

Our Glorifying

“For our glorifying is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and sincerity of God, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we behaved ourselves in the world and more abundantly to youward. For we write no other thing unto you, than what ye read or even acknowledge and I hope ye will acknowledge unto the end: as also ye did acknowledge us in part, that we are your glorifying, even as ye are ours in the day of our Lord Jesus” (2 Cor. 1:12-14).

What could be worse than hypocrisy in religion? Jesus condemned, in the severest of terms, the hypocrisy of the religious leaders of His nation. Their hypocrisy was laid bare in Matthew 23, for there eight times is found the phrase: “Woe unto you scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites.” Following the phrase, Jesus charged they shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; they entered not themselves, and forbade them who would have entered to do so; He charged that they devoured widow’s houses and for a pretense made long prayers (23:14); that they compassed sea and land to make a proselyte then they made him worse than themselves and in addition to these severe charges, made at least five more equally serious ones. Jesus quoted Isaiah 29:12 to describe His people: “This people honoreth me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.”

Paul suffered frequently because of the hypocrisy of the nation’s leaders. Taken in custody in Jerusalem where he had come to bring financial assistance to poor saints, he was allowed to speak in his defense. He began by saying, “Brethren, I have lived before God in all good conscience until this day” (Acts 23:1). The high priest, Ananias, commanded those near Paul to smite him on the mouth (Acts 23:2). Paul’s immediate response was, “God shall smite thee, thou whited wall, and sittest thou to judge me according to the law and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?” (Acts 23:3). When Paul called Ananias a “whited wall” he meant that Ananias had acted hypocritically in his command that Paul be slapped. Paul also rebuked Peter for his hypocrisy (Gal. 2:11-12). Paul knew that hypocrisy made religion worthless — the great command is that “thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind.” And if one does this, hypocrisy will be eliminated.

So when Paul wrote Corinthians, he assured them that he could glory in the fact that his conscience bore testimony that he had behaved himself in holiness and sincerity while he dwelt among them. He lived in that way before the world; he was even more careful to so behave himself in their midst. He labored unceasingly night and day to share the gospel with all men and he had worked with Aquila and Priscilla at tentmaking to provide for not only his needs but for those of his companions. In nothing had he burdened them; rather he was careful to be a good example to those who were his “children in the faith”. And, as he looked in his heart as he wrote these words, he had no slight tinge of guilt that his words were not accurately a representation of his life among them: his conscience was in perfect agreement with his words.

Thus he said, “For we write no other things unto you than what you read or even acknowledge” (2 Cor. 1:13). As Paul’s conduct in Corinth was without duplicity, so his letters to them were equally so. He did not write something he never intended to do: his written words, at the time he wrote them, expressed exactly his intentions. While (as the Corinthians knew and which Paul acknowledged) Paul had changed his plans about making an earlier visit to them (which he did not make), there was no hidden motive or purpose contrary to what he wrote and they read: his change of plans came about because he wished to give them more time to make needed corrections in their attitudes and lives: he delayed his coming to “spare them”. He did not wish to exercise a rod in their midst.

While Paul never sought the praise of men (Gal. 1:10), he did desire that all men at least regard his life and preaching as sincere, thus expressed that longing when he wrote, “... and I hope you will acknowledge unto the end” (2 Cor. 1:13).

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