

NATHANAEL—OR, THE MAN NEEDED FOR THE DAY

NO. 2068

A SERMON
 INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 3, 1889
 DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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“Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!”
John 1:47.

THIS morning we had a “behold”—a behold about a new convert. “Behold, he prays!” It seemed to me most suitable to occupy the evening with another “behold”—a behold about another new convert who is just having his eyes opened to see the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ and to become His disciple. “Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!”

When Jesus says “Behold!” we may be sure that there is something worth seeing. A man in whom is no guile is so rare a person nowadays that we ought not to grudge an evening for such a sight. We are always beholden to a man who enables us to see an honest man—such a man is one of the noblest works of God and will reward our observation. Diogenes looks for an honest man with a lantern. But Jesus finds him.

I shall not go into the full meaning of what “an Israelite indeed,” is, but I shall dwell, principally, upon the fact that Nathanael was a man with no guile in him. The Lord Jesus Christ made that discovery. And who so fit to spy out a man in whom was no guile, as the Christ in whom there is no guile? Two guileless men were that day together, for in our Lord Jesus there is neither guilt nor guile. In us there is guilt, but we trust that by divine grace guile has been cast out of us. It will be so if the Lord does not impute iniquity to us, according to the words of David, “Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputes not iniquity and in whose spirit there is no guile.” The Lord is sure to put all guile out of us when He removes all guilt away from us.

Men generally see what they are. And because Christ is guileless, therefore He spies out the man of guileless heart, and at once commends him and welcomes him and says, “Behold,” as if delighted and charmed to see him. The Lord Jesus appreciates at a high rate the sincerity which He perceives in Nathanael. I am afraid that a man without guile is not much esteemed by the ordinary run of mankind. He will be wise, however, not to trouble himself about that matter. The approbation of Jesus is better than the approbation of the whole world. They say of a man nowadays who has no guile, “Well, he is a very simple-minded kind of fellow. Exceedingly good, but rather blunt. Quite unsuspecting and therefore you may readily take him in.”

Mark you, there is no reason why a man without guile should be taken in. For while we are harmless as doves we can also be wise as serpents if we are rightly taught. But in the ordinary way, a man that is not crafty and cunning—a man that speaks his mind and practices no policy, and is not acquainted with tricks and shifts—is thought to be a poor creature by the wise and deceitful men of this day. But if Jesus Christ takes delight in a guileless man, the guileless man may be perfectly satisfied with this high measure of acceptance. God grant to each one here present, man and woman, that we all may be found free from guile!

I am going to speak upon the text in two ways. First, here is *a happy sign in a seeker of Christ*—a man in whom there is no guile. And secondly, here is *a vital point about a believer in Christ*—about the man who has passed the stage of seeking and has become a believer. He must have in his spirit no guile. It is vital to him that it should be sincere and straightforward.

I. Here, first, we clearly see A HAPPY SIGN IN A SEEKER—he is a man in whom is no guile.

We were talking, some time ago—a few of us ministers of Christ who have been familiar with the souls of men for years—and I made a remark that seemed to startle my brethren. The remark was this—although I had spoken with thousands of men and women who had been converted and I had seen persons brought to Christ of every age and of every character, yet I scarcely remembered the conversion of a man who was double-minded, crafty, false, deceitful. I could not even now qualify this solemn statement for my memory does not correct it.

Of course, God's grace is sovereign and God chooses whomsoever He wills, and He does not choose according to human merit. But it is very singular that of the ground which is mentioned in the parable, which brought forth fruit to the divine sower, it is said that it was "honest and good ground." By this was not intended any spiritual grace, nor even any moral virtue of high degree in the condition of the persons who received the Gospel. But there was sincerity about the people so described—they were honest, straight, unsophisticated, and free from subtlety and cunning. It is in the honest heart that sowing truth takes root.

I have known the drunkard saved. Blessed be God for that! I have seen the swearer have his mouth washed, so that he has spoken sweet and goodly words for the rest of his life. I have known the fornicator, and adulterer, and the harlot delivered from the Stygian ditch of abominable lust. I have known men guilty of almost every sin delivered from the power of evil. And concerning all these, the living evidence of holy conduct has proved their sincerity beyond all question. But I still say that my memory does not bring before me a single person habitually guilty of the double-shuffle, habitually a liar, habitually a cheat, converted to God at all. The insincere, the canting, the hypocritical, the habitually deceptive—I know not of converts from these classes.

There may have been such and I should not wonder if there have been, but I do not happen to have met with them. The most of the converted people I have seen have been straightforward and true after a way. They might curse and swear, they might deny the Gospel, they might occasionally lie under strong pressure, or from sheer flippancy. They might commit all manner of criminalities, but as a rule, there they were and you could see them to be what they were. They were bad fellows enough, but they did not dissemble—they sinned most grievously, but they never pretended to be saints. Such were the men that Christ converted. Such was Paul, of whom we spoke this morning—intensely earnest and honest in all that he did, even when he persecuted the saints of God.

It seems to me that often in the man who is filled with guile, there is a want of something for the grace of God to work upon. When the creature repents it is only a skin-deep business—his heart is never wounded. When he believes anything, you do not know that he does believe it. His faith is not better than another's unbelief. He begins at once putting another meaning on what he professes to believe—you cannot hold such an eel. If anything comes home to his feelings, he has such a very minute conscience left that there is no room for conviction to light upon, when it does pay him a visit.

He has got into such an habitual condition of cheating that he cheats himself as well as others. He cannot be true and thorough—it is not in him. When the truth shines full upon his face he does not openly pull down the blind to shut out the light, but he talks about how delightful it is and yet manages to shut his eyes to it. He praises truth, but he does not love it. He is a lover of the Gospel in words, but he cunningly spreads abroad sentiments which undermine it. I am sick of such men and yet they are not hard to find. We have all around us the hollowness which would, if it were possible, deceive even the very elect.

There is scarcely anything under heaven so damnable as guile, deceit, and craft. The ingrained deceiver is capable of everything evil and incapable of anything good. Out of that kind of man the devil manufactures his chief instruments. Traitors like Judas Iscariot are carved out of the ebony of deceit.

I say, again, that it is horribly difficult for any of these people ever to be converted and it seldom happens that they are. They may get into the church even like Ananias and Sapphira, but they have to be carried as corpses outside of her—such a dishonor are they to the company of God's people.

The man of whom we have great hope is one in whose spirit there is no guile. Now I will show you the sort of man he is. He is one who, when he is spoken to about Christ, has difficulties, *but in his difficulties he is honest*. Nathanael is told by his friend Philip that he has found the Messiah. Nathanael inquires, “Where did you find Him?” Why, He comes from Nazareth! “Well,” says he, “but can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?” Now, when a man will plainly state his objection, his friend can do his best to meet it and to answer it with some such word as, “Come and see.”

Around us are a number of persons who object to our Lord. But the objections which they mention are not their real objections. Their pretended difficulties are a red-herring—to turn the scent from their real reasons for opposition. Many cavil at Christ because they do not want to give up their sin. They pick up some technical question, some difficulty raised by geology or evolution, or something or other, and they make a fuss and a dust over it, while the real impediment is that they are living an unclean life and do not want to give up their evil ways. The difficulty is that they are making gain in a wrong way and to be Christians would not suit their pockets, for they would have to quit a bad trade, or conduct their business with less profits.

There is where the true difficulty lies. But they do not care to mention the real impediment, and therefore they pretend that they are the victims of some awful mystery or terrible dogma, which frightens them out of their salvation. We know the bogies and bugbears which these deceivers set up. They deceive themselves more than they deceive anybody else. He is the sincere seeker who does not play at sham difficulties, but who speaks out at once and tells his friend what the point is that hinders him.

Of the man in whose spirit there is no guile, we may also say that, *as a seeker, he is also candid*. He is willing to examine. Consequently, like Nathanael when Philip said, “Come and see,” he does come and see for himself, and he examines on his own account to see if it be so. Oh, if half the people that object to the Gospel would but read the Bible for themselves they would not object any longer! Few people nowadays care to read solidly good books. But when they do so, they are usually greatly the better for it. I saw a young brother last Friday and in answer to the question, “How were you converted?” he said, “It was through reading Luther.”

I was somewhat surprised and I said, “Luther? What book of Luther?” “I read Luther on the Galatians.” “You did? I am glad to see the man that reads Luther on the Galatians.” He was a young man employed in the city and I admired him for preferring Luther to the wretched novels of the period. “I read it two or three times,” he said, “and I saw the difference between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. I saw how man was ruined by his works and how he must be saved by faith, and I found the Savior while reading that book.” I was delighted with the young man and I feel persuaded that one day we shall hear of him in another capacity.

Oh, if people would but read the Bible and books about the Bible which explain the Gospel, with the desire to know what the Gospel is, they would find Him of whom Moses and the prophets did write! Alas, men do not find Jesus, for there is guile in their spirit and they do not desire to find Him. They do not want to know and so they remain ignorant. They do not want to discover and so do not discover.

In the last great day, when that curtain shall be drawn back which hides from our eyes all souls that are lost—if we are permitted to look into that dreadful place—we shall not find there a soul that ever sincerely cried to God for mercy through Jesus Christ. Nor do I think that we shall find one who searched the Scriptures and heard the Gospel with the desire to find Christ therein. Hell is filled through that deceitfulness of the natural heart which will not let them receive Jesus and His salvation. They blind their own eyes to the light of God. Happy is the pastor to whom inquirers state their difficulties honestly and who can persuade them to examine the subject about which they are in doubt!

Now, dear friends, a man who is really free from guile in his heart—a downright, upright, straightforward man—*is open and ready for the work of God’s Holy Spirit*. For instance, such a man is open to conviction. When he reads the Bible or hears a sermon, he says, “I desire to know all about it.” Tell me the truth, however unpleasant it may be. He does not want the preacher to flatter him. Some do,

you know. They must have very pretty words spoken about the dignity of human nature, the universal Fatherhood of God, the almost unavoidable character of sin, and the hopeful destiny of universal manhood, or else their proud hearts sneer at the preacher.

But the man in whose spirit there is no guile loves best the preacher who uses the surgeon's knife without partiality and cuts down to the root of the cancer. "No," says he, "I did not come here to be fooled and amused. I want to know about that which concerns my soul for life and for death, and to know the truth of it." Such a man is open to conviction. He has laid aside prejudice. He does not dictate to the minister of God, but he is ready to hear all the truth and to feel the power of the message if it be indeed from God. He is ready to confess his sin when he finds that he has broken the law of God. When he perceives that the law deals with thoughts, and words, and deeds. When he sees how wide its range is, so as to take in every action of this mortal life, he is ready to bow his head and say, "I am a sinner. God be merciful to me a sinner."

The man who is crafty and double-minded will not do that—indeed, it is the last thing he cares to do. He begins excusing himself in some fashion or other. He is no worse than other people. He was misled by others. He could not help it. Everybody else did so. He only followed his natural passions and he could not help his constitutional inclinations. It was his fate to do it. He had intended to do better, but was overcome.

These are a few of the forms of the shuffling of guile. If the man were an honest man he would say, "Yes, it is so. I broke the law and did wrong. I am not going to dispute the question. I am forced to plead guilty. And if you condemn me, O my God, You will do no more than is just." That is the kind of man who, before long, will find salvation and enter into peace with God.

This is the man who lies open also to the power of the Holy Spirit in reference to conversion. You have proved to him that he is wrong and with his whole heart he desires to turn from evil. Show him his mistake and he will be eager to redress it. His honest soul will not rest in wrong-doing. Look at the apostle Paul before his conversion. He is a desperate Pharisee and a furious persecutor. He tears along like a wild horse in his mad career of self-righteousness. But he no sooner perceives that Jesus really is the Christ than he is just as intense in his attempts to make known the glory of Christ as he was before to overthrow His kingdom. He sinned through ignorance and unbelief, and not from malice. If we spoke to honest hearts at all times, we should see plentiful conversions. But alas! "the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked: who can know it?"

Further than this I believe that a sincere heart, a true heart, is *a great guard to a man against pretended plans of salvation*. "Come here," says one, "I will prove to you salvation by works." The honest man replies, "That will not suit me. For salvation by works would require that my works should have been perfect throughout life and mine have not been so. Mine have been imperfect, and will be imperfect till I die. I cannot stand on the footing of merit for an hour."

"Come," says another, "here is salvation by sincerity. Sincere obedience is the patent article by which men are saved. Do your best and be sincere, and the matter is squared." But the man who is upright in heart answers, "I do not see that. Neither can I rest therein." Indeed he ought not to do so. For such a hope is based on a lie. If a man were to take poison sincerely, thinking it to be medicine, it would not cure him, but kill him. If a man most sincerely stands in the way of an express steam-engine and thinks he can stop it, it will "stop him" and his life altogether. The candid, thoughtful mind cannot believe that invention of self.

You see, the man whose heart is quite honest wants something real and solid and has no desire to arrive at an easy peace by deceitful means. Being truthful himself, he cannot bear a lie. And when somebody offers him a comforting falsehood, he replies, "I cannot be comforted except by truth. I will not let my conscience be stayed and eased except by that which is legitimate and right. I want to be justly and truly saved and not merely tempted to believe that I am saved, when I am not."

I believe that many persons will never be a prey to priest craft, or any of the thousand inventions of mankind, because God, in great mercy, has made them men in whose spirits there is no guile. And

therefore they search after that which is true and have an inward perception of what is truth. They may be mistaken in some things and will be, for we are all fallible, but a true heart is very much like the mariner's needle which is true to its own pole and therefore helps a man in his steering. God grant us all to have an instinct for truth and to be led by its aid to Christ, who is the truth, so that we may truly find Him and be saved by His great salvation.

To be free from guile also *helps us to see our need of the Spirit of God*. For the right-minded man, who will examine himself carefully, will perceive that what is required of him is more than he can ever give, unaided and unassisted. He will discover that there is that about a Christian's life to which he cannot attain, unless he is born again. He will feel that there is something about the child of God which he does not possess and cannot imitate, and can only gain by a work of the Spirit of God in the heart.

Brethren, a man whose heart has been made to be true, even though as yet he may not have found Christ, is one of those men who are pretty sure to find Him. He is on the outlook for such a Savior as Christ, and therefore he will spy Him out when He passes by. To such men I like to tell the story of substitution—how a just God cannot pass by sin without a penalty. How that just God, in the person of His Son, came here on earth and took human nature into connection with His own. How in that perfect manhood, He took the sins of all who believe in Him and bore them in His own body on the tree, that, by bearing what was due to the dishonored law, He might put away sin, so “that God might be just and the justifier of him that believes.”

Why, I have seen true hearts leap at this. They have said, “Yes, that is the secret—that is the solution of the dread problem of my conscience. I see now how righteousness and peace can kiss each other—how an offending sinner can meet his offended God—how they can justly stand on terms of mutual amity and love, the sinner washed in the atoning blood and God rejoicing in the sinner as He sees him in the righteousness of His dear Son.” The truthfulness which God puts into men's hearts seems, somehow, to open wide the doors of the understanding and the entrances of the entire being to the glories of the cross of Christ. And Jesus enters—the truth and the life, and takes possession of that honest spirit and dwells there, to the salvation of the sinner, world without end.

Now, if any man or woman here is resolved to come to Jesus, let them carry out the resolve. Come along with you! The true Savior shuts out no true man. If you mean to pray tonight, pray. If your heart means the prayer, God will hear it. O my hearer, if you will turn from your sin in real earnest, God will help you and enable you to overcome your sin. If you will give yourself up to Jesus Christ at once, not in words but from your very soul, He will receive you and save you.

Let there be no trifling, no mocking God. No stopping to talk with a Christian friend to chat away your feelings with pious words. But come as you are, only come really and truly, and Jesus will meet you and welcome you and say, “Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!” Those who come thus are always welcomed by Him. Come and see for yourself!

II. But now, secondly, I am going to give a picture of A SINCERE MAN AFTER HE BECOMES A CHRISTIAN.

It is the *sine qua non* for a Christian that he should be thoroughly sincere. Of every man who is really a child of God it must be said—or we shall question whether he is a child of God at all—“an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!” Just let me briefly state how the true Christian's portrait is here painted in life-like colors in the words, “in whom is no guile.”

First, the real believer in Christ *desires to be what he thinks he is*. That is to say, if he judges himself to be converted he desires to be soundly converted. If he judges himself to be a believer, his desire is that he may not be anything else than a true believer. If upon examination he perceives that he is regenerate, his prayer is that there may be no mistake about it, but that he may be really born again from on high. Some people do not like to be examined on these points, but the genuine Christian loves to be searched and tested.

He prays, “Search me, O God.” Because searching by his own conscience may not be enough. He asks God Himself to search and test him whether he is true or not. It would be an awful thing if you or I

should form the comforting conclusion, “I am all right, for I am in the light!”—and it should turn out that we are abiding in death and darkness. It would be an awful thing to find out that terrible truth just when we are in the valley of death and wading through the dread river. Let us find it out at once, if we must find it out at all! Startling as the discovery would be to some of us, yet we would rather know it now than go an inch further—for every inch we go, we are further away from the right road, if we are on the wrong track.

I heard of one who got into the backwoods and went traveling on all day long, and at nightfall he discovered that after the most weary plodding he had arrived at the exact place from which he started in the morning. He had been wandering in a circle and spending his strength for nothing. It is a fearful business, when one is starving, to be, at the same time, losing one’s way. We pray that it may not be so with us. We wish to be what we think ourselves to be. We want to carry out to the full any profession that we may have made—we desire to go beyond it rather than fall short of it.

And next, every true Christian *desires to do what he thinks he does*. You will understand me when I say that when we go upstairs to pray, if we are true Christians, we shall want to feel that we do pray. For there may be times when we have not prayed at all, though we have been on our knees and have repeated very excellent words. When you read the Bible you know well that there is no practical good in getting through a chapter of the Bible any more than a passage of any other book if the heart has not received the teaching of the Holy Spirit.

John Bradford vowed that he would never leave off a holy exercise until he felt that his heart had entered into it. He resolved that if he sang, he would sing until he did sing. If he prayed, he would pray until he did pray. If he heard the Word, he would hear it until he did hear it, so as to profit by it. But O dear friends, how easy it is to fall into the hypocritical cant of talking and not doing, doing and half-doing, and flattering ourselves that we have done it when, indeed, we have only talked of doing it! Let us be straight and sincere. If you have given alms, take heed that you have given alms and not spent your money in buying for yourself a name for generosity.

If you preach the Gospel, mind you have preached it and have not merely played the orator, and aimed at being thought a man of admirable parts. If you have engaged in public prayer, let it never be merely because you were called upon by the leader of the meeting. But let it be a prayer in which you breathe out a burning desire to speak with God. When you plead on behalf of your brethren, do not compel them to think of you, but lead them to the mercy seat. Let us cultivate a spirit in which there is no guile. If you have had a quarter of an hour for prayer and you have not prayed, rather mark it down as a wasted quarter of an hour than reckon it a season of devotion. It will never answer to keep false accounts with the Lord.

If you have been reading the Bible and you really have not read it and have got nothing out of it, do not say that you have read it—just say, I pretended to do so. That is the honest way. Be very straight with yourself, for he must be a great knave who is willing to cheat his own soul. If you are not very watchful and severe with yourself, you may be giving your heart and your life credit for things which are but the names of things and not the things themselves.

The Christian man in whom there is no guile *is true to his convictions*. This is an age in which convictions are sadly rare and where they do exist they are singularly sleepy and torpid. I take it, as a Christian man and minister, that I have no right to occupy the pulpit of a congregation if I do not believe those doctrines which I professed to believe when I became the pastor of the church. I have no right to undermine the basis upon which the church was formed.

As a private member of a church, I have no right to be a member of a church whose doctrines I do not accept. Indeed, I ought not to regard it as a possibility that I could remain to profess what I do not agree with. I am responsible, as a member of a church, for all that is taught and all that is done by that church in its capacity as a church. And if I am protesting in my heart, and yet in my proper person continue part and parcel of that church—I am not acting truthfully to God.

We want, in this century, a class of men who are endowed with a double portion of conscience to what is generally exhibited by professors, for there are many of them who have got enough conscience to make them miserable and disagreeable, but not enough to make them honestly quit their positions. They have enough conscience to make them feel uncomfortable, but not enough to force them to act bravely for what they believe.

Who wants to have a conscience that will only be quiet by being drugged? Trifling with conscience, though common enough, is one of the most deadly sins against a man's self of which he can be guilty. If you are following a trade and you know that it is evil, quit it. Quit it at once. Quit it before you get comfortable in it, for after a while, by continuance in it, you will become saddened with dishonesty and you will not be able to see the dishonor of it.

I do not doubt that many persons in London, who get their living by the most infamous vices, entered into those infamous ways by degrees. They began with some little divergence from morality and then turned decidedly into wickedness. It was a very little fault at first and it troubled them—but they soon grew used to it and they said, "Oh, well, everybody does it."

Then they went on a little farther and a little farther, till they were out of sight of the right road and had lost all desire to return to it. Sad is that man's case who has lost all power to hear the foghorn and yet is nearing a rock. Blessed is that man who will not listen to the common talk about making small nicks in his conscience. For he that makes a little rent will find that in the wear and tear of life those little rents soon gape wider and wider. Be true to your conscience, though it cost you your honor or your life. What if your barn is empty and your purse be taken from you? What if your reputation sink? Yet, if you be true to God and to yourself, you need not fear, for you shall have the approbation of Him who said of Nathanael, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!"

I do not myself like the doing of things for which I have to make an apology. I do not refer to apologies to my fellow men, for what matters what people think about us? We need not mind the judgments of erring mortals. But I refer to apologizing to myself and to my God. Every man who respects himself feels that the first thing he has to do is to deserve his own good opinion, and numbers of men and women have not won that good opinion yet. If they were to talk to themselves, they would say to themselves, "Why, you know you are not acting straight. You know you are not doing right. You are mean and cowardly and afraid to do right."

But they will not give themselves an opportunity of talking to themselves, lest they should be uneasy. He that never likes to be alone, probably knows that when he is alone, he is in bad company, and this fact ought to startle him. Would he be so mightily afraid to commune with his own heart in solitude if he did not suspect something to be rotten within? Never violate your convictions. If you do, you are not one in whom is no guile.

Again, a genuine Christian man is *simple in his aims*. He is aiming at God's glory. He is aiming at the good of his fellow men. He is aiming to lead a holy life. That is what he says. And if he be, indeed, a child of God, he is really aiming at these things and he is not basely taking up with godliness for the sake of gain and reputation. Are not many looking one way and rowing another, like a boatman? Do you not know Mr. Facing-Both-Ways, who looks this way and the other way, too? He runs with the hounds when there is anything good to be hunted, but he is off with the hare when a little fear surprises him.

Trimming is a despicable business. Policy is a diabolical guide and those who follow it are the worst of men. Such men are common as blackberries and base as dirt. Oh, be not so! Let your life be laid like a gun that is sighted for the center of the target and then let it be fired at once, that the bullet may go straight to its place, driven on by all the powder of your energy. God give us to be like thunderbolts hurled from His own hand against all falsehood and sham. Never caring what the consequences may be, so far as we ourselves are concerned, let us be resolved that if the heavens fall we will follow truth and justice, and righteousness, and leave those whose likings run that way to shift for themselves by trickery and policy.

The Christian man is clear in his aims, and if he is a true Christian, he is also very *clear in his modes of pursuing his aims*. Some people have a sort of spiritual or moral squint. If they want to look over *there*, they turn their eyes up *this* side of the gallery. They never say plainly and exactly what they mean, but use words in a double and doubtful sense. I abhor this most in a teacher of religion, but it is far too common. Some preachers are great men at beating around the bush. They never go to work as a truthful man would go to work, because they say, “No, I must play my cards.” Beware of all that moral card-playing. Hate the idea of playing your cards for this and that.

I do not say that you and I might wish with the Roman that we had a window in our breast, that all men might see our thoughts. For he that had a window in his breast would sometimes need to pull down the blind. But I do say this—that if we are walking as Christ would have us walk, we shall so live that our design and our mode of getting at our design will bear the test of the judgment of the last great day. I say yet further that he among you who is proposing to do one thing, as his fellow man judges, but who is really aiming to do another thing, as God knows, is not “an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.”

Brethren, in your trade, in your business, in all that you do, be straight as a line. Policy may be a guide for the world but it should never be the rule of life of church members. O my brother, be true in all things! Do that which will bear the burning heat of the last fire and the fierce light of the last day, and then you do that which you can sleep upon on your deathbed, can recollect in the day of judgment and remember without fear before your God. Live unto God. Live as in the sight of God. Live under the command of God. Court *His* approbation and care for nothing else. Set your helm towards the right course, and then fasten it there and turn not aside a half-a-point, God helping you, all your days.

Such a man as this need never be afraid. He may live or die without apprehension. He may face any company without a blush. It is a great mercy when you do not get into the way of talking one way to one set of people and another way to another. I know some professed Christians who are so delightfully sweet and earnest that they try to make things pleasant all round and therefore never speak out the whole truth in any company—unless it happens to be such as will be agreeable. It is, “Oh, yes, my dear sir.” And though there is something hard said about an absent person they quite agree with it. When they get with that very person, it is again, “Yes, my dear sir,” and they join hands with him in tearing up the character of the opposite party.

This method of talking is very liable to accidents. A person who acts this double part must always live a very unquiet life, because he does not know when No. 1 and No. 2 may meet and put their accounts together, and find out his treachery to both parties. Brethren, let no one among you be guilty of such conduct. Always say anything you have against a man straight to his face. When you speak behind his back, speak as kindly of him as truth permits. You need not do that before his face, for that might seem flattery on your part.

To his face you may tell him a few things that do not please him, if it be just to do so. But when he is absent, be silent on such themes. Double-facedness often brings a bitter reward in this life. Do not play the double in your conversation, either towards God or man. Be an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile. Such a person who has lived honestly in the sight of God, trusting alone in the precious blood of Jesus, and not to his own sincerity, need not fear in time or in eternity.

I remember seeing a good but very timorous woman, whose gracious life was drawing to a close. I was sitting by her bedside, and she seemed to be very low and filled with fear as to her future state. But at last she was comforted by a word I spoke. Then she said to me very tremblingly, “I do not think that God will send me amongst the wicked who did not love Him and did not trust His dear Son, for I never sought their company here. I have always loved the people of God, and I have loved His house, and I have loved His Word, and I have loved holiness, and therefore I think that He will let me go among my own people.”

This was sound reasoning. The true shall go with the true at the last. The man whom God has made to be upright and truthful shall not be driven down to the place where all liars go. He shall keep his own way and go to his own company. Up there in heaven it is all truth—the God of truth is there and the

Christ of truth is there, and men are there who loved the truth and who, despite all their imperfections, came to the light that their deeds might be made manifest that they were wrought in God. If you are truthful, you will go with these truthful people. Oh, may God make you so at once!

Remember that there is an absolute necessity that a Christian should possess thoroughbred sincerity and intense, downright reality. The child of God may have spots on his countenance, but he must not paint his face. It is the hypocrite that paints. There may be a speck here and a speck there upon the countenance of the true believer, but he is sorry that it should be so and he tries to wash off all such stains. But he never uses the color-box. In this he is the reverse of the world's religious professors. Oh, the multitude of hypocrites that rouge themselves up to their eyes! They are such beauties as Jezebel made herself.

You would suppose that they possessed the beauty of holiness, but see them when the paint is off—catch them at home—watch them in their own families—trace them into their secret places and there you will say, “Can these be the same men?” When one saw a woman of eighty tricked out like a girl of eighteen, he shouted, “What old hag is this?” So might you say of many a brave professor, “What disgraceful creature is this?” That which we thought was the beauty of grace we find to be the worn and shriveled countenance of the old man, hidden beneath coats of deceptive coloring. Loathe all this and be as free from it as you would wish to be free from theft or murder.

O sirs, if any of us are lost, let us at least know that we are so. If we hope that we are saved, God grant that it may be a true hope and a vital experience. I will speak to you, one and all, the Gospel of the grace of God and I have done. To each one the Word of the Lord says, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved”—saved from hypocrisy, saved from falsehood, saved from guile and guilt—for “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” May God set His seal upon this admonition, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON

DEAR FRIENDS—Writing at this present I must personally sing of tender mercy and restoring love. Health is returning, and if I could but gain sufficient strength to stand through a sermon, I would come home at once. Morning by morning my knee becomes just a little better and therefore I look forward with joyful hope to a return to my pulpit, from which I have been so long absent. If I may be favored to preach on February 17th, I shall be happy indeed.

The last few months have been crowded with more trials than it would be worthwhile to mention, but in nothing has grace failed to support the struggling heart. More sure than ever am I of the truth of the Gospel, the faithfulness of God, and the certainty of His purpose. The Lord lives when comfort dies and reigns when nature fails. Not a line of His revelation has proved erroneous. There is not a syllable of the inspired Book which has ever started from its place. You may hang the weight of your soul on any one of the words which have proceeded out of the mouth of God. This I have proved by personal experience time out of mind.

Although I am not worthy to wash the feet of the servants of my Lord, I yet most boldly ask the prayers of my fellow workers that I may not, upon this occasion, be disappointed, but may be allowed to rise from pain and return to my happy sphere of service. I beg this specially of choice friends, to whose intercessions I already owe so much.

Yours heartily,

C. H. SPURGEON.

Mentone, January 26, 1889

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOHN 1:35-51

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—416, 15, 649

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