**The Harvest is Plentiful – Can Christianity Be Embraced Even When Hypocrisy exists in the Church?**

How many of us know someone who has left a church because of hypocrisy within it? Because of the unchristian words or actions of a fellow believer(s)?

How many of us have ourselves left a church, or have considered leaving a church, for the same reason? If it hasn't happened yet, it will! Why?

Because the Church is filled with sinners, who sin! You and me included! Now I'm not trying to justify sin, and I'm not letting sinners off the hook… Sin and sinners are the reason why Jesus had to die on a cross! Sin is serious!

But we shouldn't be surprised when sinful people do what sinful people do! I hope to burst the misconceived bubble today that the Church is filled with "good" people… because, in and of ourselves, we are not! **John 8:34**

We may be redeemed by faith, & a work in progress, but none of us are beyond sin, nor incapable of doing what some would leave a church over!

But embracing Christianity should never be about having our expectations of others being met or not! It should always be about what Christ has done, what Christ is doing, & what Christ will see to completion! And that starts with me!

If our attention is focused on what others are doing, or not doing, then our attention is being distracted away from Christ, and His work in our lives!

***Romans 12:3 – "For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned."***

It's far too easy for us to focus on the sins of others than to focus on the sin that still resides in ourselves! Listen to Paul in **Romans 7:14-25a**

If Paul is acknowledging this about himself, how can we see ourselves any different! But Paul is also acknowledging something else that we must not miss… the gospel – Our only true source of rescue from ***"this body of death!"***

So, can Christianity be embraced even when hypocrisy exists in the Church?

Why? Because Christianity is all about embracing the Savior who has embraced us, even in our sin! And if He embraces us as sinners, how can we not embrace others whom He loves and gave His life for, in their sin also?

But didn't Jesus call out the hypocrisy & sin of the pharisees, & didn't He use strong language & a forceful tone in doing so? Yes He did! **Matthew 23:1-12**

But ***"He who is without sin cast the first stone"***… Only Jesus can do that! ***"First take the plank out of your own eye, then you will be able to see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye!" – Matthew 5:7***

How can someone reject Christianity on the basis of who Jesus lets in, when all of us should be excluded? And how can someone walk away from the Church because of the presence of sinners within it, when we all are?

We are as the saying goes, *"One beggar telling another beggar where to find bread!"* Some will say, *"But what about the purity of the Church/Christ's bride?"*

First, it is Christ's bride, not ours, and He is doing the work of purifying her! Second, we must be cautious how we engage sinners in their sin! **Galatians 6:1-2**

We do so with gentleness & a willingness to bear their burdens with them!

Here in lies the juxtaposition! One would think that hypocrisy in the church would lead to the rejection of the body, but it actually enhances the need for it! When one member is out of place, we splint it with another member!

The antidote for hypocrisy in the Church is Christ working in, and through the Church together! **1 Corinthians 12:24b-27** What a revolutionary thought!

I've heard it said, *"I like your Christ, I just don't like your Christians!"* But what if we started treating one another, in our sin, as Jesus did us?

What if we acknowledged our own sin, so we can look w/more grace on others? What if when hypocrisy rears its ugly head we begin to see it as an opportunity? What if we took seriously the analogy of the body in reference to the Church?

What if we saw more clearly the finished work of Christ in our lives, as well as the work that He's still doing & needing to do to make us all more like Himself? Maybe, just maybe, we would see less hypocrisy & more total dependency on Him!

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