

Private (*kruptos*)

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Throughout the New Testament the verb *kruptein* is properly translated as "to hide." The adjective *kruptos* is usually translated as "secret" and that misses the mark for modern readers. A better translation would be "private."

There is a sense of mischief suggested by secrecy which is absent from privacy. We have come to feel that a person has a right to privacy. We do not speak of a right to secrecy. That which is private is distinguished from that which is public. That which is secret, on the other hand, is distinguished from that which is evident.

In the Gospels

The sixth chapter of Matthew deals with the difference between religious acts which are between the person and God and religious acts which are between the person and spectators. The results differ as words of affection spoken to one's beloved differ from the same words spoken on stage to an audience. It is our private communion with God which gives us the power to live for him; our public ostentation reaps its harvest in social approval (6:4,6 and the whole section generally).

The various words of Jesus which declare that his teachings are not for a few but for all (Matthew 10:26-7; Mark 4:22; Luke 8:17, 12:2-3) indicate that they are not secret words but words spoken in private. A secret must not be told. These teachings must be proclaimed.

Similarly, the contrast between the 7th and 18th chapters of John must be seen as a contrast between the private and the public ministry of Jesus. His family urged him to go public immediately (7:4), but he went to the feast privately (7:10). In 18:20, however, he tells the authorities that he has not been teaching privately but publicly.

In the Epistles

Particular passages in the epistles do not give us any special insight into the use of *kruptos* as the Gospels did.

In Romans 2, the phrase "secrets of men" (2:16, *RSV*) is effective as literature but gives a wrong sense of what Paul meant—as 2:29 shows. (I know of no one who translates that as "a crypto-Jew.") Both 2:16 and 2:29 refer to one's private thoughts and attitudes. In both cases, Paul is referring to the same thing that Jesus was talking about in Matthew 6, the personal, private relation of the individual to God. Perhaps 2:16 should be translated, "when God judges the private individual according to my gospel through Jesus Christ" and 2:29 as "but he is a Jew in private. . . ."

On the other hand, the *KJV* words "the hidden things of darkness" (1 Corinthians 4:5) are both more accurate and elegant than recent translations and might not be improved by reading as "the private darkness."

In 14:25 Paul is saying that intelligible preaching can touch the personal, private reaches of one's heart where speaking in tongues cannot. It is not a matter of "the secrets of the unbeliever's heart" (*NRSV*) being disclosed but of "bringing to light the privacy of his heart."

In 2 Corinthians 4:2 "the shameful things that one hides" (*NRSV*) may approximate Paul's meaning well enough, but "private shame" comes closer to the actual phraseology.

And in 1 Peter 3:4 "the private self of the heart" or "the inner self" (*NRSV*) are better than the dreadful "the hidden man of the heart" (*KJV*).

Today

The need for private converse with God and the need for public witness to God's truth are reciprocal realities.

One of the needs of our day is for Christians to develop the public activities of faith not as substitutes for private contact with God but as avenues for effective implementation of the Christian message.

God is available to us in private, but even in our most personal and direct contact with God, he is not sequestered. God is God of all always. The words which Jesus spoke in private to the disciples were not a secret between him and them; they were words to be shared with all the world.

God has established both the condition and the content of our private encounter with him. God did this in the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The condition is faith. The content is love.

When we go into our room alone and shut the door and speak with God, God hears and answers. But his answer is not confidential. It expresses his love for us as part of an all-embracing love for humanity, indeed, for creation. That is the love we receive. It is more personal for not being limited to us personally. It is more immediate for being eternal. It is more intense for being diffused universally.

We must never ignore the importance of private meeting with God. We must never forget that such private meetings are not ends in themselves, but are bonds which unite us with others. We do not follow Jesus alone; we are part of a parade. We do not serve Jesus for ourselves; we are part of a vanguard.

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