

HORRIBLE HYPOCRISY

There are habits, character traits, or whatever they might be called that cause a person to be viewed by others as less than desirable company. No one likes to be around an individual who is egotistical, a perpetual faultfinder, or a sneak. Another type person that people don't care to be around is a hypocrite. A hypocrite is not only a person who says one thing and does another, he is also a person who fails to understand the application of Moses' warning words of wisdom to the tribes of Rueben and Gad if they did not keep their commitment to help their brethren take the land west of Jordan, before they took their inheritance on the east: *"But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure, your sin will find you out"* (Num. 32:23). The hypocrite goes on his merry way, apparently oblivious to the reality that his hypocrisy is as apparent to those who know him as is the size of his nose or the color of his eyes. No words could more fully discuss the definition, description, and demise of a hypocrite than Jesus' in Matthew 23.

Definition: No longer definition of a hypocrite offered by anyone is necessary when the five words uttered by the Savior in verse 3 really say it all, *"They say, and do not."* Verse 4 explains that the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees falsely assumed that the extent of their responsibility was to tell everyone else what to do, then sit back to watch and see if they did it. However, to do those things themselves, they would not lift a finger. The Lord's church is full of preachers, teachers, and others who like to wear the same hypocritical garments. "I've preached to you, I have taught you what to do and how to do it, now it is your responsibility to put into practice." On the other hand, what a blessing it is for those who teach the word of God to put their shoulder to the plow and thereby exemplify the words of the peerless Paul: *"Those things which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of Peace shall be with you"* (Phil. 4:9).

Description: Jesus then proceeds to describe the hypocritical teachers of the Jews. When they were **seen** doing something, that is the point. They did what they did to be seen by and praised of men. They wanted to be referred to by religious titles, they rejected the message about the kingdom of heaven and shut it up for others, they made hypocritical long prayers, made their own laws, and gave the appearance of piety on the outside, while on the inside they were full of filth. The description goes on and on culminating with the precise and dead-on accurate accusation that, *"Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets"* (v. 31). This band of hypocrites who appeared to know the law, but completely misidentified the Messiah who was the very object of the prophecies they purported to know and teach, would shortly expose their hypocrisy when in their arrogant jealousy and false piety, delivered the Lord up to the Romans to be put to death. Whether these men ever taught the people the words of Moses in Numbers 32:23 we do not know, but if they did it was a self-fulfilling prophecy, their sin indeed found them out. One may be able to conceal his hypocrisy for a brief while, but as a different version of an old saying goes: "You can fool some of the people all of the time, and all of the people some of the time, but you can't fool God any of the time!" On top of that, one cannot fool all of the people

all of the time. Doesn't this argue for the astuteness of shedding the flimsy cover of hypocrisy and live according to the truth? Where the need is, let's clean our lives from the inside out that we might stand just before the Father whose all seeing eye misses nothing, whether it be the wounded weakened sparrow which falls to the ground or the crowning creature of creation, man, as he really is (Matt. 10:29; Heb. 4:13).

Demise: Just as those in the perilous times described by the apostle to the evangelist Timothy, who would have a form of godliness while denying its power, would, *"Proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest to all"* (2 Tim. 3:5,9), so would the hypocrites of Matthew 23 meet, as the old song says, their Waterloo. Their bitter end preluded by straining at gnats and swallowing camels and their disingenuous proselytizing is announced with an absence of verbosity: *"How can ye escape the damnation of hell"* (v. 33). Jesus had already overthrown the troubling tables of the money changers in the temple. He had cast out those who bought and sold, thereby transforming God's house of prayer into a den of thieves (Matt. 21:12,13). Now in chapter 23, He announces their house is left to them desolate, and in the next chapter describes its impending destruction. One cannot help but think of the various stripes of hypocrites who have desecrated the house of God, the glorious bride of Christ, His church, today. Some of them say and do not, some like the Pharisees say things that are not so, and others do things in the house of God that in the end will have them driven out unless they repent and amend their words and ways.

Hypocrites are detested much like thieves and liars. To have God's approval and the appropriate commendation of men, let us say what is right and manifest true loyalty to truth by putting it into action in our lives. By doing so we will be recognized as those like cups and saucers that are clean on the inside not sepulchers full of dead men's bones.

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