

WHY BE SURPRISED?

A story about a preacher being imprisoned for child molesting appeared in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch during the time I lived in the St. Louis area. I know that there are hypocrites to be found, even among those identifying themselves as members of the body of Christ, however there was a statement made by the judge in this case which caught my attention. He said, "I suppose the thing that troubles me most is somebody of the cloth, who knows the truth, has openly and flagrantly lied."

I raise the question which serves as the title of this article because the preacher under consideration makes many claims which are nothing but lies. Preachers from the group of which he is a member claim to be able to perform miracles just as did Jesus and His apostles. They claim to heal the sick, speak in tongues and have the Lord speak to them directly. These men know they are not performing miracles when they claim to be doing so. The judge may be surprised but I am not surprised to know that this man has been caught in a lie about something else. He has become accustomed to lying. He expects his followers to believe his lies about spiritual things, why not expect the judge to believe his lie about his moral conduct?

Along the same line, many expressed shock at the behavior of several of the "TV evangelists" during past years. Again, I say, "Why be surprised?" Teachers of truth have been exposing these men as false teachers for years. Their mercenary tactics have been evident to any honest student of God's word. For years they have been deceiving and taking advantage of thousands for their own selfish gain. So, when they are finally exposed for what they really are why should we be so shocked?

Please do not misunderstand me. I do not suggest for one minute that all preachers who are preaching false doctrine are also guilty of the kind of immorality that has been exposed in the lives of many of these men. However, when you find men who claim to be preachers of truth but deceive and make merchandise of those who hear them you should not be surprised to learn that they will also lie about something else.

I know there are many who have decided that they are simply going to turn away from anything or anyone that has anything to do with religion because of the scandals involving these preachers. Friends, this is not the answer. Don't turn your back upon Christ because these men have played the hypocrite. Christ is as opposed (even more so) to such conduct as you are. This is why it is so important for us to put our faith in Christ and not in men. Men may fail us; men may deceive us; men may disappoint us, however, Christ will never fail us or give us cause to be ashamed of Him.

Jesus said, *"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light"* (Matthew 11:28-30). The person who responds to this invitation will never be disappointed in the one extending the invitation. How wonderful it is to know that even though we are surrounded by that which is corrupt and those who disappoint us we can say with the apostle Paul, *"nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day"* (2 Timothy 1:12) and, *"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain"* (Philippians 1:21). Only in Christ can we have such confidence and hope. (See Galatians 3:26, 27). ✍ James Hahn