

As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby. - 1 Peter 2:2

THE SINCERE MILK OF GOD'S WORD

The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword... - Hebrews 4:12

JUNE 2022

“Let Love Be Without Hypocrisy”

Romans 12:9 commands, “*Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.*”

Love is not described by God as an “uncontrollable feeling,” but something He commands us to *choose* and put into *action* (**John 13:34**; **1 John 3:16-18**). When directed toward others, it involves a choice to seek others’ highest good.

The phrase “*without hypocrisy*” in **Romans 12:9** indicates that the love we show others must be *sincere*. We must not just pretend to love others, but truly care for their well-being.

One element of this principle involves the way we approach those in spiritual danger.

Notice how Mark’s account of the rich young ruler describes Jesus. **Mark 10:21** says, “*Jesus looking at him loved him, and said to him, ‘One thing you lack. Go, sell whatever you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me, taking up the cross.’*”

While hypocritical love would have told the rich young ruler what he *wanted* to hear, it’s clear from the ruler’s reaction (**verse 22**) that Jesus told him something he did *not* want to hear. Because of

Jesus’ *genuine* concern for the man’s soul, He told him what he *needed* to hear. As Jesus walked the earth, He never approved (or pretended to approve) of sin.

Jesus wasn’t spiteful in His approach, but He also did not sugar-coat truth.

The wisdom of the world may teach that it is hateful to correct someone for doing what “makes them happy,” regardless of whether such is in accordance with God’s commands.

Scripture teaches otherwise. While many “attack the messenger” when sin is pointed out (cf. **Gal. 4:16**), sincere love will point it out anyway when it’s appropriate to do so and in the *manner* that’s appropriate, heeding parameters God has given for how He wants sin to be pointed out (cf. **Matt. 18:15-17**; **1 Cor. 5:9-11**; **1 Tim. 5:19-20**; etc.).

There are times when patting someone on the back and encouraging him or her to “keep at it” is a demonstration of sincere love. Responding to current sin in the lives of others is not one of those times.

May we *sincerely* put others’ well-being ahead of our own comfort zone, and may we remember “*that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins*” (**James 5:20**).

“Prayer of a *Righteous Man*”

James 5:16 says that the “*effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*” This is comforting for the faithful Christian.

It is significant to note though that there are some “qualifiers” placed around the prayer that avails much. Notice that **James 5:16** does not say “prayer availeth much,” but rather “*the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*” Scripture teaches that for our prayers to be effective, there are some things needed on our part. One thing that is needed is *righteous living*.

This point is brought out strongly in **1 Peter 3:12**, which says, “*For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears open to their prayer; but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil*” (also see **1 John 3:22**).

God does not promise the unrighteous that their prayers will be effective. In fact, His face is *against* the unrighteous.

Part of living righteously involves becoming a Christian as God commands, (i.e., when a repentant believer is baptized “*into Christ*” for the remission of his or her sins (**Gal. 3:27**; cf. **Acts 2:38**)).

The context of **1 Peter 3:8-16** shows, though, that living righteously is not just a one-time event, but a *lifestyle* of surrendering to God’s commands.

The one who chooses this life can take comfort in the promise of **James 5:16**.

“No One Will Know”

An excuse some use to justify sin is the claim “no one will know.”

In **2 Samuel 11**, David fell into this kind of thinking. In that chapter, David committed adultery with Bathsheba, and then told lies and had Bathsheba’s husband put to death, all in attempts to “hide” his sin (**2 Sam. 11:14-15**). Following Uriah’s death, David took Bathsheba to be his wife, and seemed to think his sins were “covered up.”

Yet, God was not fooled. The end of the chapter says “*the thing that David had done displeased the LORD*” (**verse 27**). David’s sin did not go unnoticed or unpunished (**2 Sam. 12**).

As David learned, we can’t hide from Him whose judgment matters most. **Hebrews 4:13** says “*There is no creature that is hidden from his sight, but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him to whom we must give an account.*”

Hypocrisy leads one to focus only on *appearing* righteous in the eyes of others. Sincere obedience leads one to *be* righteous, no matter how many people are watching. The righteous know that *God* is always watching.

May we walk with righteous integrity, and never make the excuse “no one will know” to justify sin.

-*Michael Hickox (all articles)*