

SINCERITY AND DUPLICITY

NO. 922

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

*“Hereby we do know that we know him, If we keep his commandments.
He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.
I John 2:3-4*

THE epistles of John possess and combine certain qualities which seem at the first blush to stand opposite as the poles to one another. Their style of expression is simple, chaste, and unadorned. Short words are used, for the most part words of one syllable. Such little homely words as a young child might easily spell. And the sense is so clear and obvious, that the captious critic or the astute reasoner must be puzzled to distort it.

Yet there is no lack of dignity in the language, and as for the matter of these epistles, it is grand and sublime. Where would you turn in the pages of the New Testament, save only to the book of the Revelation, given by the pen of the same writer, for more notable mystery? The language charms our ears, while the truth it expresses holds us in awe. There are deep meanings and veiled mysteries here, albeit the hidden wisdom which baffles finite thought, is not couched in strange terms, but declared in such plain speech as trips lightly off the tongue, and yet sinks deeply into the heart.

Again, the spirit of John is love, all love. Every line he writes is perfumed with charity. And yet to what close self-examination, to what a severe testing does he put us! How truly may it be said that these epistles are a touchstone by which we may discern between the true gold and the counterfeit! Generous but discriminating, glowing with affection but rigid in fidelity, the apostle mingles caution with caress, and qualifies the most soothing consolations with such stern warnings, that in well-nigh every sentence he constrains us to deep searching of heart.

The text is a case in point. With a wise discrimination he draws a contrast between him who knows that he knows Christ, and him who says that he knows Christ. The one he acknowledges, but the other he brands with that hard word, that ignominious title, “*a liar,*” and sends him to the right-about as unworthy of further consideration.

Not only in this case, but all through his epistles, John continues to unravel the tangled web of hypocrisy. Ah, that deceit should steal such gentle shapes and seem like truth! To show the diverging point between facts and sayings, between realities and professions, between those who have and those who only say that they have, was his constant aim.

It may interest you just to open your Bibles and turn to one or two of the passages that illustrate this. In his first chapter, at the sixth verse, he has been speaking of those who walk in the light and have fellowship with God, and he adds, “If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.”

Then in the text he speaks of those who know Christ, and he adds, “He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” And further on, in the ninth verse, speaking of those who have the light, he says, “He that saith he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness even until now.”

Not to multiply the instances, there is a notable one in the fourth chapter, at the twentieth verse, “If a man says I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?” So to *have* a thing, or to boast that you have it, to

be, or to pretend, to be such and such a character, are as opposite as white and black, as light and darkness.

Indeed, we scarcely need revelation to tell us this, for it is so in things secular, and it must be certainly applicable to religion. We meet in common life with persons who say that they are rich, but this does not make them so. They apply for credit, and say that they are wealthy, when they are worth nothing. Companies will ask for your money with which they may speculate, and they say that they are sound, but they are oftentimes found to be rotten. Though some of them make a very fair show in the prospectus, the result appears very foul in the winding-up of the association.

Persons have been known to say that they were of distinguished rank, but when they have had to prove their title before the House of Lords, oftentimes has it been discovered that they have made a mistake. Lunatics in Bethlehem Hospital, near here, have been found by scores to say that they were kings or queens.

In the old houses, where madmen were confined, it often happened that some poor creature twisted a crown of straw, put it on his head, and said that he was a monarch. But that did not make him so. No armies arose at his bidding, no fleets crossed the ocean to do his will, no tribute was brought to his feet. He remained a poor pauper madman still, though he said that he was a king.

Many a time you have found the difference, in your commercial transactions between blank saying and positive truth. A man has said that he would meet that bill, or that he would discharge that debt. He has said that the rent should be paid when it was due. He has said a thousand things—and you have found out that it was easy enough for him to say, but it was not quite as easy for you to obtain the doing of it.

And when the engagement has been turned to writing, registered, and made as fast as black and white can make it, you have not found it thoroughly reliable, for to say by subscribing a contract or covenant does not always make it certain that a man will fulfill it. To say is not necessarily a pledge of good faith, or a warrant against perfidy.

Rest assured then, that if in these temporal matters to say is not the same thing as to be or to do, neither is it so in spiritual things. A minister may say that he is sent of God, and yet be a wolf in sheep's clothing. A man may say that he unites himself to the church of God, but he may be no better than a hypocrite and an alien, who has no part in her fellowship. We may say that we pray, and yet never a prayer may come from our hearts. We may say to our fellow men that we are Christians, and yet we may never have been born again—never have obtained the precious faith of God's elect—never have been washed in the blood of Jesus Christ.

And sirs, as you would not be satisfied with merely saying that you are rich, as you want the title-deeds of the broad acres, as you want to hear the coins chink in your box, as you want the real thing, and not the mere saying of it—so, I pray you, be not put off with the mere profession of religion. Be not content with a bare assertion, or think that is enough. But seek to have your own profession verified by the witness of heaven, as well as by that of your own conscience.

It is not written, "He that *says* he believes shall be saved," but "he that *believeth* and is baptized shall be saved." It is not said that he who *says* he has confessed shall be forgiven, but "He that confesseth and forsakes his sins shall find mercy." Your mere sayers, though they say, "Lord, open to us," and aver that Christ did eat in their streets, shall have for an answer, "I never knew you; depart from me, ye workers of iniquity."

Let us not be gulled and deceived. Let us not be duped and taken in by any notion that saying so makes it so. Take heed, lest with a flattering tongue you do impose on your own soul. Standing in view of that eye which penetrates the inmost heart, may we learn to distinguish between the mere profession and the full possession of real grace and vital godliness.

The matter in hand tonight, in which this distinction is to be made, is *the knowing of Christ*. Let us speak first about *what it is to know Him*, then *about knowing that we know Him*. And after that, solemnly expostulate *with those who merely say that they know Him*.

I. The matter to be considered and judged tonight by each man for himself is THE KNOWING OF CHRIST.

What, then, is it to know Christ? Of course we have never seen Him. Many years ago He left this world and ascended to His Father. Still we can know Him. It is possible. There have been thousands, and even millions, who have had a personal acquaintance with Him whom, though they have not seen, they loved, and in whom they have rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

To “know” is a word used in Scripture in several senses. Sometimes it means *to acknowledge*, as when we read of a certain Pharaoh, that “he knew not Joseph.” That is, he did not acknowledge any obligation of the state or kingdom to Joseph. He remembered not what had been done by that great man. So too Christ says that His sheep “know” His voice. They acknowledge His voice as being the voice of their Shepherd, and cheerfully follow where their Shepherd leads.

Now, it is a matter of the first necessity to acknowledge Christ, that He is God, that He is the Son of the Father, that He is the Savior of His people, and the rightful Monarch of the world—to acknowledge more, that you accept Him as your Savior, as your King, as your Prophet, as your Priest.

This is, in a certain sense, to know Christ. That is, to own and confess in your heart that He is God, in the glory of God the Father, that He is your Redeemer, that His blood has washed you, and His righteousness covers you, that He is your salvation, your only hope and your fondest desire.

The word “know” means, in the next place, *to believe*. As in that passage, “By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many,” where it is evidently meant that by the knowledge of Him, that is to say, by faith in Christ Jesus, He would justify many.

To “know” and to “believe” are sometimes used in Scripture as convertible terms. Now in this sense we must know Christ, we must believe Him, we must trust Him, we must accept the reports of the prophets and apostles respecting Him, and we must subscribe to them practically, with all our heart, and soul, and strength, and lean the whole burden of our everlasting destiny upon His finished work. To know Him, then, is to acknowledge Him, and to believe in Him.

This is not all. The word to “know” often means *experience*. It is said of our Lord that “He knew no sin.” That is to say, He never experienced sin. He never became a sinner. To know Christ, then, we must feel and prove His power, His pardoning power, His power of love over the heart, His reigning power in subduing our passions, His comforting power, His enlightening power, His elevating power, and all those other blessed influences which through the Holy Spirit proceed from Christ. This is to experience Him.

And once more, to “know” in Scripture often means to *commune*. Eliphaz says, “Acquaint thyself with God, be at peace with Him.” That is to say, commune with Him, get into friendship and fellowship with Him. So it is necessary that every believer should know Christ by having an acquaintance with Him, by speaking with Him in prayer and praise, by laying bare one’s heart to His heart, receiving from Him the divine secret, and imparting to Him the full confession of all our sins and griefs.

In a word, dear brethren, to know Christ is very much the same as to know any other person. When you know a man, if he be your intimate friend, you trust him, you love him, you esteem him, you are on speaking terms with him. You not only bow to him in the street, but you go to his house, you sit down with him at his table. At other times you hold counsel with him, or you ask his assistance, and he comes to your house and you hold familiar association, the one with the other.

Such the good understanding there is between you and the man of whom it may be truly said that you know him. On such terms must the soul be with Christ. He must not be merely an historic personage of whom we read in the page of Scripture, but a real person, with whom we can speak in spirit, commune in heart, and be united in the bonds of love. We must know Him, His very person, so as to love and to trust Him as a real Lord to us. Judge, then, each one yourselves, whether you really and indeed in this sense “know” Christ.

Do distinguish, however, between knowing about Christ and knowing Christ. We may know very much about many of our great men, though we do not know them. Now it will never save a soul to know

about Christ. The only saving knowledge is to know Him, His very self, and to trust Him, the living Savior, who is now at the right hand of God. To Him it is we speak. With Him in very deed we commune.

Nor does it say that if we are able to speak about Him, therefore we are saved. Lest the music of your own tongue beguile you, remember how easy some people find it to talk fluently, eloquently, properly, and persuasively of persons they never knew. They had read them, they had stored it up in their memories, and they told it out again. They may vindicate the reputation of some hero or statesman in company where it is traduced, though they never knew any more of him than the fame that has reached their ears.

You may be as fluent as Whitefield, yea, you may be eloquent and mighty in the Scriptures as was Apollos. But if you do not know Christ by your own individual, personal acquaintance with His person, with His righteousness, and with His blood, you will not be saved by all your fine speeches. Rather are you in imminent peril, that out of your own mouth you will be condemned.

Such knowledge as we now refer to is inestimably precious. Get knowledge, classical or mathematical, apply yourself to literature, or study the sciences, enjoy the vast hoard of knowledge bequeathed to us by antiquity, or endeavor to augment that hoard and transmit it to future ages—but after all, there is no knowledge that can ever match that of the Christ once crucified, now risen and exalted, and expected soon to return in glory.

Such knowledge as this is incomparable. It dives deep into the mine of God's eternal purpose. It soars high into the heaven of God's everlasting love. It enlarges the soul by filling it with the inexhaustible fullness of Christ. Christ the wisdom of God, whom THE LORD possessed in the beginning of His way before His works of old.

O sirs, he that gets such knowledge need not seek for degrees at the universities. He who has Christ has the highest imaginable degree. And blessed forever be the name of my God, such knowledge can never be lost. If you know Christ, you have that written on the tablet of your heart which Satan shall never erase, which time shall never dim, which the iron hand of death shall never be able to blot out. There shall it stand forever. You know Him, and you are known of Him, "and they shall be mine, saith the LORD, in the day when I make up my jewels." "The Lord knoweth them that are his."

They that know Him He knows, and He will confess them to be His own in the day when He comes in the glory of His Father, and all His holy angels with Him.

I speak but simply, though I feel intensely the importance of this subject. A great solemnity surrounds it. Life and death, heaven and hell are here clearly legible, for if you know Christ, 'tis well with you, but if you know Him not, you are ignorant of the one thing which can save your soul.

II. Having laid down the matter that is propounded, we shall advance to speak of THE TWO CHARACTERS THAT ARE PORTRAYED IN THE TEXT.

With respect to the one—*those who know that they know Him*. We are told how they know that they know Him—"We know that we do know him, if we keep his commandments."

Some Christians who do know Christ are in great doubt as to whether they know Him. This ought not to be. It is too solemn a matter to be left to chance or conjecture. I believe there are saved ones who do not know of a surety that they are saved. They are raising the question often that never ought to be a question. No man ought to be content to leave that unsettled, for mark you, my hearer, if you are not a saved man, you are a condemned man.

If you are not forgiven, your sins lie on you. You are now in danger of hell if you are not now secure of heaven, for there is no place between these two. You are either a child of God, or not. Why say ye, "I hope I am a child of God, yet I do not know. I hope, yet not know that I am forgiven"? In such suspense you ought not to be. You are either one or the other—either a saint or a sinner, either saved or lost, either walking in the light or walking in the dark.

Oh, it is very urgent that we should know that we know Him! Though as I have already said, to know Him is the paramount matter, next to that there is nothing so important as to know that we know

Him. Do you ask what service it would render you? *It would give you such comfort as nothing else could.* To know that you know Christ is a perennial joy, and an unfailing consolation under the heaviest trial.

This is a candle that will shine in the darkest night, and give you all the light that you shall want between here and heaven. If I know that I know Christ, then all things are mine. Things present, and things to come, are alike in the covenant of grace. I am rich to all the intents of bliss, and the knowledge thereof is comfort indeed!

You who are living on “perhapses” and “maybe’s,” you are living on dust and ashes. A piece of bread that is full of grit and dirt will break your teeth if you try to eat it, but oh! if you can but get to know, to be persuaded, to be assured, to be confident, then shall you eat bread that is better than that which angels eat, and like Jonathan, when he touched the honey with his rod, and put it to his lips, you shall find your eyes enlightened.

Nor is it joy alone you would find from this knowledge, it would no less certainly bring you *confidence*. When a man knows that he knows Christ, what confidence he has in meeting temptations! “Shall such a man as I flee?” What confidence in prayer! He asks believingly, as children beloved ask of a generous parent.

And what a confident air this assurance before God would give us with the sons of men! We should not stammer in the presence of their philosophers, or look abashed in the presence of their nobles, but knowing that we knew Him, whom to know is life eternal, we should not mind though they called us ignorant, or frowned at us as ignoble and presumptuous. We should not blush to confess our faith with an elevated self-possession. Our courage would no more fail us in the pestilential swamps of the world, than our enthusiasm would subside in the fertile garden of the church, knowing that we shall not be ashamed nor confounded, world without end.

And this certainty that you know Christ would kindle in you *the very highest degree of love*. Knowing that I am saved, knowing that I am His, and He is mine, I cannot but feel the flames of affection towards Him glowing like coals of juniper. That love leads me to obedience, and that obedience develops in me fervor and zeal.

Knowing that you know Him, you will be ready to cry out with a holy passion, “What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits towards me?” You will sing with ecstasy of His free grace that made you know Him, and of His sovereign, distinguishing love that embraced you.

*“Oh! for a thousand tongues to sing
My dear Redeemer’s praise!”*

You cannot tell, dear Christians, you who are exercised with faint misgivings or with tormenting fears, what a great and infinite blessing this assurance would be to you, how it would make life seem young, and like a thing divine!

To you who are converted, it would be like a second conversion. You are now bedridden with sick thoughts, could you once know that you know Christ, you would leave that sick bed and pant no more to return to it, but enjoy the air, walk abroad, and fulfill joyfully your allotted tasks. I pray that the Master may say to many of you who are bowed with a spirit of infirmity, “Be made straight.” And to others who have long lain on this bed of doubts and fears, “Take up thy bed, and walk.”

Do you desire this sweet balm for an uneasy conscience? Observe the prescription, “Hereby we know that we do know him if we keep his commandments.” It is in the keeping of His commandments that this sound state of the soul’s health is enjoyed. Do you ask for further explanation? It means *to keep His commandments in our minds, and hold them fast in our memory with devout reverence*. It should be the object of every Christian to find out what Christ’s command is, and this done, never to ask another question, but receive it with meekness, meditate upon its holy sanction, and venerate it as the law of the Lord’s house.

If Christ has said it I dare not cavil, argue, or question, much less rebel. It is mine to keep His commandments in my heart as a sacred trust, as precious treasures more to be desired than gold, and with a yet increasing relish, as luxuries to the taste, sweeter than honey or the honeycomb. But to keep them in our hearts, we must earnestly desire to *fulfill* them. By reason of the fall we cannot perfectly keep the commands of Christ, but the heart keeps them as the standard of purity, and it would be perfect if it could.

The Christian's only desire is to be exactly like Christ. It pains him that he falls short of His image. It gives him great joy if he can feel that the Holy Spirit is working in him anything like conformity to the divine will. His heart is right towards God, sincerely so. Not that this is enough unless there is a constant, persevering aim *to fulfill His commandments in our lives*. Depend upon it, brethren, that the want of practical obedience to Christ is the root of nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand of our doubts and fears.

The roots of our fears are in our sins. Search there and you shall find the cause of soul trouble. I believe many a child of God walks in darkness because he does not obey the Word of the Lord. Take that sentence for your motto which the mother of Jesus addressed to the servants at the marriage in Cana of Galilee—"Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it."

Is it so that you often hear the precept with never a thought of heeding it? Then beware *lest you suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.* Or does your conscience smart with sore rebuke as oft as it is mentioned? *Then fares it is with you as with one who gets a wound in battle, and the sword that made it plunges through the wound again and pricks it deeper.*

Good cause is there, my friend, for your unrest, if so be, you have an open wound left to fester. Christ commands you, for instance, to be baptized, and do you resist His Will? Do you seek some frivolous pretext, saying, "I pray thee have me excused"? "He that knoweth his Master's will and doeth it not, the same shall be beaten with many stripes." Many a stripe has fallen upon a professed believer because he has not been obedient to that injunction.

The command that we should love each other is far too lightly esteemed by many. Now, if you do not love your fellow Christians with a pure heart fervently, can you wonder that you fall into doubts? It is natural that it should be so. Only in proportion as grace makes you obedient will grace make you an assured Christian. Your holiness and your confidence will keep pace together if your confidence is worth having.

Presumption outruns holiness, but confidence never does. It is little matter of surprise to me when some men doubt whether they are saved. There are grave reasons why they should, since their lives are so little saturated with the Spirit of their Master. Well may you and I bemoan ourselves before God in the silent watches of the night, because having experienced so much mercy we do so little in His service, and having seen so much of His character we are so little like our Lord.

Depend upon it, if you want to kill your doubts and fears, you must kill your sins by God's grace. By exterminating disobedience, we shall also exterminate the mass of our despondency, if not the whole of it.

Although, my dear brethren, I never said, nor thought that you must be perfect before you could be assured that you were a Christian, I tell you that you will never be altogether beyond doubts and fears till you are altogether beyond sin. And that will not be, I think, till you reach the other shore.

A dear friend in Christ wanted to controvert this question with me some time ago, whether perfection was possible in this world. I told him I would rather not, but if he and I both tried to attain it, it would be the best way to settle the controversy. I only trust that my friend may reach it. I am half afraid I never shall, but I will leave no stone unturned to try.

Who knows how far God may enable any single, watchful, prayerful soul to go? At any rate, take it as a rule that as God gives you holiness so God will give you assurance, and in proportion as you mar the fidelity of your obedience, in that proportion you will mar your evidences and weaken your knowledge that you know Him.

Let me just give you an illustration of this point before I leave it. When our Lord met the disciples at Emmaus, and talked with them, they did not know Him while He talked with them. But when think you did they know that they knew Him? Why, not until they performed an act of obedience by offering hospitality to a stranger. Then He was known to them in the breaking of bread. Yes, there is a blessed eye-clearing to many and many a child of God when he comes to give of his bread to the poor and needy, and when he comes to the table of the Lord, in remembrance of His death. He shall then know that he knows Him.

We are told that the cherubim have wings, but they also have hands under their wings. True children of God have knowledge, but they have under their knowledge practice. And you have no good proof that you are a child of God because you have the wings of knowledge, unless you have also the hands of practice.

Would one ascertain how much a sheep had eaten? It could be seen in no better way than by showing how much fat, and flesh, and wool it had gathered. So with a Christian. If you want to know how much he has lived on Christ, see how much of zeal, how much of obedience, how much of holiness he has gathered, for “hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep His commandments.”

III. We now come to the last consideration. It hurls a momentous charge against dissemblers. There is such a thing as SAYING THAT WE KNOW CHRIST, but if any man say that he knows Christ, and keeps not His commandments, such a man is a liar—plain speech this—he is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

I would have you, my dear friends, give earnest heed to these words, because while it is an *easy thing to say that you know Him*, there are many temptations so to do in a church like this. When many are impressed, and a great number of your friends and acquaintances profess that they know Christ, you may easily fall into the current, indeed, it may be hard to resist the tide, and perhaps without really knowing Him in your souls you may be led, for the sake of companionship, to say that you know Him.

Oh! I beseech you, never do this. If you know that you know Him, confess that knowledge at once, but never allow yourself to be induced to say aught beyond what you know. To let the tongue outrun the witness of the conscience is to betray guile in the heart. And the man whose sin is forgiven is one in whose spirit there is no guile.

No, no. As you love your souls, keep your hands off all profession unless you have true possession. A man may tell a story so often, that though it is not true, he may at last come to believe it. I can think of one or two notable stories of good old friends that one always listens to without raising a question, though never without suspecting that they have gradually accumulated by attritions of exaggeration.

We may smile at the fiction whose tangled threads were woven thus to please the ear and tickle the fancy, but we tremble at the slow, almost imperceptible growth of a dire falsehood which beguiles a man’s own soul. He may first of all say he hopes that he loves Christ. Then he may say, “Others think I do, and therefore I feel assured I do.” Anon he may say this and that, with an air that satisfies his friends and gratifies himself, until he makes his poor deluded heart believe a lie.

Ay, and I wot he may go on the dupe of his own credulity to his grave, and perhaps even at the judgment seat of Christ he may say that he knows Christ, only then to awaken from his treacherous dream, when he shall hear Christ say—“I never knew you; depart from me, thou worker of iniquity.”

O God, save us from this! Let us never say we know Him, unless in very deed and truth we know Christ and are found in Him.

Now, John says that to say we know Christ, and not to keep His commandments is a lie. It is a *verbal lie*. The man who utters it speaks a lie. He says, “I know Christ,” but it is a falsehood. He does not know Him. He knows about Him—but his heart knows nothing of Jesus.

It is a *doctrinal lie*, for it would be an awful heresy to say that a man who lived in sin knew Christ—that one who was a drunkard, or a thief, or unchaste had acquaintance with the Savior. Does Christ keep such company? Does He call these His friends? The men who set the taproom on a roar? Your merry-makers, who can sing lascivious songs, are these Christ’s friends? I know Christ keeps better company

than this. He is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. It is a lie against the doctrines of the Gospel.

And it is a *practical lie*. The man who says, "I know him," and then goes and breaks the commands of Christ, every time he sins tells a lie. People can tell lies when they hold their tongues, as I pointed out to the little children when addressing them last Sunday afternoon.

There was a little girl at school who always held her hand up when the boys and girls were asked to show in this manner that they knew the answer to any question that had been put to them. One afternoon she held her hand up when she did not know the answer, and a little school fellow said to her, "Jane, you did not know that." And she said, "No, but I thought teacher would think better of me if she thought I knew it." "Ah," said the other, "but that is telling a lie with your hand."

Yes, and you may equally act a lie. A man who professes to be a Christian when he is not, hangs out false colors on Sunday, and all through the week he plays the liar's part. Were his profession true, surely his conduct would be consistent with it!

It is a *corrosive lie*, a lie that eats into the man's soul, corrupts and cankers it, so that, as John says, "The truth is not in him." The man who begins by lying about his relation to God soon becomes inured to lying in the community of his fellow men. Some of the greatest rogueries and robberies ever committed have been perpetrated by professing Christian men. How often when we have heard of a gigantic fraud has there been some canting hypocrite or other connected with it! This is very natural, it is scarcely surprising, for when the man had come to deceive himself, to dissemble in things sacred, and to lie to God, he was such a practiced hand that the devil could not find a fitter vassal to lie to men.

O take care of trifling with your convictions! You may flatter yourself with the vain conceit that you will never cheat anybody. I am not so sure. If a man would rob God, he would rob his mother. If he once gives the lie to God by making a false profession, I know not where he may stay his hand.

Who, who would have sold Christ for twenty pieces of silver? who, but Judas, he who professed to be His follower, His disciple, His private secretary, and His treasurer, though all the while his heart was false to his Lord! It is a traitorous profession that breeds gigantic sins.

Once again, it is a damning lie. The man that says, "I know Christ," and does not keep His commandments, is making his own damnation sure. He signs, seals, and stamps it every day. By his profession of being a follower of Christ he confesses that he knows what he ought to be, yet by his actions he proves that he is not what he ought to be, and so he is bearing witness against himself, judging himself, condemning his own soul, and challenging the dread sentence of everlasting perdition. God save us from such a lie as this.

Before I conclude now, it behooves me to point out some of those characters *upon which the brand must be fixed—they are liars*. If there are any such here, may their consciences be pricked. There have been persons who have professed their faith in Christ, but who have been in the habit of acting dishonestly. They have been negotiating fictitious bills, they have been purloining small articles out of shops, they have taken little sums of money out of tills, they have been dealing with short weights, and selling wares with wrong marks, and all this time they have said that they knew Christ.

Now, one of His commandments is, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," and another one is, "Thou shalt not steal," and in not keeping these they have proved themselves to be liars, though they called themselves Christians.

Some who have professed faith in Christ have been drunkards. Present here tonight—I do not say they are now members of the church, but they have been—are those who have fallen into habits of intemperance. I am afraid there are some who, though they escape the odium of detection, as they have not to go home at night from the public house, manage to drink pretty hard at home.

Depend upon it, you who secretly indulge this vicious propensity are not less guilty, and shall not be more lightly judged by God than those who sin openly, who are locked up for being drunk on the Saturday night, and have to pay five shillings and costs on the Monday morning. You may be

respectable in the eyes of your fellow men, but you are disreputable and scandalous hypocrites in the sight of heaven.

Some, too, there be of good standing in society, young men who have made a profession of faith, who can take pleasure in haunts that are something more than dubious. It is a shameful thing for a professor of Christianity to be found in those music halls, saloons, and places of revelry in London where you cannot go without your morals being polluted. For you can neither open your eyes nor your ears without knowing at once that you are in the purlieu of Satan.

I charge you by the living God, if you cannot keep good company, and avoid the circle of dissipation, do not profess to be followers of Christ, for He bids you come out from among them. Be ye separate, touch not the unclean thing. If you can find pleasure in lewd society and lascivious songs, what right have you to mingle with the fellowship of saints, or to join in the singing of psalms? You do not keep the commandments, you violate them. The truth is not in you, you betray it.

And what shall we say of those who, while making a profession of religion, have been addicted to uncleanness? Sins that ought not to be spoken of among us lest the cheek of modesty should be made to crimson, have been committed in secret by such as would be accounted Christian men. God have mercy upon unchaste professors, for whoredom is a deep ditch, and the abhorred of the Lord do fall into it.

If any here have so fallen, may they lay aside their profession, for they bear the marks of God's abhorrence. Let them not come into His holy place, let them not gather at His table, neither let them henceforth count themselves His children. Such they cannot be, their profession is a lie.

The covetous! The greedy! The grasping! Those who see their brethren have needs, and shut up the bowels of their compassion! To each of you the Master's words are very strong, "How dwelleth the love of God in him?" Covetousness is idolatry! If you are eaten up of the world, if money is your God, you are as surely condemned as if you had been dishonest or unchaste.

And are there not others, whose tongue is perverse and unruly, and their conversation often far from pure? Alas! when it comes to this! That men should presume to the supper of the Lord who can hurl out an oath. That men who have been known when excited to blaspheme and use profane language, should yet with the same mouth draw near to feed upon the emblems of the Savior's passion!

O sirs, if you had a conscience, surely you would not dare to come! If your hearts had any feeling left in them, you would tremble to be found amongst the people of God, whilst your speech blasphemeth the Most High.

Is there one virtue of superlative excellence, peculiarly Christian, supported by the frequent precept and the unparalleled example of our Lord Jesus—surely it is that of forgiving injuries. Yet I have known some of His disciples, as they would have us believe, who have been unforgiving. Christians they called themselves, yet they could not forgive a trespass, were it even of their own children! A resentful, malicious Christian—what an anomaly!

Did you not lately hear of a man, great and high in station—was he not a bishop?—who cut his daughter off with a shilling, or rather without a shilling, because she had married against his will? Ah, these things are not fit to be whispered about, nor is it possible for them to be kept in secret. I tell you, if you love not your brethren, if you love not your own child, if you cannot forgive your child, there is nothing more certain in the Book of God than this, that you will never enter heaven.

An unforgiving spirit is an unforgiven spirit. First, go and forgive your brother before you bring your sacrifice, or God will neither accept you nor your offering. Are we not taught to pray, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them who trespass against us"?

It has been hard work for me thus to mention these inconsistencies. I cannot venture farther, though I might have stated more. The labor of my lips is a burden to my heart. If any man's conscience smite him—well, let it smite him hard, let it smite him till it drives him from his sin, let it smite him till he falls at the feet of Jesus, a contrite suppliant for pardon.

O be thorough, be thorough! If you wish to be washed from sin, eschew the sin, the penalties of which you dread. If you profess to know Christ, have nought to do with a sinful world. Shake off the

viper into the fire, for it will poison you and destroy you. God grant that you may renounce sin, if you profess in very deed to be the servants of Christ.

My last word is this. If any man now feels himself troubled on account of sin, let me read these words to him, and I have done. Hear them in faith. They are the words that come before the text. “And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”

O come, ye guilty ones, ye guilty professors, you who have been false to your Lord and to His love, come to Him notwithstanding all your bitter provocations. “And he is the mercy seat—the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.”

Look ye, then, look and live, whether saints or sinners, whatever your past lives may have been, look to the propitiatory sacrifice offered on Calvary’s bloody tree, look and live. The Lord grant it for His dear Son’s sake. Amen.

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