

The Bible accounts of the crucifixion show that Jesus suffered plenty for us. He was betrayed, bound, struck, spit on, beaten, blindfolded, mocked and humiliated. He was scourged with a whip until his back was only a broken, bloody mass of flesh. He then carried his heavy cross as long as he could. He was nailed to that cross and left there hanging only by the bones and flesh in his hands and feet, with his torn back against the wood; left there to die slowly in an agony beyond our imagination.

Remember that Christ didn't have to come and die for us. He is the Prince of the Universe; the Son of God; nothing was created without him. Why would he leave his heavenly home with thousands of angels attending him to come and spend 33 years in this mess? The answer is very simple. He loved us, so much that he was willing to bear the intense pain of suffering on the cross to keep us from going to hell!

But what have we done for him? Sure we come to church regularly, but that is nothing in comparison to what Jesus did for us. Many early Christians were eager to die for him; some us today balk at the idea of leading prayer or serving at the Lord's Table. Some even go to the extent of finding ways to get out of doing those things.

Jesus talks about phonies in the story of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:31, 32: "A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side." The priest and the Levite, the so-called "men of God" had no love for God in them. They were hollow: They were "Big man in the temple" on the outside, but absolutely nothing on the inside. To be praised by men is to enjoy only during a lifetime; to be praised by God is to enjoy a place in heaven with him forever.

Ananias and Sapphiras were also phonies. They came to Paul and said, "Look Paul, what we've done! We had all of this land. But we sold it and gave all of the money to you!" They didn't live long enough to enjoy the praises of men, which was all that they wanted. On the other hand, the widow with her two mites gave all that she could possible give, and didn't even say a word. She sought only favor with God.

How much do we today seek favor with man instead of with God? Are we Christians merely because it would be too much trouble not to be? Are we Christians only on the outside and hollow on the inside? Ananias and Sapphiras had no second chance, for the Lord killed them on the spot. Could you or I be considered phonies? If we are, then the Lord has blessed us with a second chance, for we are still alive and able to change our lives.

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