

## **ARE YOU AN AUTHENTIC CHRISTIAN?**

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Time is passing. Years come and go.

It is worth asking: How are we doing in our lives? Especially in terms of our Christian walk? How are we doing as disciples of the Lord Jesus?

How do we compare to a year ago? Five ... ten ... twenty years ago? More fruitful? What about 12 months from now? The same ... a bit of backsliding ... or a bit more progress?

It is worthwhile occasionally asking ourselves that question!

### **1 Corinthians 10:11-12**

11 **Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.**

12 **Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.**

Do we learn from Israel's mistakes? Do we learn from our own?

Or ... are we just coasting along ... oblivious to the passing of time? Every day our past gets longer and longer and longer ... and our future gets shorter and shorter and shorter.

It is worth checking that our Christian walk is real — authentic! Not just a façade that looks okay on the outside.

Are we genuine believers? Or is it just an image?

It might be one thing to deceive others by an outward appearance of being religious — but better not deceive ourselves!

### **Revelation 3:15-19**

15 **"I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. (You are wishy-washy!)"**

16 **So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.**

17 **Because you say**, I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—

18 **I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your (SPIRITUAL) nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.**

19 **As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.**

“**Because you say**” — The Laodiceans are deceived about themselves. Not genuine believers — though they may have all the outward appearance of being one.

They are blind to their own condition. What about us?

### **2 Timothy 3:1-5**

1 But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come:

2 For **men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,**

3 **unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good,**

4 **traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,**

5 **having a form of godliness but denying its power.** And from such people turn away!

Some have a form of godliness — an outward appearance! But it's not authentic!

### **2 Timothy 3:5 (NET)**

5 **They will maintain the outward appearance of religion but will have repudiated its power.** So avoid people like these.

### **2 Timothy 3:5 (J B PHILIPS)**

5 **They will maintain a façade of “religion”**

We don't want to fall into this category! **We want to be real believers!**

## **2 Timothy 3:10-13**

10 **But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance,**

**11 persecutions, afflictions**, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. **And out of them all the Lord delivered me.**

12 **Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.**

13 **But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.**

Paul was a “real” Christian — not just “talk”!

## **2 Timothy 4:2-5**

2 **Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.**

3 **For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; (*“they” — the believers*)**

4 and **they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.**

5 **But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.**

These people seem religious? They aren’t turning away from “Church”. They “heap up for themselves teachers”. **But — they have turned away from the Truth.**

But ... “on the outside” — they look like believers — and probably believe it themselves? They are blind. They are deceived — and they are in trouble.

## **Luke 6:46-49**

46 **“But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do the things which I say?**

47 **Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them,** I will show you whom he is like:

48 He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock.

49 But **he who heard and did nothing** is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it **fell**. And the ruin of that house was great.”

Here’s someone who “comes to Jesus” ... “hears” the teachings ... calls Jesus “Lord” — looks good? Has the “outward appearance”.

They have deceived themselves.

Just “coming and hearing” isn’t good enough. We have to come ... hear ... and do! It’s how we live our lives that counts! It’s what we do!

Just attending Sabbath services and hearing isn’t enough. We may have done so for 20 or 50 years. But ... if it’s only “coming and hearing” ... we may be deceiving ourselves.

It’s not a matter of our image or appearance. Whether we look religious. It’s how we live. Are we genuine?

We can see a “good example” of a “bad example” — of much religion of today — in:

### **Isaiah 30:8-11**

**8 Now go, write it before them on a tablet,  
And note it on a scroll,  
That it may be for time to come,  
Forever and ever:**

**9 That this is a rebellious people,**

**Lying children,**

**Children who will not hear the law of the LORD;**

**10 Who say to the seers, “Do not see,”**

**And to the prophets, “Do not prophesy to us right things;**

**Speak to us smooth things, prophesy deceits.**

**11 Get out of the way,**

**Turn aside from the path,**

**Cause the Holy One of Israel**

**To cease from before us.”**

### **Isaiah 30:11 (NASB)**

11 “... **Let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel.**”

Religious people who want to hear “smooth things” — who have “itching ears”!

A lot of today’s preaching is about the God of Love who “loves everybody ... unconditionally”.

They don’t want to hear about the law — and need to **REPENT!** They don’t want to hear of the coming judgment.

We can see these examples around us ... but we need to make sure our religion is genuine. That we heed and respond.

**Micah 6:6-8**

6 **With what shall I come before the LORD,**

And bow myself before the High God?

**Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings,**

**With calves a year old?**

7 **Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams,**

**Ten thousand rivers of oil?**

**Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression,**

**The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?**

8 He has shown you, O man, what is good;

And **what does the LORD require of you**

**But to do justly,**

**To love mercy,**

**And to walk humbly with your God?**

The reality is that God’s not interested in religious “activities” on their own. It’s not about an outward form of Godliness.

What about the heart? Genuine ... converted — and loves Him. In a practical way.

We can “turn up” for Sabbaths ... Holy Days ... read a “chapter a day” ... but do we have changed hearts?

Do we fear God?

Look at these religious people — the ministers — the priests — who don't fear God — who are serving at the temples.

### **Malachi 1:6-8**

6 "A son honours his father,  
And a servant his master.

**If then I am the Father,**  
**Where is My honor?**

And **if I am a Master,**  
**Where is My reverence?**

Says the LORD of hosts

**To you priests who despise My name.**

Yet you say, 'In what way have we despised Your name?'

7 "**You offer defiled food on My altar,**

But say,

'In what way have we defiled You?'

By saying,

The table of the LORD is contemptible.'

8 And **when you offer the blind as a sacrifice,**

**Is it not evil?**

And **when you offer the lame and sick,**

**Is it not evil?**

Offer it then to your governor!

Would he be pleased with you?

Would he accept you favourably?"

Says the LORD of hosts.

### **Malachi 1:10-14**

10 "**Who is there even among you who would shut the doors,**

**So that you would not kindle fire on My altar in vain?**

**I have no pleasure in you,"**

Says the LORD of hosts,

**"Nor will I accept an offering from your hands.**

11 **For from the rising of the sun, even to its going down,**

**My name shall be great among the Gentiles;**

**In every place incense shall be offered to My name,**

**And a pure offering;**

**For My name shall be great among the nations,"**

**Says the LORD of hosts.**

12 **“But you profane it,**  
In that you say,  
The table of the LORD is defiled;  
And its fruit, its food, is contemptible.’

13 **You also say,**  
**‘Oh, what a weariness!’**  
**And you sneer at me,”**  
Says the LORD of hosts.

**“And you bring the stolen, the lame, and the sick;**  
**Thus you bring an offering!**  
**Should I accept this from your hand?”**

Says the LORD.

14 **“But cursed be the deceiver**  
Who has in his flock a male,  
**And takes a vow,**  
**But sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished—**  
**For I am a great King,”**  
**Says the LORD of hosts,**  
**“And My name is to be feared among the nations.**

These are “religious people” ... doing “religious things” ... as laid down in the Bible.

But ... it’s not genuine. An outward show — and even that is casual and slipshod. No heart for God. No fear or reverence.

Our worship of God should be much better. Authentic!!

#### **Matthew 6:1-4**

1 **“Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men,**  
to be seen by them. **Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in**  
**heaven.**

2 **Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet**  
**before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that**  
**they may have glory from men.** Assuredly, I say to you, they have their  
reward.

3 But **when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know**  
**what your right hand is doing,**

4 **that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.**

Charitable deeds (good works).

#### **Matthew 6:5-6**

5 **“And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.**

6 But you, **when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.**

Pray — privately.

#### **Matthew 6:16-18**

16 **“Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.**

17 But you, **when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face,**  
18 **so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.**

Fasting.

All are good. But can be done as mere religious acts — for show. Outward appearance.

They were putting on an image ... a religious image. Not real.

#### **Matthew 15:2-11**

2 **“Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders?** For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread.”

3 He answered and said to them, **“Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?”**

4 For God commanded, saying, Honor your father and your mother’; and, He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.’

5 But you say, 'Whoever says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God" —

6 then he need not honor his father or mother.' Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition.

7 **Hypocrites!** Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying:

8 **'These people draw near to Me with their mouth,**

**And honor Me with their lips,**

**But their heart is far from Me.**

9 **And in vain they worship Me,**

**Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'** "

10 When He had called the multitude to Himself, He said to them, "Hear and understand:

11 **Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.**"

They are religious. It is just lip service! God's not impressed.

### **Matthew 15:18**

18 But **those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man.**

It is the heart that matters!

The Pharisees looked the part. Religious appearance and some religious "practices".

But ... it was image. Not authentic. And they deceived themselves.

Our question is not do we "look the part" ... "talk the talk" of being a believer ... looking religious.

But are we authentic? Do we live it? We have to walk the walk!

### **1 John 2:1-6**

1 My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

2 And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.

3 **Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.**

4 He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

5 But **whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him.** By this we know that we are in Him.

6 **He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.**

If we are genuine. If we are authentic. We should be walking like Jesus. Period!

#### **James 1:19-22**

19 **So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath;**

20 **for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.**

21 **Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.**

22 But **be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.**

**Not hearers only — deceiving yourselves!!**

#### **James 1:23-27**

23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror;

24 for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.

25 But **he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.**

26 **If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless.**

27 **Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.**

Pure religion is doing — not just hearing ... or having an image ... or head knowledge.

**Romans 12:1**

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, **that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.**

**Romans 12:1 (THE MESSAGE BIBLE)**

1 So here's what I want you to do, **God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering.**

It might be easy for us to fall into a rut.

Having lukewarm lives ... putting on an appearance of religion ... but denying the power thereof? Denying God's influence in our lives.

God's looking for quality in us — a zeal ... enthusiasm — AUTHENTIC CHRISTIANS!!