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Sham Christianity, Part 4

Satan's Followers

There is no question in Scripture; Satan is a liar.¹ As a wolf in sheep's clothing, he exists to deceive not just the nations² but the body of Christ as well.³ Accordingly it is not surprising to discover that it is possible to look like a servant of Christ, to be a man or woman who outwardly demonstrates great faith, godliness, devotion, and integrity, but in fact be a SHAM! Paul wrote these shocking words:

2 Corinthians 11:14-15, "And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works."

In fact so common were these false "servants of righteousness" that *The Didache* (one of the earliest Christian writings after New Testament times) devotes considerable time and space to describing what they termed *Christemporos* — Christ merchants! And what is a Christ merchant?

A Christ merchant is one who uses Christ, the gospel, and the church as a means for serving their own ends. One who uses the things of the Lord as mere merchandise to promote and dispense to their own

¹ Compare John 8:44

² Compare Revelation 20:3

³ Compare Matthew 24:24

advantage. Dr. John MacArthur wrote this:

"The master counterfeiter of saving faith is Satan. Disguising themselves as 'angels of light' (2 Cor. 11:14-15), he and his servants deceive the unwary through false systems of religion, including false forms of Christianity. Thinking they are on the narrow path leading to heaven, those who are trapped in counterfeit religion, or who simply trust in their personal concept of salvation, are actually on the way to eternal damnation. That deception extends to those within biblical Christianity who are deluded about their salvation."⁴

In light of this it behooves us as members of the body of Christ to “be all the more diligent to make certain about [Christ's] calling and choosing [of us]” (2 Peter 1:10). It behooves us to make certain that we are not Christ merchants, trafficking in the things of the Lord as a means to serve our own private agenda.

And it is to this, the examining of ourselves that we turn our focus to. Our passage contains the description of Saul's rise to power as the first King of Israel. And yet we already have seen that as a king and a servant of God, Saul was a SHAM! His was not a regency of fidelity to the Lord. As a Christ merchant, he used God, Israel, and religion to further his own cause.

But once again, that is the beauty of this text. Because we know Saul was an imposter — a Christemporos — we conclude that this passage contains the characteristics NOT of the rise of a genuine servant of Christ BUT of that which was necessary to fool not only the people of God, but Saul himself.

And thus the characteristics mentioned here do not testify to salvation, while they may accompany Genuine Christianity, they are not its proof. Accordingly let us continue in our examination of Sham Christianity.

Active Inactivity

Thus far we have seen that it is not without a life change. And that it is accompanied by incredible resources. And that it is not void of an experience. Now, notice fourthly that it is marked by an active, inactivity...

1 Samuel 10:13-14, “And when he had made an end of prophesying, he came to the high place⁵. And Saul’s uncle said unto him and to his servant, Whither went ye? And he said, To seek the asses: and when we saw that they were no where, we came to Samuel.”

One can imagine the anticipation aroused at this fateful moment in Redemptive History by anyone in the know. Now

- Activity would have ceased.
- Hearts would have pounded.

⁴ Dr. John MacArthur, *James: New Testament Commentary (Macarthur New Testament Commentary Series)*, Moody Publishers (May 1, 1998), ISBN-10: 0802409008, Page 7-8

⁵ There is some debate as to whether or not *high place* is the best reading here. The NRSV sides with Josephus in rendering this *home*. (1 Samuel 10:13, “When his prophetic frenzy had ended, he went home.”) And grammatically speaking there is something to be said about this translation (see J. Philips Long's footnote #60 in *The Reign and Rejection of King Saul*, page 209) Yet regardless of the translation, the next passage clearly indicates that shortly following the incredible experience of prophesying, Saul returned home.

- Breaths would have shortened.

as all eyes fixed on Saul and what he would do when he arrived at the high place.⁶ Recall that the text is quite clear as to what was expected of Saul here. As Hebrew is more inclined to show it rather than say it, we have seen in connection with verse 7 that it would have been expected of Saul at this time to approach the Philistine garrison which had been built on the high place at Gibeah-ha-Elohim and attack!

Once again consider the context. First of all recall that Saul's anointing was for a very specific purpose.

1 Samuel 9:16, **“To morrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him to be captain over my people Israel, that he may save my people out of the hand of the Philistines: for I have looked upon my people, because their cry is come unto me.”**

God's stated purpose for raising up a king at this time was the deliverance of His people from, not just any people, but specifically... by name- the Philistines. In other words Saul was chosen by God, set apart, and anointed that he might remove the Philistine presence from Israel! Secondly (and again this is something we would not know without research, but ALL Jews at the time would have known on account of their culture) in the ancient Near East, kings were not made; they were recognized on account of their valor and success IN BATTLE.

That is why in almost every nation at this time when a king died, the rightful heir was NOT immediately accepted as king. Instead, civil war regularly broke out as the next leader emerged on account of his being victorious over all others aspiring to the throne. And so in the ancient Near East, kings were not elected; they were confirmed through war!⁷

God is setting Saul up as a king here. Notice that without any demonstration of Saul's ability to be king via battle, Saul's anointing was disputed. After Saul was publicly anointed for the first time, yet without battle we read this:

1 Samuel 10:27, **“But the children of Belial said, How shall this man save us? And they despised him, and brought him no presents. But he held his peace.”**

These people took Saul lightly.

There was very little time between the private anointing of Saul (1 Samuel 10:1) and his presentation to Israel in 1 Samuel 10:24. And yet this would not have been a problem had Saul proven victorious in battle.

Yet as there was no battle waged between the time of Saul's private anointing and his public introduction as king, from the people's perspective it would have appeared that Saul just arrived on the scene. They would ask:

- Who is this man?
- And what makes Samuel think that he is qualified?

⁶ Compare verse 7, and the command that that Saul was to fight the Philistines.

⁷ The Book of Judges bears this out as well. The pattern for becoming a judge at the time of the Judges was designation, demonstration, and then confirmation through battle.

Ah, but bring forth a victory for Saul in war, and everything changes. Notice what happens when Saul crushes the Ammonites:

1 Samuel 11:11-12, “And it was so on the morrow, that Saul put the people in three companies; and they came into the midst of the host in the morning watch, and slew the Ammonites until the heat of the day: and it came to pass, that they which remained were scattered, so that two of them were not left together. And the people said unto Samuel, Who is he that said, Shall Saul reign over us? bring the men, that we may put them to death.”

Do you see the role that battle played in the ascension of Saul as King?

The battle was fundamental! The battle galvanized the people's devotion which consequently left no doubt in anyone's mind that Saul was the rightful king. Accordingly, notice what Samuel did following Saul's conquest:

1 Samuel 11:14-15, “Then said Samuel to the people, Come, and let us go to Gilgal, and renew the kingdom there. And all the people went to Gilgal; and there they made Saul king before the LORD in Gilgal; and there they sacrificed sacrifices of peace offerings before the LORD; and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly.”

If you are keeping record, you will note that this was Saul's **SECOND** public anointing!

Now, why were their multiple anointings?

There were multiple anointings because **SAUL'S FIRST ANOINTING TOOK PLACE WITHOUT A BATTLE AND SO IT WAS DISPUTED!**

The implication here is that when God brought Saul to the holy city of Gibeath where the Philistines had the audacity to station a garrison of men and then after all His signs and miracles, the Lord told Saul, "Do what the occasion requires" God was commanding the king to attack the Philistine Garrison, for this would have established Saul as king in the eyes of the people!

And that brings us to another important point, the destruction of the Philistine garrison of our text was a turning point in Israel's relationship with the Philistines! Prior to Jonathan's routing of the garrison mentioned in our text, Israel was enslaved and so oppressed by this evil nation.⁸ But after Jonathan's victory, the Philistines declared war on Israel⁹ with the result that God delivered Israel from the Philistine threat and in the process established Israel as a sovereign nation.¹⁰

It clearly was God's plan to use the destruction of this garrison to establish not only Saul's legitimacy as a king, but also Israel's sovereignty. While Saul enjoyed victory over the Ammonites and so became the undisputed King of Israel, it wasn't until the garrison at Gibeath was destroyed that the remaining instructions which Samuel gave to Saul in 1 Samuel 10:8 were set in motion.¹¹

Samuel commanded Saul in his commissioning to do “what the occasion required” and this then set in

⁸ Compare 1 Samuel 13:19-23

⁹ Compare 1 Samuel 13:3-4

¹⁰ Compare 1 Samuel 14:14-23

¹¹ Compare 1 Samuel 13:5-8

motion the instructions of 1 Samuel 10:8.

1 Samuel 10:8, “And thou shalt go down before me to Gilgal; and, behold, I will come down unto thee, to offer burnt offerings, and to sacrifice sacrifices of peace offerings: seven days shalt thou tarry, till I come to thee, and shew thee what thou shalt do.”

Well, after what battle did Saul himself know to go down to Gilgal, wait seven days, and then participate in a worship service involving both a burnt offering and a peace offering?

It wasn't after the Ammonite victory of chapter 11, BUT after the destruction of the Philistine garrison referenced in our passage.¹²

1 Samuel 13:8, “And he tarried seven days, according to the set time that Samuel had appointed: but Samuel came not to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him.”

The implication here is that Saul knew that the destruction of the garrison was part of his commissioning by God. And from all of this I hope you see that when Saul was commanded to approach the garrison in Gibeath and there "do what the occasion requires" the clear implication was that God had commissioned him to destroy the Philistine Garrison!

- This was God's will for His king, 1 Samuel 9:16.
- This clearly was how the King of Israel was to be proven and so elected, 1 Samuel 11:14-15a.
- This is what set in motion the remaining instructions that Saul received at his commissioning, 1 Samuel 10:8; 13:8.

Joyce Baldwin, among many voices proclaiming the same, wrote in connection with verse t, “Mention of the Philistine presence there gives a reminder of the threat that Saul is to remove...”¹³

And so it would have been with baited breath that anyone in the know would have watched Saul in our text as he approached the high place.

1 Samuel 10:14, “**And Saul’s uncle said unto him and to his servant, Whither went ye? And he said, To seek the asses: and when we saw that they were no where, we came to Samuel.**”

Talk about anti-climaxes! Talk about false advertising! Talk about over-selling a product!

All evidence suggests that after the three signs took place, the signs which spoke not only of the validity of Saul's anointing but, get this, of God's presence, provision, and power. Saul forgot the command of his commissioning: “Do for yourself what the occasion requires, for God is with you” (1 Samuel 10:7). Saul went up to the high place and did nothing! He went to the high place, possibly paid his respects (we don't know), and then he went home! V. Philips Long wrote of this:

“Returning to the issue of Saul's inaction, the question that arises is why it is that Saul simply 'stopped prophesying and went home.' Has he failed to understand his charge, or is he simply

¹² Compare also 1 Samuel 10:5-7

¹³ Joyce G. Baldwin, *1 And 2 Samuel: An Introduction and Commentary (Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries)*, InterVarsity Press (May 1989), ISBN-10: 0877842582, page 91.

reluctant to accept it?"¹⁴

Long's thesis is that it wasn't that he misunderstood his charge¹⁵; rather he shrunk back from doing what God had called him to do! And this points to a fourth characteristic of the Sham Christian. A sham Christian is a do-nothing Christianity!

Now don't get me wrong. Sham Christians are active in all sorts of things;

- Political action.
- Protests.
- Movements to protect whales, wilderness, and all manner of weak things.
- Bible study.
- Evangelism.
- Effort to help the poor and down trodden.

Truly, the road to hell is paved with good intentions! But in the matter of what is important and pressing in the Kingdom of God, there is a shocking inactivity.

Judas Iscariot

May we never forget Judas' rebuke of the Lord just six days before He was to be executed:

John 12:3-5, "Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?"

I'm telling you brothers and sisters, never did a heart beat for the poor and impoverished as did Judas! This man was so burdened by their plight that he had the boldness to confront Christ in the presence of the rest of the disciples.¹⁶

Oh, such a warm and caring individual was this Judas. Truly he embodied the heart of the believer. And yet we know the truth, Judas didn't care about the poor any more than he cared about Christ (whom he shortly would betray). In spite of his social activism and all that he did "for the Lord," he was a sham!

- John 12:6, "Now he [Judas] said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it."
- Matthew 26:24, "The Son of Man is to go, just as it is written of Him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born."
- John 17:12, "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition [destruction, condemnation or damnation]; that the scripture might be fulfilled."

¹⁴ V. Phillip Long, *The Reign and Rejection of King Saul: A Case for Literary and Theological Coherence*, Society of Biblical Literature (1989), ISBN-10: 1555403921, page 209.

¹⁵ Compare also page 209, *The Reign and Rejection of King Saul*.

¹⁶ In fact, both Matthew and Mark indicate that more than Judas was involved at this point. (See Matthew 26:8 and Mark 14:4). Judas clearly was the only one who spoke, nevertheless others in the room were in hearty agreement with the point.

Truly Sham Christianity is marked by an active inactivity! When it comes to activity in the Kingdom of God, the Sham Christian is quite busy. But when it comes to the work which really matters, there is none! I love how J. C. Ryle put it in reference to the parable of the talents:

“We are not told that the unprofitable servant was a murderer, or a thief, or even a waster of his Lord's money: but he did nothing- and this was his ruin! Let us beware of a do-nothing Christianity: such Christianity does not come from the Spirit of God. 'To do no harm,' says Baxter, 'is the praise of a stone, not a man.'”¹⁷

Ah but place a sham Christian before the Lord on the day of judgment, and you will hear a laundry list of impressive acts of service. Again listen to the warning of Christ:

Matthew 7:22-23, “Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”

Most in hell today did not arrive there with a trail of blood in their wake. Rather, their road was paved with acts of self-sacrifice and service. And such a claim could Saul have made for he had much for which he could have boasted;

1 Samuel 14:47-48, “So Saul took the kingdom over Israel, and fought against all his enemies on every side, against Moab, and against the children of Ammon, and against Edom, and against the kings of Zobah, and against the Philistines: and whithersoever he turned himself, he vexed them. And he gathered an host, and smote the Amalekites, and delivered Israel out of the hands of them that spoiled them.”

And no doubt he derived much satisfaction from what he had done for Christ.¹⁸ But in the end we know, like Judas, he was a devil!

The bent of the sham Christian is that they will boast in their deeds done for the Lord in their active inactivity. Accordingly, their trust will be in a facet of their work, but not in the **WORK THAT REALLY MATTERS!**

Did you get that?

Their error is not that they are relying upon works; it is that they are relying upon the wrong works!

Works which Count

What are the right works on which to rely for salvation? Turn with me to Philipians 3.

Paul wrote this epistle while in prison in the attempt to encourage the body of believers living in Macedonia. You will discover that it was these churches which stood with and behind Paul in and throughout his ministry. As such there was much affection between Paul and these believers.

¹⁷ J. C. Ryle, [The Gospel of Matthew Chapter 25](#), Banner of Truth (June 1998), ISBN-10: 0851514839, page 245 (Google books has the Crossway Classic version online *Matthew (Expository Thoughts on the Gospels)*, A Crossway Classic Commentary, ISBN: 089107726X page 245.

¹⁸ Compare 1 Samuel 18:7-8

And so in what has become one of the more personal letters of Paul, Philippians is an epistle in which the apostle shared his heart and soul when it came to Christ, of which this text is a perfect example.

Philippians 3:7, “But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.”

Paul has just given a laundry of things which we know the sham Christian busies himself with: Their pedigree¹⁹.

- Baptism.
- Heritage.
- Family.
- Honor in the church.
- Ministry.
- Their Passion.
- Their Purity.

Though the temptation existed to glory in these things, Paul didn't boast in this work. In fact notice this:

Philippians 3:8, “Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung²⁰, that I may win Christ.”

When Paul considered the love-relationship he enjoyed with Christ, there was nothing in this world which could compare by way of value or desire. In fact, Paul was even bolder than that, he considered all that a person might boast in as rubbish!²¹

Thus when it came to

- Worldly honor and degrees.
- Religious activity or any sort.
- His own moral purity.
- Anything he could do, say, think, feel, or aspire to.

Paul's confession here was that all of this was of no value whatsoever when it came to creating or maintaining a walk with Christ! From this we conclude that, unlike the sham Christian, activity meant nothing to Paul!

Well then what did matter to him? And what ought to matter to the Genuine Child of God?

Philippians 3:9, “And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:”

This is the key passage for Paul knew that there could be no righteousness gained through anything he did

¹⁹ Compare Philippians 3:5-6

²⁰ σκυβαλον skubalon, any refuse, as the excrement of animals, offscourings, rubbish, dregs 1a) of things worthless and detestable

²¹ σκυβαλον skubalon

in this life. As such, his boast and joy was not in

- What he had done.
- What he had accomplished.
- The poor he had helped.
- The blind he had healed.
- The lost he had saved.
- The stripes he had endured.
- The sacrificed offered.

NO! The work over which Paul rejoiced was not the labors of his hands, **BUT THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST**. It was Christ's work which Paul valued. It was Christ's

- Perfect life.
- Feeding of the poor.
- Healing of the blind.
- Offering up of Himself.
- Sacrifice.
- Upholding of the Law.
- .Sacrifice on the cross.

This is what Paul lived and ultimately died for! This is the work of which the Genuine Christian values and over which the Genuine Christian rejoices.

Accordingly it behooves us to evaluate our heart's passion and the basis for our trust and expectation that in the end we will be saved and to see whether or not we are among the Christemporos.

Don't miss it! When it comes to activity, the sham Christian has much in which to boast- his religion has done much to satisfy his soul. But when it comes to the work of Christ, to

- Trusting it alone.
- Rejoicing in it.
- Being satisfied with Christ
 - His beauty.
 - His love.
 - His commendation.
 - His affection.

There is a void. May Christ and Christ alone be our heart's desire, devotion, affection, and our boast. In contrast to the sham Christians which were terrorizing the churches in Galatia, Paul wrote this:

Galatians 6:14, "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

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About the Preacher

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