

Somebody tainted the hash at the school picnic. No one ever found out who did it. But the concoction turned shouts of happiness into groans of agony. The tainted hash didn't kill anyone, although it certainly made some people miserable for a while. But it did make a new man out of Uncle Ben Elfeiser.

You see, it was this way. Uncle Ben was at the picnic. But he didn't eat any of the hash, so he didn't get sick. A few weeks later, Uncle Ben rode with a friend to Pine Hollow. At the edge of town they stopped for a snack. While eating at the outside table, Uncle Ben launched into his favorite topic—religion. Not that Uncle Ben was a church-going person; quite the contrary. He wouldn't put a foot inside a church. And Uncle Ben wasn't bashful about telling people why. "Too many people in the church are phonies," he declared bitterly. "Oh, they're pious enough in the way they talk. But that's only Sunday prattle; they don't live it. And if they are Christians, I'm not having anything to do with their religion."

His eyes blazed as he waited for a reply. But his friend only chuckled and said, "Wasn't that strange about that hash at the school picnic?" Uncle Ben's scowl turned into cool surprise. "What's the school picnic have to do with phony Christians?" he asked.

"Well . . ."

"Well-what?" Uncle Ben cut in.

"Well," said his friend slowly, "since that picnic turned out so awful, I don't think I'll ever go to another picnic."

Uncle Ben looked at the ground. After a long pause, he murmured, "Perhaps my reasons are childish. Things look different when you compare church with school picnics and hash."

That day under the maple tree, Uncle Ben admitted he was wrong. He dropped his defenses and got serious about his spiritual hunger.

A month later he turned his life over to the Master. He decided not to be lost over a mess of "tainted hash" in the church.

Like Uncle Ben, you may be blustering your way to Hell over tainted hash. You come down hard on hypocrites, on those who say, but do not do.

What makes you so touchy on this point anyway?

The Bible bluntly states, "Thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things" (Romans 2:1).

Don't let a hypocrite make your choice for you.

So, watch your accusations. The term hypocrite boomerangs. Behind the "hash screen" lies the real reason for rejecting God and His people.

Admit your real problem: a bitter root of self-rule under your argumentative front. Turn your life over to the Master—Jesus Christ. Then as a part of His group, and with His Spirit inside you, you will be better able to deal with the hash.

Christian Liberty—or Death?

Visitors to the ancient Castle of Chillon on an island in Lake Geneva tell of one of its gruesome features. The castle had one pitch-dark corridor. Prisoners were dragged from their dungeons to its entrance. There the guards declared them free. But as the prisoners rushed toward liberty, they dropped into a shaft in the floor and fell to their deaths in the black waters of a lake below.

This cruel deception was not new. The devil has used the trick since ancient times. In fact, he invented the treachery. Satan first makes you a prisoner so that he can offer you liberty. He wears you down with discouragement and dampens your first love. Your joy in doing God's will cools into slavish duty.

Then he steps to your side and whispers, "Hath God said?" (Genesis 3:1). He points away from the will of God, and even quotes the Bible to you: "All things are lawful" (1 Corinthians 6:12; 10:23). "Ye have been called unto liberty" (Galatians 5:13).

Of course, he doesn't finish the quotes: "But all things are not expedient" (1 Corinthians 6:12). "But all things edify not" (1 Corinthians 10:23). "Only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh" (Galatians 5:13).

Beware! The devil's corridor to freedom has a death shaft. "He that is perverse in his ways shall fall at once" (Proverbs 28:18).

They promise you freedom, but . . .

Liberty lies only in the will of God. "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." (John 8:36).

Stir up a glowing love for truth by repenting, turning to Jesus, and obeying His Spirit. He will give you a new fervor for God and His way that will break your chains. He will release you into exciting new dimensions of freedom and life in Him.

Fix Your Aim on Jesus Christ

LOOK AWAY from the faults of others.

"They measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise" (2 Corinthians 10:12).

"There is a way that seemeth right unto a man; but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 16:25).

LOOK WITHIN yourself and truthfully confess your condition before God.

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way" (Isaiah 53:6).

"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3:19).

LOOK UP to Jesus, "the bright and morning star," for a life perspective that reaches beyond the stars.

"Every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life" (John 6:40).

"This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3).

"Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8).

LOOK INTO God's Word to learn God's will for you every day.

There we see Jesus, who gave "us an example, that ye should follow his steps" (1 Peter 2:21).

"For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Romans 15:4).

Then, "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory" (Colossians 3:4).