

Don't be a Hypocritical Christian

Prayer

Let me start with a borrowed illustration:

Some years ago a remarkable picture was exhibited in London. As you looked at it from a distance, you seemed to see a monk engaged in prayer, his hands clasped, his head bowed. As you came nearer, however, and examined the painting more closely, you saw that in reality he was squeezing a lemon into a punch bowl!

What a picture that is of the human heart! Superficially examined, it is thought to be the seat of all that is good and noble and pleasing in a man; whereas in reality, until regenerated by the Holy Ghost, it is the seat of all corruption.

"This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light."

Perception is good but intention is revealed under close examination.

Who likes to be called a hypocrite? Not Me...

What does that even mean to be a hypocrite?

It is a person who claims or pretends to have certain beliefs about what is right but who behaves in a way that disagrees with those beliefs

Full Definition of HYPOCRITE

- 1:** a person who puts on a false appearance of virtue or religion
- 2:** a person who acts in contradiction to his or her stated beliefs or feelings

I would go even further to say that a hypocrite is essentially an actor. They are a person who surrounds themselves with a behavioural shell. They know all the right words to say. Essentially a hypocrite tries to make others believe that they are more spiritual than they are. There are many reasons for this but chief among them are pride and fear.

I remember a story about Robert Redford who was walking one day through a hotel lobby. A woman saw him and followed him to the elevator. "Are you the real Robert Redford?" she asked him with great excitement. As the doors of the elevator closed, he replied, "Only when I am alone!"

Makes a point doesn't it...

When we look at the story of Barnabus in Acts 4:32-37 we see the selfless act of Barnabus, this apostle did what he said he would do...

"All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need.

Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means "son of encouragement"), sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet."

Here we see a selfless act for the right reasons, but when we look at Ananias and Sapphira we see an example of a hypocritical act of lying in Acts 5:1-11

Ananias and Sapphira

Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. With his wife's full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles' feet.

Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? ⁴ Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied just to human beings but to God."

When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened. ⁶ Then some young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him.

About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. Peter asked her, "Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?"

"Yes," she said, "that is the price."

Peter said to her, "How could you conspire to test the Spirit of the Lord? Listen! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also."

At that moment she fell down at his feet and died. Then the young men came in and, finding her dead, carried her out and buried her beside her husband. Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events.

Hypocrites in the church

Many Churches today have hypocrites, mostly because the grace of Christ has deferred punishment for this serious sin; so people are deceived into believing that they can get away with it.

In short, a hypocrite is a person who is not his or herself on Sunday morning, but rather a person who is playing a role. A hypocrite is a person who hides the things they do, because they would be ashamed of others finding out about the things they hide. Ananias and Sapphira promised one thing and did another. Their promise on the surface looked good, it concealed what was happening underneath. After all they are doing something, right? Isn't that good enough, but they lied to the Holy Spirit and wound up with the consequences. The wages of sin is always death.

Let's be clear here the sin was not that they had sold their property and only given part of what was promised to the church. No what they had done was that they conspired to deceive others and the church into believing that they had given the whole amount. In other words they wanted everyone to believe that they were as spiritual and selfless as Barnabas. In Acts chapter 5 and verse 4 Peter even makes it plain that it would have been far better for them to have sold their property and not given anything to the church, than to lie to God.

Many times I have gone into churches and found real people who love God and are on the right track. I felt welcome and I felt God's love.

So many other times I have gone into churches and the people are not real...

Our culture has caused us to place shells or personas around ourselves to blend in. Here is a litmus test. Let's say you like to ride motorcycles and are part of a bike group, when you go there, do you put on the role of a "biker" use the biker talk, use coarse or abrasive language to be accepted or are you yourself? When you go to a hockey game, is your language and behaviour the same as in church Sunday morning? If you are with your non-saved friends are you a different person?

So many times, in counselling people are putting up fronts of who they are and then are astonished when their relationships fall apart.

I was thinking about hypocritical behaviour...

If you are coming into church on Sunday morning, saying "Praise the Lord", "Glory to God", "Halleluiah" and "Amen" and on Friday your speech contains foul language, sexual innuendo and crude remarks, you might be a hypocrite.

If you are coming to church on Sunday wearing a Christian themed t-shirt and a t-shirt with a sexual or satanic reference on Monday, you might be a hypocrite.

If you are expounding the virtues of your wife on Sunday morning and sleeping with your secretary on Saturday night, you might be a hypocrite

If you ask people how they are but don't really care, you might be a hypocrite

If you pass by a hungry kid on the street and don't help and come to church on Sunday morning and sing of the love of God, you might be a hypocrite

If the pastor is coming over for dinner and you have a to do item saying something like put out the Christian books and dust the bibles, you might be a hypocrite

People that act inconsistently by behaving differently in different environments. Many times they are adapting because they are afraid that they will not be accepted if they show who they really are. Because of this they put up shells to protect themselves. They watch and learn the behaviours of the others in the group and they emulate those behaviours. Peer pressure isn't just for school kids...

How many marriages fall apart, because once the infatuation dies down and the shells of persona fall away, the people don't know or maybe even like the person they have pledged to spend the rest of their life with?

Have you ever done this?

Have you ever been guilty of trying to impress others just to fit in? Or have you ever played a righteous role to impress other people with your unswerving devotion to Christ?

i don't mean to be hard here, just introspective. My point is not to condemn here, but to convict. Sermons are delivered to bring about change, if it is needed...

Before we look at hypocrisy in detail let me say this:

"Be Bold, Be Strong, Be Real, Be Saved"

Want a real life example of hypocrisy in action?:

This is a quote from a congressman addressing House of Representatives: "Never before have I heard such ill-informed, wimpy, back-stabbing drivel as that just uttered by my respected colleague, the distinguished gentleman from Ohio."

Here is another real life example:

During one of his political campaigns, a delegation called on Theodore Roosevelt at his home in Oyster Bay, Long Island. The President met them with his coat off and his sleeves rolled up.

"Ah, gentlemen," he said, "come down to the barn and we will talk while I do some work."

At the barn, Roosevelt picked up a pitchfork and looked around for the hay. Then he called out, "John, where's all the hay?"

"Sorry, sir," John called down from the hayloft. "I ain't had time to toss it back down again after you pitched it up while the Iowa folks were here."

Our Lord Jesus always hit Hypocrisy hard. He did not allow it to go unchallenged. For example let's look at Matthew 23

Matthew 23

Amplified Bible (AMP)

23 Then Jesus said to the multitudes and to His disciples,

² The scribes and Pharisees sit on Moses' seat [of authority].

³ So observe and practice all they tell you; but do not do what they do, for they preach, but do not practice.

⁴ They tie up heavy loads, hard to bear, and place them on men's shoulders, but they themselves will not lift a finger to help bear them.

⁵ They do all their works to be seen of men; for they make wide their phylacteries (small cases enclosing certain Scripture passages, worn during prayer on the left arm and forehead) and make long their fringes [worn by all male Israelites, according to the command].

⁶ And they take pleasure in and [thus] love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues,

⁷ And to be greeted with honor in the marketplaces and to have people call them rabbi.

⁸ But you are not to be called rabbi (teacher), for you have one Teacher and you are all brothers.

⁹ And do not call anyone [in the church] on earth father, for you have one Father, Who is in heaven.

¹⁰ And you must not be called masters (leaders), for you have one Master (Leader), the Christ.

¹¹ He who is greatest among you shall be your servant.

¹² Whoever exalts himself [with haughtiness and empty pride] shall be humbled (brought low), and whoever humbles himself [whoever has a modest opinion of himself and behaves accordingly] shall be raised to honor.

¹³ But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, pretenders (hypocrites)! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in men's faces; for you neither enter yourselves, nor do you allow those who are about to go in to do so.

¹⁴ Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, pretenders (hypocrites)! For you swallow up widows' houses and for a pretense to cover it up make long prayers; therefore you will receive the greater condemnation and the heavier sentence.

¹⁵ Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, pretenders (hypocrites)! For you travel over sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes one [a proselyte], you make him doubly as much a child of hell (Gehenna) as you are.

¹⁶ Woe to you, blind guides, who say, If anyone swears by the sanctuary of the temple, it is nothing; but if anyone swears by the gold of the sanctuary, he is a debtor [bound by his oath].

¹⁷ You blind fools! For which is greater: the gold, or the sanctuary of the temple that has made the gold sacred?

¹⁸ You say too, Whoever swears by the altar is not duty bound; but whoever swears by the offering on the altar, his oath is binding.

¹⁹ You blind men! Which is greater: the gift, or the altar which makes the gift sacred?

²⁰ So whoever swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it.

²¹ And he who swears by the sanctuary of the temple swears by it and by Him Who dwells in it.

²² And whoever swears by heaven swears by the throne of God and by Him Who sits upon it.

²³ Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, pretenders (hypocrites)! For you give a tenth of your mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected and omitted the weightier (more important) matters of the Law—right and justice and mercy and fidelity. These you ought [particularly] to have done, without neglecting the others.

²⁴ You blind guides, filtering out a gnat and gulping down a camel!

²⁵ Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, pretenders (hypocrites)! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the plate, but within they are full of extortion (prey, spoil, plunder) and grasping self-indulgence.

²⁶ You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and of the plate, so that the outside may be clean also.

²⁷ Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, pretenders (hypocrites)! For you are like tombs that have been whitewashed, which look beautiful on the outside but inside are full of dead men's bones and everything impure.

²⁸ Just so, you also outwardly seem to people to be just and upright but inside you are full of pretense and lawlessness and iniquity.

²⁹ Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, pretenders (hypocrites)! For you build tombs for the prophets and decorate the monuments of the righteous,

³⁰ Saying, If we had lived in the days of our forefathers, we would not have aided them in shedding the blood of the prophets.

³¹ Thus you are testifying against yourselves that you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets.

³² Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers' sins to the brim [so that nothing may be wanting to a full measure].

³³ You serpents! You spawn of vipers! How can you escape the penalty to be suffered in hell (Gehenna)?

To sum up what this means; woe to you, if you:

- Love exercising Authority
- Don't practice what you preach
- Delegate but never do
- Do works just to be seen
- Seek glory for yourself
- Don't enter the kingdom so you prevent others
- Take from the poor for self gain
- Make disciples of your wicked practices
- Value stuff not God
- Focus on minor details and miss the big picture
- Play a righteous role with no real inner change
- Don't take accountability for your actions

The painful truth

we have talked about perception and our desire to change it... One of the most common complaints against the church today is that we are hypocrites.

Did you know that this is the single greatest reason for atheism today? That's right, Christians who speak the name of Jesus on Sunday but Monday to Saturday they deny the Lord Jesus in the example of their lives. People are watching us. They are hungry for a difference. They want to see some hope and real change. We are the light of the world! Do we want the world to see us as a repressed bunch of neurotics who say sorry to Jesus on Sunday, for what we do Monday to

Saturday? Or worse yet put on our royal robes and play Cleopatra, - cause' the Lord knows you could be the queen of denial.

I am not saying that WE are hypocrites. I do think its healthy to examine our motivations. Do we want to be real Christians or not? The world is noticing what the church is doing. It is time to put up or shut up! If Christians are phoney, what message do you think the world will get?

I can't remember where I read it but, I think it was in a sermon I read a while ago, the author was speaking about hypocrisy and it really stuck with me. It went something like this:

"In my church I have a confused man and woman. In my office the other day they said that they believed in the bible - but they never read it. they went on to say that they said that they thought well of the church - but they hardly ever attended. They professed that people should always be honest and respect God in matters of money - but they have never tithed. They said that people really need the love of the Lord - yet they have never visited anyone. They said that the church should minister to more people - but they have never lifted a hand to help. They said that the church is administered poorly - but they never participate. Worst of all they claim that prayer changes things - but they never show up to pray. They believe they are Christians, how do I bring a sense of self-awareness to this couple as I do not want to hurt them. I simply want them to realize their hypocrisy."

Hypocrisy always has its root in Pride. Pride comes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall. (prov.16:18)

Pride is deadly because it is the root of so many problems, we become far more concerned with our reputation that we are with our character.

We looked at Ananias and Sapphira. If we carefully analyse the passage we see that motive was the problem. Motive is the prime ingredient in the sin of hypocrisy. I truly believe that this is why God judges us by the intentions of our heart instead of just the works of our hands.

Consider what would have happened if they had said to the apostle, we got a lot more than we had expected for the property and even though we committed to it, we feel lead to donate 1/2 of what we received. The original commitment would not have been honoured but the integrity of their decision would have been preserved.

God knows what motivates our hearts, in the case of Ananias and Sapphira he judged their motives on the spot. You see, hypocrisy makes a critical mistake. It has its focus on what the people around us think; it fails to recognize the omniscience of God. He knows our intentions.

So what am I saying?

if you see any of this inside... And I don't want anyone pointing fingers. This self evaluation is between you and your God.

Don't be a hypocrite... Don't do hypocritical things. God knows the intents of your heart. People are not stupid or blind; they can see what motivates you. Satan loves to boast of the hypocrisy of the church, but if we are real people, who are working on our stuff, getting things right before God, we will see the blessings of God.

When we keep the sin inside, It starts to rot us out. We need to be filled with the spirit of truth. If we can't accept each other as we are and help each other, we have a serious problem. Christ did not come to save the righteous, he came to save the sinner. While we are positionally righteous, we still have areas of our lives that need work.

All relationships are built on trust. Don't be a chameleon be accepted for who God made you to be: a son or a daughter, a member of a royal priesthood.

If you are convicted, Repent! Make it right with God; Christ has already paid the price for us... move forward. Now there is no condemnation his banner of you is love. (Rom 8:1) Conviction is good, it is of God. Condemnation is of the Enemy.

Why this sermon?

Many people see the church as hypocritical, we have a perception to change and people to reach with the good news of Jesus Christ! Even more than the change in perception, real intention by real Christians is what is needed.

Be Bold, Be Strong, Be Real, Be Saved

- prayer-