



- Q: How can so many people move from outward religious expressions to completely opposite actions so quickly so often?
- A: Too often, outward religion is merely a part being played—a sham, a ruse, an image we wear.
- Religious _____ repels the watching world, and it disparages the God who has saved us.
- Jesus reserves His most severe rebukes for religious hypocrites.

Destructive Desire #1: The Image of Righteousness

-- The desire merely to _____ righteous is a deceitful desire and a dangerous snare (Galatians 1:10).

- v. 38 – “...surprised...” = “they marveled, wondered, were astonished”
 - Though not required in the Mosaic Law, hand washing before meals was demanded by the tradition of the Pharisees.
 - To the Pharisees, being righteous meant strict adherence to not only God’s Law but also the artificial hedge they had created around it.
- v. 39a – In Jesus’ day, the Pharisees appeared as impressive members of society (Matthew 23:5-7).
 - Pharisee meant “separate one.” They separated themselves from Gentiles as heathens and other Jews as beneath them religiously.
 - Because they wanted the praise of people, the Pharisees were very good at creating for themselves a good _____.
- v. 39b – Jesus tells the Pharisees that their “good image” is a complete sham (Matthew 15:7-9).

-- The desire to appear righteous inevitably leads to _____.

- The chief attraction of legalism is easy (albeit false) spirituality.
- It is always easier to follow a set of rules than to seek total transformation of heart.

-- Legalism makes good hypocrites (Luke 12:1).

-- Legalism _____ hypocrisy.

- By it, we follow external rules without being changed internally.
- By it, we live deceitful lives in which looking good to others is more important than being right with God.

-- Legalism _____ hypocrisy.

- It creates external rules that can be kept regardless of the true condition of the heart.
- It allows people to appear holy outwardly, even when our hearts are far from God.
- By it we clean the outside of the dish while the inside rots away.
- v. 40 – God, who made us—both inside and out—cares deeply that what we do authentically flows from who we really are.

What to Want (Part 1): Authenticity in Christ

- By God's power, people who are right with God in their inmost being will begin to display true righteousness in every part of life (Matthew 23:26).

-- v. 41 – Jesus here calls the Pharisees to _____ religion.

- Although the Pharisees were legalistically giving alms to the poor, they didn't have any sincere compassion for them.
- Jesus is telling them that true change will come to them when they stop faking mercy and actually start being merciful.
- The mercy to which Christ called them would be an authentic manifestation of the God they claimed to serve.

-- For Christianity to be authentic, we must desire _____ above all.

- No other desire can be at the heart of authentic religion (Phil. 3:7-15)
- Authentic religion is an authentic relationship with Christ.

Conclusion

- Which do we desire: The easy (albeit false) religion of external legalism, or an authentic relationship with Jesus Christ?

-- The degree to which we want Christ Himself marks the degree to which will grow in Him and discover the fullness of Christ that Paul expresses when he says, "*For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain*" (Philippians 1:21).