

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

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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 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 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 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) 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 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