

The Harmful Habits Of The Hypocrite Romans 2

Introduction:

1. It has been said that a man's character is basically a "composite of our habits."
(Stephen R. Covey, *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*)
2. "Sow a thought, reap an action; sow an action, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap character; sow a character, reap a destiny."
3. Covey goes on to say, "Habits are powerful factors in our lives. Because they are consistent, often unconscious patterns, they constantly, daily, express our character and produce our effectiveness... or ineffectiveness."
4. "Habits are like a cable. We weave a strand of it every day, and soon it cannot be broken."
5. Habits are very difficult to break because they are things that we have done so many times that we don't even realize we're doing them anymore! But through the power of Christ in our lives, any bad habit can be broken.
6. I do not agree that habits cannot be broken, but I understand the point Covey is making.
7. When someone is having physical problems, a great place to start looking for possible causes is his or her eating habits. When someone is having a spiritual problem, we also look for habits - for patterns.
8. All unthankful people will share many of the same habits. The same goes for selfish people, lazy people, or angry people. A person doesn't become "depressed" overnight. It starts with harmful habits that have been repeated over and over again, until finally they have reaped destructive results.
9. This principle is certainly true of hypocrisy as well. No one in this room has ever woken up and said to themselves, "I want to work towards being a hypocrite someday." Yet the church is full of people living hypocritical lives.
10. Perhaps you are struggling with hypocrisy today. You know in your heart that hypocrisy is wrong, yet you are still playing the game. You wonder in your mind, "How did I get here?" This is an important question to ask, because until you know how you arrived at some place, you will never be able to figure out a way back out.
11. I think that the answers are found right here in Romans 2. You see, the Jews struggled with hypocrisy too... badly! They were incredibly hypocritical towards the Gentiles. They held the Gentiles up to a standard that they did not live by themselves.
12. Paul is writing this chapter to reprimand the Jews for their hypocrisy. As I read through this chapter, I noticed three habits that the Jews had fallen into.

What are the three harmful habits of the hypocrite?

1. **The hypocrite is quick to judge others, but slow to judge self. vs. 1-3, vs. 21-24**
 - a. Read verses 1-3. Paul doesn't mince words here. He states the situation very clearly: You Jews do the exact same things you are accusing the Gentiles of doing.

- b. Paul reiterates this point in verses 21-24.
- c. The mistake that the Jews were making is the mistake that every hypocrite has made through every generation. Hypocrites make a habit out of being quick to judge others, but slow to judge self.
- d. The Pharisees in Jesus' day had the same problem. Matthew 7:1-5
- e. Over and over again, we see that hypocrites make a habit of focusing on others instead of themselves. A great biblical example of this is found in the story of the woman taken in adultery (John 8:1-11). The Bible says that she was caught in the very act. When the religious leaders brought her to Jesus, they tried to tempt Him by saying, "The law of Moses says that this woman should be stoned. What do you say?" What was Jesus' response? He knelt down and began quietly drawing in the sand. When the Pharisees continued to ask Jesus, He responded, *"He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."* And what happened? Slowly, each and every person began to be convicted by their own conscience and their knowledge of their own sin and walked away.
- f. All throughout history, hypocrites have been known for seeing others' sins, but ignoring their own.
- g. Hypocrites are still the same today. Modern-day hypocrites don't kill their neighbors with stones. Who needs a stone when we each have a much more powerful weapon called a mouth? Through hateful words and destructive gossip the hypocrite tears others down.
- h. Perhaps someone here has fallen into the first habit of the hypocrite. Perhaps you have confused the word "spiritual" with the word "judgmental." The truly spiritual Christian is too worried about His own walk with God to spend time worrying about the faults of others.
- i. The truly spiritual person finds the good in others and seeks to build up, instead of always finding the bad and seeking to tear down.
- j. We must all be aware of this evil habit because it is so easy to fall in to. But this is not the only harmful habit of the hypocrite. The hypocrite is not only quick to judge others and slow to judge self, but secondly...

2. The hypocrite focuses on knowing, instead of doing. vs. 11-16, 17-24

- a. One of the main problems with the Jews was that they thought they were more godly than the Gentiles because they were the ones that had been given the law. Unlike the "ignorant" Gentiles, they knew the law inside and out. But Paul makes it clear that "knowing" is not as important as "doing."
- b. Read verses 11-16. The Jews may have known more of the law than the Gentiles, but that didn't make them any less guilty before God for their disobedience **to** the law.
- c. Paul revealed that while Jews boasted in their knowledge, their actions were filthy and unrighteous. Read verses 17-24.
- d. This is the second harmful habit of a hypocrite. Hypocrites usually **know** a lot, but they don't practice what they preach. Their walk doesn't match their talk.

- e. God is not interested in our empty religion and our carnal knowledge. He wants **doers** of the Word, not **hearers** of the Word only.
- f. *“Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and **doeth** it not, to him it is sin.”*
James 4:17
- g. *“But be ye **doers** of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a **doer**, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a **doer** of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.”*
James 1:22-25
- h. Paul reiterates in his letter to the Philippians the importance **doing** what we know.
- i. *“Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, **do**: and the God of peace shall be with you.”* **Philippians 4:9**
- j. We must all be careful of becoming so wrapped up in “learning” and “knowing” that we forget about the “doing.”
 - i. Spirituality is comprised 10% of knowledge and 90% of application of that knowledge.
 - ii. Yes, it is true that the study of God’s Word is vital to spiritual growth (2 Timothy 2:15), but the Christian cannot stop with study. He must progress to the higher, more difficult step of obedience. How easy it is to look down at the world for their ignorance of the Scriptures, yet we are not embarrassed at our own lack of obedience to God’s Word.
 - iii. We understand intellectually the principles of contentment, yet we still covet. We know the great “prayer passages,” yet our time in the prayer closet is very limited. We can quote Romans 1:16 from memory, yet our own personal evangelism is nearly non-existent.
 - iv. We would be wise to remember Romans 2:1: *“Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself, for thou that judgest doest the same things.”*
- k. So we have examined the first two harmful habits of hypocrites. First of all, hypocrites are quick to judge others, but slow to judge self. Secondly, hypocrites focus on knowing instead of doing. And finally...

3. The hypocrite focuses on the outward, instead of the inward. 25-29

- a. From the very beginning of the nation of Israel’s history, they were a set apart people. Not only were they spiritually set apart, but physically set apart as well.
- b. Way back in the very beginning, when God was making his covenant with Abraham, He established circumcision as the physical symbol of how Israel was set apart to God.
- c. *“This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall*

circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.” Genesis 17:10-11

- d. Israel's circumcision was meant to be a physical symbol of how their **hearts** were set apart unto holiness and righteousness.
- e. Over time, Israel's hearts became defiled by sin, but they took great pride in not being uncircumcised like those “filthy” Gentiles.
- f. They were focused on their outward appearance, while completely ignoring the inward problems that they had in their hearts.
- g. Paul quickly set the Jews straight in verses 25-29, and showed them that God cares more about the inside than the outside. Read verses 25-29.
- h. Outward-mindedness is the third habit of all hypocrites. It is practiced so often that it just becomes a way of living. When we allow ourselves to become hypocritical, we buy into the lie that what I look like on the outside is more important than who I am on the inside.
- i. Once again, this was a key characteristic of the Pharisees. Jesus pointed out to them their outward focus over and over again.
- j. *“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the **outside** of the cup and of the platter, but **within** they are full of extortion and excess.”*
Matthew 23:25
- k. *“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful **outward**, but are **within** full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.”*
Matthew 23:27
- l. We must be very careful of allowing ourselves to form a habit out of dressing up the outside of our lives, but giving no attention to our inner man. Giving proper focus to our inner man is such a difficult habit to form because, when we succeed, our victory is a private one. There is no one to applaud you for doing your devotions each morning or spending time with God in prayer. Our pride leads us to prefer public success over private success. But this is a misnomer. You cannot be successful publicly if you have not first found success personally. It's like building a beautiful estate on top of a sinkhole. It's like putting a new coat of paint on a car with no engine.
- m. When you seek to impress, or even lead others, first focus on your spiritual health. Perhaps the best analogy is the one that Paul gives in verse 19 - those in darkness being led by someone who is blind. Surely no real progress will be gained.
- n. We must be careful not to trick ourselves into believing that our “image,” our “position,” or our “title” defines us. The Pharisees had an image, they had positions, and they had titles, but they had no spirituality.

Conclusion:

1. How can the habits that we have studied be broken? By humbly yielding to God and allowing His Word to not only fill our heads, but change our lives.

2. *“And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”*
Romans 12:2