**“Hypocrisy”**

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In Romans 2:21-22, the apostle Paul warned the Roman Christians about the dangers of hypocrisy. He noted some tell-tale signs of hypocrisy when he wrote, “Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?” It is a careful person who recognizes the fact that he cannot teach a person one thing and then practice something different! It is hypocrisy. Yet, hypocrisy is an easy trap in which to fall! Many have played the hypocrite, while denying this reality. When spending time in self-examination (II Cor. 13:5), are we acting as hypocrites? Let us study and see.

The word “hypocrite” means a pretender. In other words, one who says one thing and does another! Sadly, there are those who are “Christians in name only”. They are hypocrites. While they pretend to be Christians, they are actually children of the Devil, not unlike the Jews in John 8:44.

The Old Testament records occasions where people literally pretended to be someone else. For example, in Genesis 27:1-46, we read of Jacob deceiving his father. That day, Jacob received the blessing that belonged to Esau. How was this accomplished? He dressed and acted like his brother (Gen. 27:18-30). This is literally what it means to be a hypocrite. Yet, we do not have to dress as someone else to be a hypocrite!

On 15 separate occasions, Jesus rebuked people, calling them “hypocrites.” In the New Testament, we read the account of “Christians” pretending to be unselfish givers, when in truth, they were selfish. Please read Acts 5:1-11. Ananias and Sapphira pretended to give all the money gained from selling a possession (v. 1). In truth, they kept back part (v. 2), and were found to be liars (v. 4-5). Acts 5 shows us that hypocrisy is a vulgar thing that needs to be avoided at all costs. Are you pretending to be a Christian? Are you an actor?

Many today have an attitude that is often expressed as: “do as I say, and not as I do.” My friend, this will not work. This concept was what the apostle Paul was fighting against in Romans 2. How sad it is to see the transparent efforts of some to teach others the way of God while they themselves act as the Devil!

The Pharisees were known for teaching one thing, and doing another. In Matthew 23:1-12, Jesus told the multitude and the disciples not to act like the Pharisees, “For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do for to be seen of men…” (Matt. 23:4-5). If you are like this, rest assured, people can see through you. You are fooling no one!

It is up to all of us to keep away from hypocrisy, and make sure it is not in our lives. Are you a pretender? Do you teach others that “now is the day of salvation” (II Cor. 6:2), but live like there is no tomorrow? Do not be a hypocrite! Live for Christ! Who knows what good we can do in the Lord’s kingdom when we live that sincere, genuine life, that reflects Christ in all we do (Gal. 2:20)!

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