

CLARITY TRUMPET

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For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare himself for battle? So likewise, you, unless you utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how will it be known what is spoken?

For you will be speaking into the air.

-First Corinthians 14:8,9-

Hypocrisy in the Church

And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. . . . But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly (spoken by Jesus to His disciples, Matthew 6:5, 6).

Why does God insist on praying “in secret?” Samuel Chadwick suggests that “one reason is that the first quality God requires in prayer is reality.” Hypocrites do not have a prayer *life*; they do not pray in secret. That’s not the same as saying, “Hypocrites do not say prayers in private.” However, when they do say their private prayers such prayers are almost always short, repetitive and matter-of-fact, without heartfelt urgency or fervency. You see, to pray “in secret” suggests that hearts are to be pure and hands clean, shutting the door to everything else and to be alone *with God*.

Hypocrites, by their very nature, have no place in their lives for privacy with God. Oh, they may delight in privacy with their books, with their sermon-building, or with their thoughts as they plan great things for their careers, church or ministry. But *true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth* (John 4:23, 24). Hypocrisy is born and fed in the absence of this quiet, private, consistent worshipful time with the Father. Without this relationship, the greatest “public” Christian in the world is a rank hypocrite.

Worshipping the Father “in spirit and truth” is foreign to a hypocrite for by definition a hypocrite is a pretender, an actor. He is more concerned with appearance than with substance, more intent on *looking* good than in *being* good, giving higher priority to how people like something rather than whether that “something” is a delight to God – the One who will judge *every* word, thought, intent, motive and action of life.

Sobering Words from a Successful Pastor

Jim Cymbala, pastor of the 6,000 member Brooklyn Tabernacle, makes some excellent points when he states: “The apostles weren’t trying to finesse people. Their communication was not supposed to be ‘cool’ or

soothing. They aimed for piercing of the heart, for conviction of sin. They had not the faintest intention of asking, ‘What do the people want to hear? How can we draw more people to church on Sunday?’ That was the last thing from their minds. Such an approach would have been foreign to the whole New Testament. . . .”

“Instead of trying to bring men and women to Christ in the biblical way, we are consumed with the unbiblical concept of ‘church growth’ . . .”

“God nowhere asks anyone to have a large church. He only calls us to do His work, proclaiming His Word to people He loves under the anointing and power of the Holy Spirit to produce results that only He can bring about. The glory then goes to Him alone – not to any denomination, local church, local pastor, or church growth consultant. That is God’s only plan, and anything else is a deviation from the teaching of the New Testament. . . .”

“The truth is that ‘user-friendly’ can be a cover-up word for carnality. The same people who want sixty-minute worship services rent two-hour videos and watch NBA and NFL games that run even longer. The issue is not length, but appetite. Seriously, what will our children and grandchildren grow up experiencing in church? Extended times of waiting on the Lord will be totally foreign to their experience. There will be no memory bank of seeing people reach out to God. All they will recall are professionally polished, closely timed productions.”

Note: Pastor Cymbala seems to apply these observations to *all* services, but I see wisdom in having specially designed shorter services just for unbelievers. However, if such “professionally polished, closely timed productions” become the normal church menu for the body of *believers*, then I think pastor Cymbala’s comments are right on target and church leaders need to prayerfully weigh the effect that such shallowness will eventually have on the body of Christ.

Apostolic Appetites

The hypocrite has no appetite for long, secluded times alone with God, no ongoing urgency or longing to regularly pour out his or her heart to the Lord. Too much is exposed to the Light when we consistently meet alone with our God, and the hypocrite cannot stand for the Light to shine directly on his hypocrisy for too long. It’s too unbearable.

Speaking of appetites, what instincts or appetites ruled the apostles? Consider what the Book of Acts reveals:

When they were in trouble, they prayed;
When they were intimidated, they prayed;
When they were challenged, they prayed;
When they were persecuted, they prayed;
When they were opposed or questioned,
they prayed and witnessed;

When they were faced with an audience,
they prayed and witnessed;

When they were overwhelmed with too much to do, they delegated duties so they could *give themselves* “continually to prayer

and to the

ministry of the Word" (6:4).

The apostles had no appetite for public opinion, but they were *hungry for God's presence and God's Word*. In all of our high-tech, state-of-the-art demographics and know-how, have we lost that dual hunger that drove them to accomplish such truly great things for God? Perhaps more than anything else, this loss of deep spiritual hunger explains our spiritual weakness and the puny results of our efforts and service.

We don't need a "new" or "fresh" word from God; we need to make it our habit to respond to what He has already revealed in His written Word. God has nothing new or novel for His church today, and those believers who feel stifled by being bound by the Word of God are clearly advertising their own failure to plum its depths. Leonard Ravenhill succinctly stated, "People say the church today is 'growing and expanding.' Yes, it's ten miles wide now -- and about a quarter-inch deep!" Over and over again we mistake numerical growth with success; we call noise and activity, life; and we have replaced personal piety (holiness) with platform polish. *Sadly, few even know or notice the difference.*

The Tragic Results of Hypocrisy

We cannot live a hypocritical life and have no one affected by it, and whether the life we live is hypocritical or genuine, it is not possible to live a totally isolated life. Every life touches many others.

- A hypocrite (one who puts on a fair show before others while privately having little or no rich personal fellowship with God) is self-deceived. He is often the last one to realize just how two-faced he is. Scripture plainly points this out: *But be doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves* (James 1:22). The word translated "deceiving" carries with it the idea of being deceived *through false reasoning or rationalization*, and that is a dominant trait of a hypocrite.

When a person's hypocrisy is pointed out, instead of exhibiting brokenness and sincere sorrow, he'll usually rationalize, either blaming something else for his failure, or shifting the focus from his inconsistency in one area to his self-perceived "success" in another. "It may be true," he might say, "that I'm a failure in being the spiritual head of my family, but I led three people to Christ last week. How many did you lead to the Lord?" Instead of owning up to his inconsistency and conquering it, he pushes it aside and continues to glory in outward appearances. Jesus said, *You are those who justify yourselves before men [through rationalizations, no doubt], but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God* (Luke 16:15).

- Religious hypocrites (including the *Christian* variety) seduce and lure the unsuspecting into their web of deceit, and may even be Satan's tools to shut Heaven's door to some who follow in their footsteps. Jesus again is the most stern and outspoken on this truth: *Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make*

him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves (Matthew 23:15).

If you who are reading these words are a child of God living a double life of hypocrisy, I earnestly warn you and beg you: Bring it to a halt NOW! The repercussions of living a lie are much too devastating to trifle with for even a moment longer. The Lord is coming again and when He does He *will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels [motives, intents] of the heart. . . .* (I Corinthians 4:5).

If, on the other hand, you are one who has been turned off to church or religion by the hypocritical actions and words of those who purport to be godly, I have this encouraging word for you: **THERE IS NOTHING HYPOCRITICAL, FAKE, OR UNTRUE ABOUT THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.** You may examine His life as revealed in the Bible, you may test His claims, you may scrutinize the minute details revealed about Him, and you will find Him to be all that He claimed to be. I urge you to not judge *HIM* by those who claim to represent Him. God's servants are mere humans. Christ alone is the God-man, perfect and undefiled in every way. You can trust Him.

When He says, *The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost* (Luke 19:10), you can believe it.

When He promises, *He who believes in Me has everlasting life* (John 6:47), you can base your eternal destiny upon His word.

When He guarantees His believing child, *I will never leave you, nor forsake you* (Hebrews 13:5), you can count on it to be absolutely true.

Churches may be full of people who play their little hypocritical religious games, but Christ is not, nor has He ever been, into religious play-acting. He spoke Truth, He lived Truth, He is the Truth! How the Church of Jesus Christ needs genuine folks who have no hidden agendas of their own, but who only desire to do God's will, pleasing Him in ALL they do.

An Important Voice from the Past

A number of years ago a man much experienced in the Gospel ministry wrote the following: "How many of us who are engaged in the Lord's holy service are secretly cherishing some proud purpose of excelling other men, of making a name, of securing money and applause! We will use the pulpit as a pedestal for the adulation of the world and the cross for a post on which to hang garlands to our own glory.

How often do we preach sermons or make addresses and attend meetings with no other thought than to secure the recognition and goodwill of those with whom we desire to stand well! We are not willing to trust our reputation with Christ or to be called fools for His sake. . . . But all this must be laid aside. **We must have no private purposes to serve.**" (F. B. Meyer). May it ever be!

Richard A. Seymour

Clarity Trumpet #18

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