

Pharisees care much for the opinions of people

Zac Poonen:

"The baptism of John was from what source, from heaven or from men?" And the Pharisees began reasoning among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From men,' we fear the people; for they all regard John as a prophet." And answering Jesus, they said, "We do not know." (Matthew 21:25-27).

The Pharisees were always concerned what others would think about them if they took a stand on a particular matter. Their convictions were determined not by what God's Word taught, but by what the people around them would think of them. They were not concerned about the opinions of the Romans or the Greeks. But they were concerned about the opinions of their fellow-Jews.

If you are more concerned about what people in your church think about you than to do the right thing according to your conscience, then you are a Pharisee. Many preachers do and say things in order to please some group of people in their church whose favour they desire. Many believers want their children to behave properly, not for the glory of God, but because they want honour for themselves as parents. And so they make many silly rules for their children, and make them act like "tin soldiers".

In 1987, my eldest son finished school and got admission to two colleges - to IIT in India and to a better college in the USA (with a scholarship as well). When he told me that he preferred to go to the U.S. college, I said "All right. I will send you there". [Today, numerous young people from our churches in India have gone to the USA. But in 1987, there was not even one such case in our churches. There was also a Pharisaical idea in the minds of many brothers that "spiritually-minded people in India will not go abroad or send their sons abroad - either to the Arabian Gulf or to the USA".] My son was therefore surprised when I agreed to send him and asked me, "What will people in our churches say when they hear that you have sent your son to the United States?" But I was not going to let my children live according to the rules that Pharisees had made. I wanted them to live in freedom in Christ. So I told him, "That will only test whether I am free from the opinions of others."

Interestingly, some who were critical of my sending my son to America, a few years later sent their own children to America. Pharisees are like that: They preach very strict rules to others, but modify those rules when it comes to their own family members. It is extremely rare to find even elder brothers who are totally free from showing partiality to their family-members.

We can lose our children to the world, if we are concerned about the opinions of others. Don't ruin your children's future, by listening to the foolish, legalistic rules that Pharisaical elders in your church make.

Paul said,

I have been crucified to the world, and have been set free from the stifling atmosphere of pleasing others and fitting into the little patterns that they dictate (Galatians 6:14 - MSG).

Seeking to please people is like living in a room filled with a foul smell. Get out and live in the fresh air of freedom in Christ.