

How Can I Know if I am a Hypocrite?

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction:

A. This is a requested sermon on an unpleasant matter.

1. It is titled: "How Can I Know if I am a Hypocrite?"; it is not titled: "How Can I Know if Someone Else is a Hypocrite?"
2. While I feel confident that the disciple who requested it intended it for self-examination, I want to insist that the rest of us view it that way, too.
3. It is said that lessons like this makes the truly righteous doubt themselves, and makes the self-righteous more sure of themselves
4. And lastly before I begin, there is a mindset among a few here that needs to be addressed before I present either lesson today. It is a love for the roar of the cannon and the sound of bombs dropping. In other words, sometimes we don't feel we heard a good sermon unless someone is getting a beating. While a number of preachers fall into that trap, sometimes listeners in the audience get snared, too.
5. If you are one of those kind of people, you just might be a hypocrite, because keeping our focus on others who are egregiously in error keeps our attention away from our own shortcomings.
6. Not every Bible verse is addressed to denominations, liberals, homosexuals and abortionists. And very few verses in the New Testament are injunctions against named persons or doctrines
7. For example, Paul delivered a direct rebuke to named persons in only 15 verses out of the 3341 verses that speak of him from Acts through his epistles; that's less than one half of one percent
8. Cultivate an ear for the whole counsel of God, not just the militant parts

B. The Victorian novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* illustrates how the person we project to others may be very different from who we are on the inside. After the youthful and handsome Dorian Gray had his portrait painted, he dreaded the prospect of growing old, and he wished the portrait would grow old in his place. Soon he realized that his wish had been granted. The portrait, which mirrored his troubled soul, aged and became more hideous with each sin Dorian committed, while he himself remained youthful. His outward appearance did not match his corrupted heart.

C. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for displaying a similar hypocrisy. Many of them took pride in showing off their spirituality in public. Yet on the inside, they were guilty of many secret sins and malicious attitudes. Because of this, Jesus compared them to "whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of . . . all uncleanness" (Matt. 23:27).

D. We are frequently tempted to cultivate a false image for others to see, but God knows our hearts - 1Sam. 16:7; Prov. 15:3

1. We must transform ourselves from the inside out - 2Cor. 3:17-18

E. An old question

1. The first of John Wesley's 22 questions that members of The Holy Club asked each day within their daily prayer. "Am I consciously or unconsciously creating the impression that I am better than I really am? In other words, am I a hypocrite?"

2. "In the dim lamps of the world, we can compare ourselves with each other, and all of us come off looking good. We convince ourselves that God grades us on the curve. I am crucified between the sky of what I intend and the earth of what I perform" (Fred Craddock, A Chorus of Witnesses, 39-40).

I. DEFINITION

- A. Hypocrite is derived from a Greek word (hupokrinomai) which referred to an actor on stage who wore a mask and played the part.
 1. In the Bible it references one who is pretending to be something he is not, pretending to be godly outwardly, but inwardly, he is ungodly.
 2. McClintock and Strong defined the word as, "the name for the successful or unsuccessful endeavor of a person to impart to others, by the expression of his features or, gestures, by his outward actions, and by his whole appearance, a favorable opinion of his principles, his good intentions, love, unselfishness, truthfulness, and conscientiousness while in reality these qualities are wanting in him."
- B. It is one of the harshest accusations that can be levied against a Christian. It cuts to the heart, can expose inconsistencies that one doesn't want to face and often causes many to become defensive in an offensive way in response.
 1. Occasionally it is a label that is unfairly given in a hurtful way.
 2. It is an attitude that God utterly despises.
 3. "It is more than simply sinning. We all sin, but that does not necessarily make us hypocrites. The hypocrite knows he is sinning and tries to put on a façade about it. He is one who knows he is not what he ought to be and intends to do nothing about it."
 4. "Men may be divided into two great classes, those who profess religious obedience, and those who do not; and of those who do profess to be religious, there are again those who perform as well as profess, and those who do not."

II. GOD'S WORD ON HYPOCRISY

- A. Apostles - Rom. 12:9; Gal. 2:11-13; 1Tim. 4:1-2; James 3:17; 1Peter 2:1-2; 1John 1:6
- B. Jesus said more about hypocrisy than anyone else in the Bible - 20 times

III. AM I A HYPOCRITE?

- A. A hypocrite pays more attention to his reputation than his character
 1. Matt. 6:2, 5, 16, 23:5-7
 2. When we become more interested in our reputation than doing what is right, we become hypocritical.
 3. Our reputation ought to be based on our character instead of the other way around. That is what is meant by being of good report
 - a. Acts 6:3, 10:22, 1Tim. 3:7
- B. A hypocrite practices spiritual acts while his heart feels nothing toward God
 1. Matt. 23:23

2. Do we find that our worship is becoming more tedious, something we really don't look forward to? Are we just pretending to ourselves and others hoping God will overlook the rest of our lives?
- C. A hypocrite emphasizes his own virtues and the faults of others.
1. Luke 18:10-12
 2. When you read a passage of scripture, do you think of how it applies to someone else, or is your first thought of how it applies to you?
 3. When another Christian falls into sin, do you think, "I would never do that!"? - Gal. 6:1
- D. A hypocrite lives by a double standard.
1. Matt. 23:2-4
 2. Do we protest aloud or to ourselves that we have a good excuse for our actions, while condemning others for the same thing.
 3. This form of hypocrisy appears to have angered the Lord the most. How dare you hold someone else to a standard you excuse yourself from achieving?
- E. A hypocrite believes some people don't belong in the kingdom
1. Matt. 23:13
 2. Are there persons here you wish would attend somewhere else? Do you look at other Christians and think, "I won't be seeing them in heaven"?
- F. A hypocrite tries to pull others into his way of thinking and behaving
1. Gal. 2:11-13
 2. Do you find yourself covertly trying to convince others of your perspective or conduct?

IV. A HYPOCRITE'S REWARD

- A. His earthly reward is paltry - Matt. 6:1-7; Job 20:5, 27:8
- B. His eternal reward is painful - Rev. 21:8; Job 8:13, 13:16