Self righteousness and a focus on the outward appearance., on: 2011/10/5 12:58

Often times when men strive after Holiness and miss the mark they revert to a focus on the outward appearance. With so much attention focused on the outward appearance, it diverts attention away from what is lacking on the inside. If our eyes are on holiness and the outward appearance, they are not on Jesus. Ironically of course, the man whose eyes are on Jesus will be a man full of love and a man who will ever closer resemble the object of His affection.

Gal 2:4  But because of those false brothers stealing in, who stole in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus; they desiring to enslave us; Gal 2:5  to whom not even for an hour did we yield in subjection, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you. Gal 3:1  O foolish Galatians, who bewitched you not to obey the truth, to whom before your eyes Jesus Christ was written among you crucified? Gal 3:2  This only I would learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law, or by hearing of faith? Gal 3:3  Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, do you now perfect your self in the flesh?

Holiness, Righteousness, Justification, sanctification. Beautiful words, theological terms. Each word meaning something different to many people. Whatever any of these words actually mean, the definition will never contradict Holy Scriptures, and while many of us have differing opinions on what they mean, we can all agree that if our definition violated a clear unambiguous Biblical teaching, then we would have to stand corrected. As you read this, I would like you to ask yourself this question, are you infallible? Have you arrived at a place where you have complete understanding of the Scriptures? Is it possible that you are still on the journey of discovery? Is there one more thing than you may not know about any of these subjects? Are you open to others who may disagree with your interpretation?

Whatever our positions on these subjects, I think we can all agree that the Apostle Paul was passionate, extremely passionate for the Gospel, for the mystery that was revealed to him. And when he comes upon Peter playing the hypocrite, not even for an hour could he let it stand. His passion was such that he rebuked him publicly. This is not to be underestimated, for who is Paul in comparison to Peter at this time? A not very well accepted former persecutor of the church. And who was Peter, was he not a founding member of the church on the way? And the men who came down from Jerusalem, the Judaisers, the legalists, were they not important men? How audacious of Paul, how brash, how brazen of him to publicly rebuke Peter. Could he not have taken him aside, was not Peter an elder? Should he not have been afforded the respect of Paul that rather than rebuke him publicly, should he not have taken him aside?

What was this incredible passion that motivated Paul to act in such a way? What was being violated that Paul took such drastic action against one of the foremost Apostles of the living God. Freedom itself was on the line for the Son of God had come to set us free. He delivered us from the bondage of the Law and here were men seeking to re-establish the Law in the lives of men and Paul was horrified. Paul does not hold back, he states it in the clearest possible terms. He calls the men from Jerusalem “false brothers.” He says that these men had come to spy on their liberty and sought to rob them of it and enslave them. Can I suggest that this is the strongest of charges from Paul, he was holding nothing back, not even for an hour. He risked everything by calling out the legalists, who sought to ensnare the recently freed people. So, we see two groups of people in the eyes of Paul. One group were free men, the other were still under bondage, enslaved. And not only were they still enslaved, they sought to enslave those who had found freedom, and they did it all in the name of God.

Now, can we see this today? What is the real danger to genuine Christians? Does the enemy of our souls not still seek to enslave us? From him who is the most chained entity, does he not seek, at his most basic level, to enslave the free? Or those who are already enslaved require little attention from the enemy, he has them where he wants them. No, its the free men that he is after. And how does the father of all lies, the chief deceiver, go about his business? He does it with a mastery that has no equal. Now, would the father of lies, attempt to rob the freemen by convincing them that they could live any old way that they want? Would that be an effective strategy against the genuine man of God? The old heresy of antinomianism, a flagrant dis-regard for God’s commands, can that really be effective for those who genuinely know Him? Can I suggest that this scheme is only effective for keeping false professors, false professors. Those who genuinely
know Jesus could never live such a life, never.

This would be enmity to the Spirit of God that burns in their hearts. Ironically they will be accused, by the accuser of the brothers, by the enslaver, that they are teaching that they have a license to sin. And Paul’s response to that charge from the enemy is good enough to repeat “God forbid.” All who genuinely know Jesus have a heart to do what is right and ever want to please their heavenly Father. “Ah ha, A” says the enemy, this is how I will enslave them. I will convince them that they have to establish their own righteousness, their own Justification, their own sanctification. I will keep their eyes on their sins, as it was under the Old Covenant, and this will keep their eyes off Jesus, the one who alone delivers men from their sins.

So, if the enslaver desires to enslave and rob the children of God of their freedom, how does he go about this, how would his emissary’s put this operation into practice. Well, it has to be subtle. And, since Satan is the father of lies and is a deceiver, and has been from the beginning, he will use deception. As a personal example, I have no artistic ability. I can draw stick men and that’s about it. If I were to try and forge a $10 note, the results would be comical. Now, if a master forger tries to do the same thing, then we have a very serious situation. For the closer the forgery is to the genuine bill, the greater the danger is. If these bills are passed as genuine, it undermines the whole currency. That is why every government around the world pays such close attention to this issue. As it is with the forgery of currency, so it is with the counterfeiting of the message of freedom. The false message has to very closely align itself with the true message, the closer it can do this, then the greater the effectiveness and damage to the genuine.

Given that truth, it is possible that two men can preach almost the exact same message on Righteousness, one will enslave, the other will liberate. And not liberate to walk in a flagrant dis-regard of God’s commands, which is the straw man argument of the enslaver, but liberate to walk in the beauty and the holiness of God.

Joh 8:36 Therefore if the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.
Rom 6:18 Then being made free from sin, you became the slaves of righteousness.
Rom 6:22 But now, being made free from sin, and having become slaves to God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end everlasting life.
Gal 5:1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty with which Christ has made us free, and do not again be held with the yoke of bondage.
1Pe 2:15 For such is the will of God, doing good to silence the ignorance of foolish men;
1Pe 2:16 as free, and not having freedom as a cover of evil, but as servants of God.

What is this body of death that the Apostle Paul talked about? These words are found in Paul’s impassioned argument on the reign of the law, which dooms the unregenerate man to continuous disappointment and convinces him of the terrible power of indwelling sin. In ancient times, in some cases, if one committed murder, the actual dead corpse was chained to the guilty one. This was a torture that led to a horrendous death. Can you imagine, chained to a rotting corpse? And yet, this is perfect imagery for the Holy Spirit to use. If the old man is dead, and if we are forgiven, justified before the throne of Grace, then we walk in freedom, freedom from the curse of the Law. If we do not reckon the old man to be dead then we carry him with us, he is chained to us, even although he is dead and the putrid smell of the rotting corpse of the dead man will gets worse and worse. It will take enormous self-effort to drag this corpse around. It is a very sad thing to see with your spiritual eyes, men dragging corpses around with them. It is one thing to have a dead body chained to you, it is quite another to voluntarily drag a corpse around with you when the Son of God Himself has set you free from the law of sin and death.

Men are so determined to do it themselves that when a man is saved, that is not the end. He now has to be broken, he has to know that everyone of his efforts will lead to nothing but defeat. It may take one year, it may take fifty years, but every genuine follower of Christ will be broken and when the brokenness comes and total surrender comes, then, and only then do they realize that it is all God and none of them. We are the recipients of mercy and grace, not of wages. And the irony of course is that the man who discovers this, who simply kneels at the feet of Jesus, is the man who is who is trans formed and changed daily into the image of Christ.

Its not by might, nor by power, nor is it by our striving nor is it by our efforts, its by our brokenness and its by our surrender and it is by nothing else. This is the righteous man, this is the Holy man...God’s righteousness...God’s Holiness...God’s work, its all His work and it is His good pleasure to do it.
So one man preaches the message of righteousness from a prison cell, the other preaches the message of righteousness from freedom. One preaches from "Oh wretched man that I am," the other preaches from "There is therefore now no condemnation." One will enslave the other will liberate. One is focused on sin and condemnation, the other is focused on Jesus. One accuses others of having a license to sin, the other speaks of Jesus. One tells others how bad they are, the other speaks of Jesus. One tells others how Holy he is, the other tells people how Holy Jesus is. One tells people how much he has suffered, the other tells people how much his Jesus suffered. One tells people about the outward appearance, the other tells people that Jesus looks at the inner man. One preaches the sermon of righteousness with the human power of guilt, the other speaks of Christ's righteousness and the Spirit of conviction works.

One judges all according to his own standard, the other says "look to Jesus." One tells people to cast their eyes upon their sin, the other tells people to cast their eyes upon Jesus. One proclaims himself a prophet, the other says he is simply a voice crying in the wilderness. One stands and proclaims "God, I thank you that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers or even like this tax collector, I fast twice on the Sabbath and I tithe all that I possess," the other thanks God for His mercy and bows his head low and considers others more highly than he considers himself. One thought himself righteous because of his actions, because of his works, the other knew that he stood justified before God because of Jesus. One cries "who will deliver me from this body of death?" the other cries "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain."
Be well dear Brother,
Doug

Re: , on: 2011/10/5 15:18
Hi Bakary, what an inspired and thoughtful post. Yes indeed brother, the hope of glory........ brother Frank

Re: , on: 2011/10/5 15:27
Hi dietolive, you write........

"I have a comment regarding what you have here written:
I would think that instead of using the occasion of the apostle's inspired rebuking of Peter as your own personal example to follow, you may rather do better to heed his inspired commandment to us:"

So you dont really have a question about what I wrote, rather a judgement on why I wrote it? Can I refer you back to the Scriptures you quoted? May the Lord bless you and guide you dietolive.......brother Frank

Re: - posted by dietolive, on: 2011/10/5 15:38
I wish you well, but as you will, brother Frank.

Re: Self righteousness and a focus on the outward appearance. - posted by UntoBabes (), on: 2011/10/5 16:11
Hello brother Appolus,

Here is how I understand Paul's zeal for defending the Gospel of Christ against false brethren.

Imagine the story of God and Israel as the story of two married couple. Who were faithful one to another.
The husband wanted to show everyone in the world that this wife belonged to Him, so he gave her a wedding ring to wear ( the sign of circumcision ). The ring does not substitute for faithfulness nor does it add to it. But it is rather an outward appearance that reflects an inward reality.
But imagine this wife going awhoring from her husband yet thinks that as long as she wears this wedding ring He is happy with that. But we all know that this is exactly what happened.
The false brother that Paul apposes is that unfaithful wife who insists on wearing the ring when in fact it does not reflect an inner reality.
I think it is unfair to call any brother who desires to bring standards of holiness to the church a false brother. A church is supposed to be the people of God that posses an inner holiness that is also expressed outwardly.

Now let me ask you this brother, If Paul's problem was in the outward performance of the law that also reflects an inner holiness, then he would have called any one a false brother who had an outward show of pious.
He would have criticized women who wore a head covering or those who taught on it ( himself in that case ), he would have criticized as false brethren those who performed a Nazarene vow ( Himself in that case also ), those who taught on modest dress ( Himself in that case also ).

If Paul's problem was with the law in general ( moral and ceremonial ) then he would have criticized as false brethren those who taught any moral standard.

The conclusion is: (1) If Christ inside does not create a holy creature inside and out then Christ is believed in vain.
(2) Teaching and exhortation of the word of God and the Law of God is necessary to the life of the people of God.
Just as outward appearance of holiness without inner faith is futile, so also is an inner faith without outward appearance is futile. The wife who refuses to wear a ring to show the world that she belongs to her husband is not a faithful wife.
UntoBabes you wrote:  The wife who refuses to wear a ring to show the world that she belongs to her husband is not a faithful wife.

You don't really think that if a wife does not wear a wedding ring that it means she is not a faithful wife right?

God bless
mj

MaryJane,
I do not wear a ring myself. We go to a Monnomite church who does not believe in wearing any kind of jewelry and we decided to respect their covenant and take our wedding rings off..

I am talking about a wife who is ashamed to show to the world that she belongs to one man. That would be anyone who is ashamed to look Christian outwardly lest he or she be ridiculed. Or someone who thinks that faith does not have to restrain their outward appearance in anyway. Women who dress immodestly, or after the fashions of the world,...

Hi untobabes,

It does not matter if you wear a ring or not, what matters is that you are faithful. Whatever flows from the inside out is what matters, it begins and ends with Jesus. I am sure that you agree that a faithful woman who did not wear a head-covering is better than an unfaithful woman who does? Perhaps you would say that what is best is a faithful woman who wears a head-covering (when praying and prophesying, which I have personally never witnessed by those who wear the headcovering but I am sure there are ladies who stand up publicly and pray and prophesy, we cant just obey partially)

It was said that one cannot have faith without obedience and one cannot be obedient without faith, its two different sides of the one coin, they cannot be seperated. One can only be holy by their nearness to Jesus, Holiness is the reflected glory of God, and the obedience that flows from that place, a place of brokenness, is the Holiness of Scriptures, all other Holiness, so called, is an imposter. Men see with their eyes and judge accordingly, God sees the heart. If its not His Holiness, if its a creation of your own, then watch out, because Frankenstein will surely step forward at some point.

Let me quote you brother and see if I am understanding you correctly in the context of our conversation, you say......

"Just as outward appearance of holiness without inner faith is futile, so also is an inner faith without outward appearance is futile."

I want to be clear, are you saying that there can be some kind of inner holiness, but if someone is not, for instance, wearing the head-covering, then that inner holiness is futile? And lets clear up your sentence, an outward appearance of holiness without an inner holiness is not real, on that I am sure you would agree. And the flip side you are saying that there can be no inner holiness unless the outward appearance is in conformity?..........brother Frank

No brother Frank,
I do not agree that a faithful woman who did not wear a head-covering is better than an unfaithful woman who does unless such is convinced in her conscience that the Bible does not teach to cover her head? Nor do I believe that what is best is a faithful woman who wears a head-covering.

With God there is no category one, category two, and category three. There is no good, better, and best. Nor is there partiality with Him. He has no respect of persons.
A woman who sees the command in the Bible to wear a head covering and understands it correctly to mean she must wear a head covering and does not do it is an unfaithful woman. The only holiness that is pleasing to God is the holiness of Christ lived through the believer, and worked out in his practical life. A believer who obeys partially loves God partially. Partial love is no love at all.

Imagine Abraham receiving the command of circumcision but refusing to have it, or a believer refusing to be baptized having no physical impediment to do so. How would God see that. Would he say it is better that he believes but it would be best if he obeys also, or would He say it is no faith at all which refuses to obey. There is only two ways with God, Good and evil, white and black. I am not sure how you see these things but to me the frankness of God is scarier than Frankenstien.

Edit--Having said all this, I must also add that for a Christian there is no rules that fit all sizes. What can be good for one may be evil for another, and what one sees as legal and right may be sinful if done without love. A brother who eats meats offered to idols aught not do so in front of another weaker brother. Paul lived as a Jew in front of Jews, and as a Gentile in front of Gentiles. How was this then different from Peter whom he himself rebuked. Answer: Peter did so on Gentile ground. In the Jerusalem council all the Apostles agreed not to burden the Gentiles with circumcision. These people who came were visitors and not landlords. Peter was playing the hypocrite in front of people who had no rights in Gentile land. Yet we see Paul himself circumcise Timothy because he was half Jew to silence the Jews and not hurt their weak conscience.

Bottomline, if love is not the motive behind every work it is a work that will burn.

Re: , on: 2011/10/5 19:13
HI untobabes, it seems we may be at an impasse, let us go with God, I will let my original post stand and for whoever, including myself, if the shoe fits...........

Brother Frank

Re: , on: 2011/10/5 20:50
1Co 9:19 For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.
1Co 9:20 And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law;
1Co 9:21 To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law.
1Co 9:22 To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.
1Co 9:23 And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.
1Co 9:24 Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.
1Co 9:25 And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.
1Co 9:26 I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:
1Co 9:27 But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

It's not how we start the race but how we finish.

Thanks for the article, Brother Frank. I love Tuesday nights as well and all involved.
Blessings as we pray one for another!
I need that fellowship and support as well.
Thanks to all!

**Re: - posted by EverestoSama, on: 2011/10/5 21:43**
Great article brother Frank. Thanks for posting it!

**Re: , on: 2011/10/5 23:10**
1 Samuel 16:7
The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.

2Cor.5:7
We live by faith, not by sight.

**Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2011/10/6 14:20**
Hi Frank:

Haven’t been around for a while, but I very much enjoyed your message. I see what you are saying. I understand your burden.

As I thought on it, what came to me is that this is all about First Love.

What’s wrong with the emphasis on outward appearance — head coverings, women’s dress, and so on?

Well, nothing... I guess. But when this becomes the focus — when we’re focused on church order, on making sure we’re properly submitted... when we’re intent on making sure the women are dressed properly and are wearing head coverings... and so on... making sure we’re lined up with Scripture... is not this evidence that a certain Something is missing?

What had become the focus of the Ephesian church? The Lord Himself tells us. They had a lot going for them, actually. He said, “I know thy works, and thy labours, and thy patience, and how thou hast not found them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: And hast borne, and hast patience...and for My Name’s sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.”

Wow. What’s wrong with that? Very commendable, all of it. They were very zealous to be lined up right, and could not bear evil. They had great discernment. They worked untiringly for the Lord. Endured much resistance without throwing in the towel. If we could find a church like that we would think... at last, I’ve found my church!

But in spite of all that, there was a Certain Something missing. And because it was missing, the Lord — can this really be so? — He was about to remove them as even constituting a church in His sight!

“Nevertheless I have against thee that thou hast left thy First Love.”

They had left their first love! And because of that, the Lord warned them that, unless they repented, “I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place.” He would no longer consider them a church in His sight. There would be NO LIGHT there!

In spite of all this church had, the Lord saw them in a fallen condition.

“Remember therefore from whence thou art FALLEN, and repent, and do THE FIRST WORKS...”

What, then, are the first works that the Ephesians had been doing when they still had their first love?
I think it has to be along the lines of what you said. They were doing things out of a First Love, a burning love for Jesus Himself, and not out of a motive to be lined up with Scripture. When that becomes the emphasis, and it happens all too often, sadly it is a sign of Something Missing.

First works are those works that we are doing because we are abiding in Him; our eyes are on Him with a great desire to please Him. First works are the things we do that flow spontaneously out from our love for Jesus.

And when we have left that first love, regardless how “right” we might be, we are in danger of having the candlestick removed from our midst.

…I lay this to heart myself, brother. Help us all, dear Lord, to return to our FIRST LOVE... that there might be LIGHT in our Lampstand.

AD

Re: Self righteousness and a focus on the outward appearance. - posted by MaryJane, on: 2011/10/6 14:41

Thank you Frank for you post it was a real blessing to me. Lately I have struggled with some of the topics here on the forum its been a challenge prayerfully sifting through what the LORD would have for me so your post came as a much needed reminder that GOD does look at the heart of the person and not just what is on the outside.

Also was very blessed by your post AD. Thank you for sharing it here.

God bless
maryjane

Re: , on: 2011/10/6 19:12

Dear Maryjane, God knows your heart, and God alone knows your heart. We live to please our Lord, not men. I know this sister, from your many posts, that you are a child of the Living God who seeks to please her Lord. You are blood bought, redeemed, saved by the Lord Jesus. Your righteousness comes from Him. You were called to peace and freedom. There is therefore now no condemnation to those who walk according to the Spirit. From the many posts I read, there is a determined effort by some to some how nullify the salvation of others or seek to take control of the sanctification process. They would have us crawl into some dark hole and bemoan the fact that we are vile worms. When the actual presence of the Lord is taken out of the equation, what are men left with?

It is as brother AD wrote beautifully. The focus is transferred to the outward man. .......brother Frank

Re: - posted by a-servant, on: 2011/10/6 21:07

Everything starts in the Spirit and then goes to the heart as center of belief, conduct and decision:

Acts 2:37 Â Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?

Re: - posted by UntoBabes (), on: 2011/10/6 21:21

I would second brother Frank regarding you MaryJane.
I find your posts very edifying.
God Bless.