

Theme: Every human sins and fails to live up to God's righteous standards, but the Gospel offers forgiveness to those who confront this fact and openly confess and repent of sin.

I. Intro - True and False Examples of Hypocrisy

- A. Televangelist scandals of the 1980's
- B. Roman Catholic pedophile priests and coverup
- C. Evangelical leadership scandals of early 2018
- D. Facebook conversation - Christians worry about homosexuality which Jesus did not, but don't care for poor - and I had just come home from serving at Lighthouse Shelter!
- E. What is hypocrisy? Is this a particular "Christian" problem - or one we all have?
- F. How do we respond to this question/objection?

II. What Christians Believe About Hypocrisy

- A. Jesus strongly condemns hypocrisy

Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of heaven in men's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to. Matthew 23:13

 - 1. Jesus pronounces a woe on hypocrites
 - 2. Jesus condemns hypocrisy 7 times in Matthew 23
 - 3. This ushers in the prophecy in Matthew 24 that God will visit Israel in judgment for their hypocrisy
 - 4. No one hates hypocrisy more than God!

B. Jesus defines true hypocrisy

- 1. Hypocrisy was a Greek term that referred to stage actors (who often wore masks), which Jesus takes over to speak of moral hypocrisy
- 2. Hypocrisy pretends (to be someone you are not)
So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. ⁴ They tie up heavy loads and put them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them. Matthew 23:3-4
 - a. Obey them - for they are teaching God's Law
 - b. But they do not even try to do it - hypocrites

Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. ²⁸ In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness. Matthew 23:27-28

- a. Like whitewashed tombs - appear one way but are another; different inside and out
 - b. This is hypocrisy at its zenith - full of death
- 3. Hypocrisy performs for human approval
Everything they do is done for men to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long; Matthew 23:5
 - a. Hypocrites perform for a human audience, rather than God
 - b. Hypocrites perform to deceive others so that they will be more highly thought of than their true nature deserves

4. Hypocrisy craves positions and power
they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; ⁷ they love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have men call them 'Rabbi.' Matthew 23:6-7

- a. They crave the seats of honor - position
- b. They crave titles - power over others
- c. They try to get humans to focus on them, their positions, their power, their honor

But you are not to be called 'Rabbi,' for you have only one Master and you are all brothers. ⁹ And do not call anyone on earth 'father,' for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. ¹⁰ Nor are you to be called 'teacher,' for you have one Teacher, the Christ. ¹¹ The greatest among you will be your servant. Matthew 23:8-11

- a. The focus should be on God - the True Master, Father, and Teacher
- b. The opposite of hypocrisy is being a servant to others rather than pretending and performing so they will serve you

C. A hypocrite pretends to be someone they are not, performing for human approval so that others will think more highly of them than is deserved, often to attain a position of influence or power.

III. Questioning Hypocrisy

A. "Why are Christians such hypocrites?"

- 1. We must define hypocrisy - what do we mean?

- 2. If we mean some Christians condemn others for a behavior that they are secretly engaging in themselves - this is hypocrisy! Such hypocrisy is harmful to others, is unbecoming of Christians, and undermines the Gospel. For such things we can only apologize
- 3. If we mean Christians are worse hypocrites (as God defines hypocrisy) than others, this is false
- 4. If we mean Christians fail and do not always live as they ought - so does everyone. That is not hypocrisy - it is fallen humanity!
- 5. If we mean Christians do not live up to what we proclaim God's Law demands - that is true!
- 6. Hypocrisy does not refer to attempting to live up to a moral standard but failing - as long as one does not pretend to have met the standard.
- 7. Is the complaint really about true hypocrisy - or does it reflect a problem with God's Law? These must never be confused!

B. "Why should I go to Church? It is full of hypocrites!"

- 1. We must define hypocrisy - what do we mean?
- 2. If a church is full of self-righteous people who proclaim to be something they are not, only concerned with human approval, who do not admit their own sin - I would avoid it too!
- 3. But if it is claimed all churches can be described that way, that claim is simply, provably false
- 4. Once again, if we are referring to those who sin, this is true of everyone! So why go to work, or the grocery store, or the ballgame - the places are full of 'hypocrites'!

5. Sometimes the charge of Christian hypocrisy arises from a real hurt, caused by true hypocrisy in the church. In such cases, we should hear the person, grieve with them, and not make excuses for such sin.
 6. Sometimes this statement simply reflects an attempt to avoid the claims of the Gospel. In such cases, we should continue to press the person, showing that the statements are not reflective of truth, but are an avoidance technique.
- C. The ultimate problem is sin, not hypocrisy - and we all need to be saved from sin!
1. Make no mistake - Jesus hates hypocrisy
 2. But my real problem is not someone else's hypocrisy, but my own sin.
 3. Every one of us falls short of even our own standards, much less God's Law.
 4. We are all fallen, and tainted with sin, and the only solution is found in Christ and His Gospel.
 5. The only way out of this problem is not by focusing on someone else's sins and hypocrisy, but my own. I must openly confess my own sin, fully owning it.
 6. The parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector
To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: ¹⁰ "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men — robbers, evildoers, adulterers — or even like this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' ¹³ "But the tax collector

stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' ¹⁴ "I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." Luke 18:9–14

- a. The Pharisee focuses on the sin of the tax collector and others, and magnifies his own righteousness
- b. The tax collector focuses on God's righteousness and his own sin.
- c. Jesus says we must be like the tax collector - owning up to our own sin, embracing God's mercy

IV. Applying the Word

- A. A word to those who have been hurt - we are sorry
 1. If you have been truly hurt by the hypocrisy of Christians who preached one thing but did another - we are sorry
 2. Please do not let the sins of Christians eclipse God or His Gospel
- B. A word to those hiding behind false charges - come out into the light!
 1. If you are someone who is using such charges as an excuse - such excuses will not excuse you!
 2. You are not saved by the integrity or hypocrisy of Christians - but by the perfect righteousness of Christ
 3. I urge you - look to Him for salvation!
- C. A word to Christians - confess and repent of sin

1. We must admit that the behavior of the church has far too often undermined rather than promoted the Gospel
2. We are called to examine our own lives - and confess and repent of sin!
 - a. Have I compromised God's Law to cover my sin? - confess and repent!
 - b. Have I condemned in others what I practice myself? - confess and repent!
 - c. Is the Spirit convicting me of sin right now - confess and repent!
3. We must remember that we are not pointing others to ourselves, but to Christ, for we are servants, not Saviors!
For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. 2 Corinthians 4:5

D. The Table of Faithfulness and Forgiveness

1. At this Table, we remember and celebrate the faithfulness of Christ
2. At the Table, we remember and mourn our unfaithfulness - and ask for forgiveness
3. At this Table, we ask the Spirit to make us more faithful in the future, that our lives might promote the Gospel

Teaching keywords: Apologetics; Church; sin; confession and repentance; honesty and integrity

May God our Savior help us for the glory of His name; may He deliver us and forgive our sins for His name's sake, and the spread of His Gospel. Psalms 79:9

Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: ²“The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. ³ So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. ⁴They tie up heavy loads and put them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them. ⁵“Everything they do is done for men to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long; ⁶ they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; ⁷ they love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have men call them ‘Rabbi.’ ⁸“But you are not to be called ‘Rabbi,’ for you have only one Master and you are all brothers. ⁹ And do not call anyone on earth ‘father,’ for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. ¹⁰ Nor are you to be called ‘teacher,’ for you have one Teacher, the Christ. ¹¹ The greatest among you will be your servant. ¹² For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. ¹³“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of heaven in men's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to. Matthew 23:1–13

The Question of Hypocrisy

Matthew 23:1-13
April 29, 2018
Communion
Psalm 79:9