

"From the cowardice that shrinks from new truth, from the laziness that is content with half truths, from the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth, O, God of Truth, deliver us."

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WHY HYPOCRITES IN THE CHURCH?



Why should men be surprised when they find a hypocrite in the Church? I expect hypocrites in the Church and, in fact, would be surprised if there were none. Why do I expect hypocrites in the Church?

FIRST – Because Jesus had them in His small group of followers. Jesus chose the twelve, but

He said one of them was a devil. **John 6:70**

One of His own betrayed Him. Nor did he do so with just a kiss on the cheek. The word for "kiss" is a special Greek word, which denotes a "fervent kiss". If he was an enemy, why the kiss? If he was a friend, why did he wear a sword? Oh yes, Jesus had a hypocrite in His small band of handpicked men. Why then not expect it among His volunteers?

SECONDLY – Because Jesus instructed in His parables that there would be hypocrites among believers.

Did He not say that there was wayside soil, stony soil, and thorny soil as well as good soil?

Did He not say that the devil would pluck away some believers before they took root?

Did He not say that some would receive the Word with joy and then die for lack of depth?

Did He not tell us that the cares and riches of this world would choke out some?

Why then should we be surprised to find some believers less than they should be?

He also said that tares and wheat should grow together until the day the angels come and separate the tares from the wheat. Tares look like wheat until harvest. The tares should not be separated from the wheat lest you uproot the wheat.

The trouble with removing hypocrites is that you knock down ten sinners hiding behind him. Did He not say that the net would be full of both bad and good fish until the end of the world? Then the carp will be separated from the bass.

Yes, the teachings of Christ abound with proof that hypocrites would be in the Church.

THIRDLY – Jesus warned us against hypocrites in the Church. Didn't He tell us to beware of wolves in sheep's clothing? Does He not warn of those who devour widow's houses? Does He not warn of those who compass land and sea only to make their converts twofold the children of hell than themselves? Does He not warn of those who tithe of mint and anise but forget the weightier matters of the Law? Did He not put a woe upon those white sepulchers that are full of dead men's bones? Or what of those who shine the tombstones of the prophets but do not obey the prophets' words? Yes, Jesus knows the hypocrisy of religious men.

FOURTHLY – Jesus cautions believers against the practice of hypocrisy. He tells us to beware that we do not let the leaven of hypocrisy in us. He tells us not to give our tithes for the praise of men. He tells us when we fast to do it privately. He tells us when we share not to let our left hand know what the right hand is doing. Jesus warned us of the subtlety of this sin and does not want it to be in His followers.

FIFTHLY – The early Church had hypocrites. Didn't Corinth have an incestuous man? Were not some of the brethren going to court with one another? The Church at Thessalonica had those who refused to work. Ananias and Sapphira were hypocrites in their giving. They wanted to eat their cake and have it, too.

Simon, the sorcerer had been a great wizard before he was converted. When he saw a chance to be someone special in the Church he tried to purchase power to give the Holy Spirit. Diotrefes loved the preeminence and would not let others teach. Why then should we expect a Church today to be free from hypocrites?

SIXTHLY – Commonsense would have us expect hypocrites in the Church. Sinners need a cloak to hide behind. It is obvious that the Church is an excellent cloak for those who desire to deceive. Men only counterfeit things of value. Men counterfeit dollars, not pennies. One never sees hypocrite Masons, Odd Fellows, or Moose.

I never knew there to be a counterfeit Masonic Lodge but there are many counterfeit churches. Whoever heard of a counterfeit member of the Moose? But oh, how many false Christians there are.

Hypocrisy is the compliment that vice pays to virtue. We should expect hypocrites to be among us. There are always henpecked husbands who go to church to please the wife. There are many kids who are hypocrites and hide their sin from parents by Church attendance. Yes, commonsense should cause us to expect hypocrites.

But are hypocrites all bad? No! I could wish there were a few more.

I Wish:

- × Those who are openly practicing their immorality were hypocrites and doing it secretly.
- × The porno pushers were hypocrites and would do it where kids couldn't see it.
- × The abortionists would steal away to the big city and have it done privately instead of trying to get everyone else to pay for their sin.
- × It were still thought that someone sinned when divorce occurred.
- × The homosexuals would shut off their stream of dirty propaganda on the airwaves.
- × They would go back in their closets.
- × Those who have sex changes would stop their boasting and be ashamed.
- × Sin was hidden a little more and the blasphemers would go back into hiding their damnable lies.
- × We could go back to women blushing and men apologizing for a slipped phrase.

I mourn for the good old days of hypocrisy when sin was hid. There are too many hypocrites in the Church we are told. Oh! I wish that there were more of them hiding their sin instead of openly being in rebellion to God.

What this country needs is a good five-cent hypocrite! Well did Isaiah say, "Woe unto you for you declare your sin like Sodom." When sin can run around naked without the cloak of religion, a nation is ready for the judgement of God.

But a word to the hypocrite: it was good for you had you not been born. There is coming a day when purifying is coming. There is a day when nothing covered shall not be revealed or hid and not be made known. That which is spoken in darkness will be shouted from the rooftops. God has a place for hypocrites. The unfaithful servant is going to have his portion with the hypocrites. It's a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth. **Matthew 24:46-51, Luke 12:1-3** Your deceit will not hold up in the judgement.

I read of some privates in the army who were impersonating the officers. The officers then agreed not to wear their uniforms one evening. It was simple to arrest all in officer's uniforms to catch the impersonators.

Someday friend, if you're playing the part of the Christian, you're going to be exposed as an impersonator. It won't be a pleasant thing to be cast out of God's presence into outer darkness.

But a word to those who won't come to Christ because of the hypocrites. Which is better, to go to Church with some of them or to hell with all of them? You say you don't want to go where they are, yet make no preparation to avoid the place where they all are eventually going to be.

If a man stands between you and God, he is closer to God than you are. Not only so, but if you are going to hide behind the hypocrite you must be smaller than he is.

You go to a lodge with them. You go to ballgames with them. But you can't go to church with them! I wonder who really is a hypocrite?

Maybe you ought to come to church and show us what a Christian really is. Maybe we need an example. I know of no better place for hypocrites than the Church. It is there that he will hear his sin of hypocrisy condemned. The Church never made him a hypocrite anymore than a school makes men illiterate. Counterfeits imply realities. The fact that there are counterfeits proves there is something to Christianity. Maybe you better not cast out the wheat with the chaff.

Did you ever notice people who use the excuse about hypocrites always comparing themselves to the worse Church member? Not many compare themselves to the Apostle Paul! Not many compare themselves to Stephen! No, they choose some potsherd or broken pottery overlaid with gold and then says that they would prefer to be a common cup.

I am reminded of the story of the old bum that came to town with patches all over his suit. There were colored patches over the front of his outfit and one little patch in the middle of his back. When asked what they were he said that the large patches are the sins of his neighbors. He let each patch stand for some sin of each of his

neighbors. When asked what the little patch in the back was for he said, "That's my sin and I can't see it."

I am afraid that this is the problem with those who use the excuse about hypocrites. If you have been using that excuse of "too many hypocrites" you might as well come too. There is always room for one more. If you ever find the perfect Church, don't join it cause you will spoil it.

Hypocrisy is a sin. We should expect hypocrites in the Church and the hypocrites who hide behind them. It is not by driving away others that we can be alone with God.

To go astray from total depravity could only be "toward God". Imagine, going toward God being called "going astray".

Psalms 58:3 is a hyperbole to show that men are indeed sinners. What is a hyperbole? An overstatement, a figure of speech in which something is said for emphasis, an extreme exaggeration for emphasis to impress the hearer or reader of a truth. Examples: I'm so hungry I could eat a horse. He ate everything in the house. I'd give my right arm for a pizza.

So, likewise, to impress upon us that men are sinners, we are told we go astray as soon as we are born, speaking lies. (Obviously, a newborn cannot speak.) "In sin, did my mother conceive me" is a hyperbole that David used to confess that he was indeed a sinner. **Psalm 51**.

Some say, "I've been a Christian since I was born" or "I was born a Christian." These statements are used to emphasize they were raised in the Church since childhood. Do not let these hyperbole's of Scripture lead you into the false conclusion of Calvinism that we were born sinners when it is really just a confession that we are in fact sinners. We have gone astray from God because we have yielded to our own desires.