

# THE LEAVEN OF THE PHARISEES AND THE SADDUCEES

By Keith Greer

*“Then Jesus said to them, ‘Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.’ {Matthew 16:6}* Jesus was warning His disciples about the dangers of the false teaching done by the religious leaders of the day. In our own time, we also need to beware of:

**Self-righteousness.** *“For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.” {Matthew 5:20}* How can we exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees? This legalistic Jewish sect outwardly appeared to be faithful to God – but it was all for show. Christians must be careful that we do not just put on our Christianity on Sunday, like a set of good clothes, and take it off again on Monday. We must continually guard against developing over-confident, self-righteous attitudes. The church belongs to God; His work and His church must have first place in our lives. He’s first – we’re last. We are here to please God not to do what we selfishly desire.

**Love of notoriety.** *“Nevertheless, even among the rulers many believed in 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 Scriptures speak clearly concerning the dangers of seeking self-glory. This was one of the greatest failings of the Jews when Jesus was on earth. *“But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments. They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, ‘Rabbi, Rabbi.’” {Matthew 23:5-7}* We are taught to do good works so men will glorify God – not us {Matthew 5:16}. Christians should always be seeking for ways to put the spotlight on Christ and away from themselves.

**Tradition.** *“Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” {1 Peter 1:18,19}* We sometimes tend to point the finger of blame for keeping traditions at those who follow religious error. But the danger of our being caught up in this sin is ever present. Do we follow Christ because we were brought up in the church? Do we faithfully attend the worship services because we love God or out of tradition? When we take the Lord Supper, are we just going through the motions, or do we actually discern the Lord’s body? Yes, God established right and honorable traditions, but we must do what He asks because of our love and devotion to Him – not tradition.

**Inconsistency.** *“They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.” {Titus 1:16}* Do you live what you believe? Do you practice what you preach to others? How can we lead others to Christ if we continue to walk in darkness (sin)? Christians must be living examples of what Christianity is all about. Only by faithful and godly living do we give power to our Lord’s words and directions. Long ago, my parents taught me that people will remember more about what a person does than what he says. The two should match.

Christians must be constantly aware of the dangers posed, not by the enemies of the cross, but by our own conduct that is not consistent with who and what we claim to be. Let's remember to always be "**exceeding the righteousness of the Pharisees.**" \*\*\*