



THE LIFE OF
PAUL

FAMILY DEVOS

Good Works, Bad Hearts

Scripture: Acts 22:30-23:10

Memory Verse: 1 Samuel 16:7b

“For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”

For My Family:

In our last study, we saw Paul share his testimony with the Jewish crowd. This mob didn't like what Paul had to say, and so the next day the Roman commander brought Paul to trial before the Jewish religious leaders: the Pharisees and Sadducees. Now we often think of the Pharisees and Sadducees as the “bad guys” in Scripture, but this is not how the people in Paul's day viewed them. These religious leaders were seen as godly, spiritual men known for doing good works. However, as we will see in today's story, while these men seemed good on the outside, they were not so holy on the inside.

When Paul got to the trial, he was excited for the chance to defend himself and explain the Gospel to these important men, but as soon as he started talking, the high priest ordered someone to smack him in the face. Clearly these men didn't want to hear what he had to say! They wanted to get rid of this man who told people to follow Jesus rather than them. In response, Paul called the high priest a whitewashed wall—a wall that is beautiful on the outside, but hides a much darker reality inside. Basically, Paul was saying that even though the people thought these men were righteous, God saw the wickedness of their hearts.

Paul realized that these men weren't going to listen to what he had to say, so he started talking about something the Pharisees and Sadducees disagreed on: the resurrection. The Pharisees believed that people are resurrected and go to heaven or hell when they die, but the Sadducees didn't, and Paul's comments led to a huge fight! Paul had to be removed from that room and returned to where the soldiers were keeping him.

In the Gospels, Jesus also criticized the Pharisees and Sadducees. He called them hypocrites (people who pretend to be one thing but are really another) who did good deeds for the wrong reasons. They would pray long prayers, donate lots of money, and do good deeds not because they wanted to please God, but so that people would look at them and admire how holy they were (see Matthew 6:1-18). They were prideful men who cared more about what other people thought about them than what God thought about them.

The Pharisees and Sadducees should serve as a warning to all of us. While it's important to do good things, the reason we should do them is to please the Lord, not to look spiritual in front of other people. God doesn't just see our actions. He knows our hearts and sees our motivations for doing things. We should do good things, but we should do them because they are right and please God, not because they look good in front of other people.

Questions for Young Children:

What did most people think the Pharisees and Sadducees were like? What were they actually like?

What did the high priest tell someone to do to Paul?

Does God care about our actions, our hearts, or both?

Questions for Teens and Pre-teens:

Read Matthew 6:1-18. According to Jesus, what was the problem with what the Pharisees and Sadducees (whom He refers to as “hypocrites”) were doing? What should we do instead?

Have you ever done a good thing for a bad reason (for example, in order to make other people think you are godly)? Why is that wrong?