

Sorrow & A Sad Countenance

David Halbrook

No one prefers feelings of pain over feels of joy. No one likes the sound of sorrow more than the sound of laughter, but Solomon said that sadness is better for us than laughter.

Solomon understood sorrow. His parents first met to commit adultery causing family scandal, sorrow, and death (2 Sam. 11-12). His half-brothers were guilty of rape and treason. He, like us, sometimes wondered "Why. . .?"

Batesville regularly has reasons to sorrow, including the recent death and injuries of several tenth-grade students. Sorrows are not new to the world, but when they are new to us, they can feel unbearable. Solomon's prescription in such days is, *In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider* (Eccl. 7:14). Both kinds of days will come (Eccl. 3:1-8), so learn how to bear and benefit from them.

Read the book of Ecclesiastes to learn how to handle joy and sorrow. Read chapter 11:9-10 during your youth, and chapter 12:13-14 is for all ages, teaching the purpose of life.

Visit our website for articles and audio about death, the resurrection, and related topics. Often, when we are sad we gain the most out of studying and reflecting on these topics.

-- Our article appearing in *Arkansas Weekly*.

Simple opportunities to teach the lost and assist each other.

Pray for these among us: Ed & Janice White, John & Erlene Ledgerwood, Novela Puckett, Noleka Hopper, Joyce Ratliff, Ed Koettel, Maxine Epperson, others with ongoing trials, and new Christians. (Also, Ben Calderon with whom we fellowship [share] in Conway). [See the overhead charts for other prayer requests]

Check the lists on the bulletin board at the back from time to time (Lord's Supper preparation, roadside sign, men leading when we assemble).

Join us each Sunday at 10AM (classes), 10:45AM, & 5PM and Wednesday at 7PM.

church of Christ—Quail Valley 4104 E. Harrison St. Batesville, AR 72501
Office- (870) 793-6700

The Exhorter

Acts 11:23 *Exhorted them all... cleave unto the Lord*
church of Christ--Quail Valley

November 1, 2015
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"If I Had a Hammer"

Steve Kline

Renowned psychologist Abraham Maslow has said that, "When the only tool you own is a hammer, every problem begins to resemble a nail." It seems to me that some Christians only have a hammer, so all they do is hammer. Others only have a saw, so all they do is cut. Some only have a sander, so all they do is smooth things over. We as Christians have a tendency to deal with others and their problems in the way that is most comfortable for us, rather than in a way that is most beneficial for them.

We would be much better workmen and more helpful in building God's house if we would all learn to use a variety of tools (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:10). Every person with a spiritual problem is not to be handled in exactly the same way. Sensitivity and discernment are required to know which tool is appropriate. We are to "warn the unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all" (1 Thessalonians 5:14). Yes, the unruly need warning, but the weak need something different; they need support! The fainthearted need comfort. Using the hammer of warning on the weak and fainthearted is not just poor carpentry, it's destructive! More than one weak, fainthearted Christian has been destroyed by the too stern rebuke of a well-meaning brother or sister who only knew how to use one tool. On the other hand, many an unruly Christian has found unneeded support from an overly-sympathetic brother or sister who only knew how to use a floor jack.

We must learn to make distinctions. Everyone is not the same. On some we must "have compassion, making a distinction." But others we must "save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh" (Jude 22-23).

The words of an old folk song go something like this: "If I had a hammer, I'd hammer in the morning, I'd hammer in the evening, all over this land...." As Christians our song should be, "If all I had was a hammer, I'd go and buy a sander."

Beware the Leaven of the Pharisees Joe R. Price

A stage actor in ancient Greece and Rome was known as a "hypocrite" (the word primarily denoting "one who answers"). It was customary for Greek and Roman actors to speak in large masks with mechanical devices for augmenting the force of the voice; hence the word came to be used metaphorically of "a dissembler, a hypocrite" (Vine). These masks made their voices seem to be louder than they actually were. The word was eventually used to describe someone who gave himself out to be something he actually was not, hence, a dissembler or hypocrite. Hypocrisy is pretense, play-acting.

While play-acting on the stage may be harmless enough, it is another matter when it comes to the moral and spiritual realm. Jesus used the word "hypocrite" more than anyone else in the New Testament. In Matthew 23:3, His description of the scribes and Pharisees aptly defines hypocrisy: "they say and do not do". They were religious pretenders, and Jesus emphatically condemned their hypocrisy.

Jesus taught His disciples: "Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy" (Lk. 12:1). What the Pharisees taught contributed to their hypocrisy, for Jesus said to beware of "the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees" (Matt. 16:12). Their hypocrisy was showing through whenever they elevated their traditions above the word of God (Matt. 15:3-9). They continued to set themselves forward as being obedient to God while in fact they "transgress(ed) the commandment of God because of their tradition" (Matt. 15:3). They pretended to obey God even as they were disobedient to Him.

Jesus pronounced destruction upon the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23. Using it and additional Bible passages, let us learn some of the characteristics of hypocrisy. These will help us identify this dreadful sin, repent of it and avoid it in ourselves.

1) Hypocrisy obligates others while excusing itself. "They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger" (Matt. 23:4). The hypocrite places burdens upon others while excusing himself of similar obligation. As noted from Matthew 15:3-9, the hypocrite binds his traditions on others then harshly judges the person who does not conform to the tradition. Jesus rebukes this trait in Matthew 7:1-5, where the hypocrite is pictured trying to extract the speck from his brother's eye while a beam is lodged in his own eye. We avoid hypocrisy by first removing the beam from our own eye so that we can then help our brother with his speck. Beware the leaven of the Pharisees.

2) Hypocrisy is overly concerned about outward appearances (Matthew 23:5-7). Jesus said that "all their works they do to be seen of men" (Matt. 23:5). Winning the approval of others is of primary concern to the hypocrite. While ignoring the true condition of his heart, the hypocrite is supremely confident that since he appears righteous, he is righteous. He fails to examine and arrange and purify his heart. Jesus compared such external emphasis to a cup and platter that are clean on the outside but full of filth on the inside, and to whitewashed tombs that are beautiful on the outside but full of inward corruption (Matt. 23:25-28). Why are you who you are morally and religiously? Is it because of your abiding faith in God and your devotion to Christ? Or, is it to have the praise of men? Beware the leaven of the Pharisees.

3) Hypocrisy strains out a gnat and swallows a camel (Matt. 23:23-24). The hypocrite becomes consumed with the minute details of obedience while at the same time ignoring the basis for that obedience. Justice, mercy and faith must under gird our obedience to God and service to others. Jesus said obeying every command is essential, while also warning that our concern for the commands of God must grow out of these "weightier matters of the law" (Matt. 23:23; cf. 5:19-20). Beware the leaven of the Pharisees.

4) Hypocrisy spreads (Lk. 12:1). Jesus likened hypocrisy to the influence of leaven upon bread dough. Desiring to be accepted by our peers, we are tempted to act hypocritically in order to secure their acceptance. When we yield to this temptation we pretend to be something we are not for the benefit of others. The influence of hypocrisy is on vivid display in Galatians 2:12-13, when an entire group of Jewish Christians were drawn into sin by Peter's hypocrisy. Hypocrisy influences others to agree with it. Beware the leaven of the Pharisees.

5) Hypocrisy condemns (Gal. 2:11). There should be no doubt that moral and religious hypocrisy is repulsive to God. Being a hypocrite will cause you to lose your soul. Beware the leaven of the Pharisees.

6) Hypocrisy will be exposed (Lk. 12:1-5). "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known" (Lk. 12:1-2). Hypocrisy tries to cover up its true identity. But, since every hidden thing will be exposed when God judges us all, we ought to fear and obey God rather than men. By fearing men instead of God, hypocrisy attempts to secure men's approval. In the process, God's approval is forfeited. We must put away hypocrisy (1 Pet. 2:1). Beware the leaven of the Pharisees.

Finally, it is worth remembering that another person's hypocrisy is not our comfort. Too often the hypocrisy of others is used to justify bad behavior. It does not. Beware the leaven of the Pharisees.