

The purpose and passion of a Christian

Error comes into the body of Christ not only through not knowing the word of God, but by not knowing the power of God.

Matthew 22:29

29 But Jesus answered them, "You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God.

A balanced new testament Christian life is both spirit and truth, word and power.

A balanced new testament church is both spirit and truth word and power.

Romans 2:17-29

17 But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast in God 18 and know his will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed from the law; 19 and if you are sure that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, 20 an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth— 21 you then who teach others, do you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal? 22 You who say that one must not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? 23 You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law. 24 For, as it is written, "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you." 25 For circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law, but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision. 26 So, if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded [1] as circumcision? 27 Then he who is physically uncircumcised but keeps the law will condemn you who have the written code [2] and circumcision but break the law. 28 For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. 29 But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a

matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.

Here is the Apostle's first charge against the hypocrite in action:

1) Paul says that this **man teaches and preaches to others but never to himself.**

V 21 you then who teach others, do you not teach yourself?

A preacher who does not preach his sermon to himself before he preaches it to anybody else, is exposing himself to hypocrisy; he is in a very dangerous condition.

If a man has not preached to himself or taught himself, all his teaching of others is vain and useless.

But the hypocrite never does that.
He never teaches himself.
He never applies the truth to himself.
He can apply it to others, never to himself at all.

It is always outside him.
He needs nothing, he is complete.
So he never preaches to or teaches himself.

What is your motive when you read the Bible?

Is it just to have a knowledge of it so that you can show others how much you know, and argue with them, or are you applying the truth to yourselves?

As we face the beginning of each new year, we may make resolutions to do daily Bible reading in a more diligent manner.

Go through the Bible every year if you can, do as much as you can ... and as you read it, always apply it.

As you read about the Pharisees say to yourself,

'That is me! What is it saying about me?'

Allow the Scripture to search you; otherwise it can be very dangerous.

There is a sense in which the more you know about it, the more dangerous it is to you if you do not apply it to yourself.

The worst condition a preacher can ever get into is simply reading to prepare sermons, not reading for the love of reading.

Every day I take devotions before I study.
Every day I read the word and examine myself against it.

If you judge yourself against it and not others you will never run the danger of a hypocrite.

The second point here is that a hypocrite is characterized by complacency.

He is always self satisfied always pleased with himself, never conscience of any deficient

Paul says: v17 you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast in God

That is typical of a hypocrite.
Always resting on something.
Always justifying himself.
Well, I am OK Jack – I have the law.
I am a worshipper.
I pay my tithe.
I testified at AA meeting last week.

You sound like the Pharisee that prayed:

“God I thank you that I am not like other sinners” (Luke 18:11)

You see the hypocrite is above us all. Looking down condescendingly from their great spiritual heights.

Third point: Those that don't know God are turned away because of the hypocrite's life.

All this is important because of the results to which it leads and that is my third point; that is the third thing that he tells us about hypocrisy.

Here is the message of verse 24:

24 For, as it is written, "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."

You very Jews who claim to be God's people, you are causing others to blaspheme the name of God.

It works like this: 'We are God's people', the Jews would claim.

They boasted about God and about the law.

They said, 'God has ignored all the other nations, He has chosen us and He has blessed us so signally in this way'.

Now the Gentiles heard all this and they looked on.

And they drew certain deductions that were perfectly fair.

To begin with, the Gentiles were obviously judging God by what they saw in the Jews.

They had no personal or direct knowledge of God, but there was a nation that claimed it was God's own people, that they were the representatives of God.

So the Gentiles judged God by what they saw in the Jews, and you cannot blame them for doing that.

This has great implications for us today.

I wonder whether any of us who as Christians are causing people to blaspheme the name of Christ and of God as the Jews were doing?

In the same way, you cannot blame people today for judging Christ and Christianity by what they see in church members.

People seem to think that the masses are outside the Christian church because our evangelistic methods are not what they ought to be.

That is not the answer.

People are outside the church because looking at us they say, "what is the point of being Christians? - look at them!"

You don't think Ted haggard homosexual affair – or accusation there of didn't give fuel to thousands to stay away or walk away from church?

What about the current financial scandals in big ministries

The divorce of Paula White?

The fall of the Bakkers and Swaggarts in the 80's

They are judging Christ by you and by me. And you cannot stop them and you cannot blame them.

They not only judge God and Christ by this, they judge the truth of God in the same way.

The Gentiles said, 'these people are always talking about truth. They say we are in darkness, that they have some marvelous revelation, that God gave the law to heir great leader, Moses; they talk about truth.

Very well', they said, 'look at the lives that the Jews are living; is that what truth leads to? Is that kind of life and behavior the result of truth? And so they judged the truth by what they saw in its representatives.

And people are doing that today about Christianity. They say, 'Look at those Christians!

Look at them when they are ill,

Look at them when they think they are going to die,
Look at them when something goes wrong!

They can talk marvelously when the sun is shining and when the business is going well, and when there is no trouble in the family, but the moment anything goes wrong they do not seem to have anything.

They are even worse than many who are not Christians Is that Christianity?' - perfectly logical, perfectly fair deduction

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And then the fourth way in which it works is this - they judge the salvation of God by what they see in its representatives.

The Jews were always talking about deliverances and about God's salvation, and the Gentiles looked on and they said, 'Is this the sort of person that God blesses? Is this the kind of blessing that God gives His own?'

So they judged the whole of salvation by what they saw in the Jews.

And people are judging Christianity, the glorious message of the cross and the resurrection, and the Holy Ghost ... all this is being judged by what people see in you and me.

Do we give the impression that we are enjoying this glorious gospel of the blessed God, that we are holding on to and benefiting by the exceeding great and precious promises?

Are we partakers of the 'unsearchable riches of Christ'?
Are we living as princes, or do we give the impression that we are paupers? The Gentiles are looking on!

He world is watching you.

That's not fair...

You know, the fact is it is.
Not perfect, just forgiven is a cop out.
It is a reason to justify bad driving and a bad attitude.

I will never be perfect, but our standard is perfection.

Will we obtain it?

Never this side of glory, but we should always be reaching for it.

We are called to be transformed into His image.

You see if you allow the weight of this to hit you then you will

live differently,

love differently,

talk differently

think differently,

react differently,

read differently,

watch differently.

That means I am always on show.

Yes - priest collar story.

And then the fourth point is this: they judge the power of God by what they see in us.

In verse 24 the Apostle is quoting Isaiah 52: 5 taking it almost word for word

5 Now therefore what have I here," declares the Lord, "seeing that my people are taken away for nothing? Their rulers wail," declares the Lord, "and continually all the day my name is despised.

Here were these people who claimed that they were God's own people and that God was concerned about them and loved them, and would never permit any harm to come to them.

Suddenly they were carried away into the captivity of Babylon
They were defeated by the Chaldean army and they were quit helpless.

Their city was sacked and demolished, and they were taken out of their own land.

And the Gentiles looked on and said,
'Where is their God?

They always said that their God was the only true God, and that the others were not gods at all...but it looks to us', they said, 'as if these other gods are more powerful than the God of Israel.

If the God of Israel were the almighty God that they have talked about, would He have permitted their enemies to defeat them?

Would He ever have permitted them to be humbled and humiliated and carried away?'

They said, 'Their God has no power! These other gods, Baal and Ashtaroath, these are the gods that give victory. The God of Israel has no power at all'.

You see, you cannot expect the Gentiles to understand this, but this is how it works: the children of Israel were defeated and carried into captivity because of their own sin, and because God, as a part of His chastisement of them, allowed the enemy to come in and defeat them.

He could have stopped it, but He allowed it in order to teach them, in order to chastise them. But you cannot expect the non-Christian to understand that.

They see the mess that is our life and say...that aren't working for them, it sure ain't going to work for me.

Just as many Christians get divorce, are in debt, are dying of illness are stress and hostile.

There IS meant to be a difference.

When you live a mundane, passionless Christianity, you cause others to blaspheme God

The disrespectful use of the name God.

In a broader sense Blasphemy is irreverence towards something that is sacred.

If we truly believe that to bring a living Jesus to a dying world is our mandate, then we must first live it.

That's easy for you to say that you're the preacher...no it is not.

I find it incredibly hard.

I have never been able to read this book like a dead tome.

It is living, it is painful.

I hold it and some days it is like a mirror and it reveals my true nature.

And oh the pain and shame of it.

What about you friend?

I have often prayed for the old friends I had, the old girlfriends, my parents.

They saw me at my worst and never Christ at his best.

I think God my mother-in-law got saved and I pray my father-in-law will and by God's grace my parents.

That by broken sinful testimony will not hinder the good and great work of God in their life.

- 1) do you preach it and not live it?
- 2) Do you justify who you are and what you do?
- 3) Is your life a testimony or a test for God? Do you bring Him glory or grief?
- 4) Do people worship because of you or blaspheme?