



# The Tri-Cities Edifier

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## The Pharisee Shield

by Terry Benton

Often when a person does not have a defense for his/her position, but wants to guard their errors, they have invented a handy device that works wonders for their conscience. I call it "the Pharisee Shield". This is how it works. First, you imagine that anyone who challenges your novel ideas of a subject are Pharisaic if they want scriptural proof for your beliefs. You imagine that God doesn't care what you believe as long as you do not believe in strict obedience. The only spectrum of faith that really upsets God is those who demand scripture for everything they believe. To guard against this pathetic crowd, you can grab "the Pharisee Shield". What this shield does is call people names in the place of giving a Biblical answer to their questioning of our belief or practice. It also salves our conscience. The ONLY reason anyone would ever question our position is because they have a PHARISEE mentality. If they could or would get rid of that Pharisaic attitude, they would KNOW that it doesn't matter what anyone believes about anything. Grace is all that matters, and it covers everything anyway. The Pharisee Shield can be used conveniently when someone asks us to PROVE that grace is all that matters or that it automatically covers everything anyway. We do not have to "prove" anything as long as we can keep "the Pharisee Shield" handy. We can pretend that we know and appreciate the grace of God better and that we love the brethren more. But, we can get pretty ugly toward "the Pharisees" among us.

Use the shield when brethren insist that we "prove all things and hold fast that which is good". Use it when brethren insist that Jesus has ALL authority and that we must do all things whatsoever He said to

the apostles. Use it when you subjectively judge that the issue being discussed is "petty". Use it when you feel like you do not know the "truth" about something and you cannot allow that anyone else knows the "truth" either. They are PHARISEES, and that should end all discussion of the matter.

On your side of the shield you have your unprovable ideas of God's "grace" and "love" to keep your conscience seared (I mean protected) against the "truth" that only PHARISEES would dare to insist on. You know with your imaginations of "grace" and "love" that only the PHARISEES could be so pathetically mistaken about so much.

Who are these modern "Pharisees"? Anybody we want to imagine does not know and appreciate the grace of God (our imagination of it) like we do. With the Pharisee Shield we can protect ourselves conveniently against any threat to our way of thinking. Just imagine you see a Pharisee each time someone thinks we have to DO something to be saved, or to keep saved. Don't attempt to answer them with Scriptural proof. You might become pathetic like them. Instead, just use the Pharisee Shield.

On second thought, isn't that what SELF-righteousness is? Aren't those who hide behind the Pharisee Shield just a little self-righteous toward those they imagine to be "Pharisaic"? Unless a person is willing to "prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (**Romans12:2**), then their form of righteousness is invented, coming from within the imagination of self. This cannot be "God's righteousness", because God's righteousness is "revealed" (**Romans1:17**). This requires that one go to the revelation to demonstrate the "truth" of one's belief before it can be proven to be "God's righteousness" instead of "our own righteousness" (**Romans10:1-3**). If it is not provable by scripture, but is merely fanciful imaginations of what we would like the "grace" and "love" of God to be, it can still easily be "self-righteousness" (a righteousness that comes through the individual's imagination rather than the "revelation" of God). We can either throw up the convenient "Pharisee Shield" or we can test what we believe by discussing the scriptures.

I tend to think that the only real "Pharisees" among us are those who self-righteously hide behind "the Pharisee Shield". They resisted Jesus' appeal to the scriptures in the first century. They resisted Stephen's appeal to the scriptures in the first century. They are still resisting today, and the sad thing is that they think their imaginations of grace is the equivalent of true grace. These are they whom Jude said "they turn the grace of God into license" (**Jude 4**). They are they whom Peter warned that with great swelling words "they promise LIBERTY" (**2 Peter 2**) and "allure through the lusts of the flesh". The flesh lusts to be able to use "the Pharisee Shield". We must beware. It is not really a shield from an imagined spiritual enemy. It is just another one of Satan's devices. A Shield that becomes a spiritual trap. Beware of those who use the Pharisee Shield. They are usually unaware that they have fallen into a cunning trap that provides them with a false sense of security. In the end they find themselves to be slaves of corruption.

## Alphabet Soup

by Joe R. Price

You need a manual these days to decipher all the social acronyms in use. Then there are the new designations of gender that are totally confusing and beyond reason. Facebook offers over 55 custom gender options for its U.S. users, and 71 choices in the U.K. (When I was growing up we only had two genders. Somehow, I do not think biology has changed that much in the past sixty years!)

Occasionally we meet those who are unfamiliar with the more frequent acronyms of self-designation currently in use. Here are some along with their meanings:

LGBT: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender

LGBTQ: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer or Questioning

LGBTQI: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, and Intersex

LGBTQIA: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Intersex, and Allies

1. No matter how one self-identifies, God knows who you really are. The character of one's heart drives one's conduct. (See in Romans 1:20-32 how unthankful, proud hearts led to denying God, to idolatry and to all manner of immoral conduct.)

2. It is prideful for humans (the created ones) to subjectively assign their gender and proclivities instead of acknowledging their Creator's objective decision. "But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, 'Why have you made me like this?'" (Rom. 9:20) God created "male and female" (Gen. 1:27). We will not presume to be otherwise.

3. Sin remains a choice, not an inherited trait. You do not choose your gender, but you do choose whether you will honor God according to your gender. You choose whether to glorify God with your body or to defile it with sinful actions (1 Cor. 6:16-20; 1 Thess. 4:3-8; Eph. 5:3-7).