

## SEPARATING THE PRECIOUS FROM THE VILE

### NO. 305

A SERMON  
 DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MARCH 25, 1860  
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 AT EXETER HALL, STRAND

*“That ye may know how that the LORD doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel.”*  
*Exodus 11:7*

THE difference between the Egyptians and Israel was exceedingly manifest. At first sight it seemed to be very greatly to the advantage of Egypt. They had the whip in their hand, and poor Israel smarted under the lash. Egypt possessed the toil of the Israelites, the sons of Jacob made bricks and the subjects of Pharaoh inhabited the houses which the sons of Jacob builded. How soon however, were the tables turned! God wrought plagues in Egypt, but Goshen was spared. He sent a thick darkness over all the land, even darkness that might be felt, but in all the land of Goshen there was light.

He sent all manner of flies and lice in all their borders, but throughout the habitations of Israel, not a fly was to be seen, neither were they molested by the living things which crept upward from the quickened dust of the earth. The Lord sent hail and a murrian upon all the cattle of the Egyptians, but the cattle of the children of Israel were spared, and on their fields fell no desolating shower from heaven.

At last the destroying angel unsheathed his glittering sword to smite his last decisive blow. In every house throughout the land of Egypt there was weeping and wailing, He smote the firstborn of Egypt, the chief of all their strength, but as for His people, He led them forth like sheep, He led them through the wilderness like a flock, by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

They came to the Red Sea and He divided a path for them, they went through the sea on foot, there did they rejoice in Him. The floods stood upright as a heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea. They passed through the depths as through a wilderness, which the Egyptians essaying to do were drowned.

The Lord, in all these things, put a glorious difference between Egypt and Israel. The fiery cloudy pillar which gave light to Israel was darkness to the eyes of Egypt. Whenever God blessed Israel, He cursed Egypt, the same moment that He sent the benediction to the one, He sent the malediction to the other, He looked on Israel and the tribes rejoiced, but when He looked on the Egyptians, their host were troubled.

Now, in your ears this day, Egypt and Israel are declared to be types of two people who dwell upon the face of the earth—the men that fear the Lord and the men that fear Him not. The Egyptians are the pictures of those who are dead in trespasses and sins, enemies to God by wicked works, and aliens from the commonwealth of Israel. The Israelites, God’s ancient people, are set before us as the representatives of those who have through grace believed in Christ, who fear God and who seek to keep His commandments.

The task of this morning will be to show you first, *the difference*, secondly, *when that difference is seen*, and thirdly, *the reason why it should be seen*, upon which last point I shall stir up your minds, urging you to make the difference more and more conspicuous in your daily life.

#### I. First then, THE DIFFERENCE.

The Lord hath put a difference between those who are His people and those who are not.

There are many distinctions among men which will one day be blotted out, but permit me to remind you at the outset that this is an *eternal* distinction. Between the different classes of men, the rich and the poor, there are channels of intercommunication, and very properly so, for the less class distinctions are maintained, the better for the happiness of all. The social fabric is not to be kept up by maintaining one

pillar at the expense of another, or by gilding the roof, and neglecting the foundations. The commonwealth is *one*, and the prosperity of one class is proportionally the prosperity of all.

But there is a distinction so wide that we may truly say of it, “Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed,” and the broader the line of demarcation, the happier for the church, and the better for the world. There is a distinction of infinite width between the sinner, dead in sin, and the child of God quickened by the Spirit, who has been adopted into the family of the Most High. Concerning this distinction, suffer me to make the following remarks.

First, the distinction between the righteous and wicked is *most ancient*. It was ordained of God from before the foundation of the world. In the eternal covenant JEHOVAH wrote the names of His elect, for them Christ entered into engagements that He would be their surety, and their substitute to suffer in their room and stead. Covenant engagements were made for *them*, and for *them only*. Their names were from of old inscribed in the Book of God, and engraved upon the precious stones of their great High Priest’s breastplate. They were then in the covenant set apart, “The LORD hath set apart him that is godly for himself.”

While the whole world lay in the wicked one, these precious jewels were selected from the dunghill of the fall. Better than other men by nature they certainly were not, yet divine sovereignty, linked arm in arm with divine grace, selected some to be the vessels of mercy, who should be fitted for the Master’s use, in whom JEHOVAH should show forth not merely His longsuffering, but the plenitude of His grace and the riches of His love.

Other distinctions are merely temporary, they are things that grew up yesterday and will die tomorrow, but this is older than the everlasting hills. Before the starry sky was spread, or the foundations of the earth were digged, the Lord had made a difference between Israel and Egypt. This however is a mighty secret, and though we are to tell it as we find it in the Word, yet we are not intrusively to pry into it.

God has made another distinction, namely a *vital* one. Between the righteous and the wicked, there is an essential distinction of nature. There are some of you who imagine that the only difference between the true Christian and another is just this—that the one is more attentive to his place of worship—that he is more regular in the practice of ceremonies—that he could not live without private prayer, and the like. Permit me to assure you that if there is no greater difference than this between you and another man, you are not a child of God.

The distinction between the unconverted and the converted is far wider than this. It is one not of dress or of outward form, but of essence and of nature. Bring hither a serpent and an angel, there is a distinction between the two of such a character, that the serpent could not grow into an angel let it do its utmost, the angel could not eat the dust which forms the serpent’s food, nor could the serpent lift up its voice and sing the seraphic song of the blessed. As wide a distinction as that is there between the man that fears God, and the man that fears Him not.

If you are still what you always were by nature, you cannot be a true Christian, and it is utterly impossible for you to grow into one by all your doings. You may wash and cleanse, you may clothe and dress, you will be the child of nature finely dressed, but not the living child of heaven. You *must* be born-again, there must be a new nature put into you, a spark of divinity must fall into your bosom, and must burn there. Fallen nature can only rise to nature, just as water will only flow up as high as its source, and as you are fallen in nature, so must you remain, unless you are renewed by grace.

God, by His infinite power, has quickened His people, He has brought them out of their old nature, they now love the things which they once hated, and they hate the things they once loved. Old things with them are “passed away; behold all things are become new.”

The change is not that they speak more solemnly and religiously, or that they have left off going to the theater, or that they do not spend their lives in the frivolities of the world, that is not the change—it is a consequence of it, but the change is deeper and more vital than this, it is a change of the man’s very essence. He is no more the man that he once was, he is “renewed in the spirit of his mind,” born over

again, regenerated, re-created, he is a stranger and a foreigner here below, he no more belongs to this world, but to the world to come. The Lord then, in this respect, hath put a difference between Israel and Egypt.

We would remark further, that this difference of nature is followed by a difference in God's *judicial treatment* of the two men. With both, His dealings are just and right. God forbid that He should be unjust to any man! The Lord is never severe beyond what justice demands, nor gracious beyond what justice allows.

Here comes the unrenewed, the ungodly man, he brings up his good works, his prayers, his tears, the Lord will judge him according to his works, and woe worth the day to him, it will be a day of sorrow indeed, for he will soon discover that his best perfections are as filthy rags, and that all his good works only seemed to be good because he was in the dark, and could not see the spots that defiled them.

Another man approaches, it is the renewed man. God deals with him justly, it is true, but not according to the scale of the law, He looks at that man as accepted in Christ Jesus, justified through Christ's righteousness, and washed in His blood, and now He deals with that man, not as a judge with a criminal, nor as a king with a subject, but as a Father with a child.

That man is taken to JEHOVAH's bosom, his offense is put away, his soul constantly renewed by the influence of divine grace, and the dealings of God with him are as different from the dealings of God with another man, as the love of a husband differs from the sternness of an incensed monarch. On the one hand, it is simple justice, on the other hand, fervent love, on the one hand, the inflexible severity of a judge, and on the other hand, the unbounded affection of a parent's heart. The Lord then, in this also hath put a difference between Israel and Egypt.

This distinction is carried out in *providence*. It is true, that to the naked eye one event happens to both, the righteous suffer as well as the wicked, and they go to the grave which is appointed for all living, but if we could look more closely into God's providence, we should see lines of light dividing the path of the godly from the lot of the transgressor.

To the righteous man every providence is a blessing. A blessing is wrapped up in all our curses and in all our crosses. Our cups are sometimes bitter, but they are always healthful. Our woe is our weal. We are never losers by our losses, but we grow rich towards God when we become poor towards men.

To the sinner however, all things work together for evil. Is he prosperous? He is as the beast that is fattened for the slaughter. Is he healthy? He is as the blooming flower that is ripening for the mower's scythe. Does he suffer? His sufferings are the first drops of the eternal hailstorm of divine vengeance. Everything to the sinner, if he could but open his eye, has a black aspect. The clouds are to him big with thunders, and the whole world is alive with terror. If earth could have its way, it would shake off from its bosom the monsters that forget God.

But to the righteous all things work together for good. Come foul, or come fair, all shall end well, every wave speeds him to his desired haven, and even the rough blast swells his sails, and drives him the more swiftly towards the port of peace. The Lord hath put a difference between Israel and Egypt in this world.

That difference however, will come out more distinctly on *the judgment day*. Then, when He shall sit upon the throne of His glory, He shall divide them, the one from the other, as a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats. He shall cry unto His angels and say, "Gather out of my kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity." Then, with the sharp sickle in his hand, will the angel fly through the midst of heaven and reap the tares and gather them together in bundles to burn.

But stepping from His throne, not delegating the delightful task to an angel, the King Himself, the crowned Reaper, shall take His own golden sickle, and shall gather the wheat into His barn. Oh! then, when hell shall open wide its mouth and swallow up the impenitent, when they shall go down alive into the pit, as Korah, Dathan, and Abiram did of old—then, when they shall see the righteous streaming up to heaven, like a stream of light, in their bright and glistening garments, shout triumphant hymns and choral symphonies, then shall it be seen that the Lord hath put a difference.

When across the impassable gulf the rich man shall see Lazarus in Abraham's bosom—when from the lowest pit of hell the condemned one shall see the accepted one glorified in bliss—then shall the truth stand out written in letters of fire—“*The LORD hath put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel.*”

## II. We pass on to our second point—WHEN IS THIS DIFFERENCE SEEN?

Our answer is, it is often seen *in God's temple*. Two men go up to the temple to worship, they take their seats side by side in God's house, the Word is preached to them both, they both hear it, perhaps with like attention, the one goes his way to forget, the other remembers. They come again, the one listens and the minister is to him as one that plays a goodly tune upon an instrument, the other listens and weeps, he feels that the Word is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword. It comes home to his conscience, it pierces him, cuts him to the quick, every word seems to be as an arrow shot from the bow of God and finding a target in his conscience.

And now they come again. The one feels the Word at last to be *his*, he has been led to repentance and faith in Christ through it, and now comes up to sing God's praises as His accepted child, while the other remains to sing as a mere formalist—to join in worship in which he feels but little interest—to lift up his voice in a prayer when his heart is far absent. If I had here this morning a heap of steel filings and of ashes mixed together, and I wanted to detect the difference between the two, I should have nothing to do but to thrust in a magnet, the filings would be attracted and the ashes would remain.

So with this congregation. If I would know today who are those who are of God's Israel, and who are still the base-born Egyptians, there is nothing needed but to preach the Gospel. The Gospel finds out God's people, it has an affinity to them. When it comes to them, they receive it, God's Holy Spirit opening their hearts, they lay hold of it and rejoice in it, while those who are not God's, who have no part or interest in the redemption of Christ, hear it in vain and are even hardened by it, and go their way to sin with a higher hand, after all the warnings they have received.

Come now, my hearer—to come right home to you—have you ever seen this difference made between you and another man? Do you hear the Gospel now as you have never heard it before? This is the age of hearing, there are more people attending our places of worship now than ever there were, but still, it is not the hearers, but the doers of the Word that are blessed.

Say then, have you been made to hear the Word as you never heard before? Do you listen to it, hoping that it may be blessed to you, desiring that your conscience may be subjected to it, just as the gold is subject to the goldsmith's hand? If so, there is the first sign of a difference which God has put between you and the Egyptians!

But it goes further. If the Israelite is consistent with his duty, as I think he must be, in a little while he feels it incumbent upon him to come out from the rest of mankind and to be united *with Christ's church*. “The LORD hath put a difference,” saith he, “now I will show this difference. My Master has said, ‘He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.’ I put no trust in baptism, but I must show that I am no longer what I was. I desire to be obedient to my Lord and Master. I desire to cross the Rubicon. To draw my sword against the world, once and forever to throw away the scabbard.

“I long to do a something that shall make the world see that I am crucified to it, and that it is crucified to me. Let me then be buried in water, ‘in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,’ as the picture of my death to all the world. Let me rise out of the water, as the picture of my resurrection to a new life, and God help me from that blessed hour to go on my way walking as one who is not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world.”

As often as the table is spread, upon which we celebrate the memorial of the body and the blood of Christ, God again seals that difference. The unconverted, if the minister be faithful, are warned to go their way, for if they eat there, they will eat and drink damnation to themselves, not discerning the Lord's body. *They* are invited to come, and *they only* who are believers in Jesus, who have a hope that they are changed men, and have been renewed by divine grace in the spirit of their minds. Thus do we show to the world in the two outward symbols that the Lord hath put a difference.

But further, *the whole of a Christian's life*, if he is what he should be, is showing forth to the world that the Lord hath put a difference. Here are two men in trial, the same trouble has befallen them both, they are partners in business, their money is all gone, the house has gone to ruin, they are brought down to beggary, and have to start in the world again.

Now, which of these two is the Christian man? There is one ready to tear his hair, he cannot bear that he should have worked all his life and now should be poor as Lazarus. He thinks providence is unfair. "There is many a vagabond," says he, "getting rich, and here am I, after toiling hard and paying every man his own, brought down to the ground, having nothing left."

But the Christian man—if he really be a Christian, (mark that, for there are a great many that profess to be Christians and are not, and it is the rough wind that tries them)—says, "The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD." "I know," says he, "that all things work together for good. I will put my shoulder to the wheel, and work up once more," and so with courage and with confidence in Christ, he goes again to his labor, and God blesses him yet once more, nay, blesses him in his trials more than he was ever blessed in his prosperity.

Here are two men again, they have both been doing wrong, and when the righteous fall as well as the wicked, who is to know the difference? The next morning one of them rises and is quite easy about the matter—he knows no wounds in his conscience, or if he be uneasy, it is because he is afraid of being found out. He is like one who, having fallen into the mud, lies and rolls there.

But here comes the Christian. He feels he has done wrong. "What shall I do?" says he, "to make reparation to man, and to show my repentance towards God?" He would be ready to go down on his knees before anyone he has injured and confess how wrong he has been. He hates himself, he loathes himself because he has done wrong. He would sooner die than sin, and now that he finds he has sinned, he wishes he had died sooner than he should ever have dishonored his Lord and Master.

If you see a sheep fall into the mire, it is quick enough up again, but if the swine falls there, it wallows in it again and again, and nothing but the whip or the stick can make it rise. So that there is an essential difference between the righteous and the wicked, even in their sins. "A righteous man falleth seven times, but he rises up again," as for the wicked, he rolls and revels in his sin, abiding and continuing in it. God has set a difference, and even when that difference is obscured it may yet be discerned.

There is a ring about the Christian that is not to be mistaken. Do what you will with him, he is not what the other man is, and you cannot make him so. Here is a new coin which looks amazingly like a sovereign, and I turn it over, it is so clever a counterfeit that I cannot discover whether it is gold or no. Here is another, it is a light sovereign I find. I look at them both, and at first sight I am inclined to think that my new-minted sovereign is the better of the two, for I say, the other is evidently much worn and light.

But there is a ring about the Christian that proves him to be gold after all, even when he is worn and short in weight. You may deface him so that the king's image is not apparent upon him, but he is gold for all that, he only needs to be tried, and in the hour of trial that golden sound of grace will detect him, and he will prove still to be one in whom God hath made a difference.

This distinction also comes out in a godly man when he is under the pressure of some *strong temptation*. There are two tradesmen, both seem to trade in the same way, but at last a rare chance occurs to them. If they have no conscience they can make a fortune. Now will be the test.

One man looks out for the opportunity and unscrupulously grasps it. That man is no Christian, put that down as certain. There is another man, he feels a longing for the gain, for he is human, but his heart hates the sin, for it is renewed by divine grace. "No," he says. "Better shut up shop than earn my living by dishonesty, better for me to be ruined in this life than that I should be ruined in the world to come."

The maxim of the establishment on the other side of the road is, "*We must live*," the maxim of this shop will be "*We must die*." You who are customers soon know in which place you will be dealt with

most honestly, and there you discover in some degree that the Lord hath put a difference between Egypt and Israel.

But not to keep you long on this point, that difference shines forth very vividly in *the dying hour*. Oh! how distinct is that difference sometimes! The last time the cholera visited London with severity, though I had many engagements in the country, I gave them up to remain in London. It is the duty of the minister always to be on the spot in times of visitation and disease. I never saw more conspicuously in my life the difference between the man that fears God and the man that fears Him not, than I did then.

Called up one Monday morning at about half-past three, to go and see a man who was dying, I went to him and entered the place where he was lying. He had been down to Brighton on the Sunday morning on an excursion and came back ill, and there he lay on the borders of the tomb. I stood by his side and spoke to him. The only consciousness he had was a foreboding of terror, mingled with the stupor of alarm, soon even that was gone and I had to stand sighing there with a poor old woman who had watched over him, hopeless altogether about his soul.

I went home. I was called away to see a young woman. She was also in the last extremity, but it was a fair, fair sight, she was singing, though she knew she was dying, talking to those round about her, telling her brothers and sisters to follow her to heaven, bidding good-bye to her father, smiling as if it were a marriage day. She was happy and blessed. I then saw very clearly, that if there is not a difference in the joy of life, there is a difference when we come to the dying hour.

But the first case I mentioned is not the worst I have ever seen. Many have I seen dying, whose histories it would not do to tell. I have seen them when their eyeballs have been glaring from their sockets—when they have known Christ and have heard the Gospel, but yet have rejected it. They have been dying in agonies so extreme that one could only fly from the room, feeling that it was a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of an angry God, and to enter into that all-devouring fire. On the dying bed it will be manifest that the Lord hath put a difference between Israel and Egypt.

**III.** I have hurried over these first two points because I want to dwell very strongly and very solemnly upon my last. We spoke about the difference being seen between the righteous and the wicked. My last point is, **WHY SHOULD THAT DIFFERENCE BE SEEN?**

I have here a practical aim and drift, and I hope that if the first of the sermon has fallen dead upon you, this at least, may quicken your conscience.

This is an age which has many hopeful signs in it, but yet, if we judge according to the rule of Scripture, there are some very black marks upon this century. I sometimes fear that the only age to which we can be truly likened is the time before the flood, when the sons of God intermarried with the daughters of men, and when there ceased to be a distinction between the church and the world.

It is but the part of candor to acknowledge that there is such a mixture nowadays, such a compromise, such a giving and a taking on both sides of religious questions, that we are like a leavened mass, mingled and united together. All this is wrong, for God has always intended there should be a distinction between the righteous and the wicked, as clear and as palpable as the distinction between the day and the night.

My first argument is this. Whenever the church has been thoroughly distinct from the world, she has always prospered. During the first three centuries, the world hated the church. The prison, the stake, the heels of the wild horse, these were thought too good for the followers of Christ. When a man became a Christian, he gave up father and mother, house and lands, nay, his own life also.

When they met together, they must meet in the catacombs, burning candles at high noon, because there was darkness in the depths of the earth. They were despised and rejected of men. "They wandered about in sheep's skins and goats' skins, destitute, afflicted, tormented." But then was the age of heroes, that was the time of giants. Never did the church so much prosper and so truly thrive as when she was baptized in blood. The ship of the church never sails so gloriously along as when the bloody spray of her martyrs falls upon her deck.

We *must* suffer, and we *must* die, if we are ever to conquer this world for Christ. Was there ever such a surprising miracle as the spread of the Gospel during the first two or three centuries? Within fifty years after Christ had ascended to heaven, the Gospel was preached in every known part of the world, and there were converts to Christ in the most inhospitable regions.

Further than the ships of Tarshish had the Gospel flown—the Pillars of Hercules had not bounded the industry of the apostles. To wild and uncivilized tribes, to Picts and Scots, and to fierce Britons, was the Gospel proclaimed. Churches were founded, some of which have lasted in their purity to this day. And all this, I believe, was partly the result of that striking, that marked difference between the church and the world.

Certainly, during the period after Constantine professed to be a Christian, changing with the times because he saw it would strengthen his empire—from the time when the church began to be linked with the state—the Lord left her, He gave her up to barrenness, and Ichabod was written on her walls.

It was a black day for Christendom when Constantine said, “I am a Christian.” “By this sign I conquer,” said he. Yes, it was the true reason of his pretended conversion. If he could conquer by the cross it was well enough, if he could have conquered by Jupiter he would have liked it equally as well.

From that time the church began to degenerate. And coming down to the Middle Ages, when you could not tell a Christian from a worldling, where were you to find piety at all, or life or grace left in the lands?

Then came Luther, and with a rough grasp he rent away the church from the world—pulled her away at the risk of rending her in pieces. He would not have her linked in affinity with the world, and then “The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers took counsel together, against the Lord and against His Anointed,” but He that sitteth in the heavens did laugh at them, JEHOVAH had them in derision.

The church went forth conquering and to conquer, and her main weapon was her *non-conformity* to the world, her coming out from among men. Put your finger on any prosperous page in the church’s history, and I will find a little marginal note reading thus, “In this age men could readily see where the church began and where the world ended.” Never were there good times when the church and the world were joined in marriage with one another.

But though this were sufficient argument for keeping the church and the world distinct, there are many others. The more the church is distinct from the world in her acts and in her maxims, the more true is her testimony for Christ, and the more potent is her witness against sin. We are sent into this world to testify against evils, but if we dabble in them ourselves, where is our testimony? If we ourselves be found faulty, we are false witnesses, we are not sent of God, our testimony is of no effect.

I do not hesitate to say there are tens of thousands of professing Christians, whose testimony before the world is rather injurious than beneficial. The world looks at them and says, “Well, I see, you can be a Christian and yet remain a rogue.” “Ah!” says another, “you can be a Christian, I perceive, but then you will have to be doleful and miserable.” “Ah!” cries another, “these Christians like to drink sin in secret behind the door. Their Christianity lies in not liking to sin openly, but they can devour a widow’s house when nobody is looking on, they can be drunkards, only it must be in a very small party, they would not like to be discovered tipsy where there were a hundred eyes to look at them.”

Now, what is all that? It is just this—that the world has found out that the church visible is not the unmixed church of Christ, since it is not true to its principles and does not stand up for the uprightness and integrity which are the marks of the genuine church of God. Many Christians forget that they are bearing a testimony, they do not think that anybody notices them.

Ay, but they do. There are no people so much watched as Christians. The world reads us up, from the first letter of our lives to the end, and if they can find a flaw—and God forgive us, they may find very many—they are sure to magnify the flaw as much as ever they can. Let us therefore be very watchful, that we live close to Christ, that we walk in His commandments always, that the world may see that the Lord hath put a difference.

But now I have a very sad thing to say—I wish that I could withhold it, but I cannot. Unless, brothers and sisters, you make it your daily business to see that there is a difference between you and the world, you will do more hurt than you can possibly do good. The church of Christ is at this day accountable for many fearful sins. Let me mention one which is but the type of others.

By what means think you were the fetters riveted on the wrist of our friend who sits there, a man like ourselves, though of a black skin? It is the church of Christ that keeps his brethren under bondage—if it were not for that church, the system of slavery would go back to the hell from which it sprung. If there were no slave floggers but men who are fit for so degrading an office, if there were not found Christian ministers (?) who can apologize for slavery from the pulpit, and church members who sell the children of nobler beings than themselves—if it were not for this, Africa would be free.

Albert Barnes spoke right truly when he said slavery could not exist for an hour if it were not for the countenance of the Christian church. But what does the slaveholder say when you tell him that to hold our fellow creatures in bondage is a sin, and a damnable one, inconsistent with grace?

He replies, “I do not believe your slanders, look at the Bishop of So-and-So, or the minister of such and such a place, is not he a good man, and does not he whine out ‘Cursed be Canaan?’ Does not he quote Philemon and Onesimus? Does he not go and talk Bible, and tell his slaves that they ought to feel very grateful for being his slaves, for God Almighty made them on purpose that they might enjoy the rare privilege of being cowhided by a Christian master. Don’t tell me,” he says, “if the thing were wrong, it would not have the church on its side.” And so Christ’s free church bought with His blood, must bear the shame of cursing Africa, and keeping her sons in bondage. From this evil, good Lord deliver us.

If Manchester merchants and Liverpool traders have a share in this guilt, at least let the church be free of this hell-filling crime. Men have tried hard to make the Bible support this sum of all villainies, but slavery, the thing which defiles the Great Republic, such slavery is quite unknown to the Word of God, and by the laws of the Jews it was impossible that it ever could exist. I have known men quote texts as excuses for being damned, and I do not wonder that men can find Scripture to justify them in buying and selling the souls of men.

And what do you think it is, to come home to our own land, that props up the system of trade that is carried on among us? You all know that there are businesses where it is not possible for a young man to be honest in the shop, where, if he spoke the downright truth, he would be discharged. Why is it, think you, that the system of ticketing goods in the window differently from what they are sold indoors, or exhibiting one thing and then giving another article, the system of telling white lies across the counter with the intention of getting a better price, is maintained?

Why, it would not stand an hour if it were not for the professing Christians who practice it. They have not the moral courage to say once for all, “We will have nothing to do with these things.” If they did, if the church renounced these unholy customs, business would alter within the next twelve months. The props of felony, and the supports of roguery are these professing Christian men, who bend their backs to do as other men do, who, instead of stemming the torrent, give up and swim along with it—the dead fish in our churches, that flow with the stream, unlike the living fish which always go against it, and swim upward to the river’s source.

I would not speak too severely of Christ’s church, for I love her, but because I love her I must therefore utter this. Our being so much like the world, our trading as the world trades, our talking as the world talks, our always insisting upon it that we must do as other people do, this is doing more mischief to the world than all our preachers can hope to effect good. “Come ye out from among them, touch not the unclean thing, be ye separate, saith the LORD, and I will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters.”

This surely, a stern rough argument, might move us to be separate from the world. But once again, how is it possible for us to honor Jesus Christ, while there is no difference between us and the world? I can imagine that a man may not profess to be a Christian, and yet he may honor his Master, that



however is a matter of imagination. I do not know of an instance, but I cannot imagine a man professing to be a Christian, and then acting as the world acts, and yet honoring Christ.

I think I see my Master now He stands before me. He has more than those five blessed wounds. I see His hands running with blood. “My Master! My Master!” I cry, “where did You get those wounds? those are not the piercing of the nails, nor the gash of the spear-thrust, whence come those wounds?” I hear Him mournfully reply, “These are the wounds which I have received in the house of My friends, such and such a Christian fell, such and such a disciple followed Me afar off, and at last, Peter-like denied Me altogether. Such a one of My children is covetous, such another of them is proud, such another has taken his neighbor by the throat and said, ‘Pay me what thou owest,’ and I have been wounded in the house of My friends.”

O, blessed Jesus forgive us, forgive us, and give us Your grace that we may do so no more, for we *would* follow You whithersoever You go, You know Lord *we would* be Yours, we would honor You and not grieve You. O give us now then your own Spirit, that we may come out from the world and be like Yourself—holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.

I have but just these two things to say, and then I have done. To professors of religion this word. There are some of you professors of religion that are base coin. When you come to the Lord’s table you *lie*, and when you say of yourself, “I am a member of such and such a church,” you say what is a disgrace to you. Now let me remind you, sirs, that you may hold your profession here, but when you come before God’s bar at last, you will find it a terrible thing not to have had a reality in your profession.

Tremble, sirs, at God’s right hand. There hangs the scale and you must be put into it, and if you are found wanting, your portion must be among the deceivers, and you know where that is—it is in the lowest pit of hell. Tremble, sir Deacon, tremble, church member, if you are not what you profess to be, there is a doom awaiting you of a fiercer, a direr sort than even for the ungodly and the reprobate.

From the height of your profession you shall be plucked down. You have built your nest among the stars, but you must make your bed in hell. You have decked your head with a crown, but you must wear a crown of fire, you must have those fine robes plucked off you, that tinsel and that paint must all be removed, and you, naked to your shame, the hooting-mark of devils, shall become a hissing even to the damned of hell, as they shall point to you and cry, “There goes the man who destroyed himself by deceiving others. There is the wretch who talked of God and talked of Christ, and did not think himself such a one as we are, and now he too, is bound up in the bundle to be burnt.”

The last word is to those who are not professors at all. God has made a difference between you and the righteous. Oh, my dear friends, I beseech you turn that thought over in your minds! There are no three characters, no intermediate links, there is no borderland between the righteous and the wicked. Today you are either a friend to God or an enemy to Him. You are at this hour either quickened or dead, and oh! remember, when death comes it is either heaven or hell with you—either angels or fiends must be your companions, and either the flames must be your bed and fiery coverlet, or else the glories of eternity must be your perpetual inheritance.

Remember, the way to heaven is open. “He that believeth in the Lord Jesus shall be saved.” Believe on Him, believe on Him and live. Trust Him, and you are saved. Cast your soul’s confidence on Jesus, and you are *now* delivered. God help you to do that now, and there shall be no difference any more between you and the righteous, but you shall be of them, and with them, in the day when Jesus comes to sit upon the throne of His father David, and to reign among men.

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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](http://www.spurgeongems.org).