

PUBLICLY OR PRIVATELY?

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In the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector recorded in Luke 18:9-14, we see the Pharisee pointing out the perceived deficiencies of the tax collector and then extolling his own perceived virtues. The Pharisee had not assessed the circumstances correctly, but his objective was to exalt himself, to make himself look good by comparison, ego aggrandizement, if you will. I know what the Lord thought of such action: “for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted” (18:14, NKJV). In Matthew 23:23 Jesus said:

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier *matters* of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.

It is the case that there are some who use these public forums to do the exact same thing that the Pharisees of old attempted to do by their public prayers, i.e., to denigrate their own brethren to magnify their own perceived piety. True piety consists not in forms, but in substance, not in outward observances, but in justice, mercy, and faith.

Seven things were enumerated in Proverbs 6:16-19 that God hates. The very last thing is sowing discord among brethren. The God of love and peace hates the “one who sows discord among brethren,” for God delights in concord. If publicly proclaiming the perceived sins of another while ignoring the sins in one’s own life is not both pharisaical and sowing discord, then pray tell what else would one have to do for it to be so? The Lord also made clear that such conduct is hypocritical. In Matthew 7:3-5, the Lord said:

And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, “Let me remove the speck from your eye”; and look, a plank *is* in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.

Publicly proclaiming the perceived sins of another while ignoring the sins in one’s own life is oftentimes a case of one needing to look for the plank and not the speck. The accuser should beware! Is it not preferred for some matters to be handled privately rather than publicly? Would not the cause of Christ be better served if the advice given in James 1:19 were heeded: “So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath”? Why? “For the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God” (1:20).~