

Hypocrisy In the Church

Mark 7:1-13

Introduction

Turn to the Gospel of Mark, chapter 7, as we continue our expositional tour through this dynamic “Gospel of Action”. We are going to touch on a subject today, that is a very difficult one to preach about. I want you to know that I stand before you with bruised feet, as I have had them walked on all week. The topic that we are going to talk about is hypocrites and hypocrisy in the church.

You might think, “Great, Pastor, it’s about time you preached on that subject. There are a lot of hypocrites in the world and there are a lot of hypocrites in this church. Go get them! Sock it to them.”

Yet, I am afraid that if there is one sin we are all guilty of at times, it is the sin of hypocrisy. I think this message comes at a time when we need to ask ourselves some questions, not only personally, but as a church body. Do we manifest some of the characteristics that Jesus Christ will point His finger at in the lives of these Pharisees? If so, let us clean up today.

Attitudes Emphasized External Performance Rather Than Inward Purity

Look at Mark 7:1-3.

The Pharisees and some of the scribes gathered around Him when they had come from Jerusalem, and had seen that some of His disciples were eating their bread with impure hands, that is, unwashed. (For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless

they carefully wash their hands, thus observing the traditions of the elders;

“The elders,” in this verse, is referring to ancients, not necessarily elders in church polity. Continue to Mark 7:4.

and when they come from the market place, they do not eat unless they cleanse themselves; and there are many other things which they have received in order to observe, such as the washing of cups and pitchers and copper pots.)

I think the first of three characteristics that Jesus Christ will reveal, as He rips the mask off these hypocrites, is that their attitudes emphasized external performance rather than inward purity.

These verses give reference to hand washing that the Pharisees were so upset about. If you have heard our previous discussions in our study through the Gospel of Mark, then you know that Jesus has had confrontations with the Pharisees time and time again. These confrontations were usually over the same problem – Jesus Christ is not obeying their traditions. He is different; He is a maverick; He is not fulfilling the status quo that they knew should be part of the church worship. This confrontation that we will look at in Mark and in Luke today, is probably the most bitter confrontation that He will have with these men.

Understand what this hand washing was all about. Jews could be defiled just by touching something that was unceremonial or unclean by the standards of ceremony. So these Pharisees, before they ever ate, and frequently before they would even enter their homes, would go through a ritual. This ritual had

nothing to do with hygienic cleanliness, but with traditional observance.

The Pharisees would get a basin of water, or perhaps a pitcher, roll up their sleeves to keep them from getting wet, and would hold one arm up and pour water so it would run down their hand and drip off their elbow. Then, they would clench the clean hand, because they did not want to get it dirty again, and wash the palm of the other hand. They would then, rinse so that the water would run off the fingertips and that hand would be clean. Then they would, of course, do the same by rinsing the other hand. It was a very detailed observance that they made sure they did before they ever ate.

When the Pharisees came from the market, in fact, many times they would disrobe and take an entire bath. They did this because they may have brushed up against a Gentile, or touched a dead animal, or done something that would declare them unclean from among the hundreds of traditions. They wanted to make sure it was all right.

These men were so concerned with outward things that they had forgotten that cleanliness begins on the inside. Jesus Christ points His finger at them and, as He points out, there is as much danger in attaching some kind of symbol to religion as attaching to that symbol the same amount of care as you do that religion. The tradition becomes as important as scripture. We will find that He begins to be even more specific.

Loyalties To Traditional Practices Rather Than Biblical Principles

Notice, secondly, that the loyalty of the Pharisees and scribes was to traditional practices rather than biblical principles. Let us look at Mark 7:5-6.

The Pharisees and scribes asked Him, “Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat their bread with impure hands?” And He said to them, “Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: ‘This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me.’”

The word “hypocrites,” is from the Greek “hupokrites,” which is just a transliteration and we are not told what it means. It literally, refers to one who wears a mask. That is how the Greek word is defined, as “one who wears a mask”. Greek actors were called by this term “hupokrites,” and it was not a bad term.

Jesus Christ, however, uses the word in a totally different context in these verses. He says, “Look, you Pharisees, you are wearing a mask and it’s smiling, but on the inside, there is despair. You are wearing a mask and that mask is pure and clean before all those who observe you, but behind the mask is sin and an evil character.”

Jesus then says, “You actors; you who are pretending to be something that you are not, well has Isaiah said that you will honor Me with your lips, but your heart is far from Me.”

Continue to Mark 7:7-8.

But in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men. Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men.

It is fascinating that these men were so concerned with the outward performance, and not with the heart being dirty, that Jesus Christ could come along and in one fell swoop, rip the mask away.

I read a story of a devout Mohammedan. As you may know, Mohammedans have to pray at certain times of the day, whenever the call to prayer is issued. The Mohammedan in this story was very devout and carried his prayer mat with him in one hand. In the other hand, however, he had a knife and was chasing someone he wanted to kill. Just as he had the knife raised and was about to slay the individual, the call to prayer came. He dropped his knife, unrolled his mat, got down on his knees, and said his prayers as quickly as he could. He then, picked his mat up, picked his knife up, and again, went after the individual to kill him.

Is that story exaggerated? Yes. Yet, Jesus Christ is saying that these Pharisees and scribes are basically doing the same thing. They are so concerned that they pray when prayer time comes, as we will hear Him say in a moment; they are so concerned that people observe them as being pure and right, and yet, in their hearts, they are evil and murderous.

Let us note their progression. It is just as dangerous in our century.

Look again at Mark 7:7 and notice what they teach as doctrine.

But in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.

They equate their tradition with scripture. That begins a downhill progression.

- In verse 8, they lay aside the word of God, *Neglecting the commandment of God...*
- In verse 9, they reject the word of God, *. . . You are experts at setting aside the commandment of God . . .*
- In verse 13, they hinder the word of God, *thus invalidating the word of God . . .*

The first thing they do is put aside the word of God. Then, they reject it. Finally, they prevent the word of God from entering the hearts of other people to make an impact on their lives.

It is a dangerous thing to be a religious hypocrite – to place the traditions of man, of church, or whatever on an equal level with the word of God, and then, teach them as if they are equal in importance. How wrong.

Let me give the differences between God’s truth and man’s tradition.

- God’s truth will produce an inward faith; that is, God will work from the inside out. Man will produce outward forms; that is, they work from the outside in.

Man will say, “If we can just get you to do certain things; if we can just get you to look a certain way, then we can know that you are becoming clean.”

That is totally false. You have to begin from the inside out. As Proverbs 4:23 (KJV) says,

Keep thy heart . . . for out of it are the issues of life.

- God’s truth provides principles and liberty. God has a unique curriculum in developing men spiritually. Man, however, has rules and legalism. Man has a standard mold and wants a carbon copy.

Man finds a standard and says, “Yep, that’s the standard. Now, I want everyone to become like that person.”

It is a mold mentality and it is so wrong.

- God’s truth will produce inward holiness. Man’s tradition will produce outward piety.

These Pharisees were classic examples of outward piety. They would pray on the street corners. When they fasted, they would wear a particular kind of old clothing, put dust and ashes on their head, and wear a long face so that everyone would know and say, “Hey, he’s fasting and praying. What a spiritual giant.”

Jesus exposed these men as being nothing more than outwardly pious.

- God’s truth exalts the word above any tradition. Man’s tradition neglects the word.

Traditions Motivated by Stubbornness and Greed

Notice, in the next few verses, the traditions of the Pharisees and scribes are motivated by stubbornness and greed. Jesus Christ will now begin to get behind the closed doors of their hearts. He will expose their motivation, as only the Son of God can do. Look at Mark 7:10.

For Moses said, “Honor your father and your mother”; and, “He who speaks evil of father or mother, is to be put to death”;

This is the fifth commandment, by the way. They would be stoned outside the city gates for disobedience to this. Continue to Mark 7:11-13.

but you say, “If a man says to his father or his mother, whatever I have that would help you is Corban (that is to say, given to God), you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or his mother; thus invalidating the word of God by your tradition which you have handed down; and you do many things such as that.”

Understand that Jesus is referring to something that began perhaps, centuries earlier as a good idea. Yet, it became an empty and then, finally, selfish ritual. Let me tell how this happened.

As children grew, they ultimately, would take care of their moms and dads, which is a biblical principle. However, these Pharisees were so greedy; so materialistic that they had a problem on their hands. They thought, “If we have to support our moms and dads, we’re going to have to take out of our coffers and give to them. We need a way around this.”

So these religious leaders came up with the idea of Corban. They would say, “Mom and Dad, do you see this money that is left over from my salary? I’ve dedicated it to God. I’m sorry I can’t support you. You wouldn’t want to touch what belongs to God, would you?”

The moms and dads would say, “Well, of course not. We can’t do that.”

So the Pharisees began this practice which really stole from their parents. They got around what was

biblical. The fifth commandment was to honor moms and dads, and because they would not do it, they would dedicate whatever their parents needed to survive to God. They would say, “Oh, that belongs to God. You can’t touch it.”

The parents could not argue with that. So, the motivations of the Pharisees were selfish and, I think, motivated by greed.

Now, in Mark 7:4, that we read earlier, it refers to these individuals washing the cups and the pots. Let me share something that I read with you. I apologize for reading this, but it was amazing to me to discover how detailed their traditions had become. What began, in the Old Testament, as principles of cleanliness, became regulation upon regulation. Listen to the ways they were so bound.

Let me preface this with a comment that the *Mishnah* was a compilation of all the traditions of the Pharisees and the elders. Listen to these traditions that were specifically given in the *Mishnah*.

Obviously vessels could easily become unclean. They might be touched by an unclean person or by unclean food. This is what our passage means by the washing of cups and pitchers and vessels of bronze. Now, in the Mishnah there are no fewer than twelve treaties on this kind of uncleanness. If we take some actual examples, we will see how far they went.

A hollow vessel made of pottery could contract uncleanness inside, but not outside. That is to say, it did not matter who or what touched it outside, but it did matter what touched it on the inside. If it became unclean, it must be broken. And no unbroken piece must remain which was big enough to hold enough oil to anoint the little toe.

A flat plate without a rim could not become unclean, but a plate with a rim could. If vessels made with leather, bone, or glass were flat, they could not contract uncleanness. If they were hollow, they could become unclean outside and on the inside. If they were unclean, they must be broken, and the break must be a hole at least big enough for a medium sized pomegranate to pass through. To cure uncleanness, earthen vessels must be broken, other vessels must be immersed, boiled, purged with fire, or polished.

A three legged table could contract uncleanness. If it lost one or two legs, it could not. If it lost three legs, it could, for then it could be used as a board and the board could become unclean.

Things made of metal could become unclean, except a door, a bolt, a lock, a hinge, a knocker, and a gutter. Wood used in metal utensils could become unclean, but metal used in wood utensils could not. Thus, a wooden key with metal teeth could become unclean, but a metal key with wooden teeth could not.

Did you catch that? Now live that way; follow that to the letter!

It is amazing that all of these regulations were added one upon another until finally, people were bound. Jesus exposes them.

The Results of Hypocrisy

Now, let us look at the results of hypocrisy. Turn to Luke, chapter 11. Mark leaves out this very important passage, as he races through in his own style, but Luke adds it. The same confrontation is recorded in Luke, and Jesus will then look at these Pharisees and these religious traditionalists – these religious hypocrites – who were so bound by the traditions of men, and He will give several “woes.”

Notice, in Luke 11, verses 42, 43, 44, 46, 47, and 52, and underline the word “woe”. We will look briefly at these woes and see what Jesus is revealing to them, and to us, as well.

The word “woe” is not the word translated, “Hold it just a second, you hypocrite.” “Woe” is literally translated, “great grief”.

It is fascinating, in the life of Jesus Christ, as He exposes the hypocrisy of these men, He does not excoriate them; He does not pull out a whip. Jesus has compassion in His heart.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is just as wrong for someone bound by tradition to point a finger at you and say, “Oh, you are so ridiculous,” as it is for you to point a finger to one who is bound and say, “You are ridiculous.” Both are wrong.

Jesus Christ looks at these men and, I think, there is a tear in His heart; there is compassion. I think His tone of voice is perhaps, “How tragic that you live like this. How sad.”

1. Notice, in Luke 11:42, the first woe is that their priorities were wrong.

But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe of mint and rue and every kind of garden herb, and yet disregard justice and the love of God; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others.

We do not know why rue is mentioned in this verse. The commentators, in fact, rarely mention it. However, we do know that rue was a type of plant used in medicine and in cooking. We also know that the *Mishnah* said that rue was exempt from the tithe. Do not miss that – rue was exempt from the tithe. If they tithed, as they were obligated to do, they did not have to tithe rue or give a portion of that.

Do you understand what Jesus is saying? He is saying, “You are so concerned with being outwardly pure; you are so concerned with performance; you are so concerned with the way others observe you that you tithe what you should and, just to make sure you are right, you take a little bit of rue and give that to God. Just to make sure, you go one more step.”

“As a result,” He says, “you pass over justice and the love of God. You are so concerned with giving some of this little plant to God, yet you have no love in your hearts for others. You pass over the greater things and major on the minors. You are concerned with trivialities, while you miss the important things that you should be doing.”

2. The second woe, in Luke 11:43, is that their desires were selfish.

Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the chief seats in the synagogues and the respectful greetings in the market places.

Now, I hate to do this, but understand that the translation of “chief seats” is literally, “the front row”. Now we know why people sit in the front row at church! I am teasing. This is exactly how it was translated though, “the very front seats”. In fact, usually in the way they designed their auditoriums, these would be seats that would face the congregation. So, they would sit in the front where everyone could observe.

It was a high thing to be a Pharisee, or a scribe, or a lawyer, or a doctor of the law, or someone revered because they were given that seat. They could come in late and it would be reserved. They would come in with all the pomp and dignity and all of the flowing

robes, sit down, and look out over the people. The people would be thinking, “Wow! If only I could be like that. How spiritual.”

They also liked “the respectful greetings in the market places.” This is not a handshake as they went along the market, “Hi! How are you doing? Great to see you today.” No. The greetings in the synagogues were bowing, kissing the hand, showing tremendous reverence.

The Pharisees were the heroes of the day. In our day perhaps, you would have them sign your Bible and write their life verse. Now, I am not saying anything against that, in fact, I have some signatures in my Bible. However, the apostles were becoming heroes and, I think, Jesus was implying to them, “Stay off the pedestal. Don’t get to the point where people are going to say, ‘Ah, he’s an apostle and I shook his hand. I saw him today. He looked at me and said, ‘Hi.’”

The Pharisees loved these greetings in which the common people would come and almost bow before their throne; they ate it up. Their desires were so selfish.

3. The third woe, in Luke 11:44, is that they looked great, but they were a defiling influence.

Woe unto you! For you are like concealed tombs, and the people who walk over them are unaware of it.

This points back to the Passover time when they would whitewash all of the tombstones. This was kind of a “clean up Jerusalem” act which was to beautify everything. The problem though, was that sometimes people would not be aware because a stone was not as observable as a whitewash and could be taken for something else. As a result, they would walk over the grave and not realize that, according to the law, they would be defiled by walking over the grave.

So Jesus says, “You Pharisees are like whitewashed tombstones. You are like a part of the clean up act. You look great, but as a result, people don’t realize that, by your influence; by walking over your life; by rubbing shoulders with you, they are touching death and are being defiled. Men walk over you and are not aware that you are filled with the bones of dead men.”

Look at Luke 11:45, which leads us to the next woe.

One of the lawyers said to Him in reply, “Teacher, when You say this, You insult us too.”

Understand that lawyers, in that day, were similar to scribes. Frequently, in fact, scribes would be lawyers. The lawyer’s job was to interpret the interpretations. The Pharisees studied and would give their interpretations of the law. The lawyers would then, interpret the interpretations to the people. The interpretations would compile, one on top of the other, so that by the time Jesus came along, there were more regulations than people could ever hold to. So the lawyer, who is fairly perceptive, says, “Hey, Master, in the things that You’re teaching, I guess You’re pointing Your finger at us too, aren’t You?”

4. The fourth woe, in Luke 11:46 then, is that they had an absence of concern.

But He [Jesus] said, “Woe to you lawyers as well! For you weigh men down with burdens hard to bear, while you yourselves will not even touch the burdens with one of your fingers.

In other words, “You load traditions on the people; you load legalistic rules on them and then, you step back and say, ‘Okay, you live like that and I’m not going to help you.’”

It is impossible to be bound by the outward form and yet, have in your heart compassion for people. It is impossible to impose rules on individuals and at the same time, lovingly care about that individual.

The problem with the law, even today, is that it cannot take away from the individual the desire to break it. You can say, “I don’t want you to do that, so here’s a law – now, abide by it.”

The problem is, that law did not take from their emotions the desire to break it.

Let me illustrate. I am not so old that I cannot remember those years of dating as a high school student. My parents would give the law, “You’re to be home at 11 o’ clock. That’s the law.”

However, that did not take the desire from me to stay out until 11:01. In fact, I hold the record in Tidewater for making it from Virginia Beach to Norfolk in the shortest amount of time!

Now, if you tell your child, “This is the law. You be home at 11 o’ clock.”

Do you know what is going to happen? You are going to get a call at 11 o’ clock, “Mom and Dad,

you’ll never believe what happened. All of these things happened and this is the reason that I can’t make it home. Let’s make it 11:30.”

Your child is not sitting with his friends thinking, “I’m going to show up at 10 o’ clock, just to show Mom and Dad how much I love them.”

Not a chance! He is probably going to spend the last hour figuring out a way to stay out another half hour.

That was the problem with the lawyers. They were giving all of these laws and yet, they were giving no help. God works in a completely different way. He gives us His Holy Spirit to control our emotions; to give us the power to say, “No.”

So Jesus says, “Woe to you, lawyers, because you burden people and then, step back and say, ‘Okay, now live it and don’t expect any help from us.’”

One of the classic examples of their unconcern is in Luke, chapter 13. Look at Luke 13:11-14.

And there was a woman who for eighteen years had had a sickness caused by a spirit; and she was bent double, and could not straighten up at all. When Jesus saw her, He called her over and said to her, “Woman, you are freed from your sickness.” And He laid His hands on her; and immediately she was made erect again and began glorifying God. But the synagogue official, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, began saying to the crowd in response, “There are six days in which work should be done; so come during them and get healed, and not on the Sabbath day.”

This is unbelievable. In other words, “There are six days for you to be healed and, if you can’t come on Friday and get healed, you’ve got to wait until Sunday.”

The religious officials showed absolutely no concern. There was the law, so, “You’re sick and you’re going to die and it happens to be Saturday. Tough! Die! We won’t help you until the next day.”

Then, in Luke 13:15-16,

But the Lord answered him and said, “You hypocrites, does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the stall and lead him away to water him? And this woman, a daughter of Abraham as she is, whom Satan has bound for eighteen long

years, should she not have been released from this bond on the Sabbath day?"

Jesus exposed the hypocrisy of such an answer.

5. The fifth woe, in Luke 11:47, is that their reverence was deceitful.

Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets, and it was your fathers who killed them.

This is interesting because Jesus is referring to a lawyer, who is to uphold the law. He is pointing out to them that they were literally, covering murder.

Jesus says, in Luke 11:48,

So you are witnesses and approve the deeds of your fathers; because it was they who killed them, and you build their tombs.

They knew that their fathers had killed the prophets; they knew that they were involved with murderous deeds. However, in order to show the people that they were good men, they would build beautiful tombs; beautiful little sanctuaries and would speak of the prophets with reverence.

Yet, Jesus Christ says, "You've never admitted that not only your fathers, but you, in your teaching, are guilty of killing them. Your reverence is deceitful."

Continue to Luke 11:49-51a.

For this reason also the wisdom of God said, "I will send to them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and some they will persecute, so that the blood of all the prophets, shed since the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, . . ."

This is interesting because in the Hebrew Bible, Zechariah was the last prophet in the order. So from the very first murder to the very last murder, these were the prophets whom they slaughtered. In other words, "The entire Old Testament bears witness that you are murderous; you are deceitful, though you are so polished. On the outside, everything is so right, yet on the inside, there's death and sin."

Look at Luke 11:51b.

". . . yes, I tell you, it shall be charged against this generation."

It is interesting that in A.D. 70, Jerusalem was leveled. Perhaps this was the judgment referred to by Jesus Christ in this passage.

6. The sixth woe, in Luke 11:52, is that their teaching lacked discernment.

Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge; you yourselves did not enter, and you hindered those who were entering.

This is probably the most tragic of all. I would imagine that Jesus perhaps, had tears in His eyes when He said this.

In the original, this is "you have taken away the key of the knowledge". Jesus Christ, in His Messianic kingdom program; His offering to the people; He, in Himself, being the key to all of the prophecies of the One who would come, *He was the key!*

They had ignored it. They had rejected it. Now, they were holding the key away from the people so that they would not know. The things that they had taught blinded the people so that they, in fact, never saw.

The people who rejoiced and said, "Hosanna," would later say, "Crucify Him!" Why? Because He was the key that they had rejected – because He had rejected their traditions.

Let us look at this list of woes again. The hypocrites had:

- wrong priorities;
- selfish desires;
- a defiling influence;
- an absence of concern;
- reverence that was deceitful;
- teaching that lacked true biblical discernment.

As we look at this list, I find myself in it. Can you spot yourself in it? Do you at times perhaps, play the roll of an actor; put the mask up? As far as everyone else in this body is concerned; as far as anyone else in your family is concerned, everything is okay; everything is right, yet there is hypocrisy.

Could we as a church body collectively become so bound to traditions that we lose the objectives that God has given us? Absolutely. Though on the surface, everything seems okay and God may be blessing, whatever that means, yet, on the inside, there

is a heart that is without compassion and without concern.

Needed – A Fresh Awakening

Ladies and gentlemen, we need a fresh awakening. Turn to I Peter, chapter 2, where you will find the word hypocrisy again.

Look at I Peter 2:1-3.

Therefore putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

How can I rid myself of hypocrisy? How can I shield myself from malice and envy and hypocrisy; from the mask? Desire this Bible as a baby does milk.

In another passage, milk is referred to as that which is for new believers, but these verses are referring to an attitude. There is an intensity of desire; there is something about this word of God; this milk that I must have. And, I will pursue it; nothing can stop me from gaining it.

Notice, in verse 3, it says, “if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.” This is a point in your life in which you have seen that the hand of God is so gracious. You have experienced salvation; you have trusted Him and have sensed that your sins, as He has promised, have been forgiven; you have been born again; you are new; you have experienced the kindness of God. If you have come to this point in your life, then, why would you go back to law?

So, because you have left all of that; because He is so gracious, begin to grow by desiring the milk of the word of God.

Application – I Am Guilty of Hypocrisy When...

Let me summarize our thoughts today. I have written some points for me to answer to, and I want to give them to you. Let me ask you to, in your heart, answer to these points, as well.

1. First, I am guilty of hypocrisy when I am more interested in religious tradition than biblical teaching.

I am guilty when I am so concerned that my life matches some kind of mode; that my church fits some kind of mode. The favorite saying of a church bound by tradition is, “We will *always* do it because we have

always done it.” We are equating traditional practices with biblical teaching. I am guilty if I do that.

2. Secondly, I am guilty of hypocrisy when I am more concerned with the operations of a church than the objectives of a church.

I am guilty when I am more concerned with the day to day operations – when Sunday comes and I think, “Man, things had better be like they ought to be.”

We should do something different in this church. I do not have anything particularly in mind, but perhaps next Sunday, I could put the pulpit in the back of the room and you could face the back instead of the front. I have another idea – I could sit down to preach and you could stand up. That would be wonderful!

Did Hezekiah mention that the musical instruments are piano and organ? I guess our church is falling short on that one. Did he say that church begins at eleven and ends at twelve; that Sunday school comes first and then, the service? Did he say that you are to wear what you are wearing?

I am afraid, ladies and gentlemen, that many times we overlook the objectives of a church that are primarily two-fold.

- The first objective of a church is evangelizing the world for Jesus Christ.

Do you realize that God has placed us on planet earth and designed us to form a fellowship to evangelize, not only this area, but the world? That is an objective that ought to be in the front of our minds.

- The second objective of a church is to equip the saints.

These are explicit commands given by God. In fact, if you go to the word of God and try to find the number of specific commands that He has given to us to do when we meet together, you will find very few. I can only come up with four: praying, communion, fellowship, and teaching. All of the other things are practices that we dare not chain ourselves to, lest we lose and miss the objectives of evangelizing and equipping.

3. Thirdly, I am guilty of hypocrisy when I am more demanding of outward ceremony than heart commitment.
4. Fourthly, I am guilty of hypocrisy when I am more diligent in my appearance before men than my approval before God.

The solution is not hypocrisy, it is true holiness – holiness that is generated by the Spirit of God. That work is begun at salvation. You are holy, not because of what you do or what you do not do, you are holy because of what you are in Jesus Christ.

Holiness will be evidenced to others as they see in you the fruit of the Holy Spirit – not as they see practices or traditions, but love, faith, long-suffering. Holiness will be completely fulfilled when we see Jesus Christ face to face.

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