

Philippians 4:13



Words to Find:
 "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Avoid It Not

John Bate

Man does not refuse to cross the ocean because of its storms, travel by air because of accidents, or fight on the battlefield because of weaponry and deaths. Nor

does he fail to study science and philosophy because of their mysteries. Likewise, man should not refuse to learn and practice God-ordered Christianity because of the various difficulties connected with it and by obeying His commandments.

"Real 'religion' is a personal relationship with the resurrected Redeemer, not man-made, ritualistic routines under the guise of pleasing God." — *Author Unknown*

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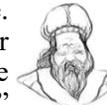



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Don't Follow the Religious. Be the Righteous!

Bill Brinkworth

Pharisees were a powerful, controlling Jewish group that boasted about and led "spiritual" activities in Jesus' time. They were known for their separation from the scripturally "unclean" practices of the worldly Gentiles. Their understanding came from the intellectual scribes that had much to do with explaining and preserving the Scriptures. At the time, if anyone were considered to be "godly" people, certainly it would have been the Pharisees.



However, Jesus had much to say against that sect. They were some of the "religious" people that opposed Jesus and tried to stop His preaching. That group taught contrary to what the Word of God taught. It was the Pharisees that led people in the wrong direction about spiritual matters.

John 8 tells much of what Jesus knew about this religious, but unrighteous, group including:

Continued on Page 2

Be of Christ, Not of Man

Bill Brinkworth

In the early church at Corinth, they had a problem that occurs even today within a church family. The new church had some declare allegiance to the one who baptized them (I Cor. 1:12).

Today, one hears of similar allegiances. Instead of those claiming to follow the teachings of early church leaders and biblical principles, we hear of some claiming to be "Ruckmannites," "Calvinists," "Jimmy Swaggart's", or another popular preacher they model their religious doctrines after. Even a denominational name is used to make it sound like their association with them shows they are as correct as they think their leadership is.

A spiritual leader may be close to God and faithful to biblical teachings, but following any man closely does not guarantee anyone else will be biblically correct. A church label may indicate general believed doctrines, but each congregation and member may have different beliefs.

Continued on Page 2

Be of Christ...

Continued from Page 1

I attend a Baptist church. I believe that historically Baptist beliefs have been one of the closest to what the Bible teaches. However, many Baptist congregations are as dead as a door-knob. Some of them have had “Ichabod” spiritually engraved as their epitaph. God has long ago departed from them. Most “religious” labels mean little.

What labels often do, however, is create divisions among the brethren (I Corinthians 1:11). The contentions these divisions create often make a ministry have a poor testimony to those around it. Ultimately, disputes among Christians give the Lord a bad testimony.

Can you imagine what the unsaved must think of a church that cannot get along with each other? “They’re Christians, and they can’t get along with each other. I certainly don’t want to be a Christian if I end up like that!”

Paul reminded those fighting among themselves that Christ was not divided. If we are born again, we are on the same side. Above all, our testimony that the world should see should be only one label. That label should be “Christian” — or “Christ-like.”

“Men will argue about their religion; write about it; fight for it; die for it; anything, but live for it.”

The Real Thing

John Bate

☞ One real dollar bill is worth a thousand counterfeits, however dim, wrinkled, and worn the genuine is.

☞ One good, fruitful tree in an orchard is far more valuable than scores of trees, which may have beauty, but no fruit.

☞ One genuine Christian, to God and the world, is worth a thousand hypocrites.

☞ One acceptable prayer to God does more than the million that He rejects, even if the righteous’ prayer is simple, broken, and unpolished.

Don’t Follow the ...

Continued from Page 1

★ Their judgments and discernments of what they saw and heard were often determined by their weak flesh and not by God’s influence (John 8:15).

★ They did not know God (John 8:19). Although this group was known for their wisdom of the Scriptures, Jesus knew that they were not of God. They did not even know the true God, and He was not their Father (John 8:44).

★ Their garb and practices led people to believe they were religious, but Jesus knew that they were not of God, but of the devil (John 8:23, 44).

★ Their man-made “religion” would not save them. Unless they believed and trusted in Je-

“I personally don’t like to use the label ‘religious’, as it usually brings up connotations of something man-made, and not necessarily God-ordained. I prefer the term “biblical”.

— Bill Brinkworth

sus alone, they would die and face judgment for their sins (John 8:24).

★ They did not realize that they were held captive by their sins. They were not spiritually free (John 8:31-37).

★ The truth of God did not direct their lives (John 8:37). They were not obedient to the Word of God they had claimed to follow (John 8:37-39).

Today, the Pharisees may not control us, but we still have “religious” among us that are not righteous. Even if they are faithful in going to church, doing “spiritual” things, or even talk the “Christian talk,” they may be as spiritually dead as were the Pharisees.

“The chief danger that confronts the coming century will be religion without the Holy Ghost, Christianity without Christ, forgiveness without repentance, salvation without regeneration, politics without God, Heaven without Hell.”

— General William Booth

The Bible reveals that the errors of today’s unrighteous “religious” are much the same as the Pharisees that Jesus rebuked. “Religion” does not save or change anyone! Only a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and trusting and obeying God’s Word will change a person — from the inside out!

When to Go

John Bate

When considering being saved, some people imagine they should bring themselves into a condition of moral excellence before they seek salvation. That is like:

☞ A sick person waiting until he is well before he sees the physician;

☞ Or an invalid waiting until he fully recovers before he seeks a change of air and place;

☞ Or a hungry man waiting until his appetite is satisfied before he sits down to eat;

☞ Or a person shivering with cold, waiting until he is warm before he lights a fire.

You go to the physician because you are sick, to the fresh air to improve your health, to the food because you are hungry, and to the fire because you are cold. In the same way, you should seek the Saviour as you are because you have a great need.