

Introduction:

- It is obvious from the NT that Jesus was opposed directly by Satan. But the battle he continually fought was against a religious spirit particularly in the Pharisees and Sadducees.
- Religious spirit is a man-made effort that utilizes works to please God.
 - All religions in the world are based on religion/religious spirit, which is a man-made attempt to reach God.
 - Religion replaces a relationship with God.
- Religious Spirit
 - The Danger of a religious spirit
 - The Nature of a religious spirit
 - Warning signs of a religious spirit.
 - Living Free of a religious spirit.

I. Religious spirits keep men out of the kingdom

- A. The biggest danger of religious spirits is that; Religious spirits keep men out of the Kingdom. Matt 23:13-14 *"But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.* NKJV
1. The Kingdom is entered by faith and a religious spirit keeps men from walking in faith and forces them to be moved by works.
 2. Matt 5:20 *For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.* NKJV Their righteousness was works based.
- B. It is the strategy of the devil to keep us focused on the evil in and around our lives because he knows that what we behold we will become. 2 Cor 3:18.
- C. How he does this is by a religious spirit. This spirit is the counterfeit to the true love of God and true worship. It has done more damage to the church than anything else I can think of. So the biggest danger of the religious spirit is it keeps people out of the Kingdom.

II. The nature of a religious spirit

- A. A religious spirit is a demon which seeks to substitute religious activity for the power of the Holy Spirit in a believer's life.
1. 2 Tim 3:5-6 *"having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!"* NKJV
 2. Matt 16:6 *Then Jesus said to them, "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees."* NKJV Leaven does not add value to the bread it only inflates. In the church, a religious spirit does not add value it just inflates the

pride of man. Pride is one of the toughest strongholds to break through once it is established.

3. Legalism is not the answer to lawlessness.
- B. A religious spirit keeps us from hearing the voice of God by assuming we already know what God thinks. This delusion is the result of believing that God is just like us. We make God in our image.
 1. A religious spirit would have us believe that rebukes, exhortations, and words of correction are for other people not us.
 2. For example those of you who are already thinking about those who really need to hear this message, you are probably already infected.
 3. The term "fresh revelation" the accuser thinks that we are adding something to scripture. We are not adding, we are just "getting" understanding of the revelation of a passage from the Word of God.
 4. We need not be afraid of others in different camps. Those who are bound by a control spirit will have more faith in the devil to deceive them than they will have in the Holy Spirit to lead them into all truth. When we think we have it all, we are in trouble. Ps 119:160 "The SUM of thy word is truth."
- C. It is the nature of this spirit to see what is wrong with others, while not being able to see what is wrong in themselves.
 1. Matt 7:3-5 *And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye , but do not consider the plank in your own eye ? 4 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 ? 5 Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye , and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.* NKJV
 2. We see more of what is wrong in others and avoid correcting what is wrong in ourselves.
- D. Another deceptive side of this spirit is that it is founded upon zeal for God. Romans 10:2 *I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge.* NKJV
 1. The Pharisees prayed more, fasted more, studied more, and were more zealous for God than anyone and yet, they missed Jesus.
 - a) Saul of Tarsus was incredibly zealous for God while persecuting the church.
 - b) Jesus had no trouble with demons while he walked this earth but the zealous religious community killed him.
 2. Christian covenants "rule book" often puts us in bondage through guilt and pressure of counterfeit spiritual authority. We only have true spiritual authority to the degree that Jesus lives in us.
 - a) Acts 15:28-29 was the result of the first church's council meeting in trying to decide what to do with the Gentiles.

- E. A religious spirit builds its work on two foundations.
1. Fear—serve the Lord in order to gain approval. Many have zeal for the Lord in order to atone for their own shortcomings and sin.
 2. Pride—Idealism, a form of humanism. It has the appearance of only seeking the highest standard but in reality is an incredible enemy of true revelation and of true grace. It does not allow for the growing up into grace and wisdom, but attacks and destroys the foundation of those who are in pursuit of God's glory, but are not yet there.
 - a) It tries to impose standards on others that is beyond what God has required.
 - b) God may want us to pray two hours a day but He will just love you starting with 10 minutes.
 - c) In the church, idealism may express itself by looking for the perfect church and refuse to be a part of anything less.
 - (1) God wants us to have high hopes but the Holy Spirit as the "Helper" will always be looking for ways to help.
 - (2) Perfectionism is a result of this pride.
 3. When fear and pride combine, this foundation is highly toxic.
 4. It seeks to have us serve the Lord in order to gain His approval, rather than from a position of faith in what Jesus has done.
 5. Did you ever notice how often Jesus let the "boys", the 12, make mistakes in their 'on-the-job training.' He really did not care if they tripped as long as they got up!
- F. A religious spirit obscures the cross. Therefore it will put things between you (good people) and the cross.
1. It wants us to do a little bit more in order for us to be saved rather than fully trusting in the cross.
 2. When the cross gets obscured we begin backsliding.
 3. It seeks to get us to do good things and get our eyes off of the cross.

Conclusion:

- True freedom is that men conform to the image of God out of their hearts, and not out of constraints and pressures that force them to conform.
- True Freedom leads to True worship from the heart!