

Overcoming Sin (Part 7)

Hypocrisy

Luke 20:20

I. Introduction: 1, 2

- I. 3 Nobody likes a “phony.” William Barclay writes: “In the New Testament there is no sin more strongly condemned than hypocrisy, and in popular opinion there is no sin more universally detested.” (Barclay, p. 140) Never a truer observation; very few words can conjure up feelings of disgust and disdain in the hearts of men like the word “hypocrite!” Nobody likes a hypocrite, even hypocrites don’t like hypocrites!
 - A. “The word *hypocrite* (and *hypocrisy*, cvt) is based on the Greek theatrical words meaning ‘actor’ or ‘to play a part.’ The essential identity of hypocrites, therefore, is that they pretend to be something they are not.” (Ryken, Wilhoit, et al.)
 - B. A hypocrite is a person who says one thing and does another; who pretends to be someone they are not; one whose actions contradict their stated or internal beliefs. One who does not “practice what they preach.”

***“Hypocrite: the man who murdered both his parents and pleaded for mercy on the grounds that he was an orphan.” -Abraham Lincoln
2. 4 Jesus often clashed with the scribes and Pharisees and condemned their blatant hypocrisy.
 - A. Once the Pharisees sent their disciples to Jesus and asked Him about paying taxes to Caesar.
 - B. Luke says they sent “*sent spies who pretended to be righteous*” (Luke 20:20).
 - C. When they came to Jesus they said, “*Teacher, we know that You say and teach rightly, and You do not show personal favoritism, but teach the way of God in truth: 22 Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not?*” (Luke 20:21-22)
 - D. But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, “*Why do you test Me, you hypocrites?*” (Matt. 22:18).
 - E. Thus, according to Jesus, a hypocrite is a person who is pretending to be something they are not. In fact, of the twelve times *hypocrite* or *hypocrisy* is used in the NT, half of those times it is Jesus using the words!
3. Hypocrisy is an terrible character flaw, particularly for a Christian.
 - A. First of all, because it is a sin that can cause us to lose our soul.
 - B. Second, because a Christian who is a hypocrite does much damage to the cause of Christ and presents a stumbling block to others (use as an excuse to dismiss the gospel, millstone).
4. Let’s look at God’s word to examine hypocrisy more closely and investigate ways we can overcome it.

II. Discussion:

- I. 5 The Problem with Hypocrisy: Why does this sin receive such universal condemnation from Christ? Why do we need to be concerned about removing it from our heart?
 - A. **Hypocrisy is a form of lying**
 - (1) The whole purpose behind hypocrisy is to make others believe something about us that is not true; to deceive them in regard to our character, thoughts and motives.
 - (2) God hates lying:
Prov. 6:16-19: “*These six things the LORD hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: 17 A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood, 18 A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil, 19 A false witness who speaks lies, And one who sows discord among*

brethren.” I don’t think there is anything more detestable to a parent than to see their children lying. We do our best to “nip that in the bud” right away!

- (3) God will punish all liars:

Prov. 19:5: “A false witness will not go unpunished, And he who speaks lies will not escape.”

Rev. 21:8: “But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”

- (4) But hypocrisy and lying are twin brothers, they go hand in hand. Paul says those who depart from the faith will be “speaking lies in hypocrisy” (1 Tim. 4:2). It is only natural for one who is living a lie to speak a lie.

- (5) The wise man said: “The hypocrite with his mouth destroys his neighbor” (Prov. 11:9).

(a) This is exactly what Satan did to Eve (Gen. 3:1-5).

(b) Satan played the hypocrite, pretending to care about the woman’s welfare and wellbeing while all the while his intent was to destroy her with sin.

B. 6 Hypocrisy taints true love: “Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith,” (1 Tim. 1:5).

- (1) Love must come from a heart that is pure, a conscience that is good and clean, and a faith that is true (**Rom. 12:9:** “Let love be without hypocrisy.”).

(a) Love is the greatest Christian virtue, but hypocrisy destroys all the good done by love.

(b) Our love must be sincere and fervent: **1 Peter 1:22:** “Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart,”; **1 Peter 4:8:** “And above all things have fervent love for one another, for ‘love will cover a multitude of sins.’”

(c) Our motives must be transparent and without “hidden agendas” in all of relationships and dealings with others.

(d) Love is known by the actions more than words! We are not to show our love in word only, but with kind and helpful deeds (**1 Jn. 3:18:** “My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.”).

- (2) ** An example of hypocritical love: Judas

(a) When Jesus was in Bethany, Mary broke a flask of costly oil and anointed Jesus with it.

(b) Judas protested: “Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?” (John 12:5) The criticism made Judas appear as a man with great concern for the welfare of the poor.

(c) Nothing could have been further from the truth (v. 6): “This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it.”

(d) Judas hid his true motives by pretending to care about the poor, by playing the hypocrite.

(e) When Judas went out with the mob to arrest Jesus. He gave the mob a sign so they would know whom to arrest: “Whomever I kiss, He is the One; seize Him.” (Matt. 26:48).

(f) When Judas approached Jesus he acted as his closest, dear friend; but Jesus exposed his hypocrisy when He said: “Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?” (Lk. 22:48)

C. 7 Hypocrisy does great harm to the cause of Christ

- (1) Sometimes people criticize the Lord’s church by saying it is “full of hypocrites.”

- (a) More often than not, this criticism is used as an excuse for the one making the accusation to avoid their responsibilities towards God (“To hide behind something you’ve got to be smaller!”).
- (b) Sometimes the charges are valid as some Christians do play the hypocrite before unbelievers (e.g., cursing, social drinking) and such actions have negative effects upon efforts to spread the gospel to the lost.
- (2) The failure of God’s people to “practice what we preach” will cause the name of God to be blasphemed among unbelievers (**Rom. 2:21-24**).
- (a) When we try to live with one foot in the kingdom of God and the other in the sinful world, unbelievers are not stupid; they can see through that and know we are not putting God first in our lives.
- (b) They recognize our faith is not real and conclude the teachings of our Lord are not worthy to be followed; thus they have no interest in hearing and obeying the gospel.
- (3) God judges everyone individually for their own unfaithfulness, but the Lord also warned against those who would be a stumbling block or an offense to others (**Matt. 18:6-7**: “Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea. 7 Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!”).
- (a) The hypocrite is a stumbling block to those who need to see the pure light of the gospel shining in a world of sin and darkness.
- (b) How terrible it would be to discover our actions kept someone from becoming interested in obeying the gospel.

D. 8 Hypocrisy is contagious

- (1) Not only does the hypocrite have a negative influence upon unbelievers, he also has a negative influence upon his own brethren. Like many sins, hypocrisy is contagious.
 - (a) For example, recall what Paul said concerning Peter’s hypocrisy:

Gal. 2:11-13: “Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; 12 for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. 13 And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy.”
 - (b) There’s no doubt Peter’s hypocrisy had a negative impact on the Gentile Christians he began to shun, but his actions also influenced other Jewish Christians to imitate his hypocritical actions. Even Barnabas, the Son of Encouragement, imitated Peter’s hypocrisy.
- (2) In the Bible, “leaven” often refers to the spreading influence of sin (**1 Cor. 5:6-7**: “Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? 7 Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.”).
 - (a) Jesus said the “leaven” of the Pharisees was their “hypocrisy” (**Lk. 12:1**: “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.”).
 - (b) The Pharisees may have taught the Scriptures, but what they displayed in their daily lives was hypocrisy. The disciples needed to take heed they did not become like the Pharisees.

E. 9 The hypocrite will be destroyed

- (1) Hypocrisy is a sin, like all other sins, hypocrisy will result in eternal punishment.

- (a) Remember when Jesus contrasted the faithful vs. unfaithful servants? Jesus said of the unfaithful servant: *“the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of, 51 and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”* (Matt. 24:50-51)
- (b) Hypocrisy is a form of lying, *“and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”* (Rev. 21:8)
- (2) In the early church, two members named Ananias and Sapphira sold a possession, kept back part of the money for themselves (perfectly within their rights), and brought the rest and laid it at the apostles’ feet (Acts 5:1-11).
 - (a) God struck them dead. It was not wrong to keep back part of the money for themselves.
 - (b) The problem is that they wanted full credit for only a partial sacrifice. They were pretending to be more generous than they really were. They acted as hypocrites! They were destroyed!
- 2. **10** How can we overcome the sin of hypocrisy? Just as with other sins, one can overcome the sin of hypocrisy with conscious effort. There are different reasons that Christians pretend to be someone that they are not, so there are different things that can help one overcome this sin.

A. ** Repent of your sin

- (1) One reason Christians are hypocrites (act like people they are not) is because they are trying to hide sin in their life.
 - (a) They act righteously in an effort to make sure no one discovers their sinful secrets.
 - (b) Judas acted piously attempting to cover up the fact he was covetous and a thief (Jn. 12:4-6).
 - (c) The Pharisees put much effort in acting righteously, but their hearts were actually full of sin (**Matt. 23:25-26**: *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. 26 Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also.”*).
 - (d) Jesus taught the cleansing of the heart would lead to a righteous life.
- (2) The proper way to deal with our sin is to repent (Acts 8:22), not to hide it under a façade of false righteousness.
 - (a) Sin causes us embarrassment and thus tempts us to try to conceal it (**Rom. 13:14**: *“But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.”*; **Rom. 12:9**: *“Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.”*; **Jas. 4:7-8**: *“Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.”*).
 - (b) We must learn to overcome the temptation to commit sin to cover previous sin! **Gen. 4:6-7** (Recall that in every lesson in this series I’ve made the point that we must make a conscious effort to overcome sin; in other words *“you should rule over it.”*)

B. **11** Stop seeking the praise of men

- (1) Some Christians are hypocrites because they try to please both God and man.
 - (a) Sometimes it’s just as simple wanting to “fit in”; wanting to be a part of the conversation; so we say things that are designed to bring attention to ourselves (e.g., exaggeration).
 - (b) We cannot divide our loyalty between two masters (**Matt. 6:24**: *“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”*).

- (i) We are to seek God with our whole heart (**Psa. 119:10**: *“With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments!”*), not with divided affections.
 - (ii) The hypocrite seeks to do this: acting one way on Sunday, or when around other Christians, then acting differently the rest of the week (or when not around Christians). All in an effort to enjoy the pleasures of the world and to receive praise and acceptance of worldly minded people.
 - (iii) This balancing act may fool men (not always!), but it will not fool God (**Jas. 4:4**: *“Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”*).
- (2) We must choose godly character over worldly reputation.
- (a) A mature Christian knows his duty is to please God—not man (**Gal. 1:10**: *“For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.”*).
 - (b) A hypocrite sells out his integrity for the beggarly crumbs of respect offered by the world; a man of character will remain true to his convictions regardless of the cost.
- (3) The Pharisees set themselves up as the most righteous and devout of the Jews.
- (a) In their effort to keep up their reputation, they fell victim to the temptation to keep up appearances at all costs.
 - (b) Soon, the inward practice of their religion gave way to only keeping outward appearances.
 - (c) The Pharisees made an ostentatious practice of their religion for one purpose—for the praise of men.
 - (d) In doing so, the practice of their religion brought them no praise or reward from God (They sounded the trumpet when doing charitable deeds in Matt. 6:1-6; also when fasting in 6:18; They enjoyed a grand show of false piety: **Matt. 23:4-8**: *“For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. 5 But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments. 6 They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, 7 greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, ‘Rabbi, Rabbi.’”*).
- (4) We don’t have to advertise our good works. Others will see the good works we do in the practice of our religion (Matt. 5:16), but the goal and result must be glorifying God, not ourselves. What is our motivation behind the things we do in our service to God and others?!

C. 12 Practice what we preach

- (1) Jesus exposed the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees regarding their actions not matching their teaching: *“Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do.”* (Matt. 23:3)
 - (a) Notice Jesus didn’t disregard their teaching; truth is truth—even from hypocrite’s mouth.
 - (b) We are to believe and obey the truth regardless of the character of the one teaching it.
 - (c) However, possessing the truth will do us no good personally if we fail to obey it.
- (2) Perhaps no man was in a better position to understand the truth regarding the acceptance of the Gentiles than the apostle Peter.
 - (a) He received visions from the Lord and witnessed the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as confirmation that God accepted the Gentiles (Acts 10).

- (b) Peter even preached the truth on this subject (Acts 11:4-18; 15:7-11; **Acts 10:34-35**: *"Then Peter opened his mouth and said: 'In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. 35 But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.'"*).
- (c) However, he acted inconsistently to that understanding when he was in Antioch (Gal. 2:11-13); he did not practice what he preached, and Paul said he played the hypocrite.
- (3) Remember, the Jews possessed the law of God, but they dishonored God by failing to keep the law (**Rom. 2:21-24**).
 - (a) They were just as guilty of sin before God as were the Gentiles.
 - (b) The best way to overcome hypocrisy is to make sure our words and actions are always in harmony with the truth of God's word.

D. **13 Judge with righteous judgment**

- (1) It is hypocritical for a man to hold others to a higher standard than what he holds himself (**Matt. 7:1-5**).
 - (a) "Judge not" is not a condemnation against a Christian ever making a judgment with regards to another person (e.g., see v. 6).
 - (b) The passage is not making a blanket condemnation of any and all judgments; but is warning against hypercritical and hypocritical judgments.
 - (i) Jesus referred to a man with the plank in his eye as a "hypocrite." Why?
 - (ii) This man, with an obvious fault (a plank, log, beam sticking out of his eye), felt the need to help another man remove a tiny splinter from his eye.
 - (iii) He ignored or dismissed his glaring fault and pointed out a minute fault in another.
 - (iv) According to the Lord, that makes one a hypocrite. Jesus spoke a similar truth when He rebuked the scribes and Pharisees for straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel (**Matt. 23:24**).
- (2) A hypocrite, in this sense, is one who condemns sin in others while ignoring sin that exists in his own life.
 - (a) They judge others by a harsh standard; they judge themselves with a lesser standard.
 - (b) We must "judge with righteous judgment" (Jn. 7:24), and need to apply that "righteous judgment" consistently and without prejudice or partiality (**1 Tim. 5:21**: *"I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing with partiality."*).
 - (i) We do not and cannot overlook sins, but we need to be as merciful to others as we would want them to be to us (**Jas. 2:13**: *"For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment."*).
 - (ii) Everyone sins and falls short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23); eventually, unmerciful judgment makes everyone a hypocrite.

E. **14 Get into the habit of telling and living the truth**

- (1) Hypocrisy is a form of lying; if we have a problem with hypocrisy we need to stop lying through both our words and our actions.
- (2) Like Paul, we are to live openly and honestly with all men (**2 Cor. 8:21**: *"providing honorable things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men."*).
 - (a) We need to learn to be content with our lives (**Phil. 4:11**: *"...I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content"*), rather than feeling the need to impress others and live up to the

world's expectations (**1 Peter 2:9**: *"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:"*).

- (b) Be a "transparent person"! We need to stop giving in to the temptation to have others believe we are something we are not (**Gal. 6:3**: *"For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself."*). Remember the kid in school who was the "attention hog"? Always exaggerating and trying to shine the spotlight upon themselves. I always felt embarrassed for such a person because most people saw right through it and held them in contempt.

III. Conclusion: 15

1. Acting like someone we are not may have been acceptable when we were a child; however, there is nothing acceptable about someone playing a hypocrite.
2. Hypocrisy is a sin that received the Lord's strongest condemnation.
 - A. It is a purposeful effort to deceive others with regards to our true character and motives.
 - B. As with other sins, hypocrisy must be laid aside (**1 Pet. 2:1-3**: *"Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, 2 as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, 3 if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious."*).
 - C. Christians are to be the "real deal"; we are to have a "sincere faith" (1 Tim. 1:5) and "sincere love"; "sincere love of the brethren" (2 Cor. 6:6; 1 Pet. 1:22).
3. If we find we have a problem with this sin, we need to pray to God for forgiveness and take the necessary steps to make sure we are not appointed a portion with the hypocrites (Matt. 24:51).

Adapted from *Overcoming Sin*, by Heath Rogers, 2013, One Stone Press, Bowling Green, KY (pp. 61-66).

References:

Barclay, William. *New Testament Words*. London, England: SCM Press Ltd., 1964. 140. Print.

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