

# Christian Hypocrisy

## Introduction

A hypocrite is a person who feigns beliefs, feelings, or virtues that he does not hold to or possess. He is a pretender, or imposter. He is a deceiver. A hypocrite does not practice what he preaches—he *talks the talk* but doesn't *walk the walk*. Think about it. Who among us has not, at one time or another, given an appearance of being someone who we are not so that we present a desired (but false) impression? How many of us say that we treat everyone equally, yet think we are better than someone else, whether it is a personal comparison of religion, nationality, race, intelligence, skill, political preference, etc.?

It is no secret that some church leaders, some of whom are very prominent in their communities or on television or radio, have been caught in a financial or immoral scandal. Some politicians who claim to be Christians exhibit very unchristian-like behavior during campaigns or other political activities, or are brought down by their own immoral behavior. Some family members, friends, acquaintances, coworkers, or strangers may represent themselves as Christians yet appear to live contrary lives—their actions speak louder than their words. Are those of us who call ourselves *Christians*, hypocrites? How should Christians live? Should God and His word be discounted or disregarded if Christians are hypocritical? Let's explore these and related questions.

## What is a Christian?

Before we get too involved with the question of whether Christians are hypocritical, we need to define *Christian*. This is not an easy task. Most western religions and denominations consider themselves to be Christian because they identify themselves with Jesus Christ in some way or another. Many nations consider themselves to be Christian because they are predominantly Catholic and/or Protestant. This is all very confusing considering most denominations set themselves apart from each other (they have exclusive church doctrine, membership, or worship requirements) and because so many *Christian* nations have instigated war in the name of God or have gone to war against each other through the centuries. Christianity seems to epitomize hypocrisy.

The word *Christian* comes from the Bible, but what does the Bible say about it? The main premise of this study is that the Bible will be used to answer questions—not church history or traditional doctrine. The Bible is the word of God and, therefore, true.

**All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching [doctrine], for reproof, for correction, for training [instruction] in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate [complete], equipped for every good work.** (II Timothy 3:16-17)<sup>1</sup>

It may surprise some that the word *Christian* is not commonly used in Scripture, and that *Christianity* doesn't appear at all. The words *Christian* and *Christians* are used a total of only three times in the *King James Version* and *New American Standard Bible*: Acts 11:26, Acts 26:28, and I Peter 4:14-16. They are

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<sup>1</sup> All references are quoted from the *New American Standard Bible* (1996). Words in brackets are either equivalent words from the *King James Version* or, if in italics, were added by the author for clarification.

derived from the Greek word *Kristianos*, which also only appears in these three verses.<sup>2</sup> Other Bible versions may use the words more often, but they are incorrect interpretations of other Greek words, perhaps to simplify the Bible in the minds of the writers of those versions (e.g., the Greek words for *disciples* or *brethren* might be interpreted as *Christians*). This practice can be very misleading, however, and change the intent of a verse or passage.<sup>3</sup>

**And when he [Barnabas] had found him [Saul, later known as Paul], he brought him to Antioch. And for an entire year they met with the church, and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch. (Acts 11:26)**

**Agrippa replied to Paul, “In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian.” (Acts 26:28)**

**If you are reviled [reproached] for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name [Christ]. (I Peter 4:14-16)**

It appears from these verses that those who identified themselves with Christ were called Christians by those who did not consider themselves as such. Acts 11:26 does not say that the disciples called themselves Christians, but that they were called Christians—apparently by those who weren’t disciples. Agrippa, the Jewish (non-Christian) King of Israel, thought of those who proclaimed Christ as Christians (he considered Paul to be a Christian), and the suffering as Christians that Peter referred to was from the perspective of the persecutors. In other words, the term *Christian* was applied by *non-Christians* to those people who identified themselves with Christ. It seems to be an appropriate term, even though rarely used in the Bible. However, are there more appropriate terms we can use to describe our fellow Christians?

The Apostle Paul did not refer to people who believe the gospel of salvation as *Christians*. Instead, he usually referred to his fellow believers as brethren (Philippians 4:8). He also called them brothers (Colossians 4:7-9), sisters (Romans 16:1), saints (Ephesians 1:1), those who believe—believers (I Thessalonians 2:10; I Timothy 4:12), children of God (Romans 8:16-17), and members of the body of Christ (I Corinthians 12:27). These are all proper scriptural terms that apply to all true Christians without distinction or status, even though some have been distorted or misused by some denominations (especially *saints*).

Who are true Christians—children of God—from the scriptural perspective? They are individuals who sincerely believe that they are sinners deserving judgment but are redeemed through faith in the death of Christ for our sins, and that He was buried and resurrected. This gospel, or good news, of salvation is most definitively presented in I Corinthians 15:1-4, where the Apostle Paul reminded the Corinthian brethren how they were saved from their sins.

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<sup>2</sup> Source: *The Englishman’s Greek Concordance of the New Testament* (G.V. Wigram).

<sup>3</sup> A number of the English-language Bible versions we have today are basically modernized interpretations (sometimes simply paraphrased versions) of the *King James Version* instead of translations from original texts. They have been developed to make the Bible easier to read or to emphasize certain denominational doctrines (it is not uncommon for a denomination to have its own specific version). Unfortunately, such practices introduce doctrinal errors that might be difficult to identify but that can easily mislead the reader.

**Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. (I Corinthians 15:1-4)**

In this passage and elsewhere, Paul emphasized that being a child of God is dependent only upon believing what Christ did for us at the cross. Furthermore, Paul repeatedly reminded the believers that their salvation had nothing to do with their own efforts to please or appease God. Everyone is sinful (unrighteous), and everyone falls short of the glory of God (Romans 3:10-12, 23). However, if we believe the gospel of salvation we are saved from the consequences of our sinful condition by the grace of God, entirely apart from any good works we may do or try to do (Romans 4:4-5; 10:8-10).

**But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. (Romans 5:8-10)**

**For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)**

Please note in these Scripture passages, as with everything we find in Paul's letters (Romans through Philemon), that there are no requirements beyond simple faith to be saved from our sins. Salvation is a gift of God (Romans 6:23). Neither denominational or church membership, confirmation, water baptism, following the Ten Commandments, or other religious act is required by God to become His child (Romans 3:27-28). Furthermore, no one is born a Christian, and trying to follow the teachings or precepts of Jesus while He was on earth does not make a person a Christian. If we could possibly be good enough to earn our way into heaven or deserve to go there, then our salvation would not be by the grace of God (Romans 4:4-5).

A true child of God has a personal relationship with God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. When we believe that Christ died for our sins, we receive the nature of Christ and are considered by God to be His child and a new creature or creation (Romans 8:14-16; II Corinthians 5:17). An actual spiritual transformation takes place the moment we believe the gospel of salvation—a spiritual baptism occurs by which the Holy Spirit of God baptizes us into Christ, making us one with Christ (I Corinthians 12:12-13; Ephesians 4:4-6). There is no water or any physical act involved in this transformation—this is a spiritual act of God that identifies us with God forever.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, a Christian is someone who is actually in Christ and is part of His body by the will of God (Romans 12:4-5; Galatians 3:26-28).

**For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks [Gentiles], whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. (I Corinthians 12:12-13)**

**Now you [*believers*] are Christ's body, and individually members of it. (I Corinthians 12:27)**

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<sup>4</sup> See the author's **Should We Be Baptized?** for more information on the types and purposes of baptism.

Unfortunately, many people who claim to be Christians are not children of God because they do not believe the gospel of salvation. They do not actually believe they are sinners who need salvation—they may acknowledge that they do bad things, but deep down they are convinced that the good in them outweighs the bad. Or they do not actually believe that Christ died for their sins and was raised up for their justification—they may acknowledge (or profess to believe) that Jesus was born of a virgin (Christmas) and that He died on the cross and was resurrected (Easter), but they don't understand that He died for them. They have been deceived, or have deceived themselves, into following a religion or denomination that has distorted or even ignored the gospel of salvation.

The cold hard facts are that every person who does not know Christ as his Savior is considered by God to be dead in sin and a child of wrath (Ephesians 2:1-3). Additionally, every unbeliever will face God's judgment and eternal punishment (Romans 6:23; Ephesians 5:6; Revelation 20:11-15). This may seem unfair according to our human logic, but God is the Almighty God, and we are in no position to question His righteous judgment (Romans 9:14-24).

### **Christian Hypocrisy**

As demonstrated earlier, Christianity as a whole is hypocritical. However, that isn't really our concern. The more important question is this: are the true children of God—those who are called Christians as in Scripture—hypocrites? As believers, we should examine ourselves to determine if we are hypocrites. Please consider the following questions:

- We say that we love our neighbors as ourselves (Romans 13:8-10), but do we consider ourselves superior to people who are not just like us—people of different color, race, religion, political affiliation, etc.?
- We say that we love those who are close to us (I Corinthians 13:4-7), but are we impatient with them, or arrogant or unforgiving toward them?
- We say that we don't break the law and look down upon those who do (Romans 13:1-7; II Corinthians 8:21), but do we intentionally exceed the speed limit, manipulate our taxes, steal from our employer (e.g., by not being honest on our timecards or by using its supplies, copiers, and computers contrary to company policy), lie to protect ourselves (cover a wrong), etc.?
- We say that our fellow brethren are equal in the eyes of God (I Corinthians 12:12-14; Galatians 3:27-28), but do we consider those of the opposite sex, of a different race or culture, or who do not have the same spiritual understanding as we do as inferior?
- We say that God provides for our needs (II Corinthians 9:8; Philippians 4:12-13, 19), but do we gamble (including playing the lottery, sports betting, computer/video gaming, etc.) and pursue *get rich quick* schemes to obtain more money and possessions?
- We say that God loves a cheerful giver (II Corinthians 9:6-7; Matthew 6:2-4), but do we give to our church, missionaries, or charities for the purpose of gaining the favor of God or for tax deductions, or give gifts with the expectation of receiving something in return?
- We say that God is in control and that He works all things together for good (Romans 8:28; Philippians 2:12-13), but do we blame God or someone during difficult times, do everything in our power to get our way, or are we quick to sue someone for a real or perceived wrong against us?

- We say that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:18-20), but do we abuse them through unhealthy eating habits, by getting buzzed or drunk, by smoking or vaping, through immoral behavior, by risking injury or life itself through thrill-seeking activities, etc.?
- We say that we are ambassadors for Christ (II Corinthians 5:20), but do people see us as any different than anyone else because of our attitude, behavior, crude language, etc.?
- We say that we put God first and don't worship idols (I Corinthians 8:4-6; 10:7, 14), but do we put our trust in money, show our adulation for celebrities or other people of prestige or power, or give our allegiance to our flag, nation, or political party?<sup>5</sup>
- We say that we were saved by the grace of God (Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:4-7), but do we take credit for choosing to be saved by exercising our own free will?<sup>6</sup>

How many other ways do we exhibit our hypocrisy? Do we act one way for some people (e.g., in church) but another way for other people (e.g., family, friends, coworkers)?<sup>7</sup> It is highly probable that all believers are hypocrites in one way or another. But, generally speaking, aren't most people hypocrites in some way or another? Hypocrisy entails pride, which corresponds to a lack of humility. What the Bible says about pride seems to be easily disregarded by us as we think or act in a boastful, arrogant, or superior way to others (Proverbs 16:5, 18; 21:24; Mark 7:20-23; Ephesians 2:8-9).<sup>8</sup> How many of us look down upon or judge someone because of something awful he did (lie, steal, cheat, behave badly, etc.) when we are doing the same things or harboring our own little secrets?

**“Do not judge so that you will not be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it shall be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ and behold, the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.”** (Matthew 7:1-5)

What makes Christian hypocrisy worse than hypocrisy displayed by those who don't identify as such, however, is that by being hypocritical, believers bring dishonor or disrespect to God. In the name of God, we often say one thing and do another. Or, in the name of God, we often do things that God has told us (through Scripture) not to do. This gives the unbeliever cause, in his mind, to ridicule or judge God. Through the Bible, God gave us the history of His chosen nation of Israel. That record shows that they continually disobeyed and dishonored God (Isaiah 65:1-7; Ezekiel 2:1-7). The ungodly nations observed their hypocrisy and, consequently, blasphemed God (Romans 2:17-24). Furthermore, the Apostle Paul said that their disobedience was recorded for us as an example for how *not* to live (I Corinthians 10:1-12). Are we revealing our hypocrisy to those around us through our disobedience?

As indicated earlier, many people who claim to be *Christian* are Christian in name only—they are unsaved (false brethren) to begin with and God does not recognize them as His children. However, the non-Christian would not know that they are false brethren, so their actions still lead non-Christians to

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<sup>5</sup> See the author's **Governing Authority** for a scriptural investigation of how God expects us to respond to the government that God places us under.

<sup>6</sup> See the author's **Salvation and the Sovereignty of God** for an in-depth investigation of God's sovereign will.

<sup>7</sup> Paul reprimanded his friend the Apostle Peter in front of others for his hypocrisy (Galatians 2:11-14).

<sup>8</sup> The only time we are to boast is to boast in the Lord; however, not in what we have done for Him, but in what He has done for us (I Corinthians 1:26-31; II Corinthians 10:17-18).

blaspheme God. Please recall how Jesus dealt with the religious leaders—the false brethren—of His people.

Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, was sent to earth by God to His people Israel. Jesus was their prophesied Messiah—the *Christ* (Matthew 16:13-17; John 1:41; 4:25-29)—and King. Israel was God’s chosen nation according to the promise He had given to Abraham and confirmed through his heirs Isaac and Jacob (who was also called Israel). God had given His law to the nation of Israel through Moses. God’s law—referred to as the Law of Moses—was to be administered to Israel by the Levites, who were the tribe of priests. However, long before Jesus came to earth, Israel had corrupted the Law and the religious leaders were in the form of scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees.<sup>9</sup> These spiritual leaders were thoroughly misrepresenting the Law of Moses and misleading the people of Israel—all in the name of God. Consequently, Jesus had nothing good to say to them or about them (Matthew 15:1-9; 16:6, 12; 22:15-18; Luke 12:1; 13:10-17).

In one discourse alone (Matthew 23:13-33), Jesus referred to the scribes and Pharisees of His people as hypocrites multiple times for doing the following things:

- Hiding or misrepresenting the truth of God to keep their hearers ignorant (vs 13);
- Taking advantage of others while pretending to be pious (vs 14);
- Corrupting those who they converted to Judaism—drawing converts to themselves instead of to God (vs 15);
- Putting their trust in riches and their religious traditions instead of in God (vs 16-22);
- Taking pride in the minor things of their service while neglecting the things that were most important (vs 23-24);
- Judging others without first judging themselves (vs 25-26);
- Putting on an appearance of righteousness while covering up their own hypocrisy and unrighteousness (vs 27-28); and
- Denying the fact that they were no different than their forebears who killed the prophets of God (vs 29-32).

Furthermore, in the same passage, Jesus used the words *blind, fools, whitewashed tombs, serpents, and brood of vipers* to describe the character of those scribes and Pharisees who assumed the responsibility of leading God’s people. Consider our *Christian* leaders today. How many are not much different than those men that Jesus was reprimanding? Honestly, how many of us have similar characteristics?

God’s word fully demonstrates that He abhors hypocrisy, and that His people are exhorted to avoid it (Proverbs 11:9; Luke 6:41-42; I Timothy 4:1-2; James 3:17). Therefore, we should examine ourselves and be careful not to speak or act as hypocrites.

**Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babes, long for the pure [sincere] milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation.** (I Peter 2:1-2)

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<sup>9</sup> See the author’s **The Mystery (God’s Secret Plan)** for an explanation of why the prophecies concerning Israel have not been fulfilled (yet).

## The Root of Hypocrisy

Hypocrisy springs forth from pride, which we have already briefly talked about. Our pride comes from the sin within us—pride and hypocrisy are part of our sin nature. Yes, believers sin. And yes, we are hypocritical. We often speak or act in a manner that is not worthy of our salvation. We often bring dishonor to God. God is perfect, but we are not. Why is this?

As shown earlier, everyone sins and falls short of the glory of God. In fact, we are born with the spirit or nature of man, which is inherently sinful (Romans 5:12-19; I Corinthians 2:14). Long ago, God revealed Himself to mankind through the wonders of His creation. Instead of worshipping the Creator, however, mankind chose to worship His creation: the sun, moon, and stars; mountains, canyons, and rivers; plants and animals; manmade things of wood and stone; and many other objects, people, and spiritual beings (gods).<sup>10</sup> Mankind chose to worship anything and everything except God. Sinful behavior automatically followed this choice. Consequently, God gave mankind over to their sin, and we became sinful by nature—our nature, not God’s nature. Please take a moment to read Romans 1:18-32 for a concise history of the spiritual fall and sinfulness of mankind.

We are born with a sin nature, and God considers everyone to be spiritually lost and dead in sin (Ephesians 2:1-3; Romans 3:10-11; II Corinthians 4:3-4). We are, by nature, separated from God and deserving of His judgment. Thankfully, God provided the remedy—the one and only remedy—for our sinful state by sending His Son Jesus Christ to die for our sins. Only through faith in what Jesus Christ accomplished for us at the cross can a person meet God on His terms.

Upon believing the gospel of salvation, a person is indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God and acquires the perfect nature of Christ (Romans 8:9-11; Colossians 1:27). This is what allows a person to be forgiven of sin and be a child of God. However, the original nature of man continues in all of us. These two natures do not mix because one is of the flesh and the other is of the Spirit—one is sinful and one is perfect (Galatians 5:16-24). This is why believers, although exhorted not to sin (Romans 6:12-14), continue to sin anyway. The Apostle Paul revealed his own personal struggles with this internal conflict in Romans 7. He was thankful, however, that despite his sin, as a believer he was not condemned for his sins. That is because God judged him, as He judges every believer, on the basis of what Christ did for us at the cross instead of on what we do (Romans 7:25 – 8:1).

## How Should Believers Act?

Does the fact that God has forgiven the sins of those of us who believe the gospel of salvation give us license to continue living sinful lives as we please? Do we have an excuse to be hypocrites? No, although many of us seem to think so and prove it by our words and actions (Romans 6:15-19).

**What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be [God forbid]! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? (Romans 6:1-2)**

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<sup>10</sup> See the author’s **Creation—What Does Scripture Say?** for a closer look at the creation account and what it means for us, and how that no one can come to God today by recognizing Him as the Creator.

But what about Paul? He continued to sin, didn't he? Yes, but look at Romans 7 again. When Paul referred to his sin, he described it as doing something he *didn't* want to do. This is far different than not caring about sin, desiring to sin, or willfully living in sin.

**For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. For the good that I want, I do not do; but I practice the very evil that I do not want.** (Romans 7:18-19)

So, what are we supposed to do? How are we supposed to deal with sin and our hypocrisy? How does God want us—His children—to conduct our lives? Thankfully, God did not leave it up to us to figure it out. He explains, through Scripture, how He wants us to live.

**Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. He [God] made Him [Christ] who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.** (II Corinthians 5:20-21)

What is an ambassador? A political ambassador is someone who represents his own nation in a foreign nation. A good ambassador acts and speaks in such a way that represents the desires of his nation without casting a poor light on it. A bad ambassador does not convey the wishes of his country, or through his words and actions causes the citizens of the nation he is serving in to despise the nation he represents. In the same way, believers represent Christ to an unbelieving world. God considers us to be citizens of heaven (Philippians 3:20), which means we are aliens in this world. Should we want to be good, or bad, ambassadors? Certainly, a nation is not served well by a hypocritical ambassador, nor is God served well by His hypocritical children.

God wants us to walk worthy of our salvation (Colossians 1:9-14).<sup>11</sup> That is, He wants our lives to reflect what He has done for us through Christ. Furthermore, God wants us to live according to His Spirit instead of continuing to live according to the flesh (Romans 8:12-13; Colossians 3:5-17).

**Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling [salvation] with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.** (Ephesians 4:1-3)

**Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting [yielding] the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness, but present [yield] yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under [the] law, but under grace.** (Romans 6:12-14)

**But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality [adultery, fornication], impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger,**

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<sup>11</sup> See the author's **Walk Worthy** for a discussion on how God wants us to live each day.



**disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If [Because] we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. (Galatians 5:16-25)**

If we continue living according to the flesh in disregard of God's desire for us, we are doing the very things that God will judge unbelievers for doing (Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:3-5). Remember that God will ultimately judge all unbelievers for their sin and cast them into the lake of fire for eternal punishment (Revelation 20:11-15). Why should we even want to dishonor and disrespect God in such a way? It's like saying "Thanks God for forgiving my sins and making me your child, but I'll just go ahead and live any way I please so that You can show how loving and gracious You really are."

Honestly, we have a very difficult uphill battle when it comes to sin. The world is sinful and we are bombarded with sin on every front. From television, movies, the internet, computer games, music, friends, and even family, we are confronted with obscene language, lying, deceit, greed, drunkenness, illegal drug use, sexual immorality, pornography, and violence. Immoral behavior that once was considered immoral by the general population is now acceptable, even by some believers. Although God says otherwise, it is commonly considered to be OK to use profanity or other abusive language. It is OK to lie in certain circumstances. It is OK to get drunk. It is OK to live with your partner before getting married. Homosexuality is OK. In so many instances, what is wrong is now considered to be right, and what is right is now considered to be wrong. Furthermore, we are accused of being judgmental if we use Scripture to show what God says about sin and its consequences.<sup>12</sup>

God, however, instructs His children to flee from sin. He knows its power, but God's power is far greater than that of sin or of Satan (Ephesians 1:18-21). Believers need to rely on God's strength, and not on our own strength or will, to avoid or resist the temptations of sin (Ephesians 6:10-17). God considers us to be dead to sin because of Christ's death for our sins, so we should not let sin continue to be masters over us (Romans 6:1-14).

**Flee [sexual] immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body. (I Corinthians 6:18-20)**

**Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. (I Corinthians 10:14)**

**Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself**

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<sup>12</sup> God does not want us to try to change the sinful behaviors of the world (I Corinthians 5:9-10). However, He expects His children to reprove and correct *fellow brethren* who are leading unruly lives contrary to God's written will (II Timothy 3:16-17; I Corinthians 5:11-13; Romans 15:14; II Thessalonians 3:6). Furthermore, we are to do so with gentleness and humility, realizing that we are not only forgiven but also capable of doing the very same things (II Thessalonians 3:14-15; Colossians 3:16).

**from these things,<sup>13</sup> he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work. Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. (II Timothy 2:20-22)**

If we willfully sin, or live sinful lives or lifestyles, we are effectively separating ourselves from fellowship with God and cannot know His peace. We will live hypocritical lives and those around us will most likely see our hypocrisy. If we find ourselves living according to sin, or someone points out that we are doing so, there is a way for us to recover from the situation and restore fellowship with God. We must admit our sinfulness, humble ourselves before God with a repentant heart (II Corinthians 7:9-10; II Timothy 2:25-26), depend on the strength of God to overcome the power of sin, and desire to do His will. We need to remind ourselves who we are in Christ and how God wants us to live.

**Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship [reasonable service]. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:1-2)**

As children of God, we should remember that we were bought with a price—the shed blood of our Lord Jesus Christ (I Corinthians 6:19-20; Romans 3:23-26). Our response to that supreme sacrifice should be thanksgiving to God and Christ for this ultimate demonstration of love, and to live according to God’s will. Only then can we truly know the peace of God and be able to withstand the sinful temptations that abound (I Corinthians 10:13). If we live as God wants us to live, then we won’t be known for our hypocrisy.

**Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7)**

### **Should God be Judged According to the Hypocrisy of Christians?**

It is well established, then, that the children of God are prone to hypocrisy. However, do our weaknesses and shortcomings, even though contrary to the will of God, actually diminish God in any way or make Him unworthy of our worship? Not at all. If a person breaks the law, does that make the law bad or ineffectual, or does it make the police officer, jury, or judge wrong in enforcing the law? No. If a student cheats on a test, does that make the test wrong or the teacher unworthy of respect? No. Our sin reflects our behavior and nature, not God’s.

**What then? If some did not believe, their unbelief will not nullify the faithfulness of God, will it? (Romans 3:3)**

So, an unbeliever has no excuse to disregard God just because he knows or sees a hypocritical Christian or things being done falsely in the name of God. As bad as these actions are, God remains righteous, faithful, and just. Even though believers sin, it does not diminish the fact of the unbeliever’s

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<sup>13</sup> We are to purge ourselves—our hearts—of dishonorable desires or pursuits, whether we consider them to be like vessels of gold, silver, wood, or earth (things that are earned). These desires demonstrate our self-worth but are considered by God to be youthful (self-serving) lusts from which we should flee.

sinfulness and his own need for salvation. Furthermore, believers have no excuse to turn their backs on God because of the poor behavior of other brethren, either. If we do so we are judging God, and we are in no position to do that (Romans 9:19-21; 11:33-36; Proverbs 21:30; Daniel 4:35). To judge God according to other peoples' sinful behavior makes us better than God—it makes us hypocrites.

### **Summary**

Hypocrisy is sin. We need to humbly and truthfully examine ourselves to determine our own hypocrisy. When we are hypocritical, it casts a very poor reflection on us and on God. Our hypocrisy could give some people an easy excuse to not want to have any association with believers or with Christ; even worse, it could give them a reason to blaspheme God. Therefore, we need to address our sinfulness to remedy our hypocrisy. Although we will continue to sin (and likely in some instances be hypocritical) as long as we live on this earth, it should be our desire to live in a manner that is worthy of our salvation. We should be thankful to God that, despite sinning, we are sealed by the Holy Spirit and cannot lose our salvation in Christ.

Only a true Christian—a believer, a member of the body of Christ—can know the peace of God and overcome the controlling power (grasp) of sin, which includes hypocrisy. Are you a child of God? Do you know Christ as your Savior? Salvation from the consequences of sin is a gift of God. A person receives this gift by simply believing that Christ died for our sins and that He was buried and rose from the dead for us. It's like saying "Thank you" to God. Thanks be to God and our Lord Jesus Christ!

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