

Are You A Pharisee?

My wife recently told me of a conversation she had with a Baptist who called her a "Pharisee." That got me to wondering if most people even know what being "Pharisaical" means. Most of the time, people consider someone "Pharisaical" who demands that the Bible is strictly followed. We will see that this is exactly what the Bible demands.

The Pharisees were soundly condemned in the New Testament, not because they strictly adhered to the word of God, but because they went beyond the word of God. Matthew 15:9 says, *"But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men"* (cf. 2 John 9). However, Jesus said in Matthew 23:23, *"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."* Jesus does not condemn the sacrificing of the smallest herbs; rather, He encourages it by saying *"these ought ye to have done."* He condemns the Pharisees for leaving undone other laws of God that were equally binding: practicing justice, mercy, and faith. Jesus called these *"weightier,"* or more important, matters of the law.

Jesus wants us to strictly adhere to His law. A lot of religious folks criticize those of us who want to conscientiously follow the Bible. In so doing, they feel justified in doing less than is required. Before you haul off and call someone a "Pharisee" for wanting to follow the Bible closely, remember that our obedience to God is dependent upon our love for God (John 14:15, 21; 15:10; 1 John 5:2-3; 2 John 1:6).

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