

Bryan Station Baptist Church

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"DOERS OF THE WORD"

By the late C. D. Cole



"And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not" (Ezekiel 33:31,32).



Human nature is the same in all ages. Human nature has been bad and opposed to God since the day the first Adam chose to do as he pleased instead of keeping the commandment of God. The very follies and sins of the ancients we see developed all around us every day. Were there skeptical men in the long ago, like Pharoah, who said, "Who is the Lord that I should obey Him?" So there are such men today who frown in the thought of any God to be obeyed. Were there daring blasphemers among the ancients? There are many more now who take the name of God in vain and poke fun at everything sacred. Were there degraded profligates, who wallowed in the mire of impurity? There are such today--men and women who dance and dine and revel in sin and live for the pleasures for a season. Were there frivolous and thoughtless persons who spent their money for naught without any thought for eternity? Multitudes are like that today. Foolish spenders, who throw their money and strength away for that which is not bread. Were there formalists who had only the name and external of

religion? Well, we have such today--those who have a form of godliness but who deny the power thereof. Were there among the ancients those who were hearers of the Word but were not doers of it? Dare we say that we do not have such people today? Who cannot see that the prophet's description is just as close, and searching, and true in reference to multitudes today, as it was when he spoke it in reference to Israel of old?

God's Word not only contains a true record of the past events, and a faithful describer of human conduct, but it is also a clear transparent mirror of the human heart and character. Every man of us may see his own likeness reflected in the spirit and deeds of some order or class of persons who lived in the past ages. The passage before us gives the description of many people who come to the house of God and observe the proprieties of public worship. They sit and listen and praise and profess much love for the things of God--they hear the Word but do not do it. It makes no change in their conduct. They live the next Monday as they lived the last Monday.

Notice in this description: (1) What is commendable; (2) What is wrong; (3) What is the cause of the wrong action?

I. What is commendable? Much in every way. More than can be said about many people.

1. There was attention to divine things. They come to God's house. They do not neglect religious observances. They did not sit in the seat of the scorner. They were not irreligious blasphemers. How proper and right is all this. Would that we had more people in our public places of worship.

2. Their behaviour was serious and reverential. They sat and listened as if they were God's people. No human eye can tell any difference between them and the real saints. They do not appear to be giddy and thoughtless as if they were in the ballroom or some place of worldly display. This, too, was good and proper. How much the minister appreciates the people who sit and try to get every word he says.

3. They appear to love divine things. "With their mouth they show much love," that is, love to God and to His service--to His house--to His people. They are nice and courteous and speak kindly of the service. How encouraging is this? How glad the minister is to have people act as these people did! It is not uncommon, however, for us to come in contact with this warm and ardent appreciation of public religious services, where there is complete absence of any real spirituality of mind. Most people love music and enjoy good singing. They love eloquence and are delighted with oratory. They are eminently social, and love to mingle with nice, cultured people in God's house. And where will you find better culture than among God's people? But, alas, after all they are only court worshippers and never enter the holiest of all to hold communion of heart with the living Christ.

4. They seem delighted with divine things. They praise the preacher. They like his studied sermon. They like his forceful and sincere delivery. The preacher is to them as a very lovely song. They count it a treat to hear him. Like the stony ground hearer, they received the word with joy. The sermon acts as an emotional stimulant. The minister is greatly encouraged by their behaviour and thinks he has been a blessing to them. But there was something lacking that the preacher could not detect.

II. What was wrong? We have seen what was right so far--but the first charge against them is that they were not practical hearers. They hear thy words, but they will not do them. They hear and learn their duty, but will not do it. They agree that salvation is by grace--something they cannot merit. They agree that Jesus Christ is the one and only Saviour, but they do not act upon the truth that they acknowledge--they do not trust Him. They agree

that the church of Christ should have their support in time and talent and money, but they do not act out what they profess. They are awed by threatenings, but do not flee from their sins. They are moved by exhortations, but do not put their trust in Christ. They are affected by appeals, but they do not come to Christ.

III. The cause assigned for this wrong. There are various hindrances to the profitable worship of God. There is no one cause that operates on all. With one person it may be forgetfulness and inattention, as James says. With another person it may be lack of self-application and serious reflection. With still another it may be listlessness and apathy of spirit. But the text speaks of one prevailing evil in the days of the Prophet Ezekiel, an evil which we fear is very common today. "Their heart goeth after covetousness." That was the thing that robbed them of the blessing they may have received. We see this illustrated in the parable of the sower. "He that received the seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful."

We see it in the young ruler who came to Christ. When Christ told him to part with his property he went away sorrowful. We see it in the case of Demas, who forsook Paul because he loved this present world. We see it in those who were invited to the feast. They excused themselves on the ground that their farms and oxen and merchandise must have their attention, and therefore, they could not come, to hear them tell it.

"Covetousness is the moral ossification of the soul." It destroys sympathy, tenderness, and generosity. A covetous spirit hardens the heart. Any class of men are more easily impressed than the covetous.

Covetousness is a deceptive sin. It darkens the mind. How few ever confess the sin of covetousness! It is a respectable sin. Other sins are generally disreputable, but covetousness is a sin that keeps one in good standing in society and the church.


★
Nothing is **GOD'S PLAN**

- ★ for Developing His Followers
- ★ for Financing His Mission Program
- ★ for Strengthening His Church

TITHING EXPRESSES YOUR LOVE

WHAT IS A SQUARE?

Everybody knows a few squares. I know one. He's that strong, polite, God-fearing young fellow who freely admits that he prays, weeps for joy, plays with little kids, kisses his mother, goes to his dad for advice, and thinks old folks are great. He wears clothes that fit him, puts savings in the bank, has his hair neatly groomed, likes school, can't imitate all the television comics, avoids dirty discussions about sex—he even blushes. He goes to church, drinks milk, drives within the speed limit, is in bed by 12, doesn't smoke, and expects purity in girls.

As a result of his unusual behavior, he suffers the loss of gang companionship; but he gains the gratitude and admiration of his parents, family, and teachers, has an unjaded imagination, and enjoys spiritual perception. To some he may seem a strange fellow, but I like him!

—Anon.

LOST—STOLEN—MISSING

The following unique notice was recently affixed to a church door in England:

“MISSING”—Last Sabbath, some families from church.

“STOLEN”—Several hours from the Lord's Day, by a number of people of different ages, dressed in their Sunday clothes.

“STRAYED”—Half a score of lambs, believed to have gone in the direction of 'No Sabbath School.'

“MISLAID”—A quantity of silver and copper coins on the counter of a public house, the owner being in a great state of excitement.

“WANTED”—Several young people when last seen were walking in pairs up Sabbath-breaking Lane, which leads to the city of No-Good.

“LOST”—A lad carefully reared; not long from home, and for a time promising. Supposed to have gone with one or two older companions to Prodigal Town, Husk Lane.

“Any person assisting in the recovery of the above, shall in no wise lose his reward.”

—Selected.