

THE FUTURE OUTLOOK

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They Are Not Pigs!

By RALPH JOHNS

This world is in a sad shape! People no longer know how to love; Men and women have become like snarling hyenas. Thousands of years ago human beings lived to survive, but only because it was the survival of the fittest, for it was the law of the jungle then. But now, we who profess to live in a civilized world and who call our selves human beings are worse than the animals of the jungle that we say we are over, in intelligence. Man is hell bent on destroying one another. Man is so full of hate and vindictiveness, that the world he is trying to survive in, he no longer will be able to do so. He is so busy being selfish, greedy, envious, that his grave has been dug and he is so blind he cannot see it. Militancy in the quest of justice is rightful if used rightfully. Militancy is wrongful in the quest of justice if the innocent are destroyed. Two wrongs shall never make a right; Law and order must not die. For if law and order dies, America dies with it. Americans who want law and order and refuse to give justice to the oppressed, are just as guilty as the lawless.

The time has come to sit down and meditate wisely to resolve the impasse we have come to in America, on our college campuses, on our city streets. First, Police are not pigs, they're human beings who have a job to do in the protection of human beings in relation to law and order. Agreed, that some have gone overboard in the pursuit of their duty. Agreed, that there has been a lack of diplomacy in many instances, but only in moments of duress, agitation, self defense. Sure there are a few rotten cops, but they don't last long, eventually they are found out and lose their jobs. All whiteys are not hunkeys! All cops are not pigs! All blackmen are not Niggers! All peoples who go to church are not Christians! All apples in the barrel are not rotten! So why this destructiveness in our thinking today? When are we going to act like human beings?

I have never seen a cop on Elm Street or any where in America attack anyone walking down the street minding their own business. I have seen so-called white people attack blackmen, segregate them, discriminate them. I have seen white KKK beat up blackmen. I have seen white men use dogs and electric prods on black men. But, can we truthfully say those two or three thousand white men speak or act for the millions of decent and law abiding white men? I've seen black men rape a white or a black woman. I've seen black men looting and killing. But, I refuse to accept those few thousand black men as the spokesmen for the black people of America. The Negroes that I have seen in our country are twenty-two million strong in goodness, decency and law and order citizens. I refuse to accept this connotation that any police is a pig! I refuse to accept that all whiteys are hunkeys and evil! I will not accept the oft spoken application that Negroes are inferior, dirty, and born to lie, cheat and connive! No this is not true! I will accept that there are good white and good black men. I also know that there are evil white and evil black men. So let us return to reasoning and wisdom.

Let us for once and for all forget this stigma and dogmatic expression of black and white. Rather, all human beings fall short of the Glory of God. All human beings are prone to imperfections. . . . I say the time has come to return back to the norms of rationalization, of intelligence, of understandings. Let us right the wrongs, rightfully and not wrongfully. Let us return our colleges back to those whose job it is to teach, to instruct, to admonish with wisdom. Let us return back to the police and the protectors of the true way of American life the dignity and respect they have rightfully earned through many untold thousands who have died in the line of duty to make our life a little safer and tranquil. Militancy is not the answer, whether it comes from police, students, black men or white men. The militants have made their point, black and white.

Now how about a little respite, how about a little common sense, how about a little Americanism and Christianity on both sides? Otherwise there is one alternative for all: BURN BABY BURN! AND THAT MEANS NO BABY LIVES! IS THAT WHAT WE WANT FOR ALL? I SAY LOVE BABY LOVE; AND YOU'LL BE LOVED IN RETURN!

This Week's Sunday School Lesson

13. WHEN RELIGION IS VITAL

What Is Our Concern?

In the days of the great Edwin Booth most ministers considered it a sin to attend theatrical performances. However, one clergyman wanted to see the great actor perform and sent Booth a letter. He asked if he might be permitted to enter the theater by a private door because he did not wish anyone to see him going into such a place. "Sir," was Booth's reply, "there is no door in my theater through which God cannot see." God always sees our insincerity, our hypocrisy.

For most of us, a hypocrite is one who pretends to be what he is not. The word hypocrite comes from the ancient Greek theater. A hypocrite was an actor, one who played many roles. The Greek sense of the word has been taken over into English. For us, hypocrite means one who pretends at virtue or play-acts at piety, being consciously insincere.

All of us are more or less guilty of preaching without practicing, of believing without living a life consistent with our beliefs. Sometimes we assume a pose or wear a mask for the benefit of the office crowd, of those we fear, or of those we dominate.

If we are honest with ourselves and know our own pretense, we are ready to ask: How can I be an authentic person? How can my private life match my public performance?

John Wesley would ask the question this way: "How can I exhibit not only the form but also the power of godliness?" Before You Read the Scripture Jesus' words were not always precious and sweet. Matthew 23:23-31 records his thunderous denunciations of the religious legalists. Mark 7:6-13 is another example of what he had to say about a life that lacks integrity and purpose.

We should note that in using the word we translate as "hypocrite," Jesus was not accusing the scribes and Pharisees of being wicked men who were pretending to be good. He was challenging their belief that they were truly serving God when they went through the motions of religious exercise. They were not pretending or play-acting at religion. They really believed that the essence of vital religion was giving your tithe and saying your prayers.

But Jesus saw within them — just as he sees within us. They were whitewashed tombs filled with dead men's bones. Their cup was clean on the outside, but the inside was filled with robbery and self-indulgence. Their inner motives and loyalties were far from God.

What the Scripture Says

The Scripture for today is Mark 7:1 through 8:26. Selected verses are printed below. See Home Bible Study suggestions in the back of the quarterly. Mark 7:1-5, 9-15

1 Now when the Pharisees gathered together to him, with some of the scribes, who had come from Jerusalem, 2 they saw that some of his disciples ate with hands defiled, that is, unwashed. 3 (For the Pharisees,

and all the Jews, do not eat unless they wash their hands, observing the tradition of the elders; 4 and when they come from the market place, they do not eat unless they purify themselves; and there are many other traditions which they observe, the washing of cups and pots and vessels of bronze.) 5 And the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, "Why do your disciples not live according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with hands defiled?"

9 And he said to them, "You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God, in order to keep your tradition! 10 For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who speaks evil of father or mother, let him surely die'; 11 but you say, 'If a man tells his father or his mother, What you would have gained from me is Corban' (that is, given to God) — 12 then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother, 13 thus making void the word of God through your tradition which you hand on. And many such things you do."

14 And he called the people to him again, and said to them, "Hear me, all of you, and understand: 15 there is nothing outside a man which by going into him can defile him; but the things which come out of a man are what defile him."

Memory Selection:

This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men. —Mark 7:6-7

How We Understand The Scripture

The argument recorded here between Jesus and the Pharisees is of great importance because it helps us understand a significant point of difference between Jesus and the orthodox Jews of his time.

Let us think of Mark 7:1-23 as a collection of Jesus' teachings concerning the traditions of the elders.

The keeping of the law was of major importance. The law was, first of all, the Ten Commandments and, second, the first five books of the Old Testament. The great moral principles were there for a man to interpret in relation to himself. But the scribes, who were legal experts, began to break down the great principles into countless rules — so many rules, in fact, that working people could never keep up with all of them. These rules became known as the tradition of the elders.

Keeping the Traditions

The Pharisees were very religious when it came to keeping all the religious observances. Therefore they brought a pretext to Jesus because the disciples did not observe the ritual of washing hands. (Mark 7:1-5) The complaint had nothing to do with cleanliness; it concerned the particular ceremonial of washing hands, which had to be done in a certain way.

Minute detail was involved in "ceremonial cleanliness." Hands had to be washed before meals and between courses. Water for washing had to be kept in special jars because it too had to

be ceremonially clean. They had to be sure nothing had fallen into it. Hands must be held with finger tips pointing upward. The water poured on must run down to the wrist. Numerous other details were a part of this process. When the disciples did not observe this ceremony of washing hands, the Pharisees complained to Jesus.

In his reply Jesus brought out the real issues. (Mark 7:9-13) He told his questioners that they were more concerned with keeping their traditions than with keeping God's laws. For example, God commands, "Honor your father and your mother," but the Pharisees had a plan that could relieve them of financial responsibility for aged parents. If they claimed they had given their money to God (probably to the Temple), they could say Corban and be relieved of further responsibility.

Keeping God's Law

Jesus declared that the inner moral and ethical attitudes of persons are what makes their religion vital and not the outer ceremonial practices. (See Mark 7:14-15.)

Jesus was addressing himself to people who were actively religious. These were the people who came to the synagogue and spoke all the right words. Outwardly they worshiped God, but inwardly their thoughts were far from God. Jesus was saying there is no value in this kind of worship because it puts man-made commandments ahead of God's commandments.

In Mark we see Jesus open conflict with the scribal tradition of orthodox Judaism. The ceremonial hand washing before every meal was originally a part of the thanksgiving a Jew offered God. But this practice, along with the washing of pots and plates to meet religious requirements, had become in many respects an empty ritual. It was also hard on the poor people of the land whose dirty jobs made it well-nigh impossible to be ceremonially acceptable.

Furthermore, Jesus had little patience with the sincere practice of petty regulations that were really detached from an encounter with God or the service of human need. It is not clear whether or not Jesus rejected all of the Levitical regulations regarding ritual purity. But at least here he was affirming the priority of the Word of God over the current scribal tradition. Jesus was concerned about the essence of religion, for that is vital.

What the Scripture Says to Us

Deeper than the matter of sincerity, of practicing what we preach, is having something worth preaching. Deeper than a necessary consistency between our private lives and our public performance is the kind of private life worth having and practicing in public.

We worship the Prince of Peace, and yet we teach man-made traditions to the effect that peace comes by bombing villages and people. We worship the Creator who creates the earth and its abundance for all men to use, and yet we teach

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