

The Hypocrite

Written by Bill Perkins

Hypocrisy was a big deal to Jesus. I mean in a bad way. Toward the end of his ministry he said this:

“Woe to you, scribes, and Pharisees, hypocrites” (Matthew 23:13).

“Woe to you, scribes, and Pharisees, hypocrites” (Matthew 23:14).

“Woe to you, scribes, and Pharisees, hypocrites” (Matthew 23:15).

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites” (Matthew 23:16).

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites” (Matthew 23:23).

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites” (Matthew 23:25).

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites” (Matthew 23:27).

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites” (Matthew 23:29).

Imagine Hearing It

If you think that was hard to read, imagine how hard it was to hear. Jesus didn't seem to gentle on that occasion. He reserved his harshest words for hypocrites. Not hookers, thieves, or crooked businessmen. But hypocrites. People who pretended to be godly while plotting to have him killed.

Two Kinds of Hypocrites

I've identified two kinds of hypocrites: the self-deceived and deceivers. The self-deceived believe a lie about themselves that's hidden behind a system of self-protection that blinds them to the truth. They're a psychotic actor who believes he's the good character he plays. They avoid the pain of this reality by isolating, or splitting off the destructive section of their personality and living as though the false-self doesn't define the real them.

While this may sound crazy, we do it every day. For instance, we're all going to die but we seldom think about it. We don't live as though we could die at any moment. What we do with death, self-deceived hypocrites do that with their secret self. They know it's there, just like we know we'll die, but they can live with it because they don't think about it.

The Deceiver

That leaves us with the hypocrite who's in touch with his dark behavior and knowingly deceives people into thinking he's better than he is. He's the priest who molests children but pretends to care for his parishioners. Or the alcoholic who serves on the church elder board. People like these have a stronghold so powerful the light of God can't penetrate the darkness (2 Corinthians 10:3-5).

We're All Hypocrites at Times

Of course, we're all hypocrites at times. But there's a difference between a man or woman who sometimes acts hypocritically and one who lives behind a mask. Both believe and act on a lie. The first will eventually see the lie, expose it to truth and live authentically. Or try to. The second embraces the lie or ignores it--until the day it's exposed.

As it will be (Mark 4:22 TLB).

Tip of the hat to Dr. Rodney L. Cooper for his insights into how hypocrites live with themselves.