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Hypocrisy: To be a hypocrite is to give others the impression that we are holier than we actually are. It is the same as being false or telling a lie. Jesus pronounced a curse on hypocrites seven times in Matt. 23:13-29. It is possible to tell a lie without even opening our mouths. Ananias lied to the Holy Spirit without saying a word - when he pretended to be a wholehearted disciple of Jesus (Acts 5:1-5).

Jesus told the Pharisees that their inner life was "full of self indulgence" (Matt. 23:25) - which meant that they lived only to please themselves. Yet they gave others the impression that because they knew the Scriptures well and fasted and prayed and tithed their income, they were holy. They appeared very pious externally. They prayed lengthy prayers in public, but they did not pray at length in private - just like many today. It is hypocrisy if we praise God only on Sunday mornings but do not have a spirit of praise in our hearts at all times.

God looks at our hearts. The wise virgins had a hidden reserve of oil in their vessels while the foolish ones had only enough to light their lamps externally and have a good testimony before men (Matt. 25:1-4).

When we hear of a Christian leader suddenly falling into adultery, we must realize that that was no sudden fall but the final result of a long period of unfaithfulness in his inner life. He was a hypocrite for long!

Spiritual Pride: Spiritual pride is the most common sin to be found among those who pursue after holiness. We all know the parable of the self-righteous Pharisee who despised others even in his prayer (Luke 18:9-14)! It is more than likely that at 90% of all prayers offered in public by believers are primarily meant to impress others who are listening and not prayed to God at all. The Pharisee in the parable may not have been evil like other sinners in his external life. But Jesus hated the pride with which he thought of his spiritual activities and with which he despised others. It is spiritual pride that makes believers constantly judge other believers.

The tax collector, however, who saw himself as THE sinner - worse than all others - was accepted by God. All who have come face to face with God will have seen themselves at some time, as the chief of sinners.

Jesus taught that the greatest person in heaven would be the humblest (Matt. 18:4). The greatest virtue found in heaven is humility. We see in the book of Revelation that all those who receive crowns in heaven are quick to cast them down before the Lord acknowledging that He alone deserves every crown (Rev. 4:10, 11).

Jesus said that even if we managed to obey EVERY SINGLE commandment of God, we would still be unprofitable servants who have not done anything more than what was expected of us (Luke 17:10).