

HYPOCRISY**NO. 237****A SERMON****DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, FEBRUARY 6, 1859****BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON****AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS***“Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.”**Luke 12:1*

THIS age is full of shams. Pretence never stood in so eminent a position as it does at the present hour. There be few, I fear, who love the naked truth, we can scarcely endure it in our houses, you would scarcely trade with a man who absolutely stated it. If you walked through the streets of London, you might imagine that all the shops were built of marble, and that all the doors were made of mahogany and woods of the rarest kinds, and yet you soon discover that there is scarce a piece of any of these precious fabrics to be found anywhere, but that everything is grained, and painted, and varnished. I find no fault with this, except as it is an outward type of an inward evil that exists.

As it is in our streets, so is it everywhere, graining, painting, and gilding, are at an enormous premium. Counterfeit has at length attained to such an eminence that it is with the utmost difficulty that you can detect it. The counterfeit so near approaches to the genuine, that the eye of wisdom itself needs to be enlightened before she can discern the difference.

Specially is this the case in religious matters. There was once an age of intolerant bigotry, when every man was weighed in the balance, and if he was not precisely up to the orthodox standard of the day, the fire devoured him, but in this age of charity, and of most proper charity, we are very apt to allow the counterfeit to pass current, and to imagine that outward show is really as beneficial as inward reality. If ever there was a time when it was needful to say, “Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy,” it is now.

The minister may cease to preach this doctrine in the days of persecution, when the kindling is blazing, and when the rack is in full operation, few men will be hypocrites. These are the keen detectors of impostors, suffering, and pain, and death, for Christ’s sake, are not to be endured by mere pretenders. But in this silken age, when to be religious is to be respectable, when to follow Christ is to be honored, and when godliness itself has become gain, it is doubly necessary that the minister should cry aloud, and lift up his voice like a trumpet against this sin, “the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.”

I am sure that every true child of God will stand at times in doubt of himself, and his fear will probably take the shape of a suspicion concerning his own state.

*He that never doubted of his state,
He may—perhaps he may—too late.*

The Christian however, does not belong to that class. He will at times begin to be terribly alarmed, lest after all, his godliness should be but seeming and his profession an empty vanity. He who is true will sometimes suspect himself of falsehood, while he who is false will wrap himself up in a constant confidence of his own sincerity.

My dear Christian brethren, if you are at this time in doubt concerning yourselves, the truths I am about to utter will perhaps, help you in searching your own heart and trying your own reins, and sure I am you will not blame me if I should seem to be severe, but you will rather say, “Sir, I desire to make sure work concerning my own soul, tell me faithfully and tell me honestly what are the signs of a

hypocrite, and I will sit down and try to read my own heart, to discover whether these things have a bearing upon me, and happy shall I be if I shall come out of the fire like pure gold.”

We shall note then this morning, first, *the character of a hypocrite*, then we shall try to *cast up his accounts for him*, with regard to his loss or gain, and then we shall offer a *cure for hypocrisy*, which, if constantly carried about with us, will certainly prevent us from attempting to deceive. The cure is contained in these words which follow the text—“For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known. Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops.”

I. First, THE HYPOCRITE’S CHARACTER.

We have an elaborate description of the hypocrite in the chapter we have just read, the twenty-third of Matthew, and I do not know that I can better portray him than by turning again to the words of Christ.

A hypocrite may be known by the fact that *his speech and his actions are contrary to one another*. As Jesus says, “They say and they do not.” The hypocrite can speak like an angel, and he can quote texts with the greatest rapidity, he can talk concerning all matters of religion, whether they be theological doctrines, metaphysical questions, or experiential difficulties. In his own esteem he knows much, and when he rises to speak, you will often feel abashed at your own ignorance in the presence of his superior knowledge.

But see him when he comes to actions. What behold you there? The fullest contradiction of everything that he has uttered. He tells others that they must obey the law, does he obey it? Ah! no. He declares that others must experience this, that, and the other, and he sets up a fine scale of experience, far above even that of the Christian himself, but does he touch it? No, not with so much as one of his fingers. He will tell others what they should do, but will he remember his own teaching? Not he! Follow him to his house, trace him to the market, see him in the shop, and if you want to refute his preaching you may easily do it from his own life.

My hearer! is this your case? You are a member of a church, a deacon, a minister. Is this your case? Is your life a contradiction to your words? Do your hands witness against your lips? How stands it with you? With a blush, each one of us must confess, that to some extent, our life is contradictory to our profession. We blush and we mourn over this. But I hope there are some here who can say, “Notwithstanding many infirmities, with my whole heart have I striven to run in the ways of Thy commandments, O my God, and I have not intentionally spoken that with my lip which I did not intend to carry out in my life.”

Ah! believe me, my hearers, *talk* is easy, but *walk* is hard, *speech* any man may attain unto, but *act* is difficult. We must have grace within to make our life holy, but lip-piety needs no grace. The first mark of a hypocrite, then, is that he contradicts by his acts what he utters by his words. Do any of you do so? If so, stand convicted of hypocrisy, and bow your heads, and confess the sin.

The next mark of a hypocrite is that whenever he does right *it is that he may be seen of men*. The hypocrite sounds a trumpet before his alms, and chooses the corner of the streets for his prayers. To him virtue in the dark is almost a vice, he can never detect any beauty in virtue, unless she has a thousand eyes to look upon her, and then she is something indeed.

The true Christian, like the nightingale, sings in the night, but the hypocrite has all his songs in the day, when he can be seen and heard of men. To be well spoken of is the very elixir of his life, if he be praised it is like sweet wine to him. The censure of man upon a virtue would make him change his opinion concerning it in a moment, for his standard is the opinion of his fellow creatures, his law is the law of self-seeking, and of self-honoring, he is virtuous, because to be virtuous is to be praised, but if tomorrow vice were at a premium he would be as vicious as the rest. Applause is what too many are seeking after. They eschew all secret religion, and only live where men may behold them.

Now, is this our case? Let us deal honestly with ourselves, if we distribute to the poor, do we desire to do it in secret, when no tongue shall tell? Are our prayers offered in our closets, where God who hears

the cry of the secret ones, listens to our supplication? Can we say that if every man were struck stone blind, and deaf and dumb, we would not alter our conduct the least? Can we declare that the opinion of our fellows is not our guiding law, but that we stand servants to our God and to our conscience, and are not to be made to do a wrong thing from flattery, nor are we urged to do a right thing from fear of censure?

Mark, the man who does not act rightly from a higher motive than that of being praised, gives sore suspicion that he is a hypocrite, but he who will do a right thing against the opinion of every man, and simply because he believes it to be right, and sees the stamp of God's approval upon it, that man need not be afraid that he is a hypocrite, he would be a kind of hypocrite that one has never discovered as yet. Hypocrites do their good works for applause. Is it so with you? If so, be honest, and as you would convict another, convict yourself.

Again, hypocrites *love titles, and honors, and respect from men*. The Pharisee was never so happy as when he was called Rabbi, he never felt himself so really great as when he was stuck up in the highest seat in the synagogue. The he must be good indeed. But the true Christian cares not for titles. It is one of the marks of Christians—that they have generally taken names of abuse to be their distinctive appellations.

There was a time when the term *methodist* was abusive. What did those good men say who had it so applied to them? "You call us methodists by way of abuse, do you? It shall be our title." The name "Puritan" was the lowest of all, it was the symbol which was always employed by the drunkard and swearer to express a godly man. "Well," says the godly man, "I will be called a puritan, if that is a name of reproach I will take it." It has been so with the Christian all the world over. He has chosen for himself the name which his enemy has given him in malice.

Not so the hypocrite. He takes that which is the most honorable, he wishes always to be thought to belong to the most respectable sect, and to hold an office in that sect which will confer upon him the most honorable title.

Now, can you say from your inmost soul, that in religion you are not seeking for honors or titles, but that you can tread these beneath your feet, and want no higher degree than that of a sinner saved by grace, and no greater honor than to sit at the feet of Jesus and to learn of Him? Are you willing to be the despised followers of the carpenter's son, as were the fishermen upon the lake? If so, I think, you have but little hypocrisy in you, but if you only follow Him because you are honored by men, farewell to the sincerity of your religion, you are unmasked, and stand before the face of this congregation an acknowledged hypocrite.

There was another evidence of a hypocrite which was equally good, namely that *he strained at a gnat and swallowed a camel*. Hypocrites in these days do not find fault with us for eating with unwashed hands, but they still fix upon some ceremonial omission. Sabbatarianism has furnished hypocrisy with an extremely convenient refuge.

Acts of necessity done by the Christian, are the objects of the sanctimonious horror of Pharisees, and labors of mercy and smiles of joy, are damning sins in the esteem of hypocrites, if done upon a Sunday. Though our Father worked hitherto, and Christ worked, and though works of kindness, and mercy, and charity, are the duty of the Sabbath, yet if the Christian be employed in these, he is thought to be offending against God's holy law. The slightest infringement of that which is a ceremonial observance becomes a great sin in the eye of the hypocrite.

But he, poor man, who will find fault with you for some little thing in this respect, straining at a gnat, is the man you will find cheating, adulterating his goods, lying, puffing, and grinding the poor. I have always noticed that those very particular souls who look out for little things, who are always searching out little points of difference, are just the men who omit the weightier matters of the law, and while they are so particular about the tithe of mint, and anise, and cumin, whole loads of tithe-wheat are smuggled into their own barns.

Always suspect yourself when you are more careful about little than about great things. If you find it hurts your conscience more to be absent from the communion than to cheat a widow, rest quite assured that you are wrong. The thug, you know, thinks it a very proper thing to murder all he can, but if a little of the blood of his victims should stain his lips, then he goes off to the priest, and says he has committed a great sin, the blood has been on his lips—what must he do to get the sin forgiven?

And there are many people of the same class in England. If they should do anything on a Good Friday, or on Christmas day, poor souls, it is awfully wicked, but if they should be lazy all the six days of the week, it is no sin at all. Rest you assured, that the man who strains at a gnat but yet swallows the camel, is a deceiver.

Mark you, my dear friends, I like you to strain at the gnats, I have no objection to that at all—only do not swallow the camel afterwards. Be as particular as you like about right and wrong. If you think a thing is a little wrong, it is wrong to you. “Whatsoever is not of faith is sin.” If you cannot do it, believing yourself to be right in not doing it, though another man could do it and do right, yet to you it would not be right.

Strain the gnats, they are not good things in your wines, strain them out, it is well to get rid of them, but then do not open your mouth and swallow a camel afterwards, for if you do that, you will give no evidence that you are a child of God, but prove that you are a damnable hypocrite.

But read on in this chapter and you will find that these people *neglected all the inward part of religion, and only observed the outward*. As our Savior said, they “made clean the outside of the cup and platter, but within they were full of extortion and excess.” There are many books which are excellently bound, but there is nothing within them, and there are many persons that have a very fine spiritual exterior, but there is nothing whatever in the heart. Do you not know some of them? Perhaps if you know yourself you may discover one.

Do you not know some who are precisely religious, who would scarce omit attending to a single means of grace, who practice the ritual in all its forms and all its ceremonies, who would not turn aside as much as a hair’s breadth from any outward command? Before the world they stand as eminently pious because they are minutely attentive to the externals of the sanctuary, but yet they are careless of the inward matter.

So long as they take the bread and wine they are not careful about whether they have eaten the flesh and drunk the blood of Christ, so long as they have been baptized with water they are not careful whether they have been buried with Christ in baptism unto death. So long as they have been up to the house of God they are satisfied. It is nothing to them whether they have had communion with Christ or not. No, they are perfectly content, so long as they have the shell, without looking for the kernel, the wheat may go where it pleases—the husk, and the chaff and the straw, are quite sufficient and enough for them.

Some people I know of are like inns, which have an angel hanging outside for a sign, but they have a devil within for a landlord. There are many men of that kind, they take good care to have an excellent sign hanging out, they must be known by all men to be strictly religious, but within, which is the all-important matter, they are full of wickedness.

But I have sometimes heard persons mistake this matter. They say, “Ah! well, poor man, he is a sad drunkard, certainly, but he is a very good-hearted man at bottom.” Now, as Rowland Hill used to say, that is a most astonishing thing for any man to say of another, that he was bad at top and good at bottom. When men take their fruit to market they cannot make their customers believe, if they see rotten apples at the top, that there are good ones at the bottom. A man’s outward conduct is generally a little better than his heart. Very few men sell better goods than they put in the window.

Therefore, do not misunderstand me. When I say we must attend more to the inward than the outward, I would not have you leave the outward to itself. “Make clean the outside of the cup and platter”—make it as clean as you can, but take care also that the inward is made clean. Look to that first. Ask yourself such questions as these—“Have I been born again? Am I passed from darkness to light?”

Have I been brought out of the realms of Satan into the kingdom of God's dear Son? Do I live by private communion near to the side of Jesus? Can I say that my heart panteth after the Lord, even as the hart does after the water brooks?

If I cannot say this, whatever my outward life may be, I am self-deceived and deceive others, and the woe of the hypocrite falls upon me. I have made clean the outside of the cup and platter, but the inward part is very wickedness. Does that come home to any of you? Is this personal preaching? Then God be blessed for it. May the truth be the death of your delusions.

You may know a hypocrite by another sign. *His religion depends upon the place, or upon the time of day.* He rises at seven o'clock perhaps, and you will find him religious for a quarter of an hour, for he is, as the boy said, "Saying his prayers to himself" in the first part of the morning. Well then, you find him pretty pious for another half-hour, for there is family prayer, but when the business begins, and he is talking to his men, I won't guarantee that you will be able to admire him.

If one of his servants has been doing something a little amiss, you will find him perhaps using angry and unworthy language. You will find him too, if he gets a customer whom he thinks to be rather green, not quite pious, for he will be taking him in. You will find too, that if he sees a good chance at any hour of the day, he will be very ready to do a dirty trick. He was a saint in the morning, for there was nothing to be lost by it, but he has a religion that is not too strict, business is business he says, and he puts religion aside by stretching his conscience, which is made of very elastic material.

Well, sometime in the evening you will find him very pious again, unless he is out on a journey, where neither wife, nor family, nor church can see him, and you will find him at a theater. He would not go if there was a chance of the minister hearing of it, for then he would be excommunicated, but he does not mind going when the eye of the church or of any of his friends are not upon him.

Fine clothes make fine gentlemen, and fine places make fine hypocrites, but the man who is true to his God and to his conscience, is a Christian all day, and all night long, and a Christian everywhere. "Though you were to fill my house full of silver and gold," he says, "I would not do a dirty action, though you should give me the stars and the countless wealth of empires, yet I would not do that which would dishonor God, or disgrace my profession."

Put the true Christian where he might sin, and be praised for it, and he will not do it. He does not hate sin, for the sake of the company, but he hates it for its own sake. He says, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" You shall find him a fallible man, but not a false man, you shall find him full of infirmities, but not of intentional lust and of designed iniquity.

As a Christian, you must follow Christ in the mire as well in the meads, you must walk with Him in the rain as well as in the sunshine, you must go with Him in the storm as well as in fair weather. He is no Christian who cannot walk with Christ, come rags, come poverty, come contumely or shame.

He is the hypocrite who can walk with Christ in silver slippers, and leave Him when it becomes necessary for him to go barefoot. The hypocrite's religion is like a chameleon, it takes its color from the light which falls upon it, but the Christian's religion is evermore the same. Is this true then of any of us? Can we say we desire to be evermore the same? Or do we change with our company and with the times? If so, we are hypocrites confessed, and let us own it before God, and may God make us sincere.

There is another sign of the hypocrite, and now the lash will fall on my own back and on most of us too. Hypocrites, and other people besides hypocrites, *are generally severe with others, and very lenient with themselves.* Have you ever heard a hypocrite describe himself? I describe him thus—you are a mean, beggarly fellow. "No," says he, "I am not, I am economical." I say to him, "You are dishonest, you are a thief." "No," says he, "I am only cute and sharp for the times." "Well, but," I say to him, "you are proud and conceited." "Oh!" says he, "I have only a proper and manly respect." "Ay, but you are a fawning, cringing fellow." "No," says he, "I am all things to all men."

Somehow or other he will make vice look like a virtue in himself, but he will deal by the reverse rule with others. Show him a Christian who is really humble and he says, "I hate his fawning ways." Tell him there is one who is very courageous for Christ, "Oh! he is impudent," says he. Show him one who is

liberal, doing what he can for his Master's service, spending, and being spent for Him, "Rash and imprudent," says he, "extravagant, the man does not know what he is about." You may point out a virtue, and the hypocrite shall at once say it is a vice.

Have you ever seen a hypocrite turn doctor? He has a fine beam in his eye, large enough to shut out the light of heaven from his soul, but nevertheless he is a very skillful oculist. He waits upon some poor brother, whose eye is a little affected with a mote so tiny that the full blaze of the sun can scarcely reveal it. Look at our beam-eyed friend, he puts on a knowing look and cries, "Allow me to extract this mote for you." "Thou hypocrite! first cast out the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." There are people of that sort who make virtues in others into vices, and vices in themselves they transform into virtues.

Now, if you be a Christian, I will tell you what will be your spirit, it will be the very reverse, you will be always making excuses for others, but you will never be making excuses for yourself. The true Christian, if he sees himself sin, mourns over it, and makes much ado concerning it. He says to another, "Oh! I feel so sinful," and the other one cries, "I cannot really see it, I can see no sin in you, I could wish I were holy as you." "No," says the other, "but I am full of infirmity."

John Bunyan describes Mercy, and Christiana, and the children, after having been washed in the bath, and sealed with the seal, as coming up out of the water, and being all fair and lovely to look upon, and one began to say to the other, "You are fairer than I!" and "You are more comely than I!" said another. And then each began to bemoan their own spots, and to praise the beauty of the others.

That is the spirit of a Christian, but the spirit of the hypocrite is the very reverse, he will judge, and condemn, and punish with lynch-law every other man, and as for himself, he is exempt, he is a king, he knows no law, and his conscience slumbers and allows him to go on easily in the very sins which he condemns in others. This is a very prominent mark of the hypocrite, and I question whether all of us must not blame ourselves a little here.

II. And now we are going to CAST UP THE HYPOCRITE'S ACCOUNT FOR HIM.

Now, sir, bring us your ledger, and let us have a look at it. You are a hypocrite. Well, what is on the profit side? A good deal, I must confess. Here is, first of all, credit and honor. If you were to say outright, "You are a thief, you are a private drunkard, you can curse God as well as any man," or if the world should hear as much, you would have no honor, but as it is you have joined the church, and the minister is very fond of you, the deacons and elders think a great deal of you, and you are a very honorable, respectable man. You go walking up to your pew with your Bible and your hymn book, and everybody says, "There is an exemplary character," and they pat their little boys on the head and say, "May you grow up to be a very good man like Mr. So-and-so."

The next advantage is the ease which you enjoy. The minister often preaches a solemn, thundering sermon against sin. You get off all that, you are not a sinner, are you? not at all, who would suspect you? You are one of the brightest of the saints, it is almost a pity you were not one of the twelve, there was one amongst them almost as good as yourself, and his end will probably be yours.

You escape every thunder of the law, your conscience rests easy, and the very thing which makes the child of God tremble, puffs you up; and the very marks and evidences which cast him down, help to exalt you. The sun of the Gospel which melts wax, hardens the poor clay of your hearts, and you get the more exalted in your self-conceit through everything you hear. And that is good too, is it not? very much in your favor, certainly.

And then, there is another thing. How nicely your shop has prospered through it, that, perhaps, is the part of the bargain which you like the best. Ever since you have made a profession of religion, have not those who go to your church and chapel traded with you? You would not have got on half as well if you had been suspected to be what you really are, but because of that fine cloak of yours, that fine garment of hypocrisy, how nicely you have prospered! What a nice little round sum you have been able to lay by, have you not? All that is the bright side again.

And besides that, what honors have you not received in the church? Are not you made a deacon, or an elder, ay, perhaps a minister too, how pleasant that is! And you puff yourself up, and you feel satisfied. “Oh, what a good man am I, other people think I am, therefore I must be. It is true I devour the widow’s house, it is true I am not very particular about what I do, nevertheless the minister, the elders, the deacons think me good, the whole church applauds me, they cannot all be mistaken, surely I must be a special saint.” That is your profit side of the account, what about the other side? I think we shall be able to strike a balance that will not be much in your favor, sir.

In the first place, I see a black item down here. Some of the people of the world do not think quite as much of you as you imagine. The poor widow does not give you much of a character. You will have to be very careful sir, or your base deeds will come out. The very first item I see down here, is a fear that your hypocrisy will be discovered. It would take you only half as much trouble to be an honest man as it does to be a deceiver. A man who is in the habit of speaking the truth, need not mind how he opens his mouth, nor where, but a man who lies, should be very careful, and have a very good memory, and recollect all he has ever said before, lest he should trip himself.

So it is with you my friend, your religion is a Sunday religion, and you have to be very careful, so as to make Monday dealings hold their tongues and Sunday doings crow as loud as they can. Hard work! I would not stand in your place to have all the trepidation and fear of discovery, which so often comes upon you. No, I would sooner be a worldling, than I would have the fear that constantly haunts you, lest you should stand ashamed before the church by your base iniquity being discovered.

But I see something worse than this, here is constant disquietude of conscience, hypocrites may seem as if they were at ease, but they cannot really be. The Christian who is true to God, and is really His child, can sometimes say, “I know that Jesus has taken away my sin.” Assurance, vouchsafed to him by the Spirit, calms his fears and he can rest in Christ. But the highest presumption, to which the hypocrite can attain, brings no such calm as that which is breathed upon the Christian by the lips of assurance. He can go to his bed, nay, he can go to his tomb in peace, but the hypocrite is afraid of a shadow, and flees when no man pursues.

And last of all, Mr. Hypocrite, I see an item here which you usually forget, it is this—that despite of your profession God abhors you, and if there is one man more than another who stinks in the nostrils of JEHOVAH, it is such as you are—you miserable pretender. There shall be a special place reserved for you among the damned. Think man what shall be your misery when your secret deeds of iniquity are read before an assembled universe, and men and angels utter one unanimous hiss against you? What shall it be when the mask is torn off you, when the masquerade of your hypocrisy is done and you are stripped naked to your shame, to be observed of all and to be despised of all?

What say you to this? Shall you go from your deaconship, or from your ministry, to be among the devils in hell? Shall you go from the sacramental table to drink the sulfurous cup of torment? Shall you descend from the song of the sanctuary and from the house of God to the abode of fiends and to the wailing of the damned? Yes, you shall as sure as this word is true, if you go on in your hypocrisy. Death shall find you out, and hell shall be your doom, for the hope of the hypocrite is as the spider’s web, soon swept away, and where is he when God takes away his hope?

This then is the casting up of the hypocrite’s account, and there is a deficit of an infinite amount.

III. Now for the matter of the CURE OF THE HYPOCRITE.

What shall we say to it? Oh! my friends, I feel that in thus speaking of the hypocrite, I have tried to speak severely, but I have not been able to reach the heart as I could wish, because it is a mark of human nature that this is the last sin of which we really suspect ourselves, and yet one into which it is most easy to fall. Often do I fall on my knees in an agony of doubt and cry, “Lord, make me sincere, if I be deceived, undeceive me.” I do not think that any Christian will live long without some such seasons of anguishing self-examination.

Let me put it to you today, let no one exempt himself. You may have been professing Christians for many years, and yet you may have been hypocrites. Remember there was a hypocrite among the

apostles, so may there be among the ministers of Christ. There have been deceivers among the apostolic churches, how much more may we expect them among us? Do not look around to find them out, it is God's business not yours to find out hypocrites, but look at yourselves to see whether you are not one.

Driving along the other day in the wind I observed a great branch fall just in front of me. I remarked that it was rotten, and wondered within myself how long that might have been upon the tree, and yet have been rotten after all. Then I thought, "Oh! if the wind of persecution were to sweep through the church, should I fall off like a rotten branch? Would not many of my hearers fall off? They have been united to Christ professedly for a long time, and have spoken for Him, perhaps preached for Him, but if the time of trial, which shall try the earth, should come upon us again, how many of us would stand?"

Oh! my hearers, do not be content to take your religion at second-hand, let it not be a superficial work. Do not think that because you have seen me and have seen my elders, and we have admitted you into the church, you are therefore all right. We have been deceived many times, it is not hard work to deceive a kind heart.

I have looked into the eyes of some, and have tried to read their very soul, and yet I have misjudged, I have seen tears in their eyes while they have made a profession of Christ, and yet they have been deceivers after all, and I have been very grossly taken in. In fact, the more kind-hearted a man is the more will human nature endeavor to impose upon him.

I am certain I have used the utmost diligence to weed out of my church those whom I have suspected of hypocrisy, and greater diligence shall yet be used. But oh, do deal with yourselves, I beseech you. I will not send you to hell blindfolded if I can help it, I do not wish to be in error myself, and God forbid that I should suffer you to be deceived.

Oh! if you be not true Christians, away with your profession altogether. If it be not sound work, down with it. Better see the house tumble now, than let it stand till the rain descends and the floods come, and the winds beat upon it in the dread eternity of the future. Oh, no, I would rather send every heart home uncomfortable than let the hypocrite sit down at ease, I would rather wound the child of God than allow the hypocrite to escape.

But now for the cure of the hypocrite. What shall we do to cure ourselves of any hypocrisy that may exist among us? Let us recollect that we cannot do anything in secret even if we try. The all-seeing God, apprehended in the conscience, must be the death of hypocrisy. I cannot try to deceive when I know that God is looking at me. It is impossible for me to play double and false when I believe that I am in the presence of the Most High, and that He is reading my thoughts and the secret purposes of my heart. The only way in which the hypocrite can play the hypocrite at all is by forgetting the existence of God. Let us therefore recollect it—wherever I am, upon my bed or in my secret chamber, God is there.

There is not a secret word I speak in the ear of a friend but God hears it. Do I seek out the most private part of the city for the commission of sin—God is there. Do I choose the shadow of night to cover my iniquity?—He is there looking upon me. The thought of a present Deity, if it were fully realized, would preserve us from sin, always looking on me, ever regarding me. We think we are doing many things in secret, but there is nothing concealed from Him with whom we have to do. And the day is coming, when all the sins that we have committed shall be read and published. Oh! what a blush shall crimson the cheek of the hypocrite when God shall read the secret diary of his iniquity!

O my fellow professors, let us always look upon our actions in the light of the great out-reading of them in the day of judgment. Pause over everything you do and say, "Can I bear to have this sounded with a trumpet in the ears of all men?" Nay, take a higher motive, and say, "Can I endure to do this and yet to repeat the words, 'Thou, God seest me'?"

You may deceive men, and deceive yourselves, but God you cannot, God you shall not. You may die with the name of Christ upon your lips, and men may bury you in sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection, but God shall not be deceived neither by your profession nor by men's opinion. He shall put you in the scales, and if you be found wanting, He shall cry, "Away with him." He shall ring you, and if you have not the ring of the pure coin of grace, He shall nail you down forever as a counterfeit.

He shall strip the mask off you. Virtue is most adorned, when unadorned the most. To detect you, you shall be stripped naked, and every cloak shall be torn to tatters.

How will you endure this? Will you dig into the depths to hide yourselves? Will you plunge into the sea to find a way of escape? Will you cry for the rocks to hide you, and the mountains to fall upon you? In vain shall you cry. The all-seeing God shall read your soul, shall discover your secret, shall reveal your hidden things, and tell the world that though you did eat and drink in His streets, though you preached His name, yet He never knew you, you were still a worker of iniquity, and must be driven away forever.

Come let us just for one second reflect, that we shall soon lie upon our death bed. A few more months, and you and I shall face the cruel tyrant, death. It will be hard work to play the hypocrite then, when the pulse is faint and few, when the eye-strings break, when the tongue is cleaving to the roof of your mouth, it will be in vain to try hypocrisy then.

O may God make you sincere, for if you die with an empty profession, you die indeed. Of all deaths, I think the most awful is that of the hypocrite, and after death, for him to lift up his eyes and find himself lost—and for ever! O make sure work of it. May God give you true grace and true faith, and may we all meet in heaven. This is our earnest prayer, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.