

CLOUDED BY VIRTUES

How many times people will delude themselves into thinking they are doing the will of God, when in reality they may be being disobedient! Countless times, I suppose, preachers will encounter or hear compliments from brethren who will say, "Good lesson, preacher...I agreed with every word!", and then know inside that this brother or sister will never do a thing to apply what they have heard. Just here, Romans 12:3 comes to mind, *"For I say, through the grace that was given me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think as to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to each man a measure of faith"*. When brethren placate themselves and rationalize themselves to be "faithful" or even justify sinful behavior, all they have done in reality is as Paul described in his second Corinthian letter: *"For we are not bold to number or compare ourselves with certain of them that commend themselves: but they themselves, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves with themselves, are without understanding" (2 Corinthians 10:12)*.

Sometimes it is difficult to see the forest for the trees. Sometimes Christian **virtues** can be camouflage for a counterfeit, which is really nothing more than a **vice**. The Christian virtues or graces of 2 Peter are good examples of virtues that can be changed into vices. "Virtue" (adherence to a strict moral code) can actually be hypocrisy and legalism. This was the Pharisee problem. Not that they failed to "do," but rather they accounted their "doing" as their god and their goal. Truly, they had their reward, but certainly not a lasting one awarded by God. Likewise, "knowledge" can be a cover for what I would call "spiritual plagiarism."

There will be none in Heaven who go there on the "coat-tails" of the preacher because of his knowledge and study.

"Self-control" is sometimes seen as laziness. Those who fail to get involved in the work are not self controlled, but are as Jesus termed *"wicked and slothful"* (Matt.25:26).

"Patience is a virtue!" This Christian grace has its own saying, yet it may pass for what is actually apathy. When a Christian answers the question, "What are the two biggest problems in the church today" by saying "I don't know...and I don't care," he has answered correctly...and has indicted himself! Apathy will kill a congregation and perhaps a whole generation of God's people.

"Godliness" might really be nothing but deception, either of self or others. It is not sufficient to merely appear to be godly. Again, take lesson from the Pharisees, *"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye cleanse the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full from extortion and excess; Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which outwardly appear beautiful, but inwardly are full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but inwardly ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity" (Matthew 23:25,28)*.

"Brotherly kindness" is a tricky one. What may appear to be love and kindness for brethren might really be a clique or worse, showing respect of persons. Although we are to *"be tenderly affectioned one to another; in honor preferring one another" (Romans 12:10)*, be cautious of the extreme: *"but if ye have respect of persons, ye commit sin, being convicted by the law as transgressors" (James 2:9)*.

Finally, we consider "love." This really can be turned into compromise because of failure to do what love demands. "Do the loving thing" is usually a disguise for overlooking, toleration and sometimes even promotion of sin! "Oh, if you really loved me you would not judge...condemn...discipline...question me!" Such foolishness! This is what true love will do: *"and ye have forgotten the exhortation which reasoneth with you as with sons, My son, regard not lightly the chastening of the Lord, Nor faint when thou art reprov'd of him; For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, And scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. It is for chastening that ye endure; God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father chasteneth not? But if ye are without chastening, whereof all have been made partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore, we had the fathers of our flesh to chasten us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened {us} as seemed good to them; but he for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness. All chastening seemeth for the present to be not joyous but grievous; yet afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit unto them that have been exercised thereby, even the fruit of righteousness" (Hebrews 12:5-11).*

Let us be on guard against false virtue. It is many times harder to correct a false virtue than blatant sin. Let us practice true faith, not folly. *"Try your own selves, whether ye are in the faith; prove your own selves. Or know ye not as to your own selves, that Jesus Christ is in you? unless indeed ye be reprobate" (2 Corinthians 13:5).*

RAGER ROAD CHURCH OF CHRIST

5775 Rager Rd, Canal Winchester, Ohio 43110
 Phone: 614-830-0110
 Website: www.ragerroad.org



SCHEDULE OF SERVICES:

SUNDAY MORNING	BIBLE STUDY	9:30 A.M.
	WORSHIP	10:30 A.M.
SUNDAY EVENING	WORSHIP	6:00 P.M.
WEDNESDAY	BIBLE STUDY	7:30 P.M.
Preachers:	Robin W. Haley	614-751-1082
	James Grayson	614-409-0941

April 19, 2009

Weekly Budget: \$1360.00

Wednesday's Wisdom:

"Faithfulness is standing on God's beautiful promises!" Hubert Wiley

What a wonderful study and time of fellowship we had yesterday! The young men all did a fine job. Speaking publicly before an audience...especially before our God and Father in Heaven, was a first for a few of them. They did great! We are blessed to have young men who will take the time, make the effort, endure the suffering (of nerves and uncertainty) to prepare and present lessons from the word of God. **THEY WERE NOT PERFORMING...**they were teaching and we all need to take heed to their words, for they were words of truth, encouragement, and warning.

Sara Rath, wife of our new brother David Rath, has been quite ill. A card would be nice to cheer her up: P O Box 188, Baltimore, OH 43105.

Men's meeting today at 4:30pm.