

What's Behind the Mask?¹

Jerry Lawson – Daystar Church – 10/31/2004

Gal 3:26-28 NKJV

26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Introduction:

A. Today, our kids wear masks designed to scare us.

1. We have to play along a be scared.
2. But Halloween can truly be a scary time:

Jerry Clower told a story of 2 men in a hearse carrying a dead body back to Mississippi on Halloween night. They stopped at a gas station and one man got out to pump gas while to other went in to pay. Another guy asked the man pumping gas if he could get a ride back to Mississippi. "Both seats are taken up front. You'll have to ride in the back with a dead guy." The man didn't mind, so he got in. As the other man came back to the car, the gas pumper went inside to use the restroom. After the first man returned to the hearse by himself and shut the door, the hitchhiker rose up from the back and said, "Hey buddy, mind if I smoke back here?" – He gave him the hearse!

B. Wearing masks is not a new phenomenon:

1. Masks were manufactured as far back as the Stone Age according to pictures on the walls of caves in Western Europe.
2. Probably every society in Earth's history has employed the use of masks for some reason.

C. The modern world is no different.

¹ Adapted from a sermon by Carl Richardson

1. Protective masks: baseball catchers, hockey players...
2. Surgeons wear protective masks, soldiers in Iraq wear gas masks.
3. I was once scared out of my wits to find Leslie wearing a “mud mask” with cucumbers over her eyes!

D. Masks are often seen at Halloween.

The Celtic festival of Samhain is probably the source of the present-day Halloween celebration. The Celts New Year began on November 1st. They honored Samhain, the lord of death on October 31st. They believed Samhain allowed the dead to return to their homes on that night. Priests ordered all to put out their fires and gather around one central fire where they burned animals, crops, and human beings as sacrifices. They then relit their fires from that central fire. During the celebration, people wore costumes made of animal heads and skins. In the 800's the Catholics Christianized this festival and called November 1st “All Saints Day”, honoring dead saints. Children would wear masks and dress up like martyrs. The “trick or treating” came from when farmers would go from house to house to collect food for the needy of the village.²

E. No one would dare show up to church today, wearing the mask of a dead martyr or a sacrificed animal.

1. But scores of people show up to church every week wearing a mask.
2. They wear it everywhere they go.

F. They are like that old 50's song, “The Great Pretender”.

1. Turmoil at home – put on a happy face.
2. Financial problems – happy face.
3. Physical worries, marital unrest, job uncertainties, family issues – put on a happy face.

² Source: Encyclopedia Britanica and others

"We're all like the moon, we have a dark side we don't want anyone to see." (Mark Twain)³

G. Here are some of the masks people wear today.

I. The Mask of Confusion.

A. Some people mistakenly identify confusion as a badge of intellectual superiority.

1. Doubt is fashionable.
2. The erosion of "absolutes" is the "in thing" of today.

B. People say we live in a world of relativism.

1. No absolute right or wrong.
2. Everything is relative.

C. This makes for a very fuzzy view of God.

1. Sadly, many pulpits are contributing to this confusion.
2. High sounding phrases and dainty theological essays will never satisfy the yearning of man's soul.

D. Man needs a SAVIOR! He needs God.

1. Man needs to find a way in the darkness.
2. He doesn't need some abstract "higher power", the "man upstairs", "the god in all of us" ...
3. HE NEEDS JESUS!!!

Acts 4:12 NIV

12 Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

E. Many have failed to accept the truth. They walk in confusion.

³ sermonillustrations.com

1. Something deep inside keeps calling b/c they know they have sinned.

Rom 3:23 NIV

23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God

2. They know there are consequences to that wrongdoing.

Rom 6:23 NIV

23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

F. The voice of God (of grace) keeps calling.

Rom 10:9 NIV

9 That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

G. It's time to take of the mask of confusion.

2 Tim 1:12 NKJV

I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.

II. The Mask of Consecration.

A. Some people refuse to consecrate their lives of Christ, but put up a front of religion.

1. Fact is; hypocrites come to church.
2. Some people talk like hypocrites are only in church.

B. Hypocrites are everywhere.

1. Pretending to be wealthy while struggling to make ends meet.
2. Pretending to be happy when they are in turmoil.

3. Pretending to have a genuine love of this country when all they want to do is promote their political future.

4. Illustration: ***“The Necklace”***⁴

C. Jesus often encountered hypocrites:

1. Pharisees.
2. Even his own disciple, Judas, kissed His cheek in public saying he loved Jesus.
3. He was a phony, trying to hide the real Judas.

*Robert Redford was walking one day through a hotel lobby. A woman saw him and followed him to the elevator. “Are you the real Robert Redford?” she asked him with great excitement. As the doors of the elevator closed, he replied, “Only when I am alone!”*⁵

D. We’re all a little different when we’re alone, aren’t we.

1. We undress, take off the mask, look in the mirror...
2. We are always naked before the Lord.

E. God sees past it all.

1. Church attendance, songs we sing, offerings we give, prayers we speak, clothes we wear...
2. He sees the real Jerry Lawson.
3. He sees the real YOU!

F. He’s calling us to MORE!

1. Church attendance, religious practice, daily routine isn’t enough.
2. He wants to get into the REAL YOU!

G. A surface relationship with God won’t do!

⁴ Guy De Maupassant

⁵ Source Unknown, sermonillustrations.com

1. He's calling you to MORE!
2. Some of us are treating our relationship with God like my annual visit to Grandma Lawson's retirement village: Early morning swimming in cold water – testing the waters, little by little...cold...step in a little...

God is saying, "You've tested the waters long enough. It's time for you to jump in over your head & swim in My Presence!"

III. The Calloused Mask.

Before you have finished, the world will do one of three things with you. It will make your heart very hard, very soft, or break it. No one escapes!⁶

- A. Life is tough. Everyone here has faced the up's and down's of this life.
 1. That's not even the question.
 2. The question is: What will you do with the hand that life deals you?
- B. Sadly, many have let the difficulties of this life, callous their hearts toward God and His people.
 1. Televangelists have fallen, priest scandal, every time you turn around local pastors and evangelists are in scandal.
 2. For everyone that has fallen, a thousand are fighting the good fight.

⁶ Faith Alive Sermon Series, Alive Ministries

C. These facts have calloused many hearts toward the ministry, the church & ultimately toward God.

1. God has chosen to work through His church.
2. God has chosen to work through men/women of God.
3. A few fallen ministers will not change how God moves!

D. In the hospital ever notice how they mark an “x” on the leg they are not going to operate on?

1. Know why? Many wrong limbs have been amputated...
2. Yet you still go to the doctor when you are sick.

E. I don't have to tell you what most people think of lawyers today.

1. Yet, you'd find one quickly if you were being sued.

F. Why do we let a bad experience keep us from the God who loves us?

1. So many today are like King Agrippa in Acts 26:28.
2. *“You almost persuade me to become a Christian.”*

G. Scores of people around the world sit in churches and are “almost” persuaded to truly sell out to Jesus.

1. I understand the pain of a bad experience.
2. BUT ALMOST doesn't work with God.
3. He did not almost die for your sins.
4. He did not almost carry the cross up to Calvary.
5. He did not almost promise you eternal life.

H. YOU CANNOT ALMOST LIVE FOR JESUS.

1. Unless Agrippa changed his heart, he died and was rewarded a Devil's hell.
2. You don't have to follow his lead. Hell was never made for you.

Conclusion:

- A. You may be saying, "I just can't do it. I can't totally sell out."
1. God promises He will "take away the stony heart...and give you a heart of flesh" (Ez 36:26).
 2. You just need to turn your life COMPLETELY over to Jesus today.

Prov 28:13 NIV

13 He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.

- B. Whatever you think of this church, this preacher, this message – you know your life needs something.
1. I think I can tell you exactly what it needs.
 2. MERCY!!!!

- C. Don't you dare give up on God.
1. I don't care how many times you have tried.
 2. I don't care how many times you have been disappointed.

Isa 35:4 KJV

4 Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance ... he will come and save you.