



“I shall always be ready to remind you of these things...” 2 Peter 1:21

The Poison of Hypocrisy

By Alex Hale

Hypocrisy is a theatrical term which came from the Greeks. In Greek theater an actor often played multiple roles by disguising himself with masks. In one scene, he might come in from one side of the stage wearing a smiling mask as he told jokes, but later he might enter from the other side wearing a frowning mask as he delivered sad lines. This actor was called a “hypocrite,” meaning someone with two or more “faces.” Over the years this word took on a negative meaning, describing someone who was “two-faced,” or one who said one thing and did another.

Jesus encountered hypocrisy several times throughout His earthly ministry. Each time He condemned it severely. In one of His messages Jesus rebuked the scribes and Pharisees no fewer than seven times, saying, “*Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites*” (Matt. 23). Jesus was upset with these individuals because He knew the damage that their hypocritical attitudes and actions caused. These religious leaders pretended to be spiritually strong but they were worldly. They sounded righteous but were void of spiritual substance. However, the worst part was that in many cases, they were pushing people away from God, rather than toward Him. The same holds true with hypocrites today.

Hypocrisy poisons our relationship with God. Hypocrisy is a form of deceit and God hates all forms of falsehood (Prov. 12:22; 6:17-19). One of the characteristics of God is *truth* (Jn. 14:6; 16:13; 17:3). Because of this, He cannot tolerate falsehood. When we live lives of hypocrisy, we become like the people Paul describes in Romans 1, who “...exchange the truth of God for a lie.”

Hypocrisy poisons us. The more we pretend to be something we are not, the easier it is for us to do so. The more we pretend, the more we begin to lose our real self. Over the years hypocrites become less real or less genuine. When we lead hypocritical lives the real “us” begins to die.

Hypocrisy poisons our relationship with others. Do you know what it feels like to have a friend you trusted to betray that trust? What about if you learn that a brother or sister was pretending to walk with God, but in reality they were embracing sinful actions? For there to be fellowship, there must be honesty and trust. John Stott has written, “What cancer is to the body, hypocrisy is to the church. It is a killing agent.”

In August 2013 a Chinese zoo closed after visitors discovered that the zoo’s lion was actually a dog! The fraud came to light when a mother and her son visited the zoo and the animal labeled an “African lion” started barking. The mother said, “The zoo is absolutely cheating us! I paid good money for the tickets and I feel defrauded!” Zookeepers admitted that the so-called lion was actually a Tibetan mastiff, a large dog with a furry brown coat. They also admitted that other zoo animals had been mislabeled. Apparently there was a white fox in a leopard’s den and another dog being passed off as a wolf. Staff also swapped two snakes at the reptile house with two giant sea cucumbers. A spokesperson for the zoo said, “We’re doing our best in tough economic times.” However, no one wants to go to a zoo filled with fake animals. Can I let you in on a little secret? No one wants to spend time with fake people either.



CABOT WESTSIDE CHURCH OF CHRIST

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When We Meet

Sunday

Bible Classes – 9:00 am

Worship – 10:00 am, 5:00 pm

Wednesday

Bible Classes – 7:00 pm

Our Elders

R.D. Hopper

Norman Kemper

Our Preacher

Alex Hale