

May 20, 2020

## **Hypocrisy**

By Pastor Doug Winne

*"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" – Matthew 23, five times*

If there is any charge against the church that really bothers the church it is that the church is full of hypocrites. We have all heard the charge. Generally our response is that the world is full of hypocrites, so it is no surprise to find them in the church as well. But the recent pandemic has highlighted an area of hypocrisy in the church that I have yet to see addressed. Here it is...

From my earliest years, I recall people praying for those "behind the iron curtain." As a young boy I did not know what that meant. Later I would hear prayers for those "behind the bamboo curtain." These were, as I eventually learned, prayers for the saints that lived in either the former USSR or in China (and its neighboring countries): Christians who were living under oppression and who were meeting in secret.

About the time that I started college, Larry Norman, the acknowledged "father of contemporary Christian music," came out with a song in which he sang,

*"There are Christian in China who live underground,  
In Cuba, they're shot when they're found..."*

Norman was singing about those behind the iron and bamboo curtains: undercover Christians who met in "underground house churches." As when I was a young boy, images of this sort of Christian were meant to inspire those of us in the west. Richard Wurmbrand's story of persecution in communist Romania added greater clarity to our understanding of these, our persecuted brothers and sisters in Christ. His "Voice of the Martyrs" gave rise to a more methodical "prayer for the persecuted church."

So we have had this picture before us of our oppressed, persecuted Christian brothers and sisters who, in the face and threat of greater persecution and even death, continue to meet with one another, pray with one another, sing with one another, and study God's word with one another.

And then, in 2020, along comes the tiniest of threats to OUR physical well being – a virus (from which the vast majority of people recover absolutely fine) – and what has the western church done? It has closed its doors, ceased meeting and, certainly to any outsider looking in, HIDDEN ITSELF AWAY. And if, while we have been hiding, we have heard of a church here or there that is meeting, we have cited Romans 13, suggesting that they are disobeying those who are in authority. Am I right or not? And if I am right, then WHY, ALL THESE YEARS, HAVE I BEEN TOLD ABOUT THE CHRISTIANS BEHIND THE IRON AND BAMBOO CURTAINS, WHO WERE MEETING **ILLEGALLY**, AND I HAVE BEEN TOLD THEY ARE MODELS TO US?

To me, this strikes of hypocrisy: Revere those who stand up to the government in the communist countries, but in our country, at the puniest of threats, we should cower, hide away, be afraid and intimidated, and definitely remain silent. It is hypocrisy in the church and by the church. At least that is how I see it.

*"Let us not give up meeting together..."* – Hebrews 10:25a (NIV)