

GUILE FORSAKEN WHEN GUILT IS FORGIVEN

NO. 1346

**A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 25, 1877,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity,
and in whose spirit there is no guile.”
Psalm 32:2.*

THE only blessing the law can give, it bestows on those who do no iniquity and walk perfectly in God's ways—the gospel alone has a blessing for the guilty. Upon their believing in Jesus, on them it pronounces the benediction, “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity.” To be “blessed” is to be in the most desirable state, at peace with God, happy in yourself, and full of divine favor. A man cannot be more than blessed or what if I say doubly blessed, since the benediction is pronounced twice? Nor is it a stinted blessing, for no limiting word is put before it or after it to mark an inferior benediction. When our Lord opened His mouth in the Sermon on the Mount, He poured forth a stream of blessings and even so does the gospel when it speaks to the soul, rivers of blessing flow from its every word. The language of the text is very emphatic in the original and implies a multiplication of blessings. There cannot be a more true, real, and assured blessedness than that which belongs to the forgiven sinner. All the blessedness which could have come to a perfect man comes to the man whose transgression is forgiven. O you who have sinned against God and are conscious of it, rejoice that you are not shut out from blessedness. For if by faith you can believe in the sin-forgiving God and accept the matchless atonement which covers all your guilt and if you will exercise faith upon that blessed system by which sin is no longer imputed, then you are even now among the blessed. God Himself has blessed you and neither men nor devils can reverse the benediction.

Now, mark that at the very same time that the guilt of sin is taken away and blessedness is bestowed, it happens unto the forgiven man that he undergoes a change of nature. The work of the Spirit is linked with the work of the Son—when the Son removes guilt, the Spirit removes guile. He who takes away our offenses, also cures our deceit. When we begin to be believers, we cease to be liars. He, who was before crafty as Jacob, no sooner receives the blessing of the Lord in answer to prayer than he becomes “an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile.”

It is to this fact that I am going to draw your attention at this time and as I desire to use it as a means for self-examination and awakening, I pray the Holy Spirit to apply it with power to many souls.

You must all have noticed in David's case that, after he had fallen into his foul sin with Bathsheba, he ceased to exhibit that transparent truth-speaking character which had charmed us so much before. Until he had obtained a sense of pardon for his great crime, David was as crooked and perverse as he could be. Guile was as abundant in him as guilt, for he made no confession of his sin and would not allow himself to see the heinousness of it, but he must have put a fearful strain upon his conscience to have hushed its protests against his grievous offense. Perhaps even months passed without any honest acknowledgment to his own conscience and to God that he had so foully sinned. His entire endeavors were concentrated upon the concealment of his crime and to that end all his wits were set to work with horrible cunning. What crafty devices he practiced in seeking to hide his sin, such as bringing Uriah back and making him drunk. Could this be David—the honest and conscientious David of former days? Could he have become so mean, so full of low scheming? Could he be the psalmist who sung so sweetly? Could he deliberately plan the death of the man whom he had so fearfully wronged? Yes, and worse, when Uriah, being willfully exposed to danger, fell in battle, David manifested no compunction, nor uttered a word by way of confession, but he put it off with apparent indifference, saying, “The sword devours one

as well as another.” He knew right well how Uriah came to die and Joab knew also and yet he trumped up a message, as if nothing had been arranged between them beforehand. Ah, David, what a deceitful heart you had and how you did practice guile upon guile! Yes, so blind had his mental vision become as to his own sinfulness that when Nathan outlined a picture which was the very photograph of his own case, he did not see it, but pronounced a fierce sentence against the supposed culprit. It needed the prophet to come forward and say, “You are the man,” before that guileful heart of David was able to perceive that Nathan spoke of him. Yes, sin gives a twist to our entire manhood and makes us play a thousand tricks both with our conscience and with God. But notice, as soon as Nathan said, “The Lord has put away your sin: you shall not die,” David became another man. He wrote the 51st Psalm, which is one of the most honest pieces of writing that ever fell from human pen. How plain-spoken it is all through! How bare is the penitent’s bosom! In it you do not so much hear the sound of vibrating harp-strings as of throbbing, breaking heart-strings. All through it, the man’s soul is running over at his lips and at his eyes—concealment and trickery are quite out of the field. Pardoned sin makes an honest heart, but while sin is unconfessed and unforgiven the serpent rules within and men twist and wriggle and wind and turn in a thousand deceitful ways.

My first head tonight is this—*many men play tricks with God and their consciences*. Secondly, *the forgiven man gives evidence of having ceased from this evil habit*, “In His spirit there is no guile.”

I. While I speak upon my first head—that **MANY MEN PLAY TRICKS WITH GOD AND THEIR CONSCIENCES**, I shall be very glad if you will each carefully notice how much of what is said belongs to you personally. I want to be very honest with you, but I should be sorry to be unjust. Do not take home what does not apply to you, but anything which is really yours, I pray you to lay to heart. Court the entrance of truth, even though it should cut you to the quick. “Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.” Avail yourselves of the opportunity which the Lord is now affording you to search our hearts, as in the presence of the Lord who weighs the spirits. May the Holy Spirit aid us in this business.

The guile of the human heart shows itself in a *refusal to come to serious consideration*. Men cannot be induced to examine themselves and to look to the state of affairs between God and their souls. We press them to it and plead with them even to tears, but they refuse to do themselves this necessary service. They are more or less conscious that something is very wrong, but they have no mind to inquire. Is this truthful? Is it reasonable? If their house were reported to be on fire, would they not see to it? But no, they could not enjoy the fool’s paradise of false peace if they were seriously to think and inquire and therefore they prefer to take matters easily and ignore as much as possible all that is unsatisfactory about their condition and prospects. From week to week there is no calling of conscience to account. Sabbaths follow one another and though there may be a little occasional awakening, there is no resolute determination to cast up accounts and find out the soul’s actual condition. They prefer to shut their eyes and stop their ears rather than see signs and hear tidings which would distress them. What childishness is this! It is worse—it is dishonesty to their souls and God. When a steward declines to render an account, you may easily guess the reason. When a shipmaster refuses to have his vessel surveyed, you shrewdly suspect the sea-worthiness of the ship. When a merchant does not care to look into his books, you judge on which side the balance has turned. Honest men are prepared to go into matters and are willing to see the naked truth, but men who are not brave enough to face uncomfortable facts play the foolish game of bandaging their eyes. Putting the telescope to the blind eye and declaring that you see nothing is an old trick and commonly practiced even now. May we never be suffered to persevere in the self-deception which is supported by a heedless disregard of warnings. Most men will do anything sooner than think about eternal things. The most frivolous amusements, the most stupid songs, the most worrisome cares, and even the most weary ceremonial of fashions are adopted as a happy release from the labor of reflection. Death, judgment, eternity, heaven, and hell—they dare not think of these—and why? Because they know that all is wrong with them and so they practice a crafty carelessness and a cunning indifference.

Others who do think a little are *partial in their judgments of themselves*. They present accounts, but these are cooked and made to appear other than they should be by a sort of spiritual financing. Ungodly men color all that they do with a rosy tint and endeavor to be gratified with the appearance of their lives.

Is it not very usual for business men, when their financial position is becoming more and more unsound, to make a show of prosperity in order to keep up their credit? Doubtful investments are reckoned as available assets and heavy liabilities are toned down by clever adjustments. Public companies often show us fine specimens of the art of coloring. Alas, that reasonable beings should practice this art upon themselves in relation to their most vital interests—yet they do so year after year. They put darkness for light and light for darkness and reckon themselves to be rich and increased with goods, while they are naked and poor and miserable. Well-skilled are many in the method of “making the worse appear the better reason.” They exaggerate any little excellence which they think they possess and greatly underestimate their faults. They deny or extenuate or altogether excuse their sin—they blame their nature or their circumstances or the tempter, but they themselves must be excused. How could they help sinning? Others would have done the same had they been in their position, why then should they be blamed? Moreover, what they did was not so very bad after all and there are all their good deeds as a set off against the bad. Men use false weights and deceitful balances when they are dealing with their souls and they will not endure honest handling. They cry, “Peace, peace,” where there is no peace and prophesy smooth things for themselves. Like the unjust steward, they permit false statements to be made of what is due to their Lord and when they come up to their false standard, they congratulate themselves as if they were the pink of honesty.

Again, many are evidently tricking themselves willfully because *they rest on such frivolous grounds of confidence*. Could any man depend on his own good works unless he had juggled with his judgment? What do you think? Do you believe that any man would build his hope for eternity upon his being christened when he was a baby and his having taken the communion at certain seasons since, if he were not anxious to be deceived? Do you think that any man, unless willingly duped, could believe that he was made a child of God by an outward ceremony? Do you think any man would rely upon sacraments unless he desired to be misled? A mortal man believes in absolution given to him by a fellow sinner who calls himself a priest—is he not willingly deceived? If any man relies upon outward performances as a means for the putting away of sin, do you think he has not sense enough in him, if he chose to use it, to know that this is utter absurdity? True, many are duped by the teachings of others, but if they possess even so much as a trace of brain, might they not see through such false teaching if they chose? If a man would sit down and only think, would he not see that confidences based upon such frail foundations are as sure to fall as houses built upon the sand? But alas, multitudes of men play such tricks with themselves so that they are led by the nose by the servants of Antichrist. They see that others yield their assent to the pretensions of priests and they conclude that they will go with the many. It is inconvenient to be too particular and so they leap with the majority. But what a wretched way of doing business and how hollow the peace which comes of it. Men will trust their souls upon statements so flimsy that they would not risk a half-crown upon them. There is guile at the bottom of this and those who profess to be easy in these confidences are not so. Sirs, there is no man honest in his peace but the man who gained it through the blood of Jesus Christ. If you come to testing and trying, all other confidences fail you except confidence in the Christ of God. But the sinner is full of guile and does not want to test and try. Like the simple, he believes every word because it would be tedious to discriminate and troublesome to doubt a good report.

Some practice guile in another way. *They avoid all home truths and keep clear of searching doctrines*. If they hear a faithful sermon and it comes home to them, do you know what they say? “The preacher was so very harsh. I could not hear a man like that. I want more love.” Of course they cannot abide a ministry which reveals their true state, for, “He that does evil hates the light, neither comes to the light lest his deeds should be reprov’d.” Only honest hearts ask to hear that searching word which lays bare the thoughts and intents of the heart, but gracious men know that to be turned inside out by a searching discourse is the very thing they need and they are grateful to the honest man of God who will not spare them.

Those persons must be very foolish who prefer a doctor who, when they are dreadfully diseased and near to death, nevertheless flatteringly say, “Oh, this is but a small matter. I shall soon set you right. Here is my wonderful pill—take a certain quantity of boxes and you will be perfectly restored. I have

seen many cases worse than yours completely cured.” The poor wretch is almost in his grave and yet he promises him long life. Sensible men hate such a deceiver. Rational men choose a trustworthy physician who will, so far as he knows, tell them what ails them and not bolster them up in falsehood. So if men would but let their senses exercise themselves on the best things, they would prefer an honest teacher and prize his faithful warnings and be glad that things should be put plainly, even if harshly, lest haply they should perish in self-deception. Very commonly we meet with people foolish enough to endeavor to turn the edge of an unpalatable home truth by finding fault with the preacher. He is too censorious and that is your excuse for remaining in spiritual apathy. He blundered in pronunciation or grammar or style and that is tacitly placed as an excuse for your rejecting the gospel which he preached. Even books come in for the same censures. The plain-speaking volume is not “conceived in a gentle spirit,” or is too narrow, bigoted, and one-sided. The witness is hated because he prophesies only evil. If the sinner cannot escape the censure of his conscience, he will raise a deal of dust and throw handfuls of it upon those who seek his good, so that in the fog he may effect a retreat. Ah, foolish trickery!

Beyond this, many are clever at *parrying home thrusts by introducing other themes*. Many imitate the Samaritan woman at the well. When our Lord began to unveil her character and touch her conscience about those five husbands of hers, she sought to change the subject by the remark, “Our fathers worshipped in this mountain and You say that in Jerusalem men ought to worship.” Thus with questions about rites or ceremonies, or doctrines, or types, or prophecies, men shield themselves from the blows of the Spirit’s sword. A brother minister told me some time ago that he visited a woman whose husband had died very suddenly and he found that she had at one time been an attendant upon his ministry. She was sitting in the room with her brother, who was an elder of the Scot church, who began at once, somewhat harshly, to remind her of her negligence of Christian ordinances. The woman evidently feared that the minister would follow in the same strain and so she cleverly warded off the expected attack by stating that she had a great difficulty which she could by no means get over. The minister had no idea of rebuking her while just newly made a widow, but her conscience was evidently putting her into a state of alarm. And so she again interrupted the minister’s kindly earnest remarks by saying, “But still, you see, sir, I cannot get my mind easy about this one thing. In the Shorter Catechism, it says that God is without beginning and I cannot understand how that can be. That He should be without end I can understand, but that He should be without beginning is quite beyond me.” “Well,” said the pastor, “my good soul, I do not think that this is quite the time to talk about such a mysterious matter. You see the Lord has removed your husband from you and it is well for us to hear the voice of the rod.” It was of no use, for the woman held to her shield and repeated that still she could not understand how God could be without a beginning. At last her brother, the elder, silenced her objection, by saying, “Woman, what are you doing? Why make such a fuss about a plain subject? Of course the Lord never had a beginning and He never needed any, for He was always there.” This for awhile silenced that particular form of caviling, but before long the woman was at the same mode of defense. You know how the lapwing pretends to have a broken wing and flies as if it must be taken and all with the view of leading the passenger from her nest, so do our hearers try to lead us away from the main matter. When comparing notes about the way in which the unconverted meet us when we try to deal personally with them, ministers can all bear witness to the cleverness of many in the art of turning the switch and shunting the conversation. You know how it has been with some of you when you have been hard pressed, you have crept under the doctrine of election. You have hidden in the dark corner of predestination or dodged the gospel behind some theory of free agency. This is sheer trickery, a display of evil subtlety, exceedingly mischievous. What would it help you if you could understand all mysteries? As long as you are unreconciled to God, what does it matter about what you understand or do not understand? Is it not your business to confess your sin and go and seek mercy at the hands of the Most High, and what degree of knowledge will excuse you if you neglect this chief duty? Those points which are worth your knowing, God will teach you in due time by His Spirit. I beseech you, attend to the main business which is that you should be saved from sin by faith in the Lord Jesus.

Another very cunning trick which is often practiced by sinners who are full of guile is this, they *pass on to other people anything which is uncomfortably applicable to themselves*. It seemed as if the preach-

er had made a cap specially to fit that head, but the result was that the person who watched the making exclaimed, "Dear me! How well he has taken my neighbor's measure." The letter is meant for him, but he puts it in another envelope, drops it into his friend's mailbox and runs away. If there is a solemn warning for unregenerate men, he does not see its bearing on himself, but he perceives somebody in the crowd who needs just such a serious word and he hopes that it will be useful to him. You will hear him sometimes say after a sermon in which almost every point has been put personally to himself, "I cannot think how our friend Smith could keep his seat while the pastor was dealing so faithfully with him." "You are the man" is an application as much needed now as ever, for it is one of the common tricks of sinners to get another to wear their robes that they themselves may pass unwounded through the battle. Alas for such wretched deceit.

One sorry piece of craft which Satan teaches to many is to make them *doubt, or pretend to doubt, anything in Scripture which frowns upon them*. If they find that, dying as they are, they will be driven from the presence of God forever, they comfort themselves by recollecting that a wise man has discovered that everlasting does not mean forever. And they hear that a clever divine has found out that there is to be a general jail release in hell and everybody is to be admitted into heaven in due time. They hear this and they hear that, and as drowning men catch at straws, so do they cling to any new inventions which promise them ease in their sins. They lay the flattering unction of false doctrine to their souls as if it were the balm of Gilead. "Perhaps it may be so," they say, and thus they risk their future happiness upon so poor a chance as the hope that perhaps these modern thinkers may turn out to be right and the plain teaching of Scripture prove to be a mistake. It is a wonderfully easy thing to make yourself out to be an honest skeptic and from this earthwork to assail your assailants. And yet all the while you may have no doubt at all, but in the core of your heart you may, like the devil, believe and tremble. Ah, you pretended doubters. If you were stretched on a dying bed, you would believe the old revelation fast enough and begin to cry out for mercy in the scare which the approach of death would bring upon you. Half the men who talk so much about their not believing, believe a great deal more than they would like to admit and they dare not test their own imaginary infidelity by spending an hour alone in their chamber at eventide and looking into their own hearts. There are many hypocritical believers, but are there not quite as many pretended unbelievers to whom doubting is a mere sop to quiet the Cerberus of their conscience? Guile plays its part with the human intellect and conjures up an army of ghosts in the form of doubts, but when the sun of truth arises, they immediately disappear.

Let us examine another product of the guile of the natural heart. While yet they are far from God, *many calm and quiet themselves with outward religion*. They never pray in sincerity. neither does their heart speak at any time with God, and yet they dare not go to bed at night without kneeling down at their bedside and repeating a form of prayer. They have never repented of sin and yet they will repeat words of confession most humbly. They do not praise the Lord in sincerity and yet their voices may be heard in psalm and hymn. On the Sabbath-day they go up to the House of God and sit there and do as God's people do—and they would not be easy if they did not do so—and yet their heart is in none of the worship. Far be it from me to discourage even outward reverence, but it is a strange cheat that a man puts upon himself when he supposes that mere formal, heartless worship can be a reason for peace of mind. To have mocked God with solemn sounds upon a thoughtless tongue ought not to be a ground of comfort. Repeating words of prayer without life and feeling should rather move us to self-condemnation than to self-congratulation. How can men feel content with rending their garments when the Lord bids them rend their hearts? O sirs, if you do not pray with your hearts, what are all your forms worth? What are bended knees without broken hearts? If you do not indeed repent of sin and lay hold on Christ, what are all your church goings or your chapel goings, however constant they may be? Of what good can external religion be to you while you deny to God the homage of your minds? And yet too many wrap themselves up in this garment of guile.

There are others who conceal in the secret of their hearts a blasphemous notion which they hardly dare to put into words, but it amounts to this that *the reason why they are not saved is not by any means due to themselves*. They reject the Savior and refuse to leave their sins, but they are not to blame for it. In fact, only they dare not actually say so, they insinuate that the blame of their condition lies with God

Himself. They have been waiting, but grace has not come. They are quite ready, but God is not. They are poor victims of adverse fate and rather to be pitied than condemned. So they endeavor to make out for themselves. Distorted truth is used to support their flagrant falsehood and conscience is drugged into a dangerous slumber. Thus do men deceive themselves out of their souls with sophistical arguments forged by him who from the beginning is a murderer and a liar. Be not hoodwinked by this slanderous falsehood, but read God's Word where He declares, "As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, but that he turn unto Me and live." He testifies that He waits to be gracious and all day long stretches out His hands to a disobedient and rejecting generation. What a strong delusion is this, when men dare to lay their blood at God's door and make Him to be the author of their sin! In their consciences they know better, but their inward crookedness delights in lies.

Perhaps the most numerous victims of this guile are those who *flatter themselves that they will be right some day*. They have been hearers of the gospel for twenty years and are not saved, but they have a full persuasion that they shall not die as they are now. They nurse the fond idea that one of these days it will be convenient for them to seek the Lord. The convenient day has never come yet, but still they think it will. There will be a favored hour and a peculiar time and they half promise that it shall not be very much longer. O you who play at procrastination, you are knaves to your own souls. Think about it—if you resolve that you will repent in a year's time, what is that but a daring defiance of God by declaring that you will continue in sin for twelve more months, at least? Have you ever looked at it in that light? Even if a man knew that he would live a year and that on this day twelve months from now he would carry out his resolution to become a Christian, yet if he should make such a resolution, what would it amount to but this, "I mean for twelve months to refuse the Savior's claims and remain an enemy to God"? Do you think that he who thus resolves is in a hopeful condition? If he is determined to rebel against his Lord for twelve months, do you not conclude that at the end of the year he will be a worse man and be even less likely to yield himself to God?

Thus have I exposed a few of the many "knavish tricks" by which our unrenewed hearts manifest their guile. May God the eternal Spirit bless the searching word to all who are deceiving themselves.

II. But now, secondly, THE PARDONED MAN GIVES EVIDENCE OF CEASING FROM THIS GUILLE, for, in the first place, *he makes an open confession of his sin to God*. Here he stands before the Most High and cries, "God be merciful to me, a sinner," for he feels his guiltiness. He takes his fault and criminality to himself and does not cloak his iniquity. He owns that he has sinned against heaven and in the presence of the Most High. This he does all the more freely because he has no motive to do otherwise. Why should he hide his sin? There is full forgiveness for him. Why should he deny it when the precious blood of Christ is ready to put it all away? I think the most honest confession is that which falls from the believer's lips when he gazes upon the—

*"Fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins."*

"There," says a creditor to his debtor, "you owe me a great deal of money, but if you will bring me the account, I will receipt it all." My friend, would you not willingly put down all you owed in such a case? Ah, I think you would rather put down too much than too little when such a promise was before you. You would be afraid lest you should overlook anything and would be eager to make a clean breast of all your liabilities. And so when the Lord Jesus gives a full pardon to the soul that believes in Him, it is sure to be met with a full confession. How could it be otherwise?

The pardoned man has also *done with all sorts of excuses and remedies*. He does not try to set his virtues in a brighter light than that of truth or to make his sins appear less heinous than they are, but he confesses all their guilt and heartily humbles himself in the sight of God. The lowly words in the language he loves best. The lowest place in the synagogue is his choice. Once he boasted that he was almost a saint, but now he owns that he is altogether a sinner. You shall hear no extenuations, excuses, or denials now. The man beholds the pardon of God and it makes him honest. Now *he desires to know the worst of his case* and longs to be searched and probed. He who has found peace through Jesus Christ surrenders the keys of the most secret chambers of his soul and asks for inspection. "O Lord," says he, "I pray You make sure work with my case. I beseech You cut from my heart this dreadful cancer of sin,

even though the painful knife must follow every rootlet of the hideous evil, for I desire truth in the inward parts and the complete eradication of the love of sin.” He is not content to make clean the outside of the cup and the platter and leave the inward part filthy, but he cries for inward cleansing and for renewal in the hidden fountains of thought and action. Now he courts divine investigation and begs his Redeemer to let the winnowing fan discover and remove his chaff. Now would he put himself in the full blaze of Jehovah’s light and desire the consuming fire to burn up his dross. He cultivates heart-searching and practices daily repentance, a lowly estimate of himself he continually desires, because he feels that self-abhorrence endears Christ to his heart as the great Savior of unworthy ones. He would rather have a little true grace than abound in great pretensions and he considers the lowest place among the children of God to be better than he deserves.

Sincerity has also entered into the sinner’s belief in the terrible things of God’s Word. He now sees their certainty and their justice and does not pretend to question them. He is one who trembles at the Word of the Lord and he leaves the cavaliers to do their daring work alone. He knows in his own conscience that there is a hell. He confesses also that it is just that there should be such a place of punishment and he only wonders that he has not been driven there himself.

Such a man now wishes to be dealt with personally and impartially whenever he reads a book or hears a sermon. He does not want the preacher to speak to others and leave him out. No, but he has come hungering and thirsting after the Word and he opens his mouth and pants for his portion, and if, instead of getting comfort, he is to receive rebuke, he is reverently ready to receive it so long as it shall be for his real good. He is ready to take bitter medicine, for he is anxious to be healed. He lays bare his breast, for he desires the heavenly surgeon to inflict any wound sooner than leave the heart of stone within his flesh. He delights in the searching Word and the more closely it tries and tests him, the more thankful he is for it.

The pardoned man also *desires in everything that he does to be true.* He is often afraid to pray in public lest he should say more than he feels. When he rises from his knees in private, he frequently questions himself, “Has it been real devotion? Did I really mean all that I said?” He catechizes himself lest he should be a hypocrite. And I have known a man, whose sins have been pardoned, when he has dared to preach a sermon, sit down afterwards and take all his sentences to pieces lest he should have said more than he altogether knew and actually felt, for he was exceedingly afraid of going beyond the line of his actual knowledge. The saved soul hates paste gems and mimic jewels. He desires to have true precious stones or none at all. He is afraid of shams. He wants to be real in all things and hence he sometimes doubts his own safety because he is in the habit of pulling himself to pieces, to dissect his heart, and to see whether it is sound all through. This habit may be carried to excess, but in itself it is an exceedingly good one. It is infinitely better than the dishonesty of setting down all our guilt as gold.

The really pardoned man also *desires to be rid of all sin.* I know some who can never hope to obtain forgiveness, for they continue in their iniquity. Can a woman expect to find peace with God while she goes on taking her sly drop and becoming intoxicated in private? Can a man find joy in God who still clings to the drunkard’s vice? Will God receive into His favor those who continue to practice dishonesty in trade? Shall sin be handled and yet pardoned? No one dares to expect it and yet deceitful hearts attempt to think so. They will condemn other people’s pet sins and yet excuse their own. They pretend much sorrow for sin in general and yet hold to one favorite sin in particular. Their delicate Agag must live. Kill all the rest, but surely as to this one the bitterness of death has passed! O sirs, be not deceived, you must be willing for all sin to go. If you desire one sin to live, you will not live yourself. The honest-hearted sinner—he whom the Lord absolves of iniquity—desires to see all his sins brought forth and hung up like the kings whom Joshua found in the cave at Makkedah—hung up in the face of the sun that they might die the death—

*“The dearest idol I have known,
Whate’er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from Your throne,
And worship only Thee.”*

We are not perfect, but every really pardoned man wishes that he were so. Though there are sins into which we fall, there are no sins which we love. Though we come short of the glory of God, yet we do

not rest happy in falling short and we can never be wholly content till it is no longer so with us. Beloved, the pardoned man is cleansed from the guile which would ask for quarter for darling sins.

He seeks after perfect purity of life and he has heartily ceased from guile, for now as an heir of heaven *he lives in the presence of God* and delights to remember the all-seeing eye. Now he does not say to God, “Depart from me: I desire not the knowledge of Your ways,” but he looks upon every action of every day as done before his Father’s face. He needs nothing but truth and that which will bear the test of the judgment day. Beloved, I can well understand why a pardoned man becomes a man without guile, because his pardon is a real pardon—there is no fiction in it. God justifies him, but He does not justify him by a deception, as some have blasphemously ventured to say. No, but there is my sin. Christ took it and was punished for it and therefore my sin was honestly put away without any violation of justice, for Christ has made a full atonement for it—and so my sin has justly ceased to be. Why, with such an honest foundation as that, an honest pardon may well make an honest man. God makes the believer righteous—righteous beyond dispute. His faith is counted to him for righteousness, seeing he has believed in Jesus Christ, and that is a righteousness which at the last great day will stand the test of the most searching inquiry. The man is saved on honest principles and therefore from now on there are no tricks for him. He stands erect and fears no accuser while he cries, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.”

The lesson from the whole is this—be honest. Sinner, may God make you honest. Do not deceive yourself. Make a clean breast of it before God. Have an honest religion or have none at all. Have a religion of the heart or else have none. Put aside the mere vestment and garment of piety and let your soul be right within. Be honest.

And you who are Christian men, recollect that your blessedness will never be enjoyed by yourselves unless you continue to be without guile. Some Christians live rather by policy than by honesty—I hope they are Christians, but I am not sure—for their life is full of scheming. They never go straight. They would not care to go straight—they rather like going a little round about just to show that they can dodge in and out. There are men of this sort in business and you need not go out of your road to meet them. Even their thinking seems to revolve on a wheel—all round about and round about. Now, friends, you will never be happy while you act craftily. The only life in which a man can enjoy the blessedness of pardoned sin is a downright straightforward life. Be like clear glass so that all who choose to do so may see right through you. There is a way of living guardedly in which you never speak your mind, but are diplomatic and reserved. You take your words out of your mouth and look at them—and judge what other people will think of them and then you put the best of them back again. There is a system of living, as it were, in armor, buckled up, with your visor down—you never dare show your real self, but maintain great prudence and reserve. What is this but to live in fetters? I would sooner die at once—

*“I would rather not be, as live to be
In awe of such a thing as I myself.”*

To speak his heart and to act honestly is to a true believer the path of peace and happiness. If any man choose another path and tries diplomacy and policy, so he may, but as sure as he lives he will come to a sorrowful ending and find that such a course is not a way which God approves, nor will He let His servants have peace in it. God of His infinite mercy bring us all to follow Jesus, trusting in His blood and treading in His footsteps. And to Him be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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