

Jesus reserved His harshest rhetoric (His prophetic “woes”) for the religious hypocrites of His day. Here is a scorching denunciation. Why did they bear the brunt of His anger?

1. **Hypocrisy attempts to live a lie.** It is wearing the mask of a pretender. It believes that a person is capable of performing so well as to achieve an acceptable self-righteousness. Self sufficiency and self-righteousness are the sins of our age – of every age.
2. **Hypocrisy deceives people.** “Do not be deceived.” But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. (Heb 3:13)

It can deceive even the hypocrite. You might not even realize you are wearing the mask.

And it deceives those who watch and are led astray. There is a great attraction to things external.

It proves the “best” reasons for rejecting Christ. See Matthew 23:1-3. The world anxiously and diligently searches out hypocrisy in order to have excuse for rejecting the truth. Hypocrisy misrepresents what is true “knowledge.” See 1 Cor. 8:1-3. A vicious worldview - “Because hypocrites are the worst of men, the only virtue is to live without a mask.” It makes the un-hypocritical evil to be heroic.

3. **Hypocrisy misrepresents the character of God and the church.**

It pretends that He can be fooled. Even God can be deceived! Or His opinion is not nearly as important as what men think. He is a real ‘lightweight’. “It is better to have God approve than the world applaud.” (Thomas Watson) This is what can be so dangerous about so-called “seeker-sensitive” worship services.

It lives as though He is only concerned with external behavior and not the issues of the heart. It confuses head knowledge with godliness.

4. **And so it uses the truth for practical gain.** It makes merchandise of the holy. It is inherently a selfish lifestyle.

Uses:

- Confront this scourge head on. Jesus did. He knew what would happen when He did not wash His hands.
- Accept the possibility of righteous anger. Would you allow “hot” communication from your mouth?
- Accept the reality of the hypocrite’s revenge.
- Keep watch over your own soul. (Gal. 6:1) I could preach these things while still living in hypocrisy.
- The opposite of hypocrisy is _____. Seek to develop “*sincerity*” (2 Cor. 1:12; 2:17) – a willingness to live in the light (judged by the light of the sun). See 1 John 1:7.

“Sincerity is not strictly a grace but rather the ingredient of every grace. Sincerity is that which qualifies grace and without which grace is not grace.” (Watson) “Sincerity is the essence of the life of godliness” (Iain Murray). “Sincerity is the very queen of virtues” (Thomas Brooks). “Satan does not oppose profession, but sincerity. Let men go to church and make glorious pretences of holiness. Satan does not oppose this; this does him no hurt and them no good; but if men want to be sincerely pious, then Satan musters up all his forces against them” (Watson). Work hardest at what Satan most opposes.

- Live out the gospel – together! We are repenting sinners. But also we are being enabled to live out the law of God from the heart. (Romans 6:17)

Should we say, “You’re right; we are all hypocrites”? No, not at all. That is not the whole truth.

Could anyone fault Jesus for the sin of hypocrisy?