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# Contending FOR THE Faith™

FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THE TRUTH AND HATE ERROR

## HONESTY

Roy J. Hearn

Diogenes was born in Pontus, Asia, and lived from 412 to 323 B.C. He has been termed the most famous cynic philosopher. He was an ascetic and was banned to Athens, Greece; he was an oddity to society. One time Alexander the Great saw him sitting by the side of the road and asked Diogenes what he might desire. He replied: "I would that you get out of my sunlight." Diogenes is perhaps best known for his going about the streets of Athens in daylight with a lantern searching for an honest man. Another philosopher in a different vein commented on the cynic view and said: "He who says there is no such thing as an honest man, you may be sure is himself a knave." So he who says that nobody is honest, by universal application, declares himself to be dishonest.

There is a need to eradicate the impression, fatal to so many, that one cannot live by being perfectly honest. It is never necessary to be dishonest, and one can never be dishonest without hurt to himself. **"Be sure your sin will find you out."** Cicero believed that nothing is useful that is not honest. George Smith, father of "Raccoon" John Smith, great pioneer preacher, had a peculiar sense of honesty. He decided that a bushel of corn was worth only 75 cents, so regardless if the market thought it might be \$2 a bushel, he would accept only 75 cents.

There have always been those who are dishonest to their

hurt and to others, Today there is to be found much dishonesty among politicians, public officials of all kinds, teachers in public and private schools, merchants, church members, elders, deacons and preachers. There is more dishonesty among the last three classes than many think.

### HONESTY DEFINED

Webster's Dictionary says honesty, "Implies a refusal to lie, steal or defraud, or deceive under any circumstances. It carries the idea of genuineness, candor, frankness and fairness."

Honesty is allied with honor, which adds to honesty the implication of high mindedness or a nice sense of allegiance to one's profession, which is especially true in the case of those who profess to be Christians. Honor is that which rightfully attracts esteem, especially in excellence of character; in men, uprightness and integrity; in women, purity and chastity.

From these definitions, one might conclude that they who think it honorable to uphold or shield that which is dishonorable, are neither honest nor honorable. This scribe found that in the college situation, students were averse to expose drinkers of alcohol, thieves, cheaters and other types of evil doers. There were few exceptions. However, it was not honorable nor honest for any real Christians not to do so. Even so it is in local churches, sometimes.

### CHRISTIANS MUST BE HONEST

First Corinthians 6:19, 20 states:

**What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.**

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*CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH is published bimonthly. P. O. Box 2357, Spring, Texas 77383-2357 Telephone: (281) 350-5516.*

**Ira Y. Rice, Jr., Founder**  
**August 3, 1917–October 10, 2001**

## *Editorial...*

# **PAUL “WITHSTOOD” PETER “TO THE FACE”**

**(Galatians 1:11)**

In his letter to the Galatian churches, Paul is affirming and proving his apostleship as he refutes the false doctrine of the Judaizing teachers who sought to bind on the Gentile converts circumcision and keeping the Mosaic law. Galatians 2:11 is located in the context of Paul’s defense and refutation of the matters mentioned in the previous sentence (Acts 15:1, 2, 5, 24). Paul began his defense when he affirmed in Galatians 1:1 that he was an apostle of Jesus Christ, whom God the Father had raised from the dead. As an apostle of Christ, Paul had received from Jesus through the agency of the Holy Spirit what he taught, as was the case with all the apostles of Christ (John 14:15-17; 15:26, 27; 16:7-14; Luke 24:49; Acts 2:1-4, 42; 8:14-18; 1 Cor. 14:37; 2 Pet. 3:2; 1 Tim. 4:1). Paul, therefore, proved he was an apostle by exhibiting the miraculous credentials of an ambassador of the court of heaven (2 Cor. 12:12). Thus, only the apostles of Christ are His official ambassadors to mankind (Luke 24: 48, 49; John 14:26; 15:26, 27).

In the process of writing to the Galatian churches in defense of his apostolic office, Paul exposed and refuted the Judaizers who questioned his apostleship. Part of Paul’s argumentation required him to report that he was obligated to withstand Peter to his face because of the latter’s sin of hypocrisy committed at Antioch of Syria sometime after the events Luke records in Acts 15—especially note verses 1, 2, and 24. Some time had passed following the Jerusalem meeting recorded in Acts 15 before Peter came to Antioch and the events Paul reported to the Galatian churches that causing Paul to confront Peter (Gal. 2:11-14ff).

When Peter came to Antioch he ate with his Gentile brethren—a significant act of fellowship between and among brethren in the Lord. However, when Jewish brethren came from Jerusalem to Antioch, Peter was so fearful of them that he ceased eating with the Gentiles. What a terrible message Peter’s evil conduct sent to all the brethren, Jew and Gentile alike, concerning Christian fellowship (or the lack of it) in the Lord’s church. Remember that God had selected the apostle Peter as the apostle to the Jews to reveal to them that God is no respecter of persons concerning who and how one is to be saved from sin and the fellowship of both in the Lord’s church (Acts 10:34, 35; 11:17; Acts 15; Eph. 2:14).

Further, Peter’s stated hypocrisy in Antioch was a slap in the face of Paul’s apostolic authority. Thus, it would undermine his teaching. After all, a part of the campaign of the Judaizing teachers was to discredit Paul’s apostleship and, thereby, what he taught. Therefore, Peter’s sinful action would also bolster the evil cause of the Judaizers.

In his Galatian epistle, Paul informed the Galatians of the debate he and Barnabas had with the Judaizers when, years before, those false teachers first came to Antioch. Concerning that debate Paul wrote. **“To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you”** (Gal. 2:5).

Following Paul and Barnabas’ confrontation with the false teachers in Antioch, a meeting convened in Jerusalem to learn from whom the false doctrine had originated. Paul tells us that he went up to Jerusalem because it was revealed to him that he ought to go to the meeting (Gal. 2:2). Indeed, Paul did not need to go to Jerusalem to learn anything about the gospel, for the Lord revealed the truth of the gospel to him about this matter. In other words, what Paul taught, he taught by revelation of Jesus Christ on this or any other topic regarding salvation (Gal. 1:11, 12). Thus, Paul was not required to wait for anyone to inform him about the truth on this or any other salvation matter. Thereby Paul and Barnabas recognized the error of the Judaizers when it was first espoused in Antioch (Acts 15:1, 2 ). It is in this Jerusalem meeting that we learn from where the Judaizers originated. **“But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses”** (Acts 15:5).

At the conclusion of the Jerusalem meeting, Peter, James, and Paul stated the truth on the matter in the presence of all convened. The conclusion was that the Judaizers had concocted the false doctrine and the apostles and elders at Jerusalem had nothing to do with it. It, therefore, pleased the apostles and elders to write a letter to the churches clearly saying as much and more (Acts 15:6-31; Gal. 2:6-10). Thus, the gospel Paul preached and defended at Antioch was the same gospel he preached wherever he preached, including the churches of Galatia. The Gospel of Christ did not and does not teach the doctrine of the Judaizers (Gal. 1:6-11).

### SOME LESSONS LEARNED

Among the things we are taught by the foregoing are: (1) when error either binds on Christians what God does not (as is the case with the doctrine of the Judaizers in the First Century AD church), or looses people from what God in His Word has bond upon mankind, the faithful are to take immediate action, without respect of persons, to refute the false doctrine(s), rebuke the false teacher(s), and call for their repentance. If no repentance is forthcoming, false teachers are to be marked and avoided by the church, again, without respect of persons (Rom. 2:11; 16:17, 18; Jam. 2:1; 1 Pet. 1:17; Tit. 3:10; 2 The. 3:6, 11, 12; 2 John 8-11).

(2) We also learn how to deal with public sins by Paul’s example in confronting the Judaizers and later Peter’s hypocrisy at Antioch. The foregoing actions of Paul harmonizes with what the inspired Jude in his epistle taught the faithful to do regarding dealing with false teachers and public sinful conduct, especially, and in no uncertain terms, in

verse 3 (1 Tim. 5:20).

In our Lord’s instructions, found in Matthew 18:15-17, we are taught God’s will for dealing with a sin committed by one brother against another (This was discussed in the 2019 August issue of *CFTF* in the late Guy N. Woods’ article. For more regarding publicly known sins, whether false doctrine and/or sinful actions, please study 1 Corinthians 5; 2 Thesalonians 3:6, 14; 2 John 8-10).

In the case of Peter’s sin at Antioch, remember that Peter was not guilty of teaching and/or defending the false doctrine of the Judaizers orally or in writing. The apostle sinned because of his conduct—he acted hypocritically. Again, in Galatians 2:12 Paul gives us the reason Peter failed to live according to the gospel, which sinful action required that Paul withstand his fellow apostle to the face because Peter **“withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.”** Indeed, Peter’s sin caused other Jews, even Barnabas, to follow his hypocritical example (Gal. 2:13, 14). For that sin Peter was to be **“blamed”** (Gal. 2:11).

(3) In the past, at present, and into the future, sinful actions by members of the church have caused as many, if not more, problems than have false teachers espousing their erroneous doctrines. Many of these problems will arise and continue in the church because brethren fear people in the church and out. Not to recognize that reality is to be foolish indeed. He who appears as an angel of light influences many brethren as they seek to justify themselves in the sins of which they are guilty (2 Cor. 11:14). Does anyone really believe that Peter is the only member of the church who ever sinned because he feared someone?

Fear, such as Peter had of the Jews when they arrived in Antioch, is no less terrible than is murder. But, as with other sins we do not deem to be serious, many brethren seemingly cannot get their heads around the fact that the fear that moved Peter to be a hypocrite is on a par with lying, etc. Thus, we see the list into which the Holy Spirit guided the apostle John to place it. Indeed, this fear is first in a most sordid list of sins, with a place in hell reserved for all who die guilty of one or all of them.

**But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death** (Rev. 21:8).

It is Paul who wrote: **“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind”** (2 Tim. 1:7). Writing about how such fear as Peter permitted to possess him, the apostle John also tells us the only remedy for it. **“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love”** (1 John 4:18).

Earlier in his epistle, John taught how love is made per-

fect or complete. John wrote: **“But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him”** (1 John 2:5). Thus, the love that drives out such fear as Peter had at Antioch is accomplished when we obey God’s Word. As Jesus said to his apostles, **“If ye love me, keep my commandments”** (John 14:15). The *American Standard version* (1901) renders John 14:15, **“If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments.”** Thus, we are reminded that it is the faith that obeys that saves us (Heb. 5:9). Further, the remedy for such fear as Peter allowed to control him at Antioch is to have a love of and faith in God and Godly things, which divine combination in a Christian will always cause one to obey the Lord. Sadly, Peter’s fear of the Jews lately come from Jerusalem to Antioch was greater than his faith in and love of God and Godly things.

Without such love and faith, preachers find themselves afflicted with various and sundry fears. Some of them are:

1. Fear of losing their preacher friends,
2. Fear of losing their preaching positions,
3. Fear of incurring the wrath of weak and insipid church members,
4. Fear that preacher training schools, etc. will “black-ball” them,
5. Fear of being lied about,
6. Fear of not being invited to lectureships,
7. Fear of not being invited to preach gospel meetings, 8.
8. Fear of losing their families, and
9. Fear of being afraid.

Also, elders fear their wives, families, the anger of those members who are good financial contributors, those who seem to be somewhat in the brotherhood, and so on. Certainly, they do not believe Jesus when he said, **“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you”** (Mat. 6:33), or when our Lord said, **“Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me”** (Mat. 16:24), or what Paul wrote to Timothy, **“Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution”** (2 Tim. 3:12). They have never learned, or they have apostatized to the point of forgetting that,

**Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you** (Mat. 5:10-12).

Sadly, their fear is the strongest thing about them, but it ought to be their love of and faith in God and Godly things. So, whether it is trouble in the church brought on by factions caused by false doctrines, or the far reaching influence of a

prominent brother’s single sinful act, as that of the apostle Peter, it has been, is, and will be as the apostle Paul wrote, **“For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you”** (1 Cor. 11:19; Also see Acts 20:29, 30; 2 Pet. 2:1).

(4) Too many preachers preach and act to please someone other than the Lord. And too many elders love to have it so. Hence, the sin of failing to preach the whole counsel of God, or any one component part of it, and defending the faith as a whole or any component part of it, is a sin of omission, leaving the church in ignorance. However, this is not the example left by the peerless apostle Paul (Acts 20:17-32; 2 Tim. 4:1-5) Nevertheless, such has been the case and there is no reason to think that in general it will change.

### WHAT IF?

If one opposes a false doctrine, but acts towards the teacher of it as if all is well between them, something is wrong. This is not the example left us in the preceding study. When one remains as silent as the tomb, when he had originally let it be known that he was going to publicly refute a false doctrine, that person is without excuse for ignoring the example of Paul confronting Peter because of the latter’s sin. Further, this person is refusing to obey what he teaches and has taught concerning Jude 3, et al. If one ceases to fellowship a person who teaches a false doctrine, but at the same time continues to fellowship a fellow elder who practices the same false doctrine, that person has not benefited from the foregoing study. Furthermore, if a lectureship director has no problem in giving permission for another longtime friend and fellow gospel preacher to deal with an error that said director had refused to address to and concerning his fellow elder, then that director has a problem in consistently applying the necessary truth to himself and what his own personal responsibility to God requires of him. When that lectureship director does not plan to inform a fellow elder about the fact that he has given permission for a lectureship speaker to expose said error and the teacher of it by name, it does not take a Solomon to see that something is wrong and said person has not benefitted from the example Paul left us in Galatians 2:5, 6, 11 and the other scriptures dealing with the same.

Some people remind us of the fellow in the civil war. He did not desire to be shot by the Yankees nor by the Confederates, so in his wisdom he wore a Yankee blue uniform coat and gray Confederate trousers. The consequence of this poor fellow’s choice of clothing was that the Confederates shot him through his blue coat and the Yankees shot him in his gray trousers. I have more respect for a person who will plainly state his error believing it to be the truth than I do for the person who loves to play both sides against the middle while straddling the fence.

—David P. Brown, Editor

(Continued From Page 1)

Christians are to honor Christ in all things. One who claims to be a Christian and does not respect God's Word lacks honor and honesty. Real Christians seek to know the will of God and put forth every effort to pursue it. Such respect cannot help but produce honesty in all who so do.

### WHAT SAY THE SCRIPTURES?

First Timothy 2:2 says: **"Pray for kings, and all in authority, that we may all lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty."** This indicates the possibility, therefore, a requirement. God does not require what is impossible to do. Romans 13:13 states: **"Let us walk honestly as in the day."** Evil doers often seek cover of darkness to hide their acts. The honest person has nothing to hide and can face the world with peace of mind. It is a good feeling to know one is right before God and man. It has been said in substance, "One can fool most of the people most of the time, and some of the people some of the time, but one cannot fool God any of the time. (Nor, all of the people all of the time)."

1. Hear the Holy Spirit in 2 Cor. 13:7: **"Now I pray to God that ye do no evil ... but that ye should do that which is honest"** ("**honorable,**" *ASV*, 1901). It takes little courage to follow the crowd and yield to pressures, and do evil, but it takes much courage to do that which is right, hence, the ones who participate in things dishonest, and those who shield and encourage such are cowards, they are weaklings. Anyone who shields evildoers becomes a partaker in the sin.

2. Romans 12:17 states: **"Provide things honest in the sight of all men."** Do such things in a way that will be regarded as honorable by all people. 1 Peter 2: 12 says: **"Having your behavior honest among the Gentiles ... that they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation."** If Christians are not honest, how does that affect the sinners in the world? We are supposed to be lights in the world (Mat. 5:14-16). By our conduct, how are we impressing our associates? For good or evil? Are we ashamed to always try to do right (Mark 8:38)?

3. In Luke 8:15, in connection with the parable of the soils, seeds and sowers, the Lord said: **"But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience."** In this parable Jesus deals with the hearer, not the teacher. Honest hearts bring forth good fruit through hearing the word and keeping it. Conversely, the heart that does not bring forth good fruit is not honest. The reason many are not affected for good is that they will not listen, or will not properly apply the word when needed.

4. Paul said: **"Pray for us for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly"** (Heb. 13:18). Honesty does not mean we cannot make mistakes, nor mean perfection (Phi. 3:12). But honesty demands we

correct the mistakes we make. One should seek to know what is right then try to do it, and as the apostle Paul did: **"Exercise selves to always have a conscience void of offense toward God and man."**

5. In view of the definitions of honesty and a few passages quoted from God's word, a few questions are in order.

Are we honest with God when we as Christians fail to have proper respect for God's will? There is no way we can hide. Hebrews 4:13 says: **"Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and opened unto him with whom we have to do."** The wise man stated: **"For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil"** (Ecc. 12:14).

Back in the days of prohibition, a bootlegger went to deliver some of his wares. In those days, there were automobiles called "touring cars." They had canvas tops, double thickness, but no windows. The man looked east, west, north and south before he pulled out a bottle of whiskey from the top to deliver. However, he failed to look up, and a man in a second story across the street saw him. So many engaged in wrong doing today are concerned about people seeing them, but never look up to see that God is watching, too.

Are we honest with ourselves? Do not be deceived into thinking that believing a thing to be different will make it so. Neither think that one can be honorable by upholding that which is dishonorable. Am I what I say I am? Am I willing to purge my motives? Honesty will demand that we seek to improve ourselves. Honesty is a fundamental virtue. It gives courage and confidence. The dishonest man is forever afraid of his deeds coming to light, while the honest man can face the world with nothing questionable about which to wonder. Honesty makes one humble and unselfish. Shakespeare said: "This above all, to thine own self be true; and it must follow, as night the day, thou canst not be false to any man." How many of us preachers can say: I have never dealt dishonestly, in the least, in any way, with any church with which I labored?

—Deceased



# IS OBEDIENCE NECESSARY?

David W. Cofer

There are some in the religious world who feel man's beliefs and opinions supersede the command of God. Some contend God never forbade using instruments of music in New Testament worship. They believe it improves the worship service, makes it more exciting and entertaining, and brings in more people to hear the Word, so therefore it must be a good thing.

Some say it is not fair to forbid women from leadership roles in the church and from having authority over a man. In our society today, women occupy positions of leadership, so why not in the church?

Some believe baptism is not necessary for salvation. Just believe and have faith and you will be pleasing to God, they say.

We could go on and on with many other examples. But what does the Bible say? The Bible says it is not for man to direct his own steps, but to look to the Lord for direction, (Jer. 10:23).

Let us look in the Bible for some examples of those who attempted to direct their own steps in opposition to the command of God and see how that worked out for them.

In Exodus 17, the Lord told Moses to strike the rock at Horeb and water would flow out of it for the people to drink. Moses did as he was instructed and water emerged from the rock. However, in Numbers 20, we read the people were once again grumbling about the lack of water. This time, the Lord told Moses to speak to the rock and it will yield water. Unfortunately, Moses did not do as the Lord commanded. Instead, he struck the rock with his rod twice. Water came forth from the rock and the people and the animals drank. Some may say, "No harm, no foul," but Moses's actions were not according to the command of God. Because Moses did not obey the command given by God, in verse 12, we read that God told Moses he would not lead this assembly into the land He had given them. Apparently, God meant what He said when He told Moses to speak to the rock. Moses' disobedience to God's command had serious consequences.

In Leviticus chapter 10, we read of Nadab and Abihu. They offered "strange" (unauthorized) fire before the Lord, contrary to His command. As a result, they were consumed by the fire and died on the spot. They suffered dire consequences for their failure to obey God's command.

In 2 Samuel 6, we read of Uzzah. The Ark of the Covenant was being transported on a cart pulled by oxen. One of the oxen stumbled, and in good conscience, but in opposition to God's command not to touch the ark, Uzzah took

hold of the ark to keep it from falling. As a result of his disobedience, he was struck dead on the spot. God had given specific instructions about the movement of the Ark of the Covenant, and to not touch it.

Finally, let us turn to the New Testament for an example. In Acts chapter 5, we read of Ananias and Sapphira. At this time, many disciples were selling land and houses and giving the proceeds to the apostles to distribute to those in need. Ananias and Sapphira also sold a piece of property. But they held back a portion and gave the rest to the apostles. As Peter explained to them, their sin was not holding back a portion, but in lying to God (Holy Spirit) about the amount for which the property sold. It was their property before it was sold, and their money after it was sold. They had no obligation to give any of it to the apostles for the needy. But Ananias and Sapphira wanted the glory of selling their property and giving all of the money to the apostles, while at the same time withholding a portion for themselves. As a result of their sin, they also died on the spot.

Many more examples could be given: Adam and Eve eating the forbidden fruit, Jonah going to Tarshish instead of Nineveh, Lot's wife looking back, etc.—each with devastating consequences.

Instead of suffering the consequences of disobedience, we must heed the word of God and obey His commands. We are instructed several times in the New Testament to sing, never to play musical instrument in the worship service (Col. 3:16, 1 Cor. 14:15, Eph. 5:19, Heb. 2:12). We are commanded to partake of the Lord's Supper on the first day of every week, not quarterly or only on special occasions as some do. In 1 Timothy 2:12, Paul writes to Timothy and tells him that the women are not to teach or have authority over a man. Yet we find in the religious world where women are "pastors" and ministers, and where women lead prayers before the congregation, serve the Lord's Supper, hold positions of leadership, etc. This is in direct opposition to the commands of the Lord.

Many believe and teach that baptism is not necessary for salvation. What does the Bible say? Mark 16:16 says "**He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.**" It cannot be any clearer than that. In every conversion example in the New Testament, the convert is baptized immediately. Galatians 3:26 says we clothe ourselves with Christ when we are baptized. Before his ascension, Jesus instructed his disciples to make disciples of all nations, "**baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit**" (Mat. 28:19-20). 1 Peter 3:21 clearly says that baptism saves us. On the

day of Pentecost when the Jews asked what they must do to be saved, Peter answered, “**Repent and be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins**” (Acts 2:38). Again, the Bible’s teaching on this is clear. Obedience to Christ in baptism is essential for salvation.

Nowhere in the Bible is anyone instructed to say a “sinner’s prayer” or to just accept Christ in their heart to be saved. We are saved by grace through our faith, but not by faith alone (Jam. 2:24).

Matthew 7:21-23 describes the fate of those who dis-

obey God. Jesus, who will judge all of mankind on Judgment Day, will say to them, “**I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!**”

Yes, disobedience has its consequences, even unintentional disobedience, as in the case of Uzzah. Therefore, it is important to develop a habit of regular, daily Bible study so we may learn and obey the commands of God. Our eternal life depends upon it.

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## WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A HYPOCRITE AND A FAITHFUL CHRISTIAN WHO STUMBLES AT LEAST ONCE IN A WHILE?

Thomas B. Warren

The aim of this article is to pinpoint some of the basic difference between a thorough-going hypocrite and a faithful Christian who (although he realizes that he “stumbles” at least at times) strives with all of his heart to walk faithfully before God.

To correctly fight this battle, he must understand what it means to be (1) a hypocrite (one who pretends to be what he is not) and (2) a truly sincere, faithful Christian (a member of the Lord’s one—and only—true church)—that is, one who strives with all of his heart to love God and, as a result, to do what God’s Word (the Bible) teaches him to do. It is possible for two people (for example, a husband and wife) to both learn and obey the truth (the Gospel of Christ), thus becoming Christians in so doing, and yet—with the passing of time—it is possible for either one or both of the two to fall away into unfaithfulness (by merely *pretending* to live as a Christian must). Consider the possibility that the wife remains faithful while the husband (without letting either his wife or anyone else know about his apostasy) continues to be at every service of the church, even though it is the case that no longer does he give a serious thought to what is occurring all about him—especially does he not give serious attention to what is being said by the man who is preaching the sermon. Rather than listening with all of his heart to the message, he thinks of worldly matters (such as envisioning himself being engaged in some sort of worldly [sinful] activity). A man who does such things may “fool” both his wife and many others in the assembly, but he cannot deceive God Almighty. However, he may be deceiving himself into believing that God—“if indeed” he says to himself, “there really is an infinite God and if the Bible really is His inspired word, then I shall be safe from eternal punishment—after all, I am a religious person who attends almost all of the Sunday morning worship services. So, it is clear that I have nothing to fear. I know that God—if he exists—will not cast me into any lake of fire.” So, he sits calmly in his pew with a great deal of self-satisfaction.

At the same time, another couple (husband and wife) *demonstrate* (even though they are *not* absolutely perfect and even as they engage in singing, prayer, the Lord’s Supper, giving, or

the preaching of God’s sacred Word) that they not only put God ahead of everything else in their lives, but they realize that they need the *mercy* of God because they are *not perfect*—that is, it is not the case that they never sin at any time by (1) doing something which the Bible *forbids* or by (2) *failing to do* some deed which the Bible makes clear is something which one *must* do to be pleasing to God.

The two couples described briefly just above can be the source of each and every one of us weighing our lives in the light of the sacred Word of God, the Bible.

If any person is a *hypocrite* (*merely pretends* to be faithful), then if he/she is to be saved eternally, he/she must repent of their past sins and turn away from their wicked ways.

If any human being holds that he can deceive God into not knowing that he is living a *hypocritical* life, then—if he never subsequently repents (before his death)—he will be lost forever in the midst of very agonizing suffering.

Jesus made clear (Mat. 23:27-28) that *every* hypocrite is in very deep trouble. On the “outside” they are “beautiful” but on the “inside” they are full of mere bones and filth. Let us all help one another so that we will not be eternally punished.

It would be good for every person to thoroughly examine his own heart and deeds with the sincere intention of (1) not *masking* who he really is while he merely plays a part for those who observe him, (2) not *acting* with the desire—not to actually do what is right but merely to gain the approval of other mere human beings (see Mat. 6:1-3), (3) not *being satisfied* with the mere external aspects of religion while he pays no attention to the crucial matters of love for God and his fellow human beings (Mat. 15:1-21), (4) not *using* the language of the Bible in such fashion as to hide the real motives which are concealed in his heart; (Mat. 22:18-22), and (5) not *ignoring* the marvelous teaching of Jesus by which He warns every hypocrite. May each and every one of us earnestly strive to reject all hypocritical thoughts and deeds.

—Deceased

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