

“Beware of Hypocrisy”

August 16, 2020

Luke 12:1-12

I. Introduction

I suspect we could all define the word hypocrite, but let me give you the definition from dictionary.com: *Hypocrite: 1) a person who pretends to have virtues, moral or religious beliefs, principles, etc., that he or she does not actually possess, especially a person whose actions belie stated beliefs. 2) a person who feigns some desirable or publicly approved attitude, especially one whose private life, opinions, or statements belie his or her public statements.* Basically, hypocrites pretend to be something they are not, they focus on outward appearance and hide the truth of who they really are. Hypocrites and hypocrisy are all around us. We see it in the protests that have arisen with the murder of George Floyd so many weeks ago. We see it in the many politicians whose ads are all around us. We hear it exposed by various people’s unedited comments when they assume a particular microphone was turned off, but it really was still on. We see it in the people around us, and, sadly, we see it in ourselves.

The leading hypocrites of Jesus’ day were the teachers of the law—the scribes and Pharisees. Speaking of them in [Mark 7:6](#) Jesus said, “**Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: ‘These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.’**” They were known for sounding trumpets to call attention to their giving ([Matt. 6:2](#)), praying on street corners for all to see ([Matt. 6:5](#)), making it obvious that they were fasting by putting on sad faces and wearing torn robes ([Matt. 6:16](#)), seeking the most important seats in the synagogue and greetings in the marketplace ([Luke 11:43](#)). In addition to a false face, they looked down on those whom they regarded as spiritually inferior and criticized their faults while ignoring their own. And, like all hypocrites, they became angry, even vehement when exposed.

This is what Jesus had just done in chapter 11—He exposed the Pharisees and teachers of the law. Their response is found in [Luke 11:53-54](#), “**The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began to oppose him**

fiercely and to besiege him with questions, waiting to catch him in something he might say.” The crowds on the other hand wanted to see more, so they continued to gather around Jesus—Luke wrote: “A crowd of many thousands had gathered, so that they were trampling on one another.”

II. Beware of Hypocrisy

A. Understand hypocrisy

1. Hypocrisy is sin. Seeing all the people gathering and knowing His disciples’ hearts, that like all of us, they wanted people to like them, and it is such an easy thing to “*act the part*” that others want to see, “Jesus began to speak first to his disciples, saying: ‘Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.’” Jesus compared hypocrisy to yeast or leaven, something every Jew would associate with evil. Jesus wanted His disciples to understand that hypocrisy is sin. Like yeast, hypocrisy begins very small but can grow quickly and quietly. As it grows it affects the whole person—as [Galatians 5:9](#) says, “A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough.” Hypocrisy does to the ego what yeast does to bread dough—it puffs it up. Soon pride takes over and the person’s character deteriorates rapidly. The only way to keep hypocrisy out of our lives is to avoid the first bit of “yeast” or “leaven”—the 1st bit of temptation and sin.

2. Hypocrisy is foolish and pointless. Hypocrisy isn’t just sin; it is foolish and pointless. Jesus said, “There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed or hidden that will not be made known.” [Ecclesiastes 12:14](#) explains it this way, “For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.” The point is that while hypocrites may succeed in their cover-up for a time, no one ultimately gets away with hypocrisy. It will eventually be uncovered. Some may be exposed in this life—Paul wrote to Timothy in [1 Timothy 5:24](#), “The sins of some are obvious, reaching the place of judgment ahead of them; the sins of others trail behind them.” But all will be exposed in the future; Jesus said in [Matthew 16:27](#), “The Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.”

Jesus went on to say that what hypocrites try to hide in the darkness is clearly visible to God and as [Job 34:22](#) says, “There is no deep shadow, no utter darkness, where evildoers can hide.” Even something spoken in the “inner room,” the innermost location in a house, the place for private conversations or prayer will one day be revealed, so why go on pretending? Hypocrisy is foolish and pointless.

B. The cause of hypocrisy Jesus mentioned the words “fear” or “afraid” five times in these verses. The basic cause of hypocrisy is the fear of man. When one is afraid of what others may say about him or do to him, then he tries to impress them in order to gain their approval. If necessary, one will even lie to accomplish his purpose, and this is hypocrisy. This was the issue with the Pharisees, they were more concerned about what people thought about them than what God knew about them. As [Proverbs 29:25](#) says, “Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe.”

C. The remedy for hypocrisy Jesus said that the remedy for hypocrisy—the way to keep any of this yeast of sin from one’s life is to forget about what people may say and do and fear the One who knows all our secrets—fear God alone. The fear of God is the fear that conquers all other fears—the person who truly fears God need fear nothing else. This is the attitude Peter and the other apostles had when they told the Sanhedrin in [Acts 5:29](#), “We must obey God rather than man.” All that man can do is kill the body, but God can condemn the soul. Since He is the final judge and He judges for eternity, it is logical that we put the fear of God ahead of everything else.

Another reason to fear God is that nothing escapes His knowledge. Jesus used two examples to demonstrate God’s omniscient knowledge of even rather insignificant things. Sparrows, like today, were common, inexpensive small birds but God knows of every sparrow in the world. Not only that, He also knows the number of hairs on everyone’s head. Hypocrites are going to be judged by God with His complete and detailed knowledge of their actions and there should be fear. On the other hand, God’s knowledge and concern should be a source of comfort to believers who are more valuable than sparrows—
turn to [Matthew 6:25-34](#).

D. Results of the Fear of God

1. Disciples will acknowledge Jesus. Jesus went on to say that this remedy for hypocrisy—the fear of God—will lead to two things. First, disciples will “**acknowledge me before men**” or as other translations say, “**Confess me before men.**” To acknowledge or confess Jesus Christ means to accept God’s Word—in **Matthew 3:17** God said, “**This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.**” And, as **Romans 10:9** says, to acknowledge Jesus Christ means to “**declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead.**” Those who truly make this confession will demonstrate openly before men both with their words and their changed lives their willing submission to Christ as their Lord as well as their Savior. Their will be no hypocrisy since they fear God and not man.

Whether a person acknowledges or disowns Christ will determine that person’s eternal destiny. On the one hand, if a person acknowledges Him “**before men, the Son of Man will also acknowledge him before the angels of God.**” But on the other hand, Jesus warned that the person who “**disowns me before others will be disowned before the angels of God.**” Those who fail to genuinely confess Christ as Lord will one day hear Him say, “**I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!**” The sure way to miss out on heaven is to deny Christ, as the scribes and Pharisees had done. But another sure way to gain hell is to make an insincere, superficial confession of Christ—**turn to Matthew 7:21-23.** God looks at the heart. Heaven belongs only to those who honor the Father by truly acknowledging or confessing His Son.

Speaking of confessing Him, Jesus said in **Luke 12:10**, “**And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.**” If no one could be saved from hell by speaking against the Son of Man, no one could be saved. Before conversion—before being saved—every Christian was a blasphemer who broke God’s law, rebelled against His rule, and rejected the truth about His Son. As Jesus said in **Luke 11:23**, “**He who is not with me is against me.**” That describes each one of us before we met Christ.

But then Jesus added, “**anyone who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.**” To blaspheme the Holy Spirit is to reject His testimony concerning the Lord Jesus Christ—in [John 15:26](#) Jesus said, “**The Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father-- he will testify about me.**” This verse about “blaspheming the Holy Spirit” is a hard verse. Some scholars feel that it applies to the Jewish nation during the time the 12 Apostles ministered. The Jewish nation had rejected God the Father when they ignored John the Baptist as he called for repentance. They rejected God the Son when they had Pilate crucify Him. Then God sent the Holy Spirit who ministered through the Apostles and other believers in the church. These scholars feel that this was the last opportunity for the nation, and they failed by rejecting the witness of the Spirit. These scholars feel that this sin of blaspheme can’t be committed today.

Other scholars, and this is where I come from, feel that to blaspheme the Holy Spirit is to persistently reject the testimony of the Holy Spirit about Christ. [Turn to Hebrew 6:4-6.](#) (A similar passage is found in [Hebrews 10:26-31.](#)) In spite of all they had heard and seen and experienced, these are people who continue to reject the message of the Gospel. [2 Peter 3:9](#) says, “**The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.**” But God has given us freewill and eventually He honors the request of those who say they want nothing to do with Him and His gift of salvation—they blaspheme the Holy Spirit and all He teaches. Because of their rejection of the Holy Spirit, they are bound to an eternity in hell. True disciples will acknowledge or confess Jesus.

2. Second, disciples can depend on the Holy Spirit. Jesus said that if one fears God then “**When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say.**” Disciples can depend on the Holy Spirit. For those who honor the Holy Spirit by believing His testimony concerning Jesus Christ, He “**will teach you at that time what you should say.**” Believers don’t need to worry that severe trials will separate them from God. The Holy Spirit will turn the trials into blessing—[turn to 1 Peter 4:12-14.](#) We can

rest on God's promise from [1 Corinthians 10:13](#) that says, "No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it."

III. Conclusion

As Jesus implied with His comparison of hypocrisy with yeast or leaven, we all need to beware of hypocrisy. It may start out small, but hypocrisy will mushroom into a huge problem. Jesus warned that in choosing God Christians will inevitably face rejection by others. At such times, we may be tempted to "save ourselves" and pretend to be what we aren't. We all need to beware of hypocrisy. Today's Scripture asks some fundamental questions. Do you fear God or the masses? Do you seek approval from above or from your neighbors? Who or what is lord of your life?

The antidote for hypocrisy is to fear God. To fear God doesn't mean to shiver in terror, it means to respect His authority as Judge and His knowledge of us. It means to trust in His care and not to worry about how others react to us. We need to remember that He sees the inner room even when the lights are out and when no one else can see. [Turn to Psalm 139:7-10](#). Respect for God's knowledge, God's omnipresence, and our accountability to Him means we will conduct our lives like an open book, where we have nothing to hide. If we are righteous before God, we have nothing to fear from Him.

How about you, are you living a double life? Those around you may not see through your mask, but you know and so does God. Do you fear and respect God? Jesus said that if one fears God, he will confess Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior. Have you really made Jesus your Lord as well as your Savior? ([Romans 10:9](#)) Do Jesus Christ and His commands take priority in your life? Can you say with David in [Psalm 139:23-24](#), "Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

If there are issues you need to deal with, remember God loved you so much that He sent His Son to die on the cross for you. He is ready to forgive you and welcome you back into His loving arms and care, [1](#)

John 1:9 says, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” Get right with Him today, don’t wait—that yeast of hypocrisy will just continue to grow if you don’t.