

OUR BIGGEST ENEMY

by W. R. Jones

A man may have many enemies on the outside, but his biggest enemy is on the inside. This enemy is called "self." Join me now in a consideration of this matter.

Recently, while vacationing in the beautiful Ozarks, I saw the following statement. It is an epilogue from "The Shepherd Of The Hills" drama which is performed there nightly. It stated: "We who build temples and churches, but will not worship in them. We buy Bibles, but will not read them. Believing in God, we do not fear Him. Acknowledging Christ, we neither follow nor obey Him. Only when we can no longer strive in the battle for material wealth do we strive to hear and see the things we so long refused to believe or consider. We consider the loss of a loved one as a tragedy, but is the end of life, as we know it, the end, or the beginning."

This quotation is very descriptive of a common problem among people. The problem is by no means new. The people who have been so aptly described are the people who play at religion. This is most attractive to many people because when a person plays at religion he can act it out pretty much as he pleases. He can start when he wants to, quit when he wants to, and skip when he pleases. Many people would not admit it, but it is the truth just the same. It is the convenient way and it pleases many folks. It doesn't suit God, but many men and women love it because it pleases self.

Jesus described such people when He said, "Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and {their} ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with {their} eyes, and hear with {their} ears, and should understand with {their} heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them" (Matthew 13:13-15).

Please observe; they heard, but never understood. They saw, but never perceived. They were not afflicted with a physical problem, but a spiritual one.

Now let us ask, what then, is the problem? The obstacle is "SELF." When people hear the Word of God and claim to believe, yet will not obey it, the difficulty is "self." They are not willing to surrender themselves under the rulership of Jesus Christ. They are afraid of "total commitment." Such people are determined to retain "rulership" over their lives. You see, as long as a man is ruling his own life he will allow himself to do pretty much what he pleases, but under the rule of Christ he will not be allowed to do so. Frail and faltering humans are not qualified to rule their own lives in matters pertaining to the soul. The prophet Jeremiah said it best. "O Lord, I know that the way of man {is} not in himself: {it is} not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jeremiah 10:23).

A doctor once told me if a physician is seriously ill and tries to treat himself, he has a fool

for a doctor. A lawyer told me if he were to get into serious trouble and try to represent himself, he would have a fool for a lawyer. Now, may I add, when one tries to run his own life without the help and counsel of God, he has a fool for a guide. Again, the big problem is "self"! People want to do what they want to do, when they want to do it, where they want to do it, and how they want to do it. With this "self" ego trip it is impossible for one to enter heaven.

In the conversion accounts of Saul of Tarsus, he humbled himself before the Lord and had but one thing to say, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" He was a penitent, confessing, believer and when he was told: "And now why tamest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16), he immediately "arose and was baptized (9:18). Saul gave up "self" rulership and accepted the rulership of Christ and for the rest of his life he followed that leadership. This made it possible for him to say, in the closing moments of his life, "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished {my} course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." (2 Timothy 4:6-8).

Jesus teaches us that we cannot serve two masters. "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." (Matthew 6:24). Do you serve the master called "SELF" or do you serve the Master called "JESUS?"