

THE SPIES
NO. 197

A SERMON
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AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS

“And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eats up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature.”
Numbers 13:32

“And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of them that searched the land rent their clothes. And they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land.”
Numbers 14:6-7

THE unbelief of the children of Israel prompted them to send spies into Canaan. God had told them that it was a good land and He had promised to drive out their enemies—they ought therefore to have marched forward with all confidence to possess the promised heritage. Instead of this, they send twelve princes to spy out the land, and “alas, for human nature,” ten of these were faithless and only two true to the Lord. Read over the narrative and mark the ill effect of the lying message and the holy boldness of the true spies.

Now, I must take up my parable. The land of Canaan is a picture of religion. I do not think it was ever intended to be a picture of heaven, for there are no Canaanites in heaven. Certainly in heaven there are no sons of Anak, no giants to be driven out, no walled cities, and no kings with chariots of iron.

Canaan is, however, a very excellent picture of religion. The children of Israel must stand this morning as the representatives of the great mass of mankind. The great mass of mankind never try for themselves what religion is. They neither search our sacred books, nor taste and try our religion.

But this is what they do. They consider those who make a profession of religion as spies who have entered the land, and they look upon our character and our conduct as the message which we bring back to them. The ungodly man does not read his Bible in order to discover whether the religion of Christ is holy and beautiful. No, he reads the living Bible—Christ’s church—and if the church is inconsistent, he condemns the Bible, though the Bible is never to be accountable for the sins of those who profess to believe it.

Ungodly men, of course, do not come and by repentance and faith and make a trial of the love of Christ. They do not enter into covenant with the Lord Jesus, or else they would soon discover that it is a good land that flows with milk and honey. But instead thereof, they stand still and they say, “Let be, let us see what these Christians make of it. Do *they* find it to be a happy thing? Does it succor *them* in their hour of trouble? Does it comfort *them* in the midst of their trials?” And if they find that our report is a gloomy or an unholy one, they turn aside and they say, “It is not a good land. We will not enter into it, for its difficulties are great, but its enjoyments are few.”

Beloved brethren and friends, to put the parable as simply as I can, I am about to make out every Christian man and woman here to be a spy who has entered into the good land of religion, and who by his conduct and conversation brings either an evil or a good report of this good land, and either moves the world to murmur at and to despise religion, or else inspires it with a holy dread of goodness and something of a longing after a portion therein.

But I shall begin with a word of caution. In the first place, I shall notice that *the men of the world are not to be excused for their folly in trusting to mere report from other persons*. Then, secondly, I shall endeavor to describe *the evil reporters*, the evil spies, which are in the camp. Then we will mention some *good spies*, who bring a good report of the land. And in conclusion, bring a *few weighty reasons to bear upon Christian men, why they should act like Caleb and Joshua, and bring up a good report of the land*.

I. In the first place, then, THE UNGODLY WORLD IS NOT TO BE EXCUSED for that which must nevertheless be admitted to be a very natural matter, namely, that INSTEAD OF INVESTIGATING RELIGION FOR THEMSELVES, THEY USUALLY TRUST TO THE REPRESENTATION OF OTHERS.

The worldly man looks at a Christian to see whether his religion is *joyful*. “By this,” says he, “shall I know whether there is that in religion which will make a man glad. If I see the professor of it with a joyous countenance, then I will believe it to be a good thing.” But listen, sir, have you any right to put it to that test? Is not God to be counted true, even before we have proved Him?

And has He not declared Himself, “Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputes not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile”? Does not the Scripture itself declare that godliness is profitable, not only for this life, but for that which is to come—that it has the blessing of two worlds—the blessing of this world below the sky and of that upper world above the stars?

Would you not know from Scripture if you were to take the Bible and read it, that everywhere the Christian is commanded to rejoice, because it is comely for him? “Rejoice in the LORD ye righteous and shout for joy all ye that are upright in heart.” “Rejoice evermore.” “Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, rejoice.”

Remember you have no right to put the joyfulness of religion to any test short of your own experience, for you are bound to believe God on His naked Word. It is not for you to stand still till you can see it to be true. It is your duty to believe your Maker when He declares that the ways of religion are pleasantness and all her paths are peace.

Again, you say you will test the *holiness* of Christ’s religion by the holiness of Christ’s people. You have no right, I reply, to put the question to any such test as that. The proper test that you ought to use is to try it yourselves—to “taste and see that the LORD is good.” By tasting and seeing you will prove His goodness, and by the same process you must prove the holiness of His Gospel.

Your business is to seek Christ Crucified for yourselves—not to take the representation of another man concerning the power of grace to subdue corruption and to sanctify the heart. Your business is to enter yourselves into its valleys and pluck its grapes—yourselves to climb its hills and see its inhabitants. Inasmuch as God has given you a Bible, He intended you to read it and not to be content with reading *men*.

There is His Holy Spirit. You are not to be content with feelings that rise through the conversation of others. Your only power to know true religion is by having that Spirit operating upon your own heart—that you may yourself know what is the power of religion. You have no right to judge religion from anything extra or external from itself.

And if you despise it before you have tried it yourself, you must stand confessed in this world as a fool, and in the next world as a criminal. And yet this is so with most men. If you hear a man rail at the Bible, you can usually conclude that he never reads it. And you may be quite certain if you hear a man speak against religion, that he never knew what religion was.

True religion, when once it takes possession of the heart, never allows a man to quarrel with it. That man will call Christ his best Friend who knows Christ at all. We have found many who have despised the enjoyments of this world—but we never found one who turned from religion with disgust or with satiety, after having once enjoyed it.

No, remember my hearers, if you take your religion from other people and are led by the example of professors to discard religion, you are nevertheless guilty of your own blood. For God has not left you to

the uncertain chart of men's characters—He has given you His own Word—a more sure Word and testimony, whereunto you do well if you take heed.

It will be in vain for you to say at the day of judgment, “Such and such a man was inconsistent, therefore I despised religion.” Your excuse will then be discovered to be idle, for you shall have to confess, that in other respects, you did not take another man's opinion. In business, in the cares of this life, you were independent enough. In your political opinions you did not pin your faith to any man's coat.

And therefore, it shall be said of you at last, you had enough independence of mind to steer your own course, even against the example of others in business, in politics, and such like things. You certainly had enough of mental vigor, if you had chosen to have done so, to have stood out against the inconsistency of professors and to have searched for yourselves.

If all Christ's church were inconsistent, so long as there is a Bible upon earth, you could have no excuse in the day of judgment. For Christ was not inconsistent, and you are not asked to follow Christ's followers—you are asked to follow Christ Himself. Until you can find a flaw in *His* character, a mistake in *His* conduct, you have no right to fling the inconsistency of His followers in the teeth of Christ, nor to turn from Him because His disciples forsake Him and flee.

To their own master they stand or fall. They must bear their own burden and you must bear yours too. “Every man shall bear his own burden,” says Scripture, “for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, to give an account for the things which we have done in the body, whether they be good, or whether they be evil.”

You will not be accountable for another man's sins, but for your own. And if another man, by his sin has brought reproach upon Christ, still it shall be no excuse for you if you do not follow Him wholly, in the midst of an evil generation.

II. With that, by way of caveat and guard, I shall now bring forth THE BAD SPIES.

I wish that the men mentioned in the text had been the only spies who have brought an evil report—it would have been a great mercy if the plague that killed them, had killed all the rest of the same sort. But alas! the breed, I am afraid, will never be extinct, and as long as the world endures, there will be some professors who bring up an evil report of the land.

But now, let me bring forth the evil spies. Remember, these spies are to be judged, not by what they say, but by *what they do*. For to a worldling, words are nothing—*acts* are everything. The reports that we bring of our religion are not the reports of the pulpit—not the reports that we utter with our lips—but the report of our daily life, speaking in our own houses and the everyday business of life.

Well, first, I produce a man who brings up an evil report of the land, and you will see at once that he does so, for *he is of a dull and heavy spirit*. If he preaches, he takes this text—“Through much tribulation we must inherit the kingdom.” Somehow or other, he never mentions God's people without calling them God's *tried* children.

As for joy in the Lord, he looks upon it with suspicion. “Lord, what a wretched land is this!” is the very height of poetry to him. He could sing that always. He is always in the valley where the mists are hovering. He never climbs the mountain's brow, to stand above the tempests of this life. He was gloomy before he made a profession of religion—since then he has become still more gloomy.

See him at home. Ask the children what they think of their father's religion. They think they could wish their father was anything except religious. “Father will not let us laugh,” they say. “He pulls the blinds down on Sunday. He tries to make us as dark and miserable as he can on the Sabbath day.” He thinks it his duty as a strict Sabbatarian, to make the Sabbath the greatest day of bondage out of the whole seven.

Ask his wife what she thinks of religion. She says, “I do not know much about it myself, but I wish my husband were a little more cheerful.” “Nay, but is it his religion that makes him miserable?” “I do not know what it is,” she says, “but I know when he is most miserable, he is generally most religious.”

Hear him pray—when he is on his knees he gives a long list of his trials and troubles. But he never says at the end, “More are they that are for us than all they that are against us.” He usually dwells upon the valley of Baca and about crying so much that he makes it a well. He never goes on to say, “They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.” No, it is just the black part of the story.

If you want to see this brother in perfection, you must see him when he is talking to a young convert. The young man is full of joy and gladness, for he has found the Savior, and like a young fledgling that has just taken wing, he delights to fly about in the sunshine and chirp merrily in the joy of his faith. “Ah!” says the old Christian, “the black ox has not trodden on your toes yet. You will have more troubles than you dream of.”

Old Mr. Timorous was a friend of mine—did you ever hear what he said to Christian, when he met him on his journey? I will tell you the same. “The lions! The lions! The lions!” he cries. He never says, “The lions are chained.” “The giants! The giants! The giants!” he exclaims. He never says, “He carrieth the lambs in his bosom, and gently leadeth those that are with young.”

He always takes the dreary side of the question, bringing up an ill report of the land. And do you know, some of these people are so proud of their ill report that they form themselves into a little knot. And they cannot hear any preacher except his face be of an extreme length, and except he has studied the dictionary to find all the most lugubrious terms, and except he appear unto men to fast, just like the Pharisees of old.

Now, I do not hesitate to say that these men are evil spies. Far be it from us to mask the great fact that religion does entail tribulation, and that a Christian, like everybody else, must expect in this world to have trouble, for man is born to it as the sparks fly upward. But it is as false as God is true, that religion makes men miserable. As sure as God is good, His religion is good. And as God is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works, religion is an atmosphere in which those tender mercies play, and the sea in which His lovingkindness swims.

Oh, come, you dreary professors, take away those storm clouds and wreath a few rainbows on your brow. Come, now, anoint your head and wash your face, that you appear not unto men to fast. Take those harps from the willows. Down with them, and now try if your unaccustomed fingers cannot make them alive with melody.

And if you will not do it, and cannot do it, permit me to bear my testimony. I can say, concerning Christ’s religion—if I had to die like a dog and had no hope whatever of immortality—if I wanted to lead a happy life, let me serve my God with all my heart. Let me be a follower of Jesus and walk in His footsteps, for never was there a truer word spoken than that of Solomon, “Her ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace.”

It is a land that flows with milk and honey. There are clusters even on earth too heavy for one man to carry. There are fruits that have been found so rich that even angel lips have never been sweetened with more luscious wine. There are joys to be had here so fair that even the nectared wine of paradise can scarce excel the sweets of satisfaction that are to be found in the earthly banquets of the Lord.

Perhaps, however, this poor man that I have just sent off is to be pitied. Not so the next one, for he is a rascal indeed. See him! he comes forward as Mr. Meek-face, making a great profession of religion. How he mouths the hymns! When he stands up to pray, with what a spiritual kind of voice he prays. Nothing carnal about his voice!

He is among the Christian people a great leader. He can preach sermons by the yard. He can dissect doctrines by the hour. There is not a metaphysical point in all our theology that he does not understand,

*“He can a hair divide,
Betwixt the west and north-west side.”*

His understanding is, in his own opinion, infinite. And he makes very boastful pretensions to piety. Everybody says when they see him in his good frames in chapel or elsewhere, “What a dear good man he is!”

You follow him to business. He will not swear, but he will lie. He won’t out-and-out rob, but he will cheat. He will not curse a man to his face, but he will do worse—he will speak ill of him behind his back. You watch him! He, if he could find a drunkard in the street, would upbraid him and talk to him so proudly against the sin of intoxication—but he himself very seldom knows his own way upstairs to bed. Only that is in a quiet way—therefore nobody sees it—and he is thought to be a very reputable member of society.

Don’t you know any such people? I hope you do not. But I have met with them. There is a great stock of them still living—men who make grand professions and their lives are as much opposed to their professions as hell is opposed to heaven. Now, what does the world say of religion when they see these people?

They say at once, “Well, if this be religion, we had better have none of it.” Says the businessman, “I could not do what So and so does. It is true I could not sing out of his hymn book, but I could not keep his cash book.” We have known many men say, “I could not make so long a prayer as So and so, and could not make out my invoices in the dishonest way he does.”

We have met with worldly men who are far more honest as tradesman and professional men than persons who make a profession of religion. And we have known on the other hand, men who have made the greatest profession, indulging in all kinds of evil. Horrible shall be that man’s fate, who thus ruins other men’s souls by bringing up a bad report of the land.

But oh! I beseech you, my hearers, if any of you have seen such professors, let the righteous stand out today, like Joshua and Caleb of old. Let the church stand before you and rend its garments, while it entreats you not to believe the lying and slanderous reports of such men.

For, indeed, religion is holy. As Christ is holy, even so do His people desire to be holy. And the grace of God which brings salvation is pure and peaceful. It produces in men things that are holy and of good report, things that magnify God, and that make human nature appear glorious. But scarcely do I need to tell you that, in your own circle while you have met with hypocrites, you have met with men whom you could not doubt.

Yes, you have sometimes seen even in your evil company, a man who was like an angel. You have felt as Satan did when Abdiel, the faithful among the faithless, stood forth, and would not turn a rebel to his God.

“Abashed the devil stood, and felt how awful goodness was.”

I beseech you, therefore, do not believe the ill report of the hypocrite and the unholy man.

But there is a third class of professors who bring up a bad report of the land. And this I am afraid will affect us all in some measure—we must all plead guilty to it. The Christian, although he endeavors uniformly to walk according to the law of Christ, finds still another law in his members warring against the law of his mind, and consequently, there are times when his witness is not consistent.

Sometimes this witness is, “The Gospel is holy” for he is holy himself. But alas with the very best of men, there are times when our witness contradicts our faith. When you see an angry Christian—and such a thing may be seen—and when you meet with a Christian who is proud, and such a thing has been known—when you catch a Christian overtaken in a fault, as you may sometimes do—then his testimony is not consistent. He contradicts then what he has at other times declared by his acts.

And here, I say again, I fear that all of us must plead guilty. We have sometimes by our actions put in words which seem to conflict with the general testimony of our lives. Oh! brothers and sisters, do not believe all that you see in us, and if sometimes you see a Christian man betrayed into a hasty or a wrong expression—do not set it down to our religion—set it down to our poor fallen humanity.

If sometimes you should catch us overtaken by a fault, and we trust it shall be rarely enough you so see us, abuse *us*, but do not abuse our Master. Say what you will concerning *us*, but do not, we beseech you, impute it to our *religion*—for saints are sinners still and the most holy men have still to pray—“Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us.”

But we do beseech you, when the madness of sin deludes us, do not believe the maunderings of our madness, but have regard to the general testimony of our lives, and that, we trust, you will find to be consistent with the Gospel of Christ. *I* could bear to be abused, but I should not like to have my Master abused. I would rather have it believed that I was not a Christian at all, than allow anyone to say that any faults I have were caused by my religion.

No, Christ is holy. The Gospel is pure and spotless. If at any time we seem to contradict that witness, do not believe us, I beseech you, but look into the matter for yourselves—for indeed it is a good land—a land which flows with milk and honey.

III. Thus, I have brought forth the evil spies who bring up a bad report. And now, thank God, we have some GOOD SPIES, too.

But we will let them speak. Come Joshua and Caleb, we want your testimony. Though you are dead and gone, you have left children behind you. And they, still grieved as you were at the evil report, rend their clothes, but they boldly stand to it that the land they have passed through is an exceeding good land.

One of the best spies I have ever met with is an *aged Christian*. I remember to have heard him stand up and tell what he thought of religion. He was a blind old man, who for twenty years had not seen the light of the sun. His grey locks hung from his brow and floated over his shoulders. He stood up at the table of the Lord and thus addressed us—“Brethren and sisters, I shall soon be taken from you. In a few more months, I shall gather up my feet upon my bed and sleep with my fathers.

“I have not the tongue of the learned nor the mind of the eloquent, but I desire before I go, to bear one public testimony to my God. Fifty-six years have I served Him and I have never found Him once unfaithful. I can say, ‘Surely goodness and mercy have followed us all the days of my life, and not one good thing has failed of all the Lord God has promised.’”

And there stood that old man, tottering into his tomb, deprived of the light of heaven naturally, and yet having the light of heaven in a better sense shining into his soul. And though he could not look upon us, yet did he turn himself, and seemed to say, “Young people, trust God in early life, for I have not to regret that I sought Him too soon. I have only to mourn that so many of my years ran to waste.”

There is nothing that more tends to strengthen the faith of the young believer than to hear the veteran Christian, covered with scars from the battle, testifying that the service of his Master is a happy service, and that if he could have served any other master he would not have done so, for His service was pleasant and His wages everlasting joy.

Take the testimony of the *sufferer*. “Behold that fragile form of delicate transparent beauty, whose light-blue eye and hectic cheek are lit by the bale-fires of decline—all droopingly she lies as a dew-laden lily—her flaxen tresses, rashly luxuriant, dank with unhealthy moisture.” I have seen her when her eyes were sunk, when she could scarcely be lifted out of the bed, when the frame was wearied of life.

And I have seen her quite complacent, as she took her Bible from beneath her pillow and read, “Yea, though I pass through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table for me in the presence of my enemies.”

I have sat down and spoken to her and have said to her, “Well, you have been in this sad place these many months. Do you find religion cheers you now?” “Oh, sir,” she has said, “what could I do without it? I cannot leave this bed, but it has been to me a couch of joy, where Christ has spread a banquet. He has made my bed in all my sickness. He has put His left hand under my head, and His right hand has embraced me. He has given me joy in my sorrows and has prepared me to face death with a calm and unflinching countenance.” Such a case bears witness to the Master. Like that of the grey-headed saint, it is an excellent report of this good land.

But we need not look to sick beds and to grey heads for the only witness. We know a Christian merchant. He is immersed in the cares of this life and yet he always finds time to prepare for a world that is to come. He has as much business as any man in the city and yet family prayer is never neglected. And perhaps you find him serving the office of civic magistrate—as was the case in one instance—and yet even on the day of a banquet, he rises from his chair, in order that family worship may still be kept up in his house.

He is known in business as one who is willing to help little tradesmen. He likes good securities, as other people do. But he will sometimes run a risk to help a rising man. When you go to him, you find him a sharp man of business, he is not to be taken in. But at the same time you will find him a man that will not take you in. You may trust him.

Whatever the transaction may be, you have no need to look over the invoice if he has had anything to do with it. There will be no mistake there—or if there be a mistake, it will be palpably a mistake and immediately confessed with the greatest possible sorrow—for he is upright in his dealings.

There has come sometimes in his case an unhappy crisis, and when houses were tumbling, and bankrupts were as common as leaves upon the trees, he was not disturbed and distracted like other men, for his confidence was in his God and his trust in the God of Jacob. He had some anxiety, but he had more faith.

And when his prosperity returned to him, he dedicated part of his substance unto the Lord. Not in a noisy way, so that it might appear in a report that So and so gave a hundred a year to a Society—but he gave five hundred and nobody knew of it.

Men said of him in the Exchange and in the Market, “If there is a Christian, it is that man.” When they saw him, they said, “There is something in religion. We have watched him. We have never found him trip or turn aside. We have always found him the same upright character, fearing his God and fearing no man.”

Such a man brings up a good report of the land. I may talk here Sunday after Sunday, and every day in the week elsewhere, but I cannot preach in so forcible a way as you can, who by your actions are preaching to the world. Ah! and I cannot preach so well as those who are servants, who by their holy action in the midst of trial and difficulty have an opportunity to show what grace can do in the heart. Those are good spies who bring up a good report of the land.

And my sisters, let me say a word to you. It is possible for you, too, to bring up a good report. Not by neglecting your households in order to attend to visiting societies. Let visiting societies be attended to—God be thanked for them, for they are among the best institutions of our times. But I have known some people who would have been a great deal better employed in scrubbing their dressers and seeing their servants wash up the tea things, than going out visiting the sick from house to house.

For their house has run to riot and their families have been quite out of order, because the wife, like a foolish woman—was plucking everything down at home—while trying to do good abroad. We have known many true sisters of mercy, who are really blessed among women, and God shall bless them abundantly.

We have known others who very seldom go out visiting the sick, but they are at home ordering their household. We have known an ungodly husband converted by a godly wife. I remember to have heard an instance of a man who had a wife of so excellent a disposition, that though he was a worldly man, he used to boast in his gay company that he had got the best wife on earth.

Said he, “You cannot put her into a passion. I go home late at night, in all sorts of trim, but she always receives me meekly, and I feel ashamed of myself every time I see her, for her holiness rebukes me. You may put her to any test you like, you will find her the best of women.” “Well,” they said, “let us all go to supper with you tonight.” They did.

In they rushed. She did not hint there was nothing in the house, though there was very little. But she and her maid set to work with all their might, although it was past twelve o’clock, and very soon had

supper, and she waited on them with all the grace of a duchess, seeming as glad to see them as if they were her friends, and had come at the most opportune time.

And they began to tell how it was they had come and asked her how it was she could bear it so patiently. She said, “God has given me a husband. I was not converted before I was married, but ever since I was converted, my first endeavor has been to bring my husband to know Jesus. And I am sure,” she said, “he will never be brought to do so except by kindness.”

Her husband through these words, after the company had gone, confessed how wrong he had acted to her. His heart was touched—next Sabbath he went to the house of God with her and they became a happy couple, rejoicing in the Lord Jesus Christ with all their hearts.

She was a good spy and brought a good report of the land. I doubt not there are many women whose names will never be heard of on earth who will receive the Master’s commendation at last, “She hath done what she could.” And when you have done what you can for Christ, by holy, patient, quiet meekness, you are good spies. You have brought a good report of the land.

And you servants, you can do the same. A religious servant girl ought to be the best servant anywhere. A religious shoeblick ought to blacken shoes better than anybody else. If there is a religious man who is set to clean knives, he ought to take care that he does not take the edge off.

You know the slaves’ piety in America is such, that a religious slave is worth many dollars more than another, and always sells well. So that the masters like them to get religious, because they are the men that do not rebel, but submit meekly and patiently. And the men, who, finding themselves slaves—much as they may hate their position—yet regard One to be their master who is higher than all, and “not with eye service as men-pleasers, but with singleness of heart,” they endeavor to serve God.

IV. And now, I want to press with all my might upon every professing Christian here THE GREAT NECESSITY OF BRINGING OUT A UNIFORMLY GOOD TESTIMONY CONCERNING RELIGION.

Brethren, I feel persuaded if Christ were here today, there are some of us who love Him so well that we would turn our own cheek to the smiters, rather than He should be smitten. One of Napoleon’s officers loved him so much that when a cannon ball was likely to smite the emperor, he threw himself in the way, in order that he might die as a sacrifice for his master.

Oh Christian, you would do the same, I think. If Christ were here you would run between Him and insult, yea, between Him and death. Well, then, I am sure you would not wantonly expose Christ. But remember, every unguarded word you use, every inconsistent act, puts a slur on Christ. The world, you know, does not find fault with you—they lay it all to your Master.

If you make a slip tomorrow, they will not say, “That is John Smith’s human nature.” They will say, “That is John Smith’s religion.” They know better, but they will be sure to say it. They will be sure they put all the mischief at the door of Christ. Now, if you could bear the blame yourself you might bear it manfully. But do not allow Christ to bear the blame—do not allow His escutcheon to be tarnished—do not permit His banner to be trampled in the dust.

Then there is another consideration. You must remember, if you do wrong, the world will be quite sure to notice you. The world carries two bags—in the bag at the back they put all the Christian’s virtues—in the bag in front they put all our mistakes and sins. They never think of looking at the virtues of holy men. All the courage of martyrs and all the fidelity of confessors and all the holiness of saints is nothing to them.

But our iniquities are ever before them. Please to recollect, that wherever you are as a Christian, the eyes of the world are upon you. The Argus eyes of an evil generation follow you everywhere. If a church is blind, the world is not. It is a common proverb, “As sound asleep as a church,” and a very true one, for most churches are sound asleep.

But it would be a great falsehood if anyone were to say, “As sound asleep as the world,” for the world is never asleep. Sleeping is left to the church. And remember, too, that the world always wears magnifying glasses to look at Christians’ faults. If a man trips who makes no profession, oh! it is

nothing—you never hear of it. Let a minister do it—let a Christian professor do it—and then comes out the magnifying glass. It is nothing in anybody else, but it is a great sin in us.

There are two codes of morality in the world and it is very right there should be. If we make profession to be God's children and to have God's grace in our hearts, it is no more wrong of the world to expect more of us than of others than it is for a gardener to expect his plants to grow more quickly on a hot-bed and under a glass shade than he would out of doors in the cold frost. If we have more privileges, and more culture, and make more profession, we ought to live up to them and the world is quite right in expecting us to do so.

There is another consideration I must offer you before I have done. Recollect, if you do not bring a good testimony for your religion, an evil testimony will defeat a great deal of good. All the saints in a church but one may be faithful to Christ and the world will not honor the church for it. But let one professor in that church turn aside to sin and you will hear of it for many a day.

It is even so in nature. Take the days in the year. The sun rises and shines upon us and we do not note it. All things continue as they were—the stars smile sweetly by night, and the day and night roll on in quiet. But there comes one day, a day of thunder and lightning, a day of earthquake and storm, and it is put on the rolls of our history that such and such a remarkable day occurred at such and such a time. Why not note the good day? But so it is. The world will only note the evil.

You may cross through a country and you will notice a hundred fair rivers, like silver streams threaded with emeralds running through the pastures. Who hears the sound of their waters, as they flow gently to the sea? But there is one precipitous rock and a waterfall dashes there—you may hear that half a mile off. We never hear anything about the St. Lawrence, in all its lengths and breadths—it is only the falls of Niagara that we hear of.

And so the Christian may flow on in a steady course of life, unseen, unheard—but you are sure to hear of him if he makes a fall. Be watchful, therefore—your Master comes. Be watchful—the enemy is at hand even now. O may the Holy Spirit sanctify you wholly that you may abound in every good work to the glory of God!

As for you who fear not God, remember, if Christians do sin, that shall not be an excuse for you. Suppose a man you are dealing with says to you, "I cheated you, but I did not make any profession of being honest." You would tell him he was a confirmed rogue. Or if a man were taken before a magistrate and were to say, "You need not put me in a prison, I never made a profession of being anything but a thief. I never said I would not break into people's chambers and get at their plate baskets!" The magistrate would say, "You speak honestly, but you are by your own confession a great rogue, and I will transport you for life and you shall never have a ticket of leave."

It will be of no use for you at the last day to say that you never made a profession of wanting to go to heaven or to escape hell, of leaving sin and trusting in Christ. If you never made a profession of serving God, you may rest assured He will have short work with you. "You have made no profession. O there is no judgment required. Depart! You did make no profession of loving Me and now you shall have no possession of My glory. Depart, accursed, into everlasting fire."

May the Lord deliver us from that, for Jesus' sake.

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.