



TAKE heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. ² Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. ³ But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: ⁴ That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly. ⁵ And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. ⁶ But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. ⁷ But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. ⁸ Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. (Matt 6:1-8)

We consider the Poinsetta to be a beautiful flower of Christmas with its bright crimson bracts and brilliant green leaves. But the flower we presume to adore is not a flower at all. It is an impostor! It looks like a flower, but the crimson petals are not petals of a flower at all, but crimson leaves that give the appearance of a flower. Its leaves are mildly toxic instead of emitting a pleasant fragrances such as a rose does.

Christians of our day are attracted to churches that are much like the Poinsetta – their worship and prayer is more contrived to entertain and attract attention than to worship and glorify God. They employ ‘market research’ to determine what to preach

and what not to preach. Their members compare to the false flower of the poinsettia – they look like Christians, but have no pleasant savor to define them as Christians. They have adopted the unworldly music of the world whose lyrics are not biblical, but manmade to generate EMOTION. Their worship practices are man-centered with entertainers and limp-wristed ministers at the center of focus, and the Lord Jesus Christ rarely mentioned along with His Holy Word.

The Poinsetta Christian, like the Poinsetta plant, cultivates their physical features and quench any holiness that might attempt to break through. They are like silver-plated spoons whose true metal will wear through with time and service. But a true Christian is sterling all of the way through.

Christ has warned us about judging by appearances. *Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.* (John 7:24) Unnoticed by most modern professors is the last clause of this sentence in which Christ uttered these words on judgment. That clause declares that we do have a responsibility to judge, but we must judge with RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT. What is righteous judgment? It is judgment that follows the very words of God. If we declare practicing homosexuals to be sinners, that is righteous judgment because it is God's judgment and not our own. The notion that we cannot judge is a great deception that disarms the church from enforcing standards of dress and behavior. Church discipline thereby is made sterile.

The Rose of Sharon is a simple little flower that grows wild across the Jordan Valley. It grows in the wilderness as well as beside the trafficked byways. It represents Jesus Christ in its inward nature. *I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.* (Song 2:1) It is most often presented in blooms of pure white, though some are bright blue. It is the national flower of the Republic of Korea as well. What a happy nation to have such a national symbol! Since the resemblance to the father should appear in the features of the children, so should the Christian bear a likeness to their namesake in Christ! So we should be like Rose of Sharon Christians. We should sprinkle across the landscape our flowers of beauty and humility. The Rose of Sharon is a true flower and no pretender. You will not find the Rose of Sharon depicted widely in holiday commercials or on the tables of fine homes.

I will list a few of the characteristics of the Rose of Sharon Christian:

1. This kind of Christian places the will of the Father above every earthly consideration, trusting in God to supply all of his needs: *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.* (Matt 6:33)
2. This kind of Christian is not weighed down with worldly woes and worries: *Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.* (Matt 6:34) He does not worry about surpassing his neighbors in possessions or apparel. These are the concerns of the hypocrites.
3. This Christian looks to the inward self, rather than the outward sins of others, in making his lifestyle. *But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.* (1 Cor 9:27)
4. He looks upon the sins of self with the eyes of an eagle, and at the sins of others with the eyes of a mole – not the other way around. The only true character that we can know with certainty is that unseen character of self. No man can know with certainty the heart of another. *While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.* (2 Cor 4:18)

5. Paul says of Abraham: *For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.* (Heb 11:10) He says that we, too, are pilgrims who seek a city “not made with hands.” A pilgrim does not travel burdened with nonessentials. He travels light and does not make himself at home in the way. His purchase is on high and not on the wilderness trail. Of such, Paul says, *These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.* (Heb 11:13-16)
6. The treasured riches of the Rose of Sharon Christian is their fixation on the treasures they have stored beyond the Gates of Splendor. *If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.* (Col 3:1-4)
7. The Rose of Sharon Christian prays to God the Father, and not for the attention of others, or with HIMSELF like a Pharisee! *Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.* (Luke 18:10-14) Would we not rather be the humble publican instead of the proud and hypocritical Pharisee? The Rose of Sharon is found where the Living Rose of Sharon is found, and they walk with God: *And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters.* (Gen 5:22)

It is my fervent hope that the Reader will look at these points and take a careful and discreet look inward and see which Christian best describes him described above. I do not like what I see in my own heart, and pray God to sanctify me fully for His Name’s Sake. What do YOU see?