## "Because of the Pharisees"

"Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God," John 12:42-43

The "chief rulers" were members of the Sanhedrin, the great Council at Jerusalem. It is indeed noteworthy that "among the chief rulers also many believed on Him." Of course, they had many reasons to believe "on Him!" After all, "He went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him," Acts 10:38. Jesus of Nazareth had proven Himself to be "a man approved of God" among them by "miracles and wonders and signs, which God" had done by Him in their midst, Acts 2:22. Nicodemus, "a ruler of the Jews," had already admitted to Christ, saying, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him," John 3:1-2.1 Then, too, Jesus had healed the nobleman's son, John 4:49-54, the "impotent folk" at the pool of Bethseda, John 5:1-4, the man "born blind," John 9:1-7, and had raised His friend, Lazarus, who had been "dead four days," John 11:32-44. It is difficult to even imagine how any of the "chief rulers" could have failed to believe in Jesus, and to have rejoiced, knowing that in their land, and in their midst, walked the long promised and sought after Messiah of Old Testament prophecy and promise.

However, Christ had come to His Own, and His Own had "received Him not," John 1:11. The poor, the blind, the lame, the humble, and the lower echelons of society could gladly follow Him, but the elite, the socially prominent, and especially the self-righteous Scribes and Pharisees, with spiteful envy and vengeful jealousy, regarded Jesus more of a rival than a Savior. Hence, certain of the Jews had made an agreement "that if any man did confess that He was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue," John 9:22.

It is so hard to buck society, especially society's most prominent! Convinced that Jesus was the Messiah, "the prince of peace," the "Son of David," the "seed" of Abraham, the heaven-sent, miracle-working Seeker and Savior of lost souls, they "believed on Him." Yet they did not confess Him! Why? "Because of the Pharisees." Loving "the praise of men more than the praise of God," they could not bear the thought of being "put out of the synagogue." Loss of reputation meant more to them than loss of character. To them, class and acceptance was more to be desired than God-acceptance. They would not "confess Him," and thus obtain His favor, lest they offend the Pharisees and reap their disfavor.

How short-sighted! How foolish! How enslaved! Yet, how typical of so many today! Today many believe "on Him," but "because of the Pharisees," in the form of neighbors, relatives and friends (?), many refuse to "confess Him" in either word or deed. Profanity often seems to saturate and pollute the very air we breathe, yet many will not oppose such lest someone might say "religion has gone to his head." Social drinking, gross immodesty, religious error and religious indifference abounds, and even many

members of the church partake of the same, daring not to speak a word in opposition, lest they be considered some sort of an "odd ball." Some can hear the name of Christ blasphemed, His church vilified, and righteousness ridiculed, but dare not criticize lest they be ostracized.

The standard of authority for multitudes is not "what does the **Bible teach**;" rather it is "what will other think!" Deep within our bosoms the squelched cries of an offended conscience vainly try to be heard, but alas! They are too often muffled by the "praise of men" which contradicts the "praise of God." At times we deceive ourselves in not opposing what we know is sinful, inwardly saying, "we don't want **them** to be offended." wherein the real reason for our neglect is that we don't want them to think hard of **us**!

We live in a politically oriented society. Many politicians (not statesmen!) count the votes and not the cost, the praise gained instead of the loss sustained, the political "expediency," and not the principle violated. How easy it is for us to imbibe the spirit of the age and thus be more moved by fear than by faith, thus growing more in worldly status than in spiritual stature!

It is tragic that "the praise of men" and "the praise of God" seldom harmonize, but it is a fact nevertheless. We need, therefore, to realize what we are up against and thus be more concerned about how we stand with God and less concerned about where we stand with men. The "praise of men" not only is the basis for individuals lining up instead of standing up; it is also a cause for churches going "liberal," or "soft," heaping unto themselves distinction before men and disgust before God.

"I would obey the gospel, but my family would disown me and my friends would ostracize me." "I know we ought to do such and such, but it would only offend others." "What will the brotherhood think?" "What will the community think?" These and other statements and questions are born of the marriage between Miss people-pleaser and Mr. Jellyfish.

Dear reader, the appeal is herein made that we, from henceforth, strive to be more devoted to the praise of God than deluded by the praise of men, more high-bred than high-brow, and more able to conscientiously pray "not my will, but thine be done." Meanwhile, watch out for the Pharisees. They will get you into trouble every time!

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Bobby Witherington

## What is Most?

- \*Whom do you honor the most? Those men leaving their homeland and family to go to war? Or, gospel preachers who leave to preach the gospel in such places?
- \*Where would you be proudest to have a son go? To Afghanistan to fight? Or, to Africa to preach the gospel?
- \*What makes you happiest? To hear of 100 Taliban soldiers killed? Or, to hear of one soul converted in India?
- "For whom do we pray most often? Those in harm's way for their country? Or, those preaching the gospel in faraway places?
- "In praying for our rulers, what is our greatest concern? Our own peace and quiet lives? Or that "all may be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth?"
- \*What disturbs you the most? An American fighting with the Taliban? Or, a professed Christian

living for the devil?

\*What arouses your greatest sympathy? The fact that many in Afghanistan are hungry or cold or, that most of them do not Know the Lord?

\*What do you fear the most? A terrorist hijacking a plane on which you are flying?": Or, the Devil's hijacking a church of which you are a member?

What concerns you most? Pollution by anthrax or smallpox? Or, pollution by pornography?

\*Who are most blameworthy? Those who deny a woman's right to education and employment? Or, those who promote homosexuality?

"Who are most evil? Those who attack two buildings and destroy lives of our citizens? Or, those in universities who attack and destroy the faith of our young?

\*Who are the most violet terrorists? Those who fly into two buildings and kill persons? Or, those who take the lives of unborn infants each year?

\*\*\*\* —By Swell Hall