

Sinners or Hypocrites?

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Christians are often criticized by the world for committing sin. It seems they believe Christians should be perfect. Certainly we should strive to sin less, but we are far from sinless. The apostle John wrote:

If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us (1 John 1:8).

We all know by experience that we are not sinless. Because we do sin from time to time, the world considers us hypocrites. However, while hypocrisy is a sin, our committing sin does not make us hypocrites.

A hypocrite is someone who pretends to be someone they are not. The word hypocrite comes from a Greek word which was used to describe an actor in a play.

Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for their hypocrisy. They were rebuked, but not just because of their sin. They were rebuked, due to the fact that they were acting religious in their prayers and giving, in order to be noticed by men (Matt. 6:1-5). It would seem that part of their hypocrisy was acting as if they had no sin.

As Christians, just as the apostle John wrote, we acknowledge the fact that we sin. We acknowledge there was only One who was sinless (Heb. 4:15). This does not make us hypocrites. It only confirms the truth that we need the blood of Jesus to cleanse us of our sins (1 John 1:7-9). It confirms the need for prayer and the support of our brethren (Heb. 10:25).

We have seen how the apostle John said we would be lying if we failed to admit we sometimes sin. John also spoke of the one who "practices" sin (1 John 3:4-9). This is very different than occasionally struggling with sin. He tells us one who practices sin is not born of God. As Christians, we do not, and should not, practice sin. There is a difference between one who lives a not so perfect Christian life, sinning from time to time, and one who practices sin. To practice sin is to make sin a constant part of one's life.

The world needs good examples. We can supply that need, even while struggling with sin from time to time. The world also needs one who lived a sinless life. For that, there is only One: Jesus Christ!