



MASK

« Beyond the Masks »

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In the complexity of life, on streets where thousands of people pass by one another every day, there is perhaps very little that is as widespread and yet as hidden as the “mask.” The mask we are referring to here is not a covering that conceals the face from the eyes of others; rather, it is an invisible mask that a person places upon the soul and personality. This mask is a covering used to hide from the eyes of others what is taking place in the depths of one’s being. If, for just a moment, we were able to journey into the hearts of people, we would realize that many of the faces we see every day are not their true faces. There are smiles resting upon lips that were never born from the heart. There are eyes that appear calm, yet behind them silent storms are raging. There are people who seem successful, strong, and unshakable on the outside, yet when they are alone, they struggle with feelings of defeat, fear, hopelessness, and loneliness.

From the very beginning of creation, humanity has sought acceptance. Every person longs to be loved, to be seen, to be valued, and to be respected. This longing is woven into human nature. However, when this need and desire turn into disappointment and fail to find fulfillment in the right way, a person gradually learns to hide their true self and present a version of themselves that appears more acceptable. This is how masks are born. Some wear the mask of strength. These individuals never allow others to see their weaknesses, as though admitting weakness or inadequacy were a sign of defeat. Others wear the mask of happiness. They laugh in public, joke with others, and bring smiles to people’s faces; yet when night falls and silence fills their rooms, they come face to face with the pain they have hidden from everyone for years. Others wear the mask of spirituality. They speak holy words, talk about faith, and invite people to God, while within their own hearts they struggle with battles they have not even dared to contemplate or confront deeply. Saying these things is not meant to judge anyone, because the truth is that all of us wear masks on our faces in different ways and to different degrees.

In my opinion, as long as a person lives in this temporary world, they carry some kind of mask. The only difference lies in the thickness of those masks. Some people’s masks are thin, and from time to time their true personality can still be seen through them. Others, however, have built such high walls around themselves that they can no longer recognize their own true face. This is why the great Christian theologian Augustine said, “The beginning of drawing near to God is acknowledging the darkness within oneself.” Until a person is willing to face the truth about their own existence, they will never experience genuine freedom. Denying wounds does not heal them, just as hiding darkness does not transform it into light. Today, social media has become a giant factory producing new masks. Modern humanity has more opportunity than at any other time in history to present a carefully selected and edited version of life. Many people share only the most beautiful moments of their lives. Successes become visible, while failures remain hidden. Smiles are shared, while tears are shed in silence. As a result, millions of people compare their real lives with the artificial and carefully constructed lives of others.

Over time, the boundary between reality and performance becomes blurred. A person becomes so immersed in the role they are playing that they gradually begin to forget who they truly are. Little by little, they lose themselves in the personality they have created for others and surrender their true identity. Yet there is one reality from which no one can escape forever: “No mask lasts forever.” Sooner or later, crises, failures, illness, loneliness, and the pressures of life begin to crack those masks. And when the masks begin to crack, the truth that has been hidden for years inevitably comes to light. For a person may deceive others, but they can never escape from their own true self forever.

But perhaps the deepest question is this: Why does a person wear a mask? The answer to this question must be sought in the depths of the human heart. A person is afraid of their true self being exposed. They fear that others will

see their weaknesses, recognize their failures, and touch their hidden wounds. They worry that if they remove their mask, they will be judged, rejected, or lose their value in the eyes of others. For this reason, they spend years trying to create an identity that appears more lovable, more successful, stronger, and more spiritual than they truly are.

Yet the truth is that the farther a person drifts from their authentic self, the more lost they feel. For the human soul was not created to live for appearances, but to live in truth. At this point, the profound words of John Calvin take on special significance. He writes: “Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves.” These two forms of knowledge are inseparable. The more a person comes to know God, the more clearly they will come to know themselves; and the more honestly they know themselves, the more deeply they will understand their need for God. The problem for many people is not that they cannot see their weaknesses; the real problem is that they lack the courage to confront them. We generally love our strengths, yet avoid facing our weaknesses. We want others to see our virtues, but we do not want anyone to know about our weaknesses or our inner struggles.

A. W. Tozer made this thought-provoking observation: “What a man is when he is alone is what he really is.” The truth is that our true character is not what we display before others; it is who we are when we are alone. It is the person that emerges when there is no encouragement, no praise to be heard, and no eyes watching us. Even religious and spiritual people are not immune to this hidden danger. Sometimes a person may speak about faith, love, humility, or holiness, while there may be a profound distance between those words and their daily life. Such a condition is not unique to any particular individual, religion, or belief system; rather, it is part of wounded human nature, which longs to appear better than it truly is.

Perhaps this is why Jesus Christ opposed hypocrites more than any other group: “These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.” (Matthew 15:8) His concern was never people’s weaknesses, for He came to save sinners. What He opposed were the masks that concealed the truth. The Lord is not troubled when a person confesses their weakness, but He is not pleased when they pretend to be perfect. For healing can begin only when the wound is brought into the light. As long as a person continues to wear a mask, the possibility of healing will remain limited. Coming to know oneself is not an easy journey. Indeed, it is often painful, because it forces a person to confront the hidden aspects of their being from which they have fled for years. Yet it is precisely this difficult journey that marks the beginning of freedom. For truth, no matter how painful it may be, sets a person free from the prison of illusion. As Jesus Christ declared: “You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (John 8:32)

The astonishing message of the Holy Scriptures begins precisely at this point. The Lord knew us even before we tried to hide ourselves. Before we ever placed the first mask upon our faces, He had already seen our hearts. He knew our failures, our fears, our doubts, and our wounds; yet He did not withhold His love from us. David declares with wonder: “O LORD, You have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you understand my thoughts from afar.” (Psalm 139:1–2) What a comforting truth! There is a God who knows everything about us, and yet does not turn away from us. The Word of God says: “For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.” (1 Samuel 16:7)

People usually see the outward appearance. They see success; they see failure; they see clothing; they see position and status. But God sees the depths of the human heart. He knows the real person hidden behind every mask. Perhaps the most beautiful aspect of God’s love is this: He loves us exactly as we are, but He does not leave us as we are. He accepts us so that He may transform us. His love does not remove our masks in order to shame us; it sets them

aside in order to make us free. 2 Corinthians 3:18 beautifully describes this transformation: “And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image.” True freedom actually begins the moment a person is no longer afraid to face the weaknesses within. It begins when they lay down their mask and accept that their worth is not found in their masks, but in God’s love for them.

In conclusion, perhaps the most important question in life is not how others see us. The real question is this: When all the masks have fallen, when every role has ended, and when every performance has come to silence, who is the person standing behind that mask? Do we truly know that person? And more importantly, do we have the courage to become the person God intended us to be from the very beginning? For true freedom is not found in perfection, but in living with complete honesty before ourselves and before God. This is where the beauty of the Christian faith is found: a person does not have to live behind a mask. In the presence of Christ, they can openly bring their fears, their weaknesses, their failures, and even their sins before Him. For He receives, forgives, and heals through His love and grace. When the masks fall away, the light of God’s truth shines into our lives, and the things that have remained hidden for years are given the opportunity to be restored and transformed.

The Lord invites each of us to lay aside our masks and come into His presence with a sincere heart. For a deep and living relationship with God is not built upon outward appearances, but upon honesty, humility, and truth. Only when we dare to surrender our true selves to God can we experience freedom, peace, and genuine joy. This joy does not come from the approval of people, but from the fact that God knows us and loves us unconditionally. In the end, true freedom and true peace are found not in hiding ourselves behind masks, but in being known and loved by the God who sees beyond every mask. And life’s greatest freedom is not the moment when others accept us, but the moment when we no longer need to hide.

Saint Augustine said: “God does not ask you to hide yourself from Him; He asks you to be the person you truly are.”

