

“Acting” Like A Christian

Matthew 23:1-5 [NIV] *“Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: ‘The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. **But do not do what they do, for they do not practise what they preach.** They tie up heavy loads and put them on men’s shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them. ‘Everything they do is done for men to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long;’”*

In one of Christ’s most stinging speeches He criticised the religious leaders of His day for their hypocrisy.

They were acting out the part of pious people but it was **not** what was in their heart and secret lives.

In reality they were self-centred, dishonest, arrogant seekers of power and prestige.

1 Timothy 4:1-5 [NIV] *“The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and **follow deceiving spirits** and things taught by demons. **Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.** They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth. For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer.”*

Satan deceives people by offering a clever imitation of the real thing. The false teachers gave stringent rules that made them appear self-disciplined and righteous.

Colossians 2:20-23 [NIV] *“Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: **“Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!”**? These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. **Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.**”*

This discipline demanded by the false teachers seemed good, and such legalism still attracts many people today.

Following a long list of religious rules requires strong self-discipline and can make a person appear and feel moral, but religious rules **cannot** change a person’s heart.

Only the encounter with Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit can do this.

John 16:7-8 [NIV] *“But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counsellor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, **he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment:**”*

Jesus tells us what the work of the Holy Spirit is. One of His jobs is to convict us of sin, not make us self-righteous through keeping of religious rules.

Remember that Christ reserved His strongest and longest sermon for hypocrites, glory hogs, legalists, present-day Pharisees.

Matthew 6:1 [NIV] *“Be careful **not** to do your ‘acts of righteousness’ before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.”*

This is a check list for all of us. How do we score?

Matthew 6:2-4 [NIV] *“So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honoured by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, **do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret.** Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”*

Any acts of love should be done in secret, stay out of the picture, remain anonymous.

Matthew 6:5 [NIV] *“And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.”*

Our prayers, private or public, need to be simple, honest and sincere, not phoney or put on with a “religious” sounding voice.

Matthew 11:17-19 [NIV] *“We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.’ For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon.’ The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and “sinners”.’ But wisdom is proved right by her actions.”*

Jesus condemned the attitude of His generation, for no matter what He said or did, they took the opposite view.

They were cynical and sceptical because He challenged their comfortable, secure and self-centred lives.

Too often we justify our non-conformity to what Jesus Christ is saying because it may require us to change the way we live.

The Pharisees were **not** troubled by their non-conformity towards both John the Baptist and Jesus. They were good at justifying their “wisdom”.

Most of us can find compelling reasons to do or believe whatever suits our purposes.

If we do **not** examine ourselves in the light of Jesus Christ’s words and the Holy Spirit’s inspired words of Paul and the other Apostles, we may be just like the self-serving as the Pharisees.

Wisdom’s children were the followers of Jesus, John the Baptist and the Apostles.

These followers lived changed lives, that demonstrated the wisdom that Jesus taught.

1 Corinthians 1:26-31 [NIV] *“Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But **God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.** He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things, and the things that are not, to nullify the things that are, **so that no-one may boast before him.** It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God, that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: “Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.”*

God is calling those who as far as the world is concerned are insignificant, who have little to boast about until Jesus Christ in living in their lives, Jesus in their wisdom, righteousness, holiness and redemption.

God’s calling is based on God’s choosing, God’s selection.

We did **not** call upon God until He called us.

God is the initiator of our calling so all the glory should be to Him, we have nothing to boast about.

1 Corinthians 1:20 [NIV] *“Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? **Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world.**”*

Jesus Christ is central to the three progressive stages of our salvation.

a) **Righteousness** – our past un-righteousness has been cleansed by the blood sacrifice of Jesus Christ and we become justified [just as if we had never sinned] in God’s eyes.

Romans 5:18-19 [NIV] *“Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also **through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.**”*

The one sacrifice of the perfectly righteous life of Jesus Christ allows all humanity to become righteous.

Romans 4:18, 21-25 [NIV] *“**Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed** and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” ... **“being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. This is why “it was credited to him as righteousness.”** The words “it was credited to him” were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness — for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.”*

Christ’s righteousness credited to us.

Nothing for us to boast about in this loving transaction.

b) **Sanctification** – we are set apart by God to be made holy even as He is holy.

Romans 6:19, 22 [NIV] *“I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness.” ... **“But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.”***

As we offer our lives to Jesus Christ we are being transformed in our mind, emotions and will by Jesus Christ living in us through the active presence of the Holy Spirit.

c) **Redemption** – our future is secured by Jesus Christ.

Romans 6:3-4 [NIV] *“Or don't you know that all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, **we too may live a new life.**”*

Baptism, the outward sign of an inner change of life, with new priorities and goals.

Romans 6:5 [NIV] *“If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be **united with him in his resurrection.**”*

The resurrection is our **only** hope of a future life.

Romans 8:19-25 [NIV] *“The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. **We know that the whole creation** has been groaning*

*as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we **wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.** For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.”*

Redemption is both physical and spiritual.

Sin has caused all creation to fall from the perfect state in which God created it.

So the world is subject to frustration and bondage to decay so that it cannot fulfil its intended purpose.

One day all creation, both physical and spiritual, will be liberated and transformed.

Until that time it waits eager for the expected resurrection of God’s created children.

Christians see the world as it is, physically decaying and spiritually infected with sin.

But Christians do **not** need to be pessimistic, because they have hope in a glorious future that Jesus Christ will bring at His return.

Christians look forward to a new heaven and a new earth that Jesus Christ has promised.

Revelation 21:1-5 [NIV] *“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” He who was seated on the throne said, “**I am making everything new!**” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”*

Jesus Christ revealed the new future to the apostle John as his physical life drew to an end.

When we realise that our past, present and future are all in the hands of Jesus Christ we have nothing to boast about other than what Jesus Christ is doing in us and for us.

1 Peter 2:1-2 [NIV] *“Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, **hypocrisy**, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation,”*

This is how we can fulfil the command to rid ourselves of hypocrisy.