



The Tri-Cities Edifier

Volume 6

September 8, 2019

No. 36

Lip Service or Heart Service?

A great definition of hypocrisy is found in Isaiah 29:13 "...Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths And honor Me with their lips, But have removed their hearts far from Me,..." Many of us know what to say and when to say it, but words that do not come from the heart are hollow words. Lip service is quick and easy and doesn't really require any effort, only the occasional opening of the mouth. When one's heart is right what leaves one's lips will be right.

Jesus applied the teaching of Isaiah 29:13 to the behavior of the Pharisees of His day. The Pharisees offered their lip service every day, but they were not practicing the commandments of God. In Matthew 23, Jesus would sharply rebuke them while instructing the people to "observe and do" what the Pharisees were instructing them to do, but not to do "according to their works, for they say and do not do." (Matthew 23:1-2) That is portrait of the hypocrite. Saying but not doing!

As Jesus' teaching continues in Matthew 23, it is easy to see where the Pharisees' heart truly was. It wasn't near God, it was near himself! What he did do was to make himself look good in the sight of men, NOT GOD!

Verse 5 – his clothes

Verse 6 – where he sat

Verse 7 – how he was greeted

Oh things looked really good on the outside, but inside, he was "full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness" (verse 27)

The solution to hypocrisy is humility. "he who humbles himself will be exalted." (Matthew 23:12)

Engaging the heart into one's words of honor and humbly doing the will of God brings us near to God. Jesus also identifies the servant's heart in Matthew 23:11 "he who is greatest among you shall be your servant." (Matthew 23:11) Greatness before God is to be found one's serving not one's being served.

"let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water." Hebrews 10:22

"Draw near to God and He will draw near to you" James 4:8

STACY

Three Gifts You Never Exchange

by Andrew Roberts

Confession time: I know I don't always give "the perfect gift" to my loved ones. My family is so gracious, I've probably missed even more often than I realize.

Even with the best of intentions, I've fallen short in creativity or attention to detail. My second-guessing and insecurity about this is heightened during the holidays, so I save receipts. They can always exchange a gift when it is the wrong color, wrong size, or otherwise unwanted. And there are no hard feelings about it. I've chosen to exchange gifts myself. Haven't we all?

But God is not this sort of gift-giver. Rather, "Every **good** gift and every **perfect** gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning" (James 1:17). Our good Father gives us exactly what we need when we need it (Matt 7:11). There are no genuine exchanges for something better. Better gifts do not exist! In fact, only deception, foolishness, or selfishness would move people to exchange God's good gifts for the devil's inferior knock-offs. Let's notice three of God's gifts that the Bible warns us never to exchange.

1. **Never Exchange the Truth of God for Lies.** The wise man advised his son, "Buy the truth, and do not sell it; also wisdom and instruction and understanding" (Prov 23:23). The apostle Paul explained that wicked, idolatrous societies have exchanged the gift of truth for lies and reap the disastrous results. "Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen" (Rom 1:24-25). God's word is truth (John 17:17) and Scripture is the word of God (2 Tim 3:16-17). Perhaps we fail to recognize that every word from God is a gift from Him, the gift of truth. The Bible is a good and perfect gift from God.

2. **Never Exchange The Faith for Worldly Philosophies.** There is only one faith, one gospel, and one doctrine of Jesus Christ (Eph 4:5; Gal 1:6-9; 2 John 9-10). Paul exhorted the young minister Timothy to guard the faith and to avoid exchanging it for fashionable worldly philosophies. "O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge – by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith" (1 Tim 6:20-21). Likewise, Christians at Colosse were warned, "Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ" (Col 2:8). Let's respect Christianity as it is revealed in Scripture and not attempt to wed it to worldly philosophies or discard it in favor of man-made religions. The faith is a good and perfect gift from God.

3. **Never Exchange Salvation for Sin.** The greatest gift that God gives us is salvation in Jesus Christ. "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 6:23). This gift is priceless because it is only obtainable by the precious death of Jesus Christ (Matt 16:26; 1 Pet 1:18-21). Yet temptation often offers us something in exchange for our salvation. The Hebrew writer warns Christians to view temptation to sin like Moses did—these things are only "passing pleasures" and not worth exchanging our eternal reward (Heb 11:24-26). Furthermore, learn from Esau—not to be shortsighted by the selfishness of the flesh and fall into the trap of exchanging our birthright of salvation (Heb 12:15-17). Salvation is a good and perfect gift from God (Eph 2:8-10).

I don't always give "the perfect gift" to my loved ones, but God gives *only* perfect gifts and he doesn't include gift receipts. The devil tries to fool us into thinking we can make an exchange for something better. But remember that no matter how sin wraps the package, it only contains error, apostasy, and death (James 1:14-15). Never exchange God's good gifts for that. &