

# Did Not He Make You?

Job 40:1-14, Luke 11:37-54 (ESV)

June 12, 2005

“Now you Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. You fools! Did not he who made the outside make the inside also? But give as alms those things that are within, and behold, everything is clean for you.” Let us remember that such historical criticisms of the Pharisees have been remembered in the Scriptures not as condemnations of the Jews but as warnings for all the generations of Christians who have read this, who are reading this, or who ever will read this, including even us. That is to say, this warning and this exhortation are for us, here and now.

“You...cleanse the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. You fools! Did not he who made the outside make the inside also? But give as alms those things that are within, and behold, everything is clean for you.” Let us also remember that so far in our reading of the Gospel according to Luke we have found it to function as a catechism, a question and answer teaching device intended to communicate the gospel and to explicate the Christian faith, in order that we might have certainty concerning the things we have been taught (Luke 1:4). That is to say, the questions in the text have almost always pointed us to the major affirmations of the text. And this is the only question in today’s reading from Luke: “Did not he who made the outside make the inside also?”

The first and most obvious point being made here is that the interior life is as important as the exterior life, that the spiritual is as important as the bodily, and that faith is as important as obedience. In fact, even to say it this way may overstate the distinctions, for we cannot have the interior life without the exterior life, we cannot have the spiritual without the bodily, and we cannot have faith without obedience. We shall return to that in a moment. For now, in a world in which we are tempted to emphasize the exterior life more than the interior life, to value the bodily more than the spiritual, and to champion action more than faith, the first and most obvious point which Jesus is making to us here is that the interior life is at least as important as the exterior life, that the spiritual is at least as important as the bodily, and that faith is at least as important as obedience. “Did not he who made the outside make the inside also?” Well, yes, he did. So we need to pay attention to the inside, also. The Christian life includes at least something of the interior, of the spiritual, and of faith. Perhaps we should take these up one at a time.

The interior life is at least as important as the exterior life. That is to say, the Christian life is more than exterior behavior. It includes exterior behavior, but it goes beyond that. In addition to coming to church, we are actually to worship God Almighty. In addition to confessing our sins, we are to repent of our sins. In addition to reading the Bible, we are inwardly to absorb and digest it. In addition to giving of our treasures, we are to give of our very selves. In addition to feeding the hungry, we are actually to love the hungry. In addition to housing the homeless, we are actually to love the homeless. In addition to welcoming the stranger, we are actually to love the stranger. In addition to sponsoring the refugee, we are actually to love the refugee. In addition to praying for our enemy, we are actually to love our enemy. To have the outward alone, without the inner reality, would be a sham. And there are a lot of shams in the world. We do not want any here in church. So, for the Christian life, the interior life is at least as important as the exterior life.

Also, the spiritual is at least as important as the bodily. Every day of the week, and every Sunday morning, I see people walking and running as I come to church. They are not going anywhere, of course. They are walking or running in circles, large or small, in order to get exercise. Walking and running are good in and of themselves. I need to do more of that myself. But the zeal, the effort, and the dedication which I see poured into them do raise certain questions. Do we pray as much as we exercise, minute for minute and hour for hour? Do we worship God as much as we exercise, week in and week out, year after year? Do we even read the Bible as much as we exercise, listening to the word of the living God and being shaped on that anvil as much as we try to sculpt our bodies? For the Christian life, the spiritual is at least as important as the bodily. If we know that we need to exercise our hearts and lungs, our arms and legs, and we do need to do that, then it is important for us to realize that we need to exercise our hearts and souls also, as well as our minds and spirits.

And faith is at least as important as obedience. Here we come to the gist of it all. Jesus was speaking then to a group of people who emphasized outward, visible obedience more than inner faith. We may or may not think that that is our problem, but the tendency toward attempting self-justification runs very deep in the human race. So we would do well to appreciate this distinction and to learn this lesson. After all, justification comes from God, not from our own efforts. When we think about obedience, we think about the law of God that is to be obeyed. The law of God is summarized in the Ten Commandments. That is to say, the Ten Commandments express the will of God for the people of God. Everything they say to do is very good. But one of the problems that the people of God frequently have is the assumption that we can obey and fulfill the will of God without God's help. But if we were good enough to do that, we would not need to be saved by Jesus

Christ. Think about it. If we were good enough to obey the will of God, we would not need to be saved by Jesus Christ.

Since we do need to be saved by Jesus Christ, since he has already come and died on our behalf, since he has provided for the forgiveness of our sin, it should be clear that we are not good enough to obey and fulfill the will of God without God's help. We need God's help. So, in addition to our efforts at outward obedience, we need that inner assurance of our forgiveness in Christ, that confidence in the goodness of God toward us, sealed upon our hearts by the Holy Spirit. That is to say, we need grace, and we need faith. Jesus said, "Give as alms those things that are within, and behold, everything is clean for you." Yield up your inner faith to God, and only then will your outer obedience be correct, too. So, the first and most obvious point being made here is that the interior life is as important as the exterior life, that the spiritual is as important as the bodily, and that faith is as important as obedience. But that is not the only point.

A second and less obvious point being made here, in the very presupposition of the question, is that the exterior life is still important, the bodily is still important, and that obedience is still important. To emphasize the interior, the spiritual, and faith is not to belittle the exterior, the bodily, and obedience. Quite the opposite, the very way the question is phrased maintains an emphasis upon these. "Did not he who made the outside make the inside also?" In a way, this is a secondary emphasis of this text, but it is an important one. Jesus never said not to be obedient. He said to have an inner faith to match and undergird the outward obedience. So, yes, worship God, pray, and love your enemy, and continue to do so within the outward context of coming to church, giving our tithes and alms, and feeding the hungry.

As Jesus said to the Pharisees, "You tithe mint and rue and every herb, and neglect justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others." He did not tell them to promote justice and the love of God instead of tithing. Tithing was not a problem in and of itself. The problem was that they wanted to stop at tithing and not give their hearts to God, also. So, Jesus tells us to promote justice and the love of God in addition to tithing. That makes a big difference. So, a second point is that the exterior life is still important, the bodily is still important, and obedience is still important.

A third and deeper point being made here in the conjunction of the outside and the inside is that God made both the exterior and the interior, that God made both the physical and the spiritual, and that God calls for both obedience and faith. As we said earlier, even to contrast these may overstate the distinctions, for we cannot have the interior life without the exterior life, we cannot have the spiritual without the bodily, and we cannot have faith without obedience. "Did not he who made the outside make the inside also?" Well, yes, he did. But the significance of

this is not that he made the inside instead of the outside. The significance of this is that he made both. Perhaps we could combine both the presupposition and the main part of the question into a single question: Did not he make you, inside and out, body and soul? Yes, he did. That is to say, God is our Creator. God is our Father. God is not a remote and arbitrary lawgiver. God is not a distant and angry judge. God is the One who made us, inside and out, for himself, for his own good pleasure, that we might forever know, love, and enjoy him.

The upshot of this third point is that while God does not want obedience without faith, neither does he want faith without obedience. There is one God. He has made us as unified human beings. And we want both faith and obedience from us. In fact, the two are even closer than that. Faith is obedience. The first thing God wants from us is for us to believe in him and in his goodness toward us, embodied and revealed in Jesus Christ. To believe in him is to obey this call to faith. At the same time, obedience flows out of faith. If outer action apart from the love of God is not and cannot be pleasing, outer action flowing from the love of God is obedience as an expression of faith. Indeed, faith leads to obedience. If there were no obedience, the question would have to be asked as to whether there is any faith. The two go together, and God is the God of both.

The fourth and final point being made here, perhaps somewhat of an abstraction from the other three but actually the great truth underlying them all, is that it is God with whom we have to do. What this meant for the Pharisees then was that it was not only the law with which they had to do but also the very giver of the law with whom they had to do. That was far more important. So also for us, in all of life, it is God with whom we have to do. In the exterior life as well as the interior, in the bodily as well as the spiritual, in matters of obedience as well as matters of faith, it is God with whom we have to do. "Did not he who made the outside make the inside also?" Did not he make you? Well, yes, he did. In all of life, it is God with whom we have to do.

We may think we are dealing with a rude neighbor. It is God with whom we have to do. We may think we are dealing with a hurricane. It is God with whom we have to do. We may think we are dealing with disease, decay, decline, and death. It is God with whom we have to do. We may think we are dealing with an enemy. It is God with whom we have to do. We may think we are dealing with a beloved family member. It is God with whom we have to do. In all of life, it is God with whom we have to do. No matter what the presenting realities, no matter what our supposed accomplishments, no matter what struggles we have or hardships we endure, the great truth behind them all, the liberating truth of our lives, is that in all of life, it is God with whom we have to do.

This is what Job learned the hard way. Having lost almost everything, he demanded his day in court. He got it. And as Job finally stood before God Almighty, he fell silent. All of his self-justification fell away. He realized as never before that it was God with whom he had to do. It was not just his own suffering with which he had to do, as terrible as it was. It was God with whom he had to do. That changed everything. Job's horrible losses are remembered for us in hope that we might learn his lesson easier and earlier. And I submit to you that the living Lord Jesus Christ continues to teach us the same lesson today about God his Father. Did not he make you? Is it not the case that in all things we are dealing with him?

John Calvin, one of the leading Reformers of the 1500s, taught this same lesson throughout his life. He wrote in a commentary on this very passage from Luke that man's chief error is failing to realize that we have to do with God.<sup>1</sup> What this means for us is that in our faith, in our obedience, in our worship, and in our life, it is God with whom we have to do. In the routine and in the spectacular, in the good and in the bad, in what sustains us and in what crushes us, it is God with whom we have to do. To remember this, to hold this close, and to keep this perspective on life is a powerful thing. Calvin also wrote of this reality more generally in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. "Therefore no one will weigh God's providence properly and profitably but him who considers that his business is with his Maker and the Framer of the universe, and with becoming humility submits himself to fear and reverence."<sup>2</sup> "Accordingly, the Christian must surely be so disposed and minded that he feels within himself it is with God he has to deal throughout his life."<sup>3</sup>

So, the interior life is as important as the exterior life, the spiritual is as important as the bodily, and faith is as important as obedience. At the same time, the exterior life is still important, the bodily is still important, and obedience is still important. Indeed, God made both the exterior and the interior, God made both the

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<sup>1</sup>John Calvin, *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries*, eds. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance, vol. 2: *A Harmony of the Gospels: Matthew, Mark and Luke, Vol. I*, trans. A. W. Morrison (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), 2:101.

<sup>2</sup>John Calvin, *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. from the 1559 Latin ed. by Ford Lewis Battles, 2 vols., in *Library of Christian Classics*, ed. John T. McNeill (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), cited by book, chapter, section, and, in parentheses, volume and page, 1.17.2 (1.212).

<sup>3</sup>Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.7.2 (1.691).

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physical and the spiritual, and God calls for both obedience and faith. So in all of life, it is God with whom we have to do. “You...cleanse the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. You fools! Did not he who made the outside make the inside also? But give as alms those things that are within, and behold, everything is clean for you.”

*To God be the glory forever and ever! Amen.*

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