

ACCIDENTAL
PHARISEES

Week 6 – Idolizing the Past

Accidental Pharisees

Idolizing the Past

Accidental Pharisees Tend to...

- Compare themselves with others in a way that puffs up their pride
- Suffer from “log-eye” disease
- Use the Bible to show off our knowledge or intellectual prowess
- Raise the bar to keep the riff-raff out

Accidental Pharisees Tend to...

- Resort to “Litmus Test” Christianity to decide who is in and who is out (tribalism)
- Promote a “Gold Package” Christianity (superiority)
- Suffers from a severe lack of mercy

Rose Coloured Glasses



*How do we view the past through
rose-colored glasses?*

Consequences of Wearing Rose-Colored Glasses

The Good

- It can feed gratitude
- We can celebrate genuinely good things from the past
- Protects us from dwelling on negative aspects of our past

The Bad

- Can blind us to the beauties of the present
- Can distort reality
- Can leave us with an unholy dissatisfaction

“They can leave us with an unholy dissatisfaction, where every glass is half empty and our dreams of the future are nothing but a longing for a nonexistent past.”

(Osborne, *Accidental Pharisees*, p. 113-114)

Say not, "Why were the former days better than these?" For it is not from wisdom that you ask this. (Ecclesiastes 7:10 ESV)

In the day of prosperity be joyful, and in the day of adversity consider: God has made the one as well as the other, so that man may not find out anything that will be after him. (Ecclesiastes 7:14 ESV)

*So is it wrong to be “idealistic?”
Why or why not?*

Consequences of Idealism

The Good

- Fuels change & growth
- Helps dreams become reality
- Inspires people to take action
- Promotes what is good & possible

The Bad

- Trap of “never enough”
- Trap of perpetual disappointment
- Can become cynical
- Inspires harsh criticism
- Can lead to pride & arrogance.

“Cynicism is idealism on steroids. It has an eagle’s eye for what is wrong and a bat’s blindness for what is praiseworthy...”

Today’s spiritual elite, “...are masters at finding fault, especially with their three favorite whipping boys – the church, its leaders, and current culture.”

(Osborne, *Accidental Pharisees*, p. 115)

Three Common Targets

- 1.The Church
- 2.The Church's Leaders
- 3.The Culture

Which one of these are you most likely to criticize & why?

THE
GOOD OLD
DAYS

I miss life when my only problem was this:



How do we idolize/ idealize the church, its leaders, or the culture of former days?

*But... the good old days weren't
always or only good.*

Nostalgic person:

"I wish we can go
back to the good ol' days!"

Literally every historian:



**REMEMBER THE GOOD
OLD DAYS WHEN PEOPLE
WEREN'T GLUED TO THEIR PHONES!**



THE 50'S LOOKED FUN



THE "GOOD OL' DAYS"

The “Good” Old Days

The Church	The Church's Leaders	The Culture
We are selective with our reading of the book of Acts (e.g. Acts 2:42-47)	Peter was hypocritical (Gal. 2), Paul's less than favorable treatment of John Mark (Acts 13), etc.	Roman empire values, pluralistic society, loyalty to emperor, mistreatment of lower class.
We forget how broken Paul's churches were (e.g. Corinth, Galatia, etc.)	John Calvin allowed his followers to torture & kill an opponent who argued against the Trinity & infant baptism.	Pick a century... racism, division, oppression, wars, injustice, immorality.
Abuses & Flaws of the church over 2,000 years of history (hierarchy, division, indulgences, racism, etc.)	John Wesley & A.W. Tozer had horrendous marriages	American history is also littered with the same kind of issues.

“Abraham was a liar, Moses a murderer, David an adulterer, and Peter a denier. But a strange thing happens with the passage of time. The farther removed we get from the stick, the more likely we are to credit the stick (rather than the divine artist) as the reason for the straight line. And the closer we are to a crooked stick, the harder it is to see the straight line being drawn.”

(Osborne, *Accidental Pharisees*, p. 117)

“All of this gives me great pause. It tempers my tendency to catastrophize the future. It makes me slow to join the chorus of people who claim the sky is falling. It gives me hope that perhaps the imperfect church, its leaders, and the culture of my day may one day be looked back upon with the fondness reserved for the good old days.”

(Osborne, *Accidental Pharisees*, p. 120)

*So...how should we humbly & wisely
confront or critique issues of our day
without becoming an Accidental
Pharisee?*

Paul's Example Towards Corinthians

1. He found the good & praised it (1 Cor. 1:1-9)
2. He spoke directly to those he was concerned about
3. He spoke the truth in love (1 Cor. 4:14; 2 Cor. 2:4; 6:13)

Three Temptations to Avoid

1. To think that the sins and failings today are something new and rare.
2. To lash out in anger and disgust
3. To attempt to help out Jesus by yanking out all the weeds that we see growing up among the wheat.

[24] He put another parable before them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, [25] but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. [26] So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. [27] And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, ‘Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?’

(Matthew 13:24–30 ESV)

[28] He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' So the servants said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?' [29] But he said, 'No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. [30] Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, "Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn."'"

(Matthew 13:24–30 ESV)

Which, if any, of these three are you most susceptible to? Why?