

### The Snare Of Self-Righteousness

By W. C. Moore

The Pharisees are not all dead yet. Even the most spiritual churches today have Pharisees in them. Outwardly they appear righteous to men, but within they are *"full of hypocrisy and iniquity"* (Matt. 23:28). I must ask, "Am I in that class?"

Notice how humble David was when Nathan, God's messenger, told him of his great sin, and see how quickly forgiveness followed David's confession: *"And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord. And Nathan said unto David, The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die"* (2 Sam. 12:13). David had to suffer greatly for his terrible sin, but upon fully confessing and forsaking his sins, he was fully forgiven.

*"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:9). Only upon full confession can God fully pardon. *"Then went out to him [John the Baptist] Jerusalem, and all Judea...and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins"* (Matt. 3:5-6). *"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy"* (Prov. 28:13).

Even under the mighty ministry of John the Baptist, some would not repent. If we reject God's messenger we reject God Himself. *"And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him"* (Luke 7:29-30).

*"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth Me"* (John 13:20). *"He that heareth you heareth Me; and he that despiseth you despiseth Me"* (Luke 10:16).

### Job Learns Brokenness

Did Job need to confess any sins? Not at first, for he was not conscious of any. However, God saw that Job could go a lot farther in his experience of godliness, so He permitted Satan to attack him for his good.

After all Job's sufferings and testings and trials, God began to talk to him (Job, chapter 38). In Job 40:3-5 we see his answer to the Lord: *"Then Job answered the Lord, and said, Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer Thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken; but I will not answer: yea, twice; but I will proceed no further."*

Now this was not a real, humble, broken, full confession before the holy presence of Almighty God. It is as though Job had said, "Well, I will hush. I think, Lord, You are pretty hard on me – as righteous a person as I am – but I won't say any more. I'll hush."

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We know that Job had not fully humbled himself before God, for the Lord said to him, *"Wilt thou also disannul My judgment? Wilt thou condemn Me, that thou mayest be righteous?"* (Job 40:8).

It is nothing but right that we should fully humble ourselves before God, the Almighty, the Creator of all things, Who gave His only begotten Son to die a cruel, shameful death for our poor souls. It is reasonable and proper that we should make God first in our lives.

How often the Lord does have trouble with "old" saints! How often He finds it hard to get them into a humble, honest place before Him where He can fully show them His favor. Oh, the terrible, subtle sin of self-righteousness! It was the religious leaders of Jesus' day who caused His crucifixion. It is hard for a person who has a reputation for sanctity and uprightness to humble himself fully and confess openly and fully when some sin is shown up in his life.

The tendency is to excuse ourselves, to justify ourselves, to blame other people, to blame conditions, to blame even God Himself – that we may appear to be not so bad after all. Oh, the deceitfulness of the human heart! May God help us! *"And the Pharisees...heard all these things: and they derided Him. And He said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God"* (Luke 16:14-15).

There is no respect of persons with God. If a religious leader, like Saul of Tarsus for instance, will humble himself and throw away all his self-righteous rags, God will have mercy on him.

Thank God, Job did finally come to a humble and a full confession. In Job 42:5-6 he says, *"I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth Thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."*

It was then that God began to bless him mightily. However, it was not till Job had prayed for those tormenting friends of his – prayed *for* them, not *against* them – that the Lord gave him "a double portion." *"And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before"* (Job 42:10).

### True Heart Humility

One great lesson we learn from the experiences of Job is this – that no matter how long we have been Christians, no matter how God has blessed us, no matter to what degree of holiness we have attained – God wants us always to be humble before Him. If you have been saved forty years, you need to humble yourself just as much as the drunkard or harlot who comes to the altar for salvation.

*"Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted"* (Matt. 23:12). *"...every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted"* (Luke 18:14).

Are you a religious leader? Are you an "old" saint? Take care, my friend, that you keep very humble before God. Maybe you do not look so big in God's sight after all. Jesus told the religious leaders of His day, *"Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you"* (Matt. 21:31).

### Beware of Loving the Praises of Men

It is an exceedingly dangerous thing to get into a place where you want the praises of men or where you will accept the praises of the people. *"How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?"* (John 5:44). *"Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets"* (Luke 6:26).

Are you a Christian? Have you been *"bidden"* to the wedding? (Matt. 22:1-14). Take heed then that you be not too much occupied with other things and neglect that humble, prayerful walk where your chief concern is not what people think of you, but how you can please God. Many are called but few are chosen we read in Matthew 22:14 and 20:16.

When someone criticizes you, or when some sermon "hits" you, don't fight back and try to defend yourself. Say rather, "Well, maybe there is something God wants me to look into in this matter. Maybe that harsh criticism has some truth in it after all." *"Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time"* (1 Pet. 5:6).

*"God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble"* (Jas. 4:6). God Himself resisted Job till Job gave up his pride and self-justification. It was when Job humbled himself and fully confessed that the Lord gave him His grace, His favor, His help, His blessing in full.

### The Prophet Isaiah Purged

Isaiah was a prophet. But one day he caught a vision of the holiness of God and he said, *"In the year that King Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple.... Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts"* (Isa. 6:1,5).

Thank God, the Lord met Isaiah right on the spot when he humbled himself and made a full confession: *"Lo, this [live coal from off the altar] hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged"* (Isa. 6:7). Even a prophet had *"iniquity"* and *"sin"* which up to that time, when the illumination of the very presence of God shone into his innermost heart, had been apparently unnoticed.

*"Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you"* (Jas. 4:8).