

Sunday, June 28, 2009

**Living Hope EFC**

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"Attending church is an advantage for getting to heaven: T or F?"

Rom.2:1-29

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QUIZ:

1- Every church that preaches the Bible is seeking to fulfill the Great Commission and make converts for heaven: T or F

2- Any person who becomes a *member* of a Bible believing church (Protestant, Catholic, Synagogue, etc.) will ultimately go to heaven: T or F

3- The person who lives piously & sincerely, conscientiously committed to his religion's teachings, traditions and sacraments - God will accept:  
T or F or Maybe.

4 - A person who regularly attends a Bible teaching church has an advantage over the person who doesn't, and has a better chance of going to heaven: T or F

5 - Any person who attends church regularly, gives, prays, studies the Scripture, must have a personal relationship with God in his heart: T or F.

6 - Which is more important to God, a person's behavior or what is in his heart?

THE PRODIGAL SON: Luke 15:11-32

Actually – it is the parable about the loving Father!

Q: Which of the sons is really lost? In need of a relationship with the Father? (Both were lost. One isn't at the end of the story, one is.)

- What kind of sin separated the younger/ older brother from his father?
- Which kind of sin *looks more* like "sin?" Which is more deadly?
- What is it about this scene – that makes the elder brother so mad?  
(*"After all I've done for you...I deserve better: from you, than him."*)
- Have you ever gotten the feeling the God owes you more?
- How did the prodigal son feel toward the father? (*Grateful for grace!*)
- Had the elder brother been a "good" son? **Did his good behavior hinder – or help – his experience of love with the father?**
- Is it possible that our efforts to "be good" can interfere with our sense of closeness and love with the Father? How can that be?
- **Closeness (acceptance) to God cannot be attained by good works!**
- Once we are His child, good works "**set our hearts at rest in His presence,**" 1 Jn.3:19, Eph.2:10 "Created in C.J. unto good works."

This parable of the two sons – has a lot in common with Paul’s message in Romans 1 & 2.

- Romans 1 – Paul addresses mankind with sins like the younger son.
- Romans 2 – He deals with the Jew – who looks a lot like the elder brother - in his “**self-righteousness.**” The *moral* person who pronounces judgment upon overt sinners, but is blind to his own sin.
- But no matter whether it is overt or covert sin, people without the Bible or with the Bible = All **sin is fatal!** All need reconciliation!

Much of what Paul says to the Jew,  
applies to the Church in the West, in the U.S. today.

### **2:1-4 You who judge the outright sinner, you are just as guilty!**

- You do the same things that you are condemning others for!
- **Which of the sins in chapter 1 – haven’t you committed?**
- Each of us has an uncanny way of seeing the sin of others, but not our own. *Our* sins are not really ‘sins.’

Have you noticed?

-**When** the other fellow acts that way, he is ugly; when you do, it’s **nerves**

-When others are set in their ways, they’re obstinate; when you are it’s firmness of **principle**.

-When your neighbor doesn’t like your friend, he’s prejudiced; when you don’t, you’re a **good judge of character**.

-When he treats someone especially well, he’s flattering; when you do you are being **thoughtful**.

-When he takes the time to do something well, he’s a slowpoke or lazy; when you do, you are deliberate and **careful**.

-When he spends a lot, he is materialistic; when you do, you’re **generous**.

-When someone points out flaws in things, he’s critical; when you do, you’re creative or **discerning**.

-When he is mild-mannered, he is weak; when you are you’re **gracious**.

-When someone dresses especially well, he’s extravagant; when you do it’s **tastefulness**.

-When he says what he thinks, he’s spiteful; when you do, you’re **honest**.

POINT: We often play the role of the elder brother, pointing our finger at others – but just as guilty in our self-righteousness.

### **2:5-12. Self-righteousness also places a person under God’s wrath.**

- **Vs.5,11.** God doesn’t show favoritism, & will judge each **impartially**.
- This was real news to the Jew! He wasn’t used to such thinking.

- **WW:** "God had **given** Israel great material & spiritual riches, a wonderful land, a righteous Law, a temple and priesthood, God's providential care, and many more blessings. He had patiently endured Israel's many sins...Even after Israel crucified Christ, God gave the nation nearly 40 more years of grace and withheld His judgment. It is not the judgment of God that leads men to repentance, but the goodness of God; *but Israel did not repent.*"
- **ALL of this – was meant to bring Israel to their Savior!**
- **Like the elder brother**, they thought their benefits were somehow **owed to them**. Like the **heir** of a wealthy estate thinks he deserves to be wealthy, or the person with **good looks**, talent or high **IQ** thinks he is responsible for his good fortune – **not realizing it is all a "gift!"**
- **Their privileges became the source of their pride**, their advantage was turned into a sense of "**superiority.**" They are "God's CHOSEN!"
- **Vs.12.** God will judge each according to his privilege.

### **2:17-20: Paul shares how the Jew viewed himself, in contrast to the Gentile sinners in chapter 1.**

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- (1) V.17 – The name "**Jew**" looked back to such ancestors as Abraham - the 1<sup>st</sup> Hebrew, the "friend of God." Jacob: Father of the 12 tribes.
- (2) The **LAW** of Moses. Mt. Sinai. Tabernacle. God in their midst!
- (3) V.18 – It was true. They knew **God's will!** Divine Revelation.
- (4) They "approved" a lifestyle **superior** to the Gentile nations.
- (5) V.19 – They were a **guide**, a light – to other people.
- (6) V.20 – **Instructors**, teachers of the foolish. They possessed the truth!

*We have to admit, these are all very legitimate advantages!*

- If you had lived in OT days, would you want to be a Jew or Gentile?
- **Today**, would you rather be born in the U.S., or in Iraq, Iran or India?
- **Have not we in the U.S. taken the place of privilege today?**
- America has been blessed by God. We have the seminaries, Bibles, know God's will, churches, superior moral laws. We teach others...
- *And all of these are very legitimate advantages!*
- **And all of these are gifts** meant to bring us to the Savior! **Have they?**
- **Has God's kindness brought us repentance, or rebellion?**

### **2:21-24: How did the Jews respond to God's privileges?**

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Q: "Did all the favor God has shown you cause you to live in a manner honoring to God? Are you living in the *moral superiority* of God's Law?"

- "Are you leading Gentiles to the Savior? Are your marriages and children exemplary of God's wisdom and love and faithfulness?"
- "Are you worshiping God, & serving Him with love for His people??"
- NO! Their hypocrisy caused unbelievers to turn against God!

MATTHEW 23: THE DEADLY SIN OF HYPOCRISY!
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**QUIZ: (What does religious hypocrisy look like?)**

1- Every church that preaches the Bible is seeking to fulfill the Great Commission and make converts for heaven: T or **F** Read [Matt.23:13-14](#)

- Some churches teach the Bible, but don't lead people to God?
- HOW? Matt.15:3.8-9. They teach a manmade salvation.

***HYPOCRISY pretends to build God's K'dom, but builds human mvmnt.***

- A true church: teaches the Bible, and points men to Christ alone.

2- Any person who becomes a *member* of a Bible believing church (Protestant, Catholic, Synagogue, etc.) will ultimately go to heaven: T or **F** Read [Matt.23:15](#).

- Converts to Judaism, a denomination, religion – don't get to heaven.

***HYPOCRISY pretends their group can get you into right rela'p with God***

- [Paul isn't saying](#) it's wrong to be Jewish, or a member of a church. He's saying - that alone will not get anyone to heaven.

3- The person who lives piously & sincerely, conscientiously committed to his religion's teachings, traditions and sacraments - God will accept: T or F or **Maybe**. Read [Matt.23:23-24](#)

- John 14:6 "I am the Way"; 6:28-29, 38-40; 8:24. Mark 10:45.

***HYPOCRISY pretends that by keeping their rules you earn heaven.***

- [Jesus is not saying](#) sincere commitment is wrong, but it won't save us.

4 - A person who regularly attends a Bible teaching church has an advantage over the person who doesn't, and has a better chance of going to heaven: **T** or F. Read [Rom.3:1-2](#)

- Having the Bible, teaching, seminaries, freedom to worship, a local church = [ARE advantageous](#) to forming a relationship with Christ.
- ***These must not REPLACE a relationship with Christ, but foster such.***
- [Paul is not saying](#): "Church is optional & unimportant to your faith."
- [It is a true advantage](#) - that today we are saying we don't need!?

5 - Any person who attends church regularly, gives, prays, studies the Scripture, *must have* a personal relationship with God in his heart: T or **F**.

- Matt.23:25-28. Rom.2:24, 1. 3:9. > Rom.1:16. ***Only Jesus saves!***

***HYPOCRISY pretends outward appearance can substitute for inner life.***

- [Jesus & Paul are not saying](#) - "Don't do these things, they're bad."
- All are commanded *for the Christian!* But they are not a substitute for a relationship with Christ.

6 - Which is more important to God, a person's behavior or what is in his heart? - Rom.2:21-24, 29; Matt.23:23.

- **Matt.22:37-39 - Great Commands.** Love! ***Is this heart or behavior?***
- **1 John 5:1-3, 3:16-18, 8-10.** "Well done good and \_\_\_\_ servants."
- [Aren't BOTH our heart and our actions of great importance to God?](#)
- Can we separate the two? Isn't this where "hypocrisy" begins?
- **Integrity = means the integration of thoughts, heart & behavior.**
- **Webster: "The state of being complete or undivided."** Unity.
- "As a man thinks in his heart - so is he." **Rom.12:1-2**, mind & body.

POINT:

Often we think that as long as my "heart" is right, it's not so important if my actions don't measure up. But is this biblical? **Does the Bible make this distinction? Can I love in my heart & not in my actions?** 1 Cor.13.

- **God's purpose in redemption is that we become "complete."**
- **What you see ... is what I am. What I am on the inside ... is seeable on the outside,** Rom.6:11-14.
- **Only then will the world see & experience Christ thru the church.**

JESUS AND PAUL BOTH CONCLUDE:

***As faith without works is dead so works without faith is dead!*** Because without Faith in Christ, Works cannot Honor God or be truly Christian.

Romans 2:21-24: POINTS:

1-It is dishonoring to God to have, know & teach God's Law – yet live in a manner that routinely breaks that Law.

2- We honor God when we live according to the Word of God we teach.

3- **Q:** Is God's name blasphemed in the world because of the Church?

- **When the world observes our daily lives, does it see the Gospel?**

## CONCLUSION

All men are sinners, whether the prodigal son or the self-righteous elder brother. We can pretend we're different, but we aren't. God judges all men by the same standard of perfect righteousness. None pass the test.

We may be born into many privileges – but none of these make us a Christian. None make us better, more righteous before God. They are given to us by God's kindness, to lead us to the Savior.

Pretending we are better than others by flaunting our privileges, talents, position, knowledge, Christianity – causes non-believers to blaspheme God. They can see right through our hypocrisy.

Religious symbols, ceremonies, holy days, sacraments, education – do not make us different on the inside. Only God can do that. None of these take away our sins.