

Hypocrisy and Its Consequences

Micah 6:9-16; Romans 14:23

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Not only should hypocrisy be revolting to us because it is revolting to Christ (as we saw in Micah 6:6-8), but also because hypocrisy is filled with many destructive consequences. Make no mistake, dear ones, if we sow the seeds of insincerity and merely going through the motions of our faith, worship, and practice, we will reap the harvest of self-deception wherein we may be led to believe what is false, the harvest of disinterestedness in growing in the knowledge and grace of Christ, of dullness in hearing Christ speak to us by His Word and His Spirit, of a man-centered orientation wherein the applause of man is sought over the applause of Christ, and finally of a nauseating discontentment with the blessings of God.

Consider how this harvest of hypocrisy was reaped in the life of Balaam who for the riches offered to him by Balak, king of Moab, manifested his insincerity by seeking ways to lead Israel into sin. Korah demonstrated his hypocrisy in not being content with his place in Israel—he coveted the authority to also rule over Israel like Moses. King Saul's hypocrisy was evidenced in deluding himself into believing that he could usurp the office of the ministry in offering sacrifices to God. The hypocrisy of Ananias and Sapphira was seen in their lying to Peter that they had sold their property and given a larger portion of it than was actually the case—and they did so in order to receive the applause of men. Believers also manifested times of hypocrisy as when David sought the peace of God while continuing in his unrepentant sin of having taken another man's wife and then having her husband killed. Even Peter bore the fruit of hypocrisy when for the applause of men he ate with the Jews and refused to eat with the Gentiles. Although a true Christian cannot be entirely given over to hypocrisy (so as to become a hypocrite), nevertheless, every true Christian may commit sins of hypocrisy. For this reason, we must watch and pray that we enter not into temptation. The consequences of hypocrisy are devastating to our own life and to the lives of others (as we shall see from our text this Lord's Day).

The main points from our text are: (1) The Lord Knows Our Heart (Micah 6:9); (2) The Lord Unmasks Hypocrisy (Micah 6:10-12,16a); (3) The Lord Brings Severe Consequences for Hypocrisy (Micah 6:13-15,16b).

I. The Lord Knows Our Heart (Micah 6:9).

A. Micah declared (in Micah 6:8) the graces of the Holy Spirit that are manifested in varying degrees in the life of one who knows, loves, and trusts the Lord in sincerity and truth: (1) he is just—he is a man that is characterized by integrity, honesty, and truth; (2) he loves mercy—he is a man who delights in helping others where ever there are legitimate needs; (3) he walks humbly with his God—he is a man that exalts not in himself, but exalts in Christ, in the righteousness of Christ, in the grace of Christ, and in the cross of Christ. These are graces that are foreign and alien to the hypocrite. Such sincerity of faith from the heart is in fact impossible to the hypocrite.

B. Now Micah proceeds (in Micah 6:9) to press home to Israel that it was no mere man that brought this charge of hypocritical covenant breaking against them. It is indeed the voice of the Lord God who cries out to them (and pleads with them with a loud voice) through the voice of His prophet to turn from their hypocrisy and embrace in all sincerity the Lord their God. Israel of old should not turn a deaf ear to the Word of the Lord simply because it comes by means of a weak human vessel, namely Micah. Nor ought God's people today to turn a deaf ear to God's Word, simply because the sermon isn't delivered in a particular style of preaching, or simply because the sermon isn't brought by a particular kind of personality in the preacher. For what is most important is not the style or the personality of the messenger, but the faithfulness of the message—is the Word of God faithfully preached and applied by the power of God's Spirit to the hearts of

men, women, and children (1 Corinthians 2:1-5). Dear ones, if you are not coming to worship anticipating that God Himself is going to be speaking to you through the reading and preaching of His Word, then I would submit that you have drifted into a hypocritical state of indifference in listening to God's Word preached (which raises red flags of hypocrisy in other areas of your life as well). If you haven't come to hear God, but simply to hear me, then you need to repent of all such hypocrisy. Micah says the man of wisdom will hear the Lord speak through His messenger (John 10:4-5).

C. But since Israel will not hear the Word of the Lord through His prophet, then they must hear it through the rod of affliction and chastisement which the Lord will bring upon them by means of their enemies (Micah 6:9). Since their hypocritical hearts have become dull of hearing through the patient entreaties of God by His prophets, their hearts will be aroused by the Assyrians and the Babylonians (Isaiah 10:5-6). The Lord, as a general rule, begins with reproof, correction, instruction, and pleading as a tender Father, but then He turns to more severe measures when such gentle means fall upon deaf ears and indifferent hearts.

D. It is the Lord Himself who cries out to you today and who exposes the secrets of your heart through this feeble and frail messenger (Psalm 44:20-21). A faithful preacher is to be like John the Baptist, "a voice" crying out to all who will hear, "Turn to the Lord." Dear ones, we cannot run and hide from the Lord, for everything is laid bare before His all-penetrating eye (Hebrews 4:12-13). Beloved, hypocrisy cannot dwell together with sincerity of heart, honesty of soul, integrity of mind. Hypocrisy must flee when we beat our chest and cry out sincerely to the Lord, "God, be merciful to me a sinner." For hypocrisy cannot live in the light of God's truth. Just as Rachel had stolen her father's household idols and hidden them from her husband, Jacob, so we too hide our secret idols in our heart as well (idols of materialism, earthly pleasures, intellectual pride, earthly comforts, family, authority and rule, self-sufficiency in our gifts and talents, confidence in man, success in the eyes of others, belief in what we can see rather than in what God has revealed). Let us cast out all secret idols and hypocrisy in our lives for He sees all (Acts 19:18-20).

II. The Lord Unmasks Hypocrisy (Micah 6:10-12,16a).

A. The Lord asks in Micah 6:10: "Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the scant measure that is abominable?" The question anticipates a positive answer of "Yes." Yes, after all this time in which the Lord has sent His prophets to instruct, correct, and reprove the people of Israel for their double dealing with one another, still they continue to accumulate by fraud and deception the treasures of wickedness. The Lord says in effect, "Do you think I will rejoice in your many sacrifices, your outward worship when you deal so dishonestly with one another?" The Lord who knows the hearts of all men, asks the question, yet knows the answer.

B. The Lord asks a second question in Micah 6:11: "Shall I count them pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights?" This question anticipates a negative answer of "No." God will not look upon one as pure in his worship regardless of how perfect his outward conformity to the Law of God might be if he is not honest, fair, and just in his business relationships. If he can lie, steal, and cheat in his vocation and calling (as indicated in Micah 6:12) and yet think everything is fine when he approaches God in worship, then He treats God as one of those from whom he has stolen and believes he can get away with his dishonesty with God just as he does with his neighbor. But God will not be deceived or mocked with such hypocrisy. For if we cannot love our neighbor and deal in integrity with him whom we can see, then how can we love God and deal in integrity with Him whom we cannot see (1 John 4:20)? Dishonesty, insincerity, and breaking covenant will not confine itself to one's neighbor, but will certainly manifest itself in one's relationship with the Lord who knows and sees all. Dear ones, if the Lord is not your silent partner in business, if you run your business as if God does not see or hear all that you do in your work with others, if you think

you can cheat your employer or a client and that you have merely shown worldly wisdom, then you are acting as if God doesn't see what's going on, or worse as if God doesn't exist—that's hypocrisy! We can talk about how we love our brethren, but when our actions fail to measure up to our words, we are manifesting hypocrisy. Are we willing to sacrifice our own comfort, our own time, or our own resources for brethren in need? Are we those who give lip service to loving the brethren, but yet we fail to earnestly pray for those in need? Beloved, love is not merely expressed in words; it is also evidenced in deeds. Israel of old manifested her hypocrisy in the way she treated her brethren, and the Lord unmasks her hypocrisy.

C. Not only was Israel's hypocrisy evidenced in the way each one treated their neighbor, but also in the way each one treated God in their worship. For the worship of God had become perverted and corrupted by various man-made innovations (Micah 6:16a).

1. A little bit of background is necessary at the mention of Omri and Ahab. The kingdom of Israel was united as one nation under the reigns of David and Solomon. However, when Rehoboam, Solomon's son, came to the throne, the 10 tribes of Israel followed Jeroboam while the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin followed Rehoboam. Jeroboam introduced into Israel's worship various man-made inventions for political purposes (1 Kings 12:33). From that point on, Jeroboam becomes the evil pattern for the successive kings of Israel (e.g. Omri in 1 Kings 16:25-26 and Ahab in 1 Kings 16:30-33). Note God's extreme disapproval of Israel's worship (Amos 5:21-23; Amos 6:5), for Israel had introduced new forms of worship which God had not authorized; and furthermore she simply went through the outward forms of worship while there was no inward graces evident in her life (Amos 5:24). God says he hates and despises all such worship (Amos 5:21). Dear ones, if we do not approach the Lord through and only through the work of Jesus Christ and bring to the God the righteousness of Jesus Christ, if we do not approach the Lord with sincere hearts of faith, love, and gratitude for all that Christ has done for us, and if we do not approach the Lord bringing only those acts of worship which He has authorized in His Word, the Lord says He hates our worship. We cannot make mere assumptions that our worship is pleasing to God; we must be convinced that such is the case from His Word (Romans 14:23). Otherwise we have introduced that which is superstitious and idolatrous into the worship of God (just like Israel of old). All superstitious worship is that which stands above God's authorization in His Word. This, as well, is hypocrisy, for it assumes (regardless of the good intentions of those who offer it to God) that He will be pleased with that which He has not prescribed us to bring in worship.

2. It is not only pagans that bring idolatrous and superstitious worship to God, for here the Lord calls those who bring Him such worship His people (Micah 6:3,16). Yes, even those churches that declare themselves to be Presbyterian and Reformed have fallen away from purity in worship and into superstitious worship by offering the Lord what He has not authorized in New Covenant worship: uninspired hymns of man; instrumental accompaniment; the use of images in worship like crosses, representations of the Trinity (whether a lamb, a shepherd, or a dove); parts of a service where the congregation watches people perform by singing, dancing, or acting out skits; bringing into the church the celebration of various holy not ordained by God in His Word (like Christmas, Easter, Pentecost etc.). All such acts in worship are superstitious (standing above the Law of God) and are hypocrisy (for they believe such superstitious acts are acceptable to God when they are not).

III. **The Lord Brings Severe Consequences for Hypocrisy (Micah 6:13-15,16b).**

A. Dear ones, the Lord will not long tolerate hypocrisy in the lives of those who profess to be His people. His love for us is shown in revealing to us our hypocrisy and in chastening us for our hypocrisy.

B. Upon Israel of old, the Lord first threatens to make them sick and desolate (Micah 6:13). All the wealth, comfort, and enjoyment they have unjustly swallowed by their greed, fraud, and deception, will be the means by which they will become desperately sick and made desolate by the Assyrians and the Babylonians.

The Lord's bride gloried in her wealth, in her beauty, and in her comfortable life; and it would be the love for these very things that would bring about her downfall. That which replaces Christ as our first love is sure to be our own downfall (whether it be our family, our health, our possessions, our pleasure, our intelligence, our gifts or talents, our job, our reputation, our success). That is essentially the message of the Lord to Israel in Micah 6:14-15. Whatever it is in which you have trusted, looked for peace, contentment, and happiness rather than finding it in God your Savior shall lead you further and further away from Christ and bring God's chastening rod into your life (Luke 12:15). You may be filled with food, with riches, with pleasure, or with people, but they will not bring true satisfaction and contentment to the soul. Only Jesus can satisfy that for which our souls truly yearn (Isaiah 55:1-3).

C. One of the sins that most people seem to despise more than any other sin in the lives of others is that of hypocrisy. How it bothers us when we see people pretending to be something that we know they are not. And yet are we as critical of the hypocrisy in our own lives? Do we see all too clearly the hypocrisy of others, but conveniently overlook our own hypocrisy? Do you want to see your hypocrisy so that you might turn from it? That is where true repentance must begin.

In conclusion, I leave with you some helps and aids that I have found so beneficial in dealing with hypocrisy in my own life.

1. Think often about your own death. For we need to be reminded that we will not live long in these mortal bodies and that all that we enjoy in this life will soon pass away. Since this life vanishes so soon, how can we afford to replace the eternal Christ with that which will soon perish? How can we afford to play games with God and to go through the mere motions of faith in light of our approaching death?
2. Think often about the final judgment. Dear ones, the Lord sees all that is in our hearts even now, but there is coming a day when all that is in our hearts will be revealed and uncovered before all (Matthew 10:26). How foolish for us to think that we can forever hide our hypocrisy. Now is the time to be perfectly honest with Christ and to stop pretending and going through the motions of Christianity. Judge yourselves, lest ye be judged.
3. Think often about your need of Christ. You cannot deal with the sin of hypocrisy without Christ. Only He is free of hypocrisy; only He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. All of us are prone to hypocrisy, but He died to deliver us from it (Titus 2:14; Philippians 1:10).
4. Think often about all the reasons you have to praise the Lord. Thankfulness is the fruit of a sincere heart.

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