

## **The Sieve**

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DELIVERED BY

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"Not everyone that says unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven; but he that does the will of My Father which is in Heaven." [Matthew 7:21](#).

IN reading this chapter one is led to feel that it is not, after all, an easy thing to be a sincere Christian. The way is hard, the road is narrow. Who will, may represent the way to Heaven as being easy, but our Savior does not speak so of it. "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way, and few there are that find it." "Many are called and few chosen." The difficulty of being right is increased by the fact that there are men in the world whose trade it is to make counterfeits. There were, and there are, many false prophets. Our Savior has spoken about them in this chapter and given us a way of testing them—but they are still carrying on their trade as successfully as ever.

Now, since there are traitors abroad whose business it is to deceive, we ought to be doubly vigilant and constantly upon our watchtower lest we be misled by them. I charge you, examine every statement you hear from Christian pulpits and platforms! I charge you, sift and try every religious book by the great standard of the Word of God. Believe none of us if we speak contrary to this Word—yes, believe not an angel from Heaven if he preaches any other Gospel than that which is contained in Inspired Scripture.

"To the Law and to the Testimony," if they speak not according to this Word it is because there is no truth in them. God grant us Grace to escape from false prophets! We shall not do so if we are careless and off our guard, for the sheepskin garment so effectually covers the wolf—the broad phylactery so decorates the hypocrite—that thousands are deceived by the outward appearance and do not discover the cheat! Crafty are the wiles of the enemy and many foolish ones are still ignorant of his devices. Tutored by the experience of ages, seducers and evil men not only wax worse and worse, but they grow more and more cunning. If it were possible, they would deceive even the very elect! Happy shall they be who, being elect, are kept by the mighty power of God unto salvation so that they are not carried away with any error.

In addition to the fact that there are false teachers, it is certain that there are false professors. There never was a time in the Church of God in which all were Christians who professed to be so. Surely the golden age of the Church must have been when the Master Himself was in it and had selected 12 choice spirits to be nearest to His Person and to act, as it were, as the prime ministers of His kingdom. Yet there was a devil among the 12—a devil in the Church of which Jesus was Pastor! Judas, the treasurer of the Apostles, was also

a son of Perdition. When Paul and the Apostles kept watch over the elect Church, surely that must have been a happy time—and when persecution raged all around and acted like a great winnowing fan to drive away the chaff—one would have expected to find that the threshing floor contained only clean grain!

But it was not so. The heap upon the threshing floor of the Church was, even then, a mingled mass of corn and chaff. Some turned aside from love of the world and others were deluded into grievous error. And there were others who remained in the Church to discredit it by their impurity and to bring chastisements upon it by their sin. We shall never see a perfect Church till we see the Lord face to face in Heaven. Above yon clouds is the place for perfection! But here, alas, nothing is undefiled. Even in the purest Churches we find deceivers and deceived. Among you over whom it is my calling to preside, I know that there are false professors—lovers of the world rather than lovers of God—and though I cannot remove you any more than the servants of the householder could uproot the tares from the wheat, yet I sigh over you and you are my daily cross and burden. Oh, that God would convert you and make you true to your professions, or else remove you from the Church which you so greatly grieve and weaken!

But now, if in the Church of God there are those who are deceivers and deceived, the question comes to each one of us, "May we not, also, be mistaken? Is it not possible that we, though making a profession of religion, may, after all, be insincere or deluded in that profession and fail to be what we think we are?" Therefore let us put ourselves, at this time,

into the attitude of self-examination—and whatever is spoken, let it come home to us personally. May we try ourselves whether we are right or not, not flinching from any pointed Truth of God but anxiously desiring to be tried and tested before the Lord Himself.

I would bring the text before you by noticing, first, that it contains a very commendable expression, "Lord, Lord." But, secondly, it was used by gross hypocrites. And then, thirdly, we shall show wherein these hypocrites failed—what it was that they lacked which rendered it impossible that they should enter into the kingdom.

I. First, then, the text contains A VERY COMMENDABLE SPEECH. We may be sure the speech was a good one, or the hypocrites would not have used it as a cloak for their hypocrisy. Men do not use dubious expressions when they want to appear exceedingly devout. They take care, however bad their deeds may be, to make their words, at any rate, sound well. Therefore the persons spoken of in the text said to Jesus, "Lord, Lord." It is a fitting mode of speech for each one of us to use.

And first, dear Friends, we ought to say to Jesus, "Lord, Lord," in reference to His Divinity. How can we be saved if we do not? Jesus Christ of Nazareth is to us Lord and God! We do not hesitate to use the language of Thomas when he put his finger into the print of the nails and said to Him, "My Lord and my God." Let others say of Him what they will. Let them make Him to be a mere man, or a Prophet, or a delegated God—such talk is nothing

to the point with us! We believe Him to be very God of very God and we worship Him this day as He is enthroned in the highest heavens, believing Him to be worthy of the adoration which is due to God, alone!

I do not wonder that those who believe our Lord Jesus Christ to be a mere man say severe things of us. Nor must they wonder if we deliver very strong utterances with regard to them! If we are wrong, we are idolaters, for we worship a person who is only a man. If we are right, much of their teaching is blasphemous, for they deny the Deity of the Christ of God! There is a great gulf between us and it is only common honesty to admit it. To conceal the fact in order to be thought liberal would be a mean artifice—unworthy of an honest man. The question in debate is a vital one and there can be no halting place between one view or the other.

Compromise must always be impossible where the Truth of God is essential and fundamental. There are some points in which we may agree to differ, but these are points in which there can be no mutual concessions or toning down of statement. Christ Jesus is either God or He is not! And if He is God, as we believe He is, then those who reject His Deity cannot be true believers in Him. And therefore they must miss the benefits which He promises to those who receive Him. I cannot conceive any man to be right in religion if he is not right in reference to the Person of the Redeemer. "You cannot be right in the rest unless you think rightly of Him." If you will not have Him to be your God, neither will He save you. Let His abundant miracles, His Divine teaching, His unique Character and His Resurrection convince you that "the Word was God," and is in all respects equally Divine with the Father and the Spirit.

The expression before us is commendable under another aspect—one in which, very likely, it was used by these hypocrites. We use it towards Christ to denote that we acknowledge Him to be our Master—He is, "Lord, Lord," to us. In the true Church of Christ there are no lords but this one Lord. "One is your Master, even Christ, and all you are brethren." "Lord Bishop" is an expression suitable for Babylon or Rome—but not for the new Jerusalem. I challenge the whole world to find any Apostolic title of the kind, or anything approaching to it in the days of the Apostles! It is as contrary to Christianity as Hell is contrary to Heaven!

As servants of one common Master, we stand upon equality. Did He not say, "The rulers of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, but it shall not be so among you"? Christ is Lord to us and no one else in the Church of God. And the Church takes care, when she is in a right state, that there shall never be any legislator for her except Christ. He is her law-maker—not Parliaments or kings. Jesus walks in the midst of the Churches, among His golden candlesticks, to observe and prescribe her order. He tolerates no other lawgiver or ruler in spiritual things. We know no Rabbi but Christ! Doctrine comes from His lips and from His Word, but from no councils and no teachers or divines.

As to the rules of the Church, if they are not the rules of Jesus, given by the authority of His Spirit, they are not rules for us. As for human traditions, prescriptions and ordinances in reference to religion, tear them to pieces and toss them to the winds! Christ is Lord and every Christian's heart echoes to the words when I say, in the name of His people, "Jesus, son of Mary, Son of God, You are to us Lord, Lord. Your mother's sons bow down before You and do You homage. The sun and moon and 11 stars of Israel's household bow before You—You who were separate from your brethren for your

brethren's sake." Onto Jesus, who was once nailed to the tree, be honor throughout all ages. He is Lord, Lord, in that sense.

And, beloved, as he is thus beyond all controversy Lord divinely and Lord as legislator, it is right that this should be spoken. It was a brave thing for the Covenanters of Scotland to be ready to die for the headship of Christ in His Church, and I trust there are thousands still alive who would as gladly relinquish life, itself, to preserve the crown right of our exalted Lord. It would be well worth any man's while to lay down his life to defend the Deity of Christ, which doctrine cannot be taken away without removing the very foundations of the faith! And if the foundations are moved, what can the righteous do? Bear your testimony, then, you followers of the Lamb, and be not afraid to acknowledge His name! Though hypocrites have said it, you need not blush to say it—for it is most true that Jesus is both Lord and God. Say "Lord, Lord" with unfaltering tongue!

Say it daily by your actions. Have respect unto your Master and let others see that you respect Him. Do this good action because Christ bids you. Refuse to do that evil thing because Christ forbids you. Move in that line because He leads the way. Refuse that other line because you do not see His footprints there. Let all men see that you practically say, "Lord, Lord," whenever you think of Jesus. This is the very spirit of Christianity—to do what Christ bids us—and to honor Him in heart and lip and life forevermore! I wish that some Christians were a little more outspoken in their acknowledgment of their great Lord and Master—and I commend these hypocrites, if I can commend them at all—that they wisely choose a fit and godly speech, though, alas, they dishonored the good speech by using it so foully when they said, "Lord, Lord."

II. And now, secondly, THERE WERE HYPOCRITES WHO USED THIS EXCELLENT MODE OF SPEECH. What sort of people were they who said, "Lord, Lord," and yet the Master says of them, that not everyone of them shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven? Well, I think He refers to a considerable number of people, and I will search for them. I wonder whether I shall find any in this congregation? Help me, my Brothers and Sisters, by your own self-examination to discover these people. There can be no doubt our Lord referred, in the first place, to a certain class of superficial externalists, who said, "Lord, Lord," and there their religion ended.

Such persons still exist all around—they are superficial in nature and in general character. They say good things, but they never feel what they say. Their pious expressions come from as low as the throat, but never from the abysses of the heart. They are of the stony ground order and have no depth of earth. The hard, barren rock is barely concealed by a sprinkling of soil. They may accurately be styled externalists, for they have the notion that when they have attended to the outside of godliness, the whole matter is fully discharged. For instance, if they sing with their voices, they conclude that they have praised God—and that when the hymn is uttered to melodious notes—worship has been presented to God, even though the heart has never praised Him at all.

When they bow the head and close their eyes in public prayer, they consider they are doing something very right and proper—though they are very likely thinking of their farm, their garden, their children, or their home—casting up their accounts and wondering how they will find trade and the money-market on Monday when they get to their shops. The externalists are satisfied with the shell of religion whether life remains or not. They have a form of godliness, but they are strangers to its power. If they read a chapter every day, they feel very self-complacent and think they are searchers of the Word, though they have never entered into the inner sense, but merely allowed the eye to run over the verses and lines.

If they never get an answer to prayer, they feel quite satisfied because they have duly said their prayers. Like boys who give runaway knocks, they have no expectation of an answer. They merely give God the husks and they think He never looks to see if there is a kernel there. They give Him the outward sign and imagine that He is satisfied, though the thing meant is absent. Oh, how large a proportion of our fellow creatures seem to be content when they have rendered an outward obedience to religious requirements! They are content to have made clean the outside of the cup and the platter, but the washing of the inside—the new heart, the Truth in the inward parts, the giving of the heart's love to Jesus—does not seem to be worthy of their attention. And if we talk of it, they are weary of it, and think we are Puritanical and imagine that we mean to judge them after a too lofty standard.

We are too severe with them, they say, but oh, Beloved, it is not so! Does not every thoughtful man see that without the heart, religion must be vain? What can there be in mere external forms? Put it to yourselves—what can there be?

What do you, yourselves, think of your children if you see them doing what you bid them, but doing so because they must—not from an obedient spirit, or because they love you? What would you think of them if they had no trust in you, no confidence in their father's love and in their mother's care, but just went about the house mechanically doing what you bade them and no more? You would feel you needed your children's love—you must have their hearts.

And God, our Father, thinks the same of us! If we do not love Him, whatever we may do cannot be acceptable with Him. Perhaps you have attended regularly at Church or

Meeting House almost since you were born. And it is possible that you have gone through all the rites and ceremonies of the community to which you belong. I am not about to condemn you for doing so if you are a Churchman, or if you are a Methodist, or if you are a Presbyterian, any more than I will if you are a Baptist—only I will put the whole together and say—"God abhors the sacrifice where the heart is not found, and if you have brought Him nothing but these externals, the verdict of truth concerning your religion is just this—'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.'"

If you say "Lord, Lord," you must yield a hearty obedience to Jesus and make your inner nature to be the temple of His Holy Spirit, or else your hypocrisy will condemn you at the Last Great Day as one who dared to insult the God of Truth with a false profession! Another class of persons who say, "Lord, Lord," and yet are not saved, are those who regard religion as a very excellent thing for quieting their conscience, but who do not look upon it as a practical influence which is to affect their lives and to influence their conduct. I have known persons who certainly would not be easy if they had not gone through their morning and evening prayers—and yet they were bad husbands and quarrelsome neighbors. They could falsify an account and put down an article twice to a customer without a very great disturbance of their self-satisfaction—and they would not like to have been away from the house of God on the Sabbath—or to have heard an unsound discourse.

Either of these things would have touched their conscience, though it was callous on the point of unfair dealing! They could lie, could lie handsomely, but they would not swear, or sing a song. They draw the line somewhere and compounded for a thousand sins of dishonesty by avoiding certain other vices—thus being left to cheat themselves as a righteous punishment for cheating others. Oh, the deceits and cheats which men play upon themselves! They are their own most easy dupes. A mere matter of religious form will outweigh the most important matters of virtue when the judgment is perverted by folly. We have heard of the Catholic in Spain who had a very serious sin to confess to his priest. He had been a brigand and had murdered hundreds, but the sin that lay upon his conscience was not murder.

He had perpetrated a thousand robberies but the sin that troubled him was not theft. Once upon a time, upon a Friday, a drop of blood spurted from a man he had killed and it had fallen on his lips, so that he had tasted flesh on a Fri-day—that had troubled him! His conscience, which, like Achilles, was invulnerable everywhere else, could yet be rounded at the heel. Though we might smile, the same eccentric fact might be declared concerning many beside the brigand. Their eyes see motes and overlooks beams. Their judgment strains out gnats and flies—and yet it swallows camels and elephants. They leap one hour and limp another. They are very nice on points of ritual and equally lax as to common honesty.

The thing really worth having—love to God and love to man—they fling behind their backs and fancy they shall be saved because they have complimented God by a hypocritical presence of worship and have deceived men by sanctimonious pretensions. As though if I

cheated a man every day I could make up for it by taking my hat off in the streets to him! They bow to the Almighty and rebel against Him. Do they fancy He is to be fooled by them? Do they dream that He is gratified by their sound words and empty declarations? Whatever they may imagine, it is not so! Many say, "Lord, Lord," to quiet their conscience, but they can never enter the kingdom of Heaven!

Now, of this class of hypocrites there are many. There is one I have met with—an old acquaintance of mine—he may be here now. He is a gentleman who is exceedingly orthodox. I would have you know that he assesses the imperial and infallible standard of orthodoxy. I believe there is a legal pound and a legal yard, kept somewhere in London, to which all measures must conform. This gentleman has got the legal standard of theology in his own possession. He knows exactly what a preacher ought to say upon a text. And it is one of his great delights to sit down and listen to a sermon and say, "A part of that was right, but it was not all so. It was yes and no. The preacher gave a pail of good milk and then tipped it over at the close. He was not bound on such a point, and such a point."

This gentleman can divide a hair between the west and north-west side with extreme accuracy—and he can never be wrong under any circumstances. He has infallibility. The truth was born when he was born and will expire when he expires. He is a paragon of accuracy as to his beliefs—but unfortunately he is not quite so accurate in the daily conduct of his business. He may be sound in his creed, but he is cracked in his manners. His wife never told me so, but I think if she did speak out her mind, she would complain that she has the most crabbed, ill-tempered husband that ever a woman was plagued with! His children don't go to the place of worship where their father goes because he does not know whether they are elect. He does not trouble himself whether they are so or not, for if they are to be saved they will be saved in God's own time and it does not matter whether they go to a place of worship or not.

Neither would they like to accompany their father, for they have come to the very natural conclusion that whatever religion their father believes in, they would like to believe the very opposite—for they would like to follow a religion which would make them different from what he is! He is known in the place where he lives as being a man who will walk 10 miles to hear some favorite preacher, but would not stir a finger to reclaim the sinner or instruct the ignorant. And he is known for another thing, that, with the exception of his divinity, you cannot believe a word he says! Oh, may God deliver us from these men! There are such to be found in most of our villages. They set themselves up for judges in God's heritage and yet they know not what it is to have their nature renewed—in fact, if you were to preach a sermon to them upon, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord," they would try to pump the meaning out of it and put another sense upon it, instead!

They would say that practical godliness is legality and that the children of God are not to be talked to in that fashion. They imagine that they may live as they like and yet be the

dear people of God. Beloved, may God save us from this spirit of Antinomianism! For of all the devils that have ever come up from Hell, I believe this is one of the most brazenfaced and deceitful, and has done more damage among professors than almost any other. They say, "Lord, Lord," but they shall not enter into the kingdom! We have also met with others who say, "Lord, Lord," but not in sincerity. They are very busy professors—always ready to do anything—and they are not happy unless they have something to do. I blame them not for being busy—I would to God that the sincere people were half as busy!

But I detect in them this vice—they are fondest of doing that which will be most seen. They prefer to serve God in those places where the most honor will be gained. To speak in public is infinitely preferable to them to the visitation of a poor sick woman. To work or to give where the deed will be blazoned abroad is after their minds. To take the chair at a public meeting and receive a vote of thanks is delightful to them. But to go into a back street and look after the poor, or plod on in the Sunday school in some inferior class is not according to their taste. It may seem harsh, but it is nevertheless true that many are serving themselves under the pretence of serving Christ! They labor to advance the cause in order that they may be, themselves, advanced—and they push themselves forward in the Church this way and that way for the glory of place and position—that everybody may say, "What a good man that is, and how much influence he has, and how well he serves his Master!"

Beloved, if you and I do anything nominally for God, and at the bottom we are doing it for the sake of praise, it is not for God. We are doing it for ourselves! I do not say there is anybody here of that sort, but I would like your conscience to ask you, as my conscience is asking me, "Do I really serve the Lord, or do I work in the Church in order that I may be considered to be an industrious, praiseworthy minister, seeking the good of my fellow men?" I charge you before God, shun the desire of human praise and never let it pollute your motives! May the Holy Spirit purify you from so base a motive! The praise of God—to have it said by Him, "Well done, good and faithful servant"—that you should seek. But honor from men avoid as you would a viper! Shake it off into the fire if ever you find the desire of it clinging to your soul, else it may be your unhappy lot to find at last, that saying, "Lord, Lord," will not secure you an entrance into the kingdom.

In all Churches, I fear, there are some of another class of hypocrites, who say "Lord, Lord," for the sake of what they can get by it. John Bunyan speaks of Mr. Byends who had many motives for going on pilgrimage besides going to the Celestial City. He came from the town of Fairspeech and there he had a large circle of interesting relatives. Mr. Smooth Tongue, Mr. Doublemind, and Mr. Facing-Bothways who made all his money as a waterman, by looking one way and pulling the other. Many of his race still survive in all circles—gentlemen who hold with the hare and run with the

hounds—especially run with the hounds if the hare is likely to be caught. They believe that if gain is not godliness, godliness may be made helpful to gain.



These gentlemen flourish in all quarters of town and country. One of them set up in a village and the first question he asked before he opened his shop was, "Which is the most respectable congregation in the neighborhood?" His object being to go there that he might not only get good, but dispose of his goods as well! We meet with persons in another rank in life whose object in attending a place is that they may get into a respectable circle and have wealthy friends, and have their hand upon the door handle of society. Swimming with the stream is their delight and they prefer that stream in which there are the most gold fish. Others who are poorer have a keen eye to the loaves and fishes and those Churches are best where the loaves are not made with barley, as they used to be, but with white flour—and are not mere penny loaves—but good substantial quarterns.

They are pleased, also, if the fishes are larger than those we read of in the New testament. One of these loathsome hypocrites came to Rowland Hill and was soon detected by that shrewd Divine. "Well," he said, "and so you profess to have been converted?" "Yes," said the old lady, "I was converted under your blessed ministry." "And where have you attended since that time?" "Sir, I have always attended your blessed ministry." "And I hope you have been comforted and built up?" "Yes, I have, very much, under your blessed ministry." "I suppose you know some of the rich people who attend with us." "Yes, I have been kindly noticed by many who sit under your blessed ministry." Mr. Hill then said, "I suppose you have heard that we have some blessed almshouses?" "Yes," she said, she had, "and she hoped she might have the blessed privilege of dwelling in one of them."

Alas, alas, the blessed almshouses and the other blessed charities, which, indeed, are blessed if given from pure motives, have often been perverted to most accursed ends, and, "Lord, Lord," has been said with importunity by some whose sole object for saying it was that they might gain pence thereby. In whatever station of life you may be, I beseech you, scorn this meanness! Many a member of Parliament is as mean as any man in this respect. He pretends to be zealous for religion in order to gain a seat in the House. Everywhere there is too much of making religion a stalking horse by which lower ends may be reached. If you wish to be rich and opulent, go and get a ladder from anywhere except from Calvary! Put not the Cross to so mean a use! If you take the wounds and blood of Jesus and the Savior's precious name, and only to get worldly gain by them, what can come upon you but an angry blast from Almighty God? How can He bear such hypocrisy? And yet many will say, "Lord, Lord," for this reason and will never enter into the kingdom.

Well, the list is sorrowfully long, but I must mention one or two others. One is the Sunday Christian. I dare say he is here now. He is an excellent Christian on Sunday. As soon as the sun shines upon the earth on the first day of the week, all his religion is awake! But, alas, he is a very strange Christian on Monday and a remarkably bad Christian on Saturday nights. Many people keep their piety folded up and put away with their best clothes—they only give it an airing on the Sabbath. Their Bible is to be seen under their arm on Sunday—but

on Monday, where is that Bible? Well, not at the man's right hand as a perpetual companion! Where are the precepts of Scripture? Are they in the shop? Are they in the house? Alas, the golden rule has been left in Church to lie dusty in the pews until next Sunday!

Religion is not needed by some people on a weekday—it might be inconvenient. Many there are who sing Psalms of praise to God but confine their praises to the congregation. As to praising Him in their heart at home, it never occurs to them. Their whole religion lies inside the Meeting House walls, or comes up at certain times and seasons during the day, when the family is called in to prayer. May God bare us from intermittent religion! May He grant us Grace to be always what we should wish to be if we were about to die! May religion never be to us a coat or a cloak to be taken off, but may it be intermingled with the warp and woof of our nature so that we do not so much talk religion as breathe and live it!

I desire to eat and drink and sleep eternal life, as an old Divine used to say. May that be ours. Good John Newton used to say of his Calvinism that he did not preach it in masses of dry doctrine like pieces of lump sugar, but that it was stirred up in all his preaching, like sugar dissolved in our tea. Oh, that some of those people who keep lumps of religion for Sundays would sweeten their lives and tempers with it till men could see that their ordinary everyday actions were full of the Grace of God and that they were actuated at all times by the love of the Most High!

God save us from being Sunday Christians! I will not continue the list, as our time is almost fled. There are many more varieties of vain professors, even as of unclean beasts there are many kinds. May we not be among them!

III. WHERE DID THESE PEOPLE FAIL? That is the last point. The Savior said that they did not do what He said. "He that does the will of My Father which is in Heaven," says He, "shall enter the kingdom." What is the will, then, of His Father in Heaven? We are expressly told that this is the will of Him that sent Christ—that whoever sees the Son and believes on Him should not perish. It is a part, then, of the will of God, which we must do if we would be saved, that we believe on Jesus Christ.

Dear Hearer, have you believed in Jesus? It not, your sacraments, your Church attendance, your Chapel attendance, your prayers and hymns all are for nothing! If you do not trust in Jesus, you have not even the foundation stone of salvation! You are lost, and may God have mercy upon you! It is a part of God's will, moreover, that where there is faith there should be obedience to God, conformity to the Divine precepts. In fact, true faith in Jesus always brings this. There never was a man that believed in Jesus but what he sought to do the will of Jesus! Now it is a part of the will of Jesus that all those who are His should love one another. Hypocrites do not love one another—though they are always talking about the need of love there is in the Church.

Listen to them! They are always denouncing other people—and this is no mark of love to the Brethren. They have a keen eye for the imperfections of others, but they have no love

to those they censure. We must love the Brethren or we lack the most plain and most necessary evidence of salvation, "for we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the Brethren." The true child of God, also, adds to his faith, love, and faith begets in him all the Graces and virtues which adorn renewed manhood and bring glory to God. Alas, I have known some high professors, not commonly truthful, who would talk about communion with Christ and sweet enjoyments of Divine love, and yet they seemed to miscalculate the multiplication table and did not know how many pounds went to a hundred-weight! How dwells the love of God in a man who is a thief?

How can it be that he is a servant of a just and holy God, when he is unjust in his dealings toward his fellow men? It will not do, Sir! You prate as long as you will, but you are no Christian unless the rule of integrity is the rule of your life! Yes, and there are some who are unchaste, and yet dare to talk about being Christians. My eyes might at this moment glance upon some who make this Tabernacle their place of pretended worship and profess to hear the words we speak with pleasure, who are a disgrace to Christianity all the time! Let them get home to their knees and pray God to give them manliness enough, at least, to be damned honestly and not to go down to Perdition wearing the name of Christian when Christians they are not! If I served Satan and loved the pleasures of sin, I would do so out-and-out like a man! But to sneak into the Church of God and to live unchastely—I have no words sufficiently strong with which to denounce such detestable meanness!

Alas, I must add that here are some professed Christians who are not sober. If a man is not temperate in meats and drinks, how dare he talk about the power of prayer? How dare he come to the Prayer Meeting and open his month? Do you suppose that Christ has any communion with Bacchus, that He will strike hands across the ale house bar, and call him a friend who staggers out of the door of the gin palace to go and listen to a sermon? "Is that ever done?" asks one. Done? Yes, let some here confess that they have done it this very day! How dare they say, "Lord, Lord," and yet drain the drunkards' bowl in secret? O Sirs, I don't want to put any of these cases in such a way that you should be vexed and angry, and say, "He is too personal." But if you did say so I should not apologize! I would tell you that so long as you are personal in your offense to Christ, I shall be personal in my rebukes! If you are personally insulting the Savior, you must expect the Savior's servant to be personal in upbraiding you!

Once more, I fear there are, in these days, a large number of professors who never exercise real private prayer. The Savior says He will say to them, "I never knew you." Now He would have known them if they had been accustomed to conversing with Him in private prayer. Had they communed with Him in earnest supplications, the Lord Jesus could not, then, have said, "I never knew you," for they would each one have replied, "Not know me, Lord? I have wept before You in secret when no other eyes saw me but Yours. I brought You habitually my daily cares and cast my burden upon You. Do You not know me? I have spoken

to You face to face, as a man speaks with his friend! I know You, O my Lord, by joyous experience of Your goodness, and therefore I am sure You know me. Your answers to my prayers and your gifts of Divine Grace have been so constant that I am sure You know me! Who is there on earth You know if You do not know me?"

Happy is the man who can speak thus! But alas, many are quite unable to make such a reply. I fear there are some professors now before me who do not pray. You were baptized and yet you do not pray! You have joined the Church and yet you restrain prayer! You dare come to the Communion Table, although for a long time you have lived without prayer, for I cannot call that prayer which you slobber over in the way you do with your morning prayer when you are in a hurry, and your evening prayer, when you are almost asleep. God bless you, Beloved, and save you from sham praying! May He, by His Grace, make you to have truth in your inward parts and cause you to be sincere before the living God.

Now, I know what will happen. Some dear trembling heart will say, "I always thought I was a hypocrite. Now I know I am. I have always been fretting and troubling about that." It generally falls out contrary to our desire—those who are not hypocrites think they are—while real hypocrites throw off our warnings as an ironclad man-of-war casts off the shots of an ordinary gun! I try to make caps fit heads which deserve to be covered, but the people whose heads they will fit never put them on! And others for whom they were never intended at all—dear, loving, tender-hearted Believers, always watchful and careful—are the very ones who will put them on their own heads and cry, "Yes, I fear I am the hypocrite."

Ah, dear Soul, do not write bitter things against yourself, because if you will consider the matter, you will soon see that you are no hypocrite. Would you do anything to grieve Christ? Do you not, above all things, desire to trust Him? Do you know anybody to trust in but Jesus? Are you not depending upon Him? And though you could not say you would die for Him, yet I believe, if it came to that, that your trembling faith would still stay alive—but some of the boastful ones, who, in their own esteem, are almost perfect—would give way and end in apostasy. To each one I would say, if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with all your heart—you are no hypocrite!

But if any one of you has been a hypocrite and has to plead guilty to many things I have mentioned, come to the foot of the Cross and say, "Jesus, Master, I am the chief of sinners—have mercy upon me! Look on me and let my sins pass away. Look on me and let all cunning and hypocrisy be driven far from me. Give me a new heart and a right spirit, and from this day make me Your child and I will glorify You, both on earth and in Heaven, forever and ever."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew 7. HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—643, 640, 637.

MESSAGE:

Beloved Friends—This is the last sermon to be issued in my absence. I hope to present you next week with a discourse preached on my return. I have been very ill during my absence in foreign lands, but I hope the result will be that on recommencing my work I shall be both physically and mentally all the more fitted for it. And I pray that to these blessings spiritual energy may be added by the abiding power of the Holy Spirit. It is a period of revival—may the Lord revive His work in each of us! I entreat the prayers of my readers and of my beloved flock. Grace, mercy, and peace be with you all. Amen.

Mentone, Feb. 12, 1874 C. H. SPURGEON.