

The Test of Loyalty

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It is difficult for us to imagine how life was like for the Pharisees before Christ came. In their day and time, they embraced, stood for and practiced the Law of Moses in some of the highest and best ways (at least, in comparison to other groups). They were greatly respected and followed by the people. They were often admired leaders among the people.

Then comes Jesus who calls them things like hypocrites, frauds, and white-washed tombs and denounces them in scathing terms He would never use against sinners, Romans or even tax-collectors. How do we account for this stark difference? The bottom line is that Jesus, because of His reliance on the Spirit of God for all discernment, insight and wisdom, saw their hearts and not their outward actions.

But picture yourself as one of these Pharisees who had believed all your life that salvation was found by knowing and doing the Law of Moses. You enjoy the respect and affirmation of the people in your chosen religious practices. You even have a measure of wealth and prosperity – the “proof” that even God is pleased with how you live your life. But then along comes some young, upstart wandering preacher who says that all you stand for and do is really done in opposition to God. Whom will you believe – the people, your own understanding, this young preacher or will you turn to God’s Spirit of truth for the answer to all these questions? This is perhaps the ultimate test of loyalty – whether one will follow one’s own heart or whether one will actually and truly follow God.

Today’s “Christian” – especially the professional clergy and all those embroiled in the counterfeit institutional “church” – faces a similar choice. The “church”-ite enjoys the status of being a recognized “church” member – surely a sign that he or she is approved by both God and men – and receives affirmation and perhaps even praise from the “pastor” (who unfortunately must scratch the ears and egos of his followers so as to maintain his income and lifestyle). Further, the people who attend this “church” virulently resist any efforts by “rogue rebels” to institute any changes or reforms and this is interpreted as yet another confirmation of their being in the right and only way to follow Christ and God. So long as the “church”-ite conforms and submits to this assimilation, he or she is considered “a good Christian.”

The “pastor” is often well-paid to stand in front of the people and share his “superior” Biblical and spiritual knowledge, insights and wisdom. He is routinely affirmed in this position by compliments and financial gifts. The “pastor” sees his authority over the congregation as delegated to him by God Himself and therefore resists all suggestions of change as if they came from the devil himself even when he is not consciously motivated to preserve his lucrative career. And so long as the “church”-ites are content under his benevolent rule, his position is both secured and viewed as confirmed as a God-given right and privilege.

But then along comes some preacher (who has no following comparable to the mega-“church” “pastor” who so expertly and soothingly stimulates the ears of his followers), a preacher who says that even though Jesus is the Truth it is the “church” that is the lie, who warns that unless one listens to and follows Christ for oneself one cannot possess eternal life, who denounces all the “theological” fables that fuel and perpetuate the counterfeit “church.”

Here then arises the crucial test of loyalty. Is the “church”-ite truly loyal to Christ and God or loyal to his or her “church” and “pastor”? Is the “pastor” serving the kingdom of God or merely building his own personal fiefdom? Are these ones’ lives based on their own

understanding of “theology” and “doctrines” or are they individually truly led by the Spirit of truth?

Paul wrote, “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.” (Rom. 8:14) Paul also listed “the fruit of the Spirit” as “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.” (Gal. 5:22-23) Jesus said, “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” (Jn. 13:35) And James wrote, “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.” (Jas. 1:27)

These are the primary indications of a genuine life in Christ, the absence of which is most often ignored by the perpetuators of churchianity. But the absence of these key ingredients of the true life in Christ is a dire indication indeed. Apart from Christ we can do nothing. (Jn. 15:5) Only those who hear Christ’s voice and follow Him as their only Shepherd are those who receive eternal life. (Jn. 10:27-28) If one does not have the Spirit of Christ, that one is not His. (Rom. 8:9)

The test of loyalty is put before us now so that when we appear before Christ on the last day, we do not need to hear Him say, “Depart from Me, you workers of lawlessness and unrighteousness – I don’t know you, not even where you are from.” (Lk. 13:25-27, Mt. 7:22-23) If we are genuinely clad in “the white linen” which is “the righteous deeds of the saints” (Rev. 19:7-8), then we will be included in His “glorious ekklesia” that does not have any “spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but [is] holy and without blemish.” (Eph. 5:27)

But if our life is characterized by sin, worldliness or deception of any kind, we ought not confuse ourselves by labeling ourselves as His children or His citizens of light. We may belong to some man’s “church” and may be dominated by deceptive demonic “theology,” but we have no genuine right to claim the name of Christ over our life. When Jesus returns, no matter how busy we may be at the things we, in our own eyes, deem right, good and true, He will not be fooled. He knows those things which are done by His Spirit and those things which are done in the power of our flesh – and our flesh loves to look spiritual and religious even as it remains filthy unchanged and in control of our lives. (2 Tim. 3:5)

“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap death, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.” (Gal. 6:7-8) The test of loyalty to which God subjects all who claim His name is not a question of fact or knowledge, not even knowledge that can be pulled from the pages of the Bible – it is a question of which source one draws upon for his or her life.

Let he who has ears hear.

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