

Christian Hypocrisy

The word hypocrisy means “under a mask.” Greek actors (called, in Greek, hypocrites) held masks over their faces to let the audience know the emotion they wanted to portray. Everybody knew what they were doing, so there was no actual deceit involved. The actor may have had a bad morning, but for the matinee he could simply hold a happy mask over his anger or his tears. Alternatively, he might be ecstatic about the birth of his first child, but at that evening’s performance had to put a sad mask over his joyful heart.

Hypocrisy is acting like who you aren’t, just like the biblical Pharisees. Jesus called them hypocrites because they faked looking good and hid their evil hearts. Their act may have been purposely deceitful or they may have actually believed they were good, but Jesus knew better. Whitewashed tombs, He called them – nice on the outside but rotten within. They pasted good acts over evil intentions. God tells us not to imitate the Pharisees. We’re not supposed to do things like pretend kindness when we’re really trying to take advantage of someone.

Sin-Masks

But there’s a deeper hypocrisy that most Christians never recognize: for a Christian, *sin* is hypocrisy. Why? Because when Christians sin they are acting like who they aren’t. Let me explain.

God says that when we join to Jesus He gives us a new identity: He transforms our very self, making us glorious at the depths of our being. Most Christians don’t believe any such change has occurred. Most think they’re still rotten to the core. But Christians are not sinners – not any longer. Please don’t misunderstand me. I’m not saying we don’t ever sin; I’m saying that we no longer should *identify* with our sin. This is important. Sin doesn’t describe who we are, but who we *were*. Paul’s repeated “no longer I” statements (Romans 7:17, 20) make that abundantly clear.

Hypocrisy is acting like who we aren’t. For a Christian, sin is hypocrisy.

Do we need to recognize when we sin? Yes, we do. Do we need to turn from our sinful acts? Of course. Must we sorrow for our sin? Yes, we must. But should we believe that our acts of disobedience prove that we still are shameful beings? Absolutely not. Our sin no longer defines who we are. God defines who we are. And He says He has made us new and clean and holy. Even if *we* believe we are still sinners, Jesus knows better. He knows that sin contradicts our new selves. Sin, for a Christian, is a hypocritical act: it pastes evil over a newly good heart.

Salvation makes us so radically new that God calls us “new creations” (2 Corinthians 5:17). But when we sin? Then we’re acting like we’re still our old, pre-Christian selves. Each time we sin, we (like the Pharisees) are acting like who we aren’t; we’re hiding our new hearts behind an ugly mask. The Bible doesn’t specifically call this “hypocrisy” ... but is it so different a phenomenon?

A Few Questions for Christians

- Are you convinced that God has made you a new creation – that you, the *real* you, resemble Jesus?
- Have you ever considered that each time you sin you’re committing “Christian hypocrisy”?
- How would your behavior towards others change if you accepted the fact that God has given you a new and glorious self?

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