

They Went to Church Every Time the Doors Were Open

The Danger of "Religion"

Matthew 5:20

We tend to measure a person's wealth by outward attainments. Education, wealth, athletic achievements, daring deeds, etc. become the things we use as a measuring stick for our success. In religion, a similar gauge is often employed. A certain number of accomplishments and practices are given value by a group. Following this, a list is composed allowing people to check each item to demonstrate their positive standing with God. There is, however a serious flaw to be found in such an approach--something is missing. Do we dare look into this missing component so vital to religion? It can hit closer to home than we are comfortable admitting!

The Pharisees, a Case in Point (Matt. 5:20; Mk. 7:1-23; Matt. 23:1-39; Jn. 5:39-47; Lk. 7:36-50)

- They went to all the prescribed religious services
- They regularly gave money to the cause of God
- They knew their Bible backward and forward
- They were considered the most religious people of their day
- They prayed regularly
- They fasted often
- They consistently avoided major outward sins
- They shunned things that were evil
- They were damned!

What Went Wrong?

- Their hearts were centered on self
- The principles of God's will were sacrificed for a fixation with outward acts
- They craved the praise of men over acceptance by God
- They had no love for the lost

What Do These Things Mean?

- It does not mean laws and outward actions have nothing to do with religion
- It does mean that God first looks at the heart
- It means religion is principle based
- It means grace is our only hope, thus humility is essential
- Life is about God and His will, not about us