

The Hypocrites in the Church

Intro:

1. A brother: Grew up “in the church” but didn’t want to associate with “hypocrites.”
2. What is a hypocrite? Basically, an actor; someone who role-plays as a Christian. Faith in God is not *genuine* but *pretended*.
 - a. Someone who publicly espouses a principle while privately violating - Mt 23:27-28.
 - b. Someone who criticizes others for doing what they themselves do - Lk 13:14-16.
 - c. Someone who avoids the rules by technicalities - Mt 15:3-8.
3. Jesus condemned hypocrisy in no uncertain terms; all 20t in Synoptics by Jesus.

1. To the Hypocrite ...

- A. There are many reasons to associate with Christians and pretend to be one without full devotion to Christ: habit, family ties, social framework, etc. As with the Pharisees, hypocrisy is often camouflaged by superficial godliness and piety.
- B. If you pretend to be something you’re not, you are an obstacle to unbelievers - see Jews in Rom 2:21-24. The world may resent true faith, but it loathes a hypocrite.
- C. You aren’t fooling anyone but yourself. Even children can perceive insincerity. But most of all *God cannot be fooled* - Mk 12:13-15 (on paying Roman tax).

2. To the Church ...

- A. Hypocrisy involving clearly established sin is subject to discipline - Gal 2:11-13.
 1. Hypocrisy is a corrupting influence within the church. The **super-pious** are often harsh, critical and demoralizing; the **casually committed** foster an attitude of slackness and minimal involvement.
 2. Hypocrisy also hurts the church’s reputation in the community. **Ex:** A brother in small town: Uncorrected hypocrisy ruins the church’s influence.
- B. The hypocrite needs incentive, opportunity to repent. Good men like Peter and Barnabas can be caught up in the subtlety of hypocrisy.

3. To Those Who Reject the Lord on the Basis of Hypocrites ...

A. This rationale is full of problems ...

1. It is **foolish**: Would you totally reject, neglect parents because of hypocritical brother or sister? Why would you sacrifice your own blessings to these people you detest? Does the wrongness of others make one's own rebellion right?
2. It is **irrational**: Why avoid them *now* only to spend *eternity* with them in hell?
3. It is **arrogant**: Usually said in condescension. "I'm *too good* to associate with them."
4. It is **irresponsible**: Refusal of responsibility by blaming others.
5. It is **inconsistent**: People do not avoid football games because of the presence of hypocritical fans.
6. It is **HYPOCRITICAL**: If you reject Christianity for its hypocritical adherents:
 - a. If you believe his standards are **false**, then *you are a hypocrite* by saying that you reject the person rather than his standards. I am against socialism because of its principles, not because of hypocritical socialists who profit from it.
 - b. If you believe his standards are **true**, then *you are a hypocrite* by your own failure to do what is right.

B. A variation of the theme: "*I don't want to be a hypocrite, so I'll just be consistent and quit altogether.*"

C. **Bottom line: It is an excuse** to avoid doing what is right. What is the *proper course*? Do what is right and set the example of genuineness and sincerity for the hypocrites to follow.

Conclusion: Jesus warns: "*Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!*" (Mt 18:7). Both the hypocrite and the one who uses him for an excuse will be lost.