

Are You Twice the Son of Hell?

Due to distorted purposes and identity, first-century religious leaders within Judaism implemented a misguided approach to things. Twisted forms of religion not only affected their understanding of faith, but also marred their efforts to expand the “*community of faith*.” Confronting this problem on one occasion, Jesus declared the following,

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You travel sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves”
(Matt. 23:15)

Fierce forms of proselytism and critique were continually being expressed by the Pharisees. They were restless in their efforts. Yet their zeal was in vain. Just because there’s scriptural knowledge and a desire to share one’s beliefs doesn’t mean God’s kingdom is actually advancing. In this instance, it’s clear that the Pharisees were causing more harm than good.

I’m concerned that a similar problem is manifest in the church today. While centuries have passed since the Gospel of Matthew was written, old problems have a way of resurfacing. The attitude of the Pharisees still affects many individuals today.

In my experience, a number of things being done “*in the name of Jesus*” are misguided. While having the best of intentions, Christians can easily delve into moralism, doctrinal contention and guilt inducing rhetoric. They feel compelled to make it clear how “bad” outsiders are. They insist on blatantly correcting everyone and then wonder why so few are willing to respond to their message.

Many unknowingly sound like the ancient Pharisees, people who viciously fought against the work of Jesus (*for the sake of the "Bible," morality and traditional values*). It seems they would rather be "*right*" than behave righteously.

As we desire to transform culture, we must be reminded of the importance of love and the outworking of supernatural power. The goal isn't to rebuke and correct the unrighteous. It is to win them to the beauty and glory of the gospel.

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