

THE GREAT DANGER OF HYPOCRISY

Andrew Bromhall (c. 1608-1662)

“First of all, beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy”
—Luke 12:1.

DOCTRINE: hypocrisy is a dangerous leaven, which ministers and people are chiefly and especially to beware of and acquit¹ themselves from. Hence, you have a chapter of woes against it (Mat 23). And it is represented as that which renders odious² to the Lord and defiles His choicest ordinances and our best duties, if it cleave to them (Isa 1:11, 12; 66:3) and puts God to sad complaints and exprobrations³ of such a people: “O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud” (Hos 6:4)—all show, no truth, no showers. And [it] hath been the ruin of many forward⁴ and glorious professors as Balaam, Jehu, Saul, and many other persons of great parts and many great performances and, one would conceive, of great hopes too. But they and their works and their hopes are all perished: “The hypocrite’s hope shall perish” (Job 8:13).

What hypocrisy is: much of the nature of a thing is many times discovered in its name; the name is a brief description. The word *hypocrite* properly signifies “an actor or stage-player, a personator⁵ of other men in their speech, habit, and action.” The Hebrew word signifieth both “a wicked man” and “a deceiver.” And it is observed that those whom David, the devoutest man, called “wicked,” Solomon, the wisest man, calls “fools,” and Job, the most upright man, calls “hypocrites.”

Hypocrisy then is but a feigning⁶ virtue and piety,⁷ [which] it seems to put on; and vice and impiety, [which] it conceals and seems to put off. It is indeed vice in a vizard:⁸ the face is vice, but virtue is the vizard. The form and nature of it is imitation: the ends⁹ are vainglory,¹⁰ to be seen of men, or some gain or carnal respects.

¹ **acquit** – to set free or clear from a charge or accusation.

² **odious** – causing or exciting hatred; disagreeable; offensive.

³ **exprobrations** – rebukes; upbraiding.

⁴ **forward** – eager; zealous.

⁵ **personator** – one who plays the part of another; an impersonator.

⁶ **feigning** – pretending; assuming a false appearance.

⁷ **piety** – habitual reverence and obedience to God; godliness; devoutness.

⁸ **vizard** – an outward appearance or show under which something different is hid; a mask or disguise.

⁹ **ends** – the intended results of an action; aims; purposes.

¹⁰ **vainglory** – excessively exalting one’s self.

There is a *gross hypocrisy* whereby men pretend to the good, [which] they know they have not. And there is a *formal close hypocrisy*,¹¹ whereby men deceive others and themselves too—are hypocrites and do not know it. In this case, it is probable the Pharisee was signified by “the five foolish virgins” (Luk 18:11; Mat 25:2), [as well as] all formal Christians¹² that are not regenerated by the Spirit nor put into Christ by faith. This is a subtle evil, a secret poison, a close contagion.¹³ And here it is infinite mercy and grace that we do not all split¹⁴ and perish. And if we can escape this, if we are indeed sincere, we are out of the greatest danger of all, “the leaven of hypocrisy.”

Wherein is this leaven of hypocrisy so dangerous, that ministers and people ought firstly, chiefly, to beware of it?

1. There is *great danger of it*:

(1) *For we have the ground of the matter in ourselves*: hearts deceitful above all things and desperately wicked—who can know thy wickedness? “I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins” (Jer 17:9, 10). As if none beside the Lord knew the bottomless depths and deceits of the heart! In the heart are those lusts and affections that feed and foment¹⁵ all the hypocrisy in the world—pride, vainglory, concupiscence,¹⁶ carnal wisdom: were it not for these, there would not be an hypocrite living.

(2) *The devil watcheth night and day to set fire to this tow*:¹⁷ he is fitted to the purpose and filled with raging desire to comply with a filthy heart and to engender¹⁸ this spurious offspring of hypocrisy. He hath in readiness his wiles and his depths, his baits and his snares; and for a false heart [he] hath false ways, false doctrines, false faiths, false seasons, false ends and aims. When two such be agreed to such a purpose, “hardly will they be frustrated.”

(3) *And that we may not be secure, there are before our eyes and in our view dreadful examples*: Balaam, a great prophet; Judas, an apostle familiar with Christ; Saul, Jehu, Herod, and Agrippa, famous kings; five virgins, conspicuous and most confident; Ananias and Sapphira, eminent converts; Alexander and Demas, confessors...It may grieve and make a tender heart

¹¹ **close** – secret; hidden.

¹² **formal Christians** – pertaining to outward form or appearance; Christians in name only.

¹³ **close contagion** – a hidden, spreading disease.

¹⁴ **split** – of a ship, to break apart by striking rocks; figuratively of persons suffering spiritual shipwreck.

¹⁵ **foment** – to promote the growth or spread of something.

¹⁶ **concupiscence** – the desire for worldly things; sexual appetite.

¹⁷ **tow** – the fiber of flax or hemp prepared for spinning.

¹⁸ **engender** – to beget, as a parent; to produce.

tremble to think what they became and what is become of them! [May it] teach him that standeth to take heed lest he fall (and all of us to our dying day) to “beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.”

2. And there is great danger by it:

(1) *The loss of all that is done*: Christ will say, as to that young man, “Yet lackest thou one thing,” sincerity (Luk 18:22). Wouldest thou have heaven too? Why then didst thou all things for the praise of men? Thou hast thy reward and art overpaid. “Depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Mat 7:23).

(2) *Frustrating of hopes, great hopes, hopes of glory and heaven, and escap-ing eternal misery*: all these hopes must “perish” to the “hypocrite” (Job 8:13), perish like a ship at the very mouth of the haven; perish while they are crying, “Lord, Lord”; perish into everlasting horror and eternal despair.

(3) *Full detection and manifesting of them in the sight and face of all the world*: “For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known” (Luk 12: 2). The vizard will be then taken off, which was feigned sanctity;¹⁹ and the face will appear, which was indeed double iniquity. And for going about to cozen²⁰ God, the world, and his own soul, the miserable hypocrite will be left to eternal, intolerable confusion, to be detested and derided by God, angels, and saints; to be insulted by the devils and damned to all eternity.

(4) *And in hell the hypocrite “shall be beaten with many stripes”*: for he “knew his Master’s will” and pretended he was doing of it, and yet “did it not” (Luk 12:47). Shall he that judged others to hell lie lower in hell and have more of hell than those condemned by him? Shall it be worse with a proud Pharisee than with a publican, nay, a damned publican? Is hell the portion of hypocrites? (Mat 24:51). Are they the freeholders²¹ and all others but tenants and inmates with them? Or else, if there be a worse place in hell, must it be theirs? It must be so; for the nearer heaven, the more of hell. And that will be the hell of hell to all eternity. Surely, then, hypocrisy is a dangerous thing. There is exceeding danger *of* and danger *by* this “leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.”

Use: I shall commend but one use to be made of this doctrine at this time, and it is the “beware” in the text: to stir and provoke you to put forth your

¹⁹ **feigned sanctity** – pretended holiness of life.

²⁰ **cozen** – to cheat; to defraud by deceit.

²¹ **freeholders** – those who own an estate.

utmost care, diligence, and circumspection,²² to “beware of this leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.”

Here I could show you how much you are concerned to beware of the Pharisees’ leaven in doctrinals.²³ to beware of doctrines advancing anything in man or of man, doctrines that are derived from any other fountain than the pure Word of God: traditions, enthusiasms,²⁴ impulses²⁵ beside or against the Word; doctrines of will-worship,²⁶ superstition, voluntary humility;²⁷ doctrines ascribing too much to and laying too much stress on externals in worship not instituted by Christ; doctrines of rigid imposition²⁸ of things indifferent; doctrines that have a tendency to blind obedience and implicit faith.²⁹ Whoever reads the New Testament may soon discern [that] such were their doctrines, and this is the leaven of the Pharisees in doctrinals. And truly you had need to take care of this, for doctrines and principles have no small influence on conversation³⁰ and practice.

From “How Is Hypocrisy Discoverable and Curable?” in *Puritan Sermons 1659-1689 in Six Volumes, Being the Morning Exercises at Cripplegate*, Vol. 1, reprinted by Richard Owen Roberts, Publishers.

Andrew Bromhall (c. 1608-1662): English Puritan minister. His sermon “How Is Hypocrisy Discoverable and Curable?” is undated but preserved in Samuel Annesley’s edition of the *Morning Exercises at Cripplegate*. Apparently born at Shrewsbury, Shropshire, England.



One proud man may hate another, and he that is covetous himself will be apt to censure another for being so...so may an hypocrite loath that in another, which yet he alloweth in himself.—*John Flavel*

²² **circumspection** – being heedful to circumstances and their consequences; prudent.

²³ **doctrinals** – matters or points of doctrine.

²⁴ **enthusiasms** – prophetic utterances.

²⁵ **impulses** – influences upon the mind by some external force or power.

²⁶ **will-worship** – worship according to one’s own will or fancy; worship imposed by human will without divine authority.

²⁷ **voluntary humility** – delighting in extreme self-denial; asceticism.

²⁸ **rigid imposition** – harsh, inflexible requirements or commands.

²⁹ **implicit faith** – faith that rests on the unquestioned, absolute authority of another.

³⁰ **conversation** – used here to mean behavior; lifestyle; conduct.

THE HYPOCRITE'S CHARACTER

Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892)

THIS age is full of shams. Pretence never stood in so eminent a position as it does at the present hour. There be few, I fear, who love the naked truth: we can scarce endure it in our houses; you would scarcely trade with a man who absolutely stated it. If you walked through the streets of London, you might imagine that all the shops were built of marble and that all the doors were made of mahogany and woods of the rarest kinds. And yet you soon discover that there is scarce a piece of any of these precious fabrics to be found anywhere, but that everything is grained³¹ and painted and varnished. I find no fault with this, except as it is an outward type of an inward evil that exists. As it is in our streets, so is it everywhere: graining, painting, and gilding,³² are at an enormous premium. Counterfeit has at length attained to such an eminence that it is with the utmost difficulty that you can detect it.

The counterfeit so near approacheth to the genuine, that the eye of wisdom itself needs to be enlightened before she can discern the difference. Especially is this the case in religious matters. There was once an age of intolerant bigotry, when every man was weighed in the balance; and if he was not precisely up to the orthodox standard of the day, the fire devoured him. But in this age of charity and of most proper charity, we are very apt to allow the counterfeit to pass current³³ and to imagine that outward show is really as beneficial as inward reality. If ever there was a time when it was needful to say, "Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy," it is now.

The minister may cease to preach this doctrine in the days of persecution: when the faggots³⁴ are blazing and when the rack is in full operation, few men will be hypocrites. These are the keen detectors of impostures³⁵; suffering, pain, and death for Christ's sake are not to be endured by mere pretenders. But in this silken³⁶ age, when to be religious is to be respectable; when to follow Christ is to be honored; and when godliness itself has become gain, it is doubly necessary that the minister should...lift up his voice like a trumpet against this sin, "the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy."

³¹ **grained** – painted to imitate the grain of wood or the markings of marble.

³² **gilding** – to cover with a thin layer of metal, often gold.

³³ **pass current** – pass for truth.

³⁴ **faggots** – bundles of small sticks, twigs, or tree branches bound together and used for fire.

³⁵ **impostures** – persons which pretend to be what they are not; impostors.

³⁶ **silken** – effeminate; soft.

The Christian, however, does not belong to that class. He will at times begin to be terribly alarmed, lest, after all, his godliness should be but seeming³⁷ and his profession an empty vanity. He who is true will sometimes suspect himself of falsehood, while he who is false will wrap himself up in a constant confidence of his own sincerity. My dear Christian brethren, if you are at this time in doubt concerning yourselves, the truths to utter will perhaps help you in searching your own heart and trying your own reins;³⁸ and sure I am you will not blame me if I should seem to be severe. But you will rather say, “Sir, I desire to make sure work concerning my own soul; tell me faithfully and tell me honestly what are the signs of a hypocrite, and I will sit down and try to read my own heart to discover whether these things have a bearing upon me. And happy shall I be if I shall come out of the fire like pure gold.”

THE HYPOCRITE’S CHARACTER: We have an elaborate description of the hypocrite in the chapter we have just read, the twenty-third of Matthew, and I do not know that I can better portray him than by turning again to the words of Christ.

A hypocrite may be known by the fact that his speech and his actions are contrary to one another. As Jesus says, “They say and they do not.” The hypocrite can speak like an angel; he can quote texts with the greatest rapidity. He can talk concerning all matters of religion, whether they be theological doctrines, metaphysical questions,³⁹ or experimental difficulties. In his own esteem, he knoweth much and when he rises to speak, you will often feel abashed⁴⁰ at your own ignorance in the presence of his superior knowledge.

But see him when he comes to actions. What behold you there? The fullest contradiction of everything that he has uttered. He tells to others that they must obey the Law. Doth he obey it? Ah! No. He declares that others must experience this, that, and the other; and he sets up a fine scale of experience, far above even that of the Christian himself. But does he touch it? No, not with so much as one of his fingers. He will tell others what they should do. But will he remember his own teaching? Not he! Follow him to his house, trace him to the market, see him in the shop; and if you want to refute his preaching, you may easily do it from his own life. My hearer! Is this thy case?

³⁷ **seeming** – giving the impression of being one thing, when it is something else.

³⁸ **reins** – the seat of human feelings or affections.

³⁹ **metaphysical questions** – questions on the principles and causes of all existing things.

⁴⁰ **abashed** – stricken with surprise; ashamed.

With a blush, each one of us must confess that to some extent, our life is contradictory to our profession. We blush and we mourn over this....Ah! Believe me, my hearers: talk is easy, but walk is hard. Speech any man may attain unto, but act is difficult. We must have grace within to make our life holy; but lip-piety needs no grace. The first mark of a hypocrite, then, is that he contradicts by his acts what he utters by his words. Do any of you do so? If so, stand convicted of hypocrisy, bow your heads, and confess the sin.

The next mark of a hypocrite is that whenever he does right it is that he may be seen of men. The hypocrite sounds a trumpet before his alms⁴¹ and chooses the corner of the streets for his prayers. To him virtue in the dark is almost a vice: he can never detect any beauty in virtue, unless she has a thousand eyes to look upon her, and then she is something indeed. The true Christian, like the nightingale, sings in the night; but the hypocrite has all his songs in the day, when he can be seen and heard of men. To be well-spoken of is the very elixir⁴² of his life. If he be praised, it is like sweet wine to him. The censure⁴³ of man upon a virtue would make him change his opinion concerning it in a moment, for his standard is the opinion of his fellow creatures. His law is the law of self-seeking and of self-honoring: he is virtuous because to be virtuous is to be praised. But if tomorrow vice were at a premium, he would be as vicious as the rest. Applause is what too many are seeking after.

Now, is this our case? Let us deal honestly with ourselves. If we distribute to the poor, do we desire to do it in secret, when no tongue shall tell? Are our prayers offered in our closets, where God who heareth the cry of the secret ones, listeneth unto our supplication? Can we say, that if every man were struck stone blind and deaf and dumb, we would not alter our conduct the least? Can we declare that the opinion of our fellows is not our guiding law, but that we stand servants to our God and to our conscience, and are not to be made do a wrong thing from flattery, nor are we urged to do a right thing from fear of censure? Mark: the man who does not act rightly from a higher motive than that of being praised gives sore suspicion that he is a hypocrite. But he who will do a right thing against the opinion of every man, and simply because he believes it to be right, and sees the stamp of God's approval upon it, need not be afraid that he is a hypocrite....Is it so with you? If so, be honest. And as you would convict another, convict yourself.

⁴¹ **alms** – anything given freely to relieve the poor, such as money, food, or clothing.

⁴² **elixir** – a drug or essence with the property of indefinitely prolonging life.

⁴³ **censure** – an expression of strong disapproval or strong criticism.

Again, hypocrites love titles, honors, and respect from men. The Pharisee was never so happy as when he was called Rabbi.⁴⁴ He never felt himself so really great as when he was stuck up in the highest seat in the synagogue....But the true Christian cares not for titles. It is one of the marks of Christians that they have generally taken names of abuse to be their distinctive appellations.⁴⁵ There was a time when the term *methodist*⁴⁶ was abusive. What did those good men say who had it so applied to them? "You call us methodists by way of abuse, do you? It shall be our title." The name *Puritan*⁴⁷ was the lowest of all; it was the symbol, which was always employed by the drunkard and swearer, to express a godly man. "Well," says the godly man, "I will be called a Puritan. If that is a name of reproach, I will take it." It has been so with the Christian all the world over. He has chosen for himself the name, which his enemy has given him in malice. Not so the hypocrite. He takes that which is the most honorable; he wishes always to be thought to belong to the most respectable sect, and to hold an office in that sect which will confer upon him the most honorable title.

Now, can you say from your inmost soul, that in religion you are not seeking for honors or titles, but that you can tread these beneath your feet and want no higher degree than that of a sinner saved by grace and no greater honor than to sit at the feet of Jesus and to learn of Him? Are you willing to be the despised followers of the carpenter's Son...? If so, methinks, you have but little hypocrisy in you. But if you only follow Him because you are honored by men, farewell to the sincerity of your religion!

There was another evidence of an hypocrite which was equally good, namely, that he strained at a gnat and swallowed a camel. Hypocrites in these days do not find fault with us for eating with unwashed hands, but they still fix upon some ceremonial omission. Sabbatarianism⁴⁸ has furnished hypocrisy with an extremely convenient refuge. Acts of necessity done by the Christian are the objects of the sanctimonious⁴⁹ horror of Pharisees; and labors of mercy and smiles of joy are damning sins in the esteem of

⁴⁴ **Rabbi** – a title of respect given by the Jews to doctors of the Law: *my great one; my teacher*.

⁴⁵ **appellations** – a designation, name, or title given; a descriptive name.

⁴⁶ **methodist** – originally, a term for members of a religious society established at Oxford in 1729 by John and Charles Wesley; later applied to those in the movement of the Wesleys and George Whitefield; applied scornfully to persons of strict religious views.

⁴⁷ **Puritan** – a member of the English Protestants who regarded the reformation of the church under Elizabeth as incomplete and called for further "purification" from unscriptural, corrupt forms and ceremonies retained from the unreformed church; later an abusive term for anyone regarded as having strict religious views.

⁴⁸ **Sabbatarianism** – a movement of those who regard the Lord's Day as the Christian Sabbath.

⁴⁹ **sanctimonious** – pretended piety or righteousness; making a show of holiness.

hypocrites, if done upon a Sunday. Though our Father worked hitherto and Christ worked, though works of kindness, mercy, and charity are the duty of the Sabbath; yet if the Christian be employed in these, he is thought to be offending against God's holy Law. The slightest infringement⁵⁰ of that which is a ceremonial observance becomes a great sin in the eye of the hypocrite. But he, poor man, who will find fault with you for some little thing in this respect, straining at a gnat, is the man you will find cheating, adulterating⁵¹ his goods, lying, puffing,⁵² and grinding the poor.

I have always noticed that those very particular souls who look out for little things, who are always searching out little points of difference, are just the men who omit the weightier matters of the Law....Always suspect yourself when you are more careful about little than about great things. If you find it hurts your conscience more to be absent from the communion than to cheat a widow, rest quite assured that you are wrong...

Rest ye assured, that the man who strains at a gnat, yet so allows the camel, is a deceiver. Mark you, my dear friends, I like you to strain at the gnats; I have no objection to that at all—only do not swallow the camel afterwards! Be as particular as you like about right and wrong. If you think a thing is a little wrong, it is wrong to you. "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Rom 14:23). If you cannot do it, believing yourself to be right in not doing it, though another man could do it and do right, yet to you it would not be right. Strain the gnats; they are not good things in your wines; strain them out! It is well to get rid of them, but then do not open your mouth and swallow a camel afterwards. For if you do that, you will give no evidence that you are a child of God, but prove that you are a damnable hypocrite.

But read on in this chapter, and you will find that these people neglected all the inward part of religion and only observed the outward. As our Savior said, they made clean "the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess" (23:25). There are many books, which are excellently bound; but there is nothing within them. And there are many persons that have a very spiritual exterior, but there is nothing whatever in the heart. Do you not know some of them? Perhaps if you know yourself, you may discover one. Do you not know some who are precisely religious, who would scarce omit attending to a single means of grace, who practice the ritual in all its forms and all its ceremonies, who would not turn aside as much as a hair's breadth from any outward

⁵⁰ **infringement** – violation of a law or regulation.

⁵¹ **adulterating** – making impure by adding false or impure ingredients.

⁵² **puffing** – bidding at an auction for the purpose of inflating or raising the price; appointing a person to bid for you at a sale or auction to keep the price of an item high.

command? Before the world, they stand as eminently pious⁵³ because they are minutely attentive to the externals of the sanctuary; yet they are careless of the inward matter. So long as they take the bread and wine, they are not careful about whether they have eaten the flesh and drunk the blood of Christ. So long as they have been baptized with water, they are not careful whether they have been buried with Christ in baptism unto death. So long as they have been up to the house of God, they are satisfied. It is nothing to them whether they have had communion with Christ or not. No, they are perfectly content, so long as they have the shell without looking for the kernel. The wheat may go where it pleases—the husk, the chaff, and the straw are quite sufficient and enough for them.

Some people I know of are like inns, which have an angel hanging outside for a sign, but they have a devil within for a landlord. There are many men of that kind. They take good care to have an excellent sign hanging out; they must be known by all men to be strictly religious. But within, which is the all-important matter, they are full of wickedness. But I have sometimes heard persons mistake this matter. They say, “Ah! Well, poor man, he is a sad drunkard, certainly; but he is a very good-hearted man at bottom.” Now, as Rowland Hill⁵⁴ used to say, that is a most astonishing thing for any man to say of another, that he was bad at top and good at bottom. When men take their fruit to market, they cannot make their customers believe, if they see rotten apples at the top, that there are good ones at the bottom. A man’s outward conduct is generally a little better than his heart. Very few men sell better goods than they put in the window.

Therefore, do not misunderstand me. When I say we must attend more to the inward than the outward, I would not have you leave the outward to itself. “Make clean the outside of the cup and platter”—make it as clean as you can, but take care also that the inward is made clean. Look to that first. Ask thyself such questions as these—“Have I been born again? Am I passed from darkness to light? Have I been brought out of the realms of Satan into the kingdom of God’s dear Son? Do I live by private communion near to the side of Jesus? Can I say that my heart panteth after the Lord, even as the hart does after the water-brooks?” For if I cannot say this, whatever my outward life may be, I am self-deceived and deceive others, and the woe of the hypocrite falls upon me. I have made clean the outside of the cup and platter, but the inward part is very wickedness. Does that come home to any of you? Is this personal preaching? Then God be blessed for it! May the truth be the

⁵³ **pious** – exhibiting religious reverence or devoutness.

⁵⁴ **Rowland Hill** (1744-1833) – Anglican preacher who ministered at Surrey Chapel in Southwark, London. An aristocratic convert to Evangelicalism and an enthusiastic champion of itinerant preaching. Often quoted by Charles Spurgeon.

death of your delusions.

You may know a hypocrite by another sign: his religion depends upon the place or upon the time of day. He rises at seven o'clock perhaps, and you will find him religious for a quarter of an hour. He is, as the boy said, "Saying his prayers to himself," in the first part of the morning. Well, then you find him pretty pious for another half-hour, for there is family prayer. But when the business begins, and he is talking to his men, I won't guarantee that you will be able to admire him. If one of his servants has been doing something a little amiss, you will find him perhaps using angry and unworthy language. You will find him too, if he gets a customer whom he thinks to be rather green, not quite pious; for he will be taking him in. You will find too, that if he sees a good chance at any hour of the day, he will be very ready to do a dirty trick. He was a saint in the morning, for there was nothing to be lost by it. But he has a religion that is not too strict. "Business is business," he says, and he puts religion aside by stretching his conscience, which is made of very elastic material. Well, some time in the evening you will find him very pious again, unless he is out on a journey, where neither wife, nor family, nor church can see him; and you will find him at a theater. He would not go if there were a chance of the minister hearing of it, for then he would be excommunicated. But he does not mind going when the eye of the church or of any of his friends is not upon him. Fine clothes make fine gentlemen, and fine places make fine hypocrites. But the man who is true to his God and to his conscience is a Christian all day and all night long and a Christian everywhere. "Though you were to fill my house full of silver and gold," he says, "I would not do a dirty action. Though you should give me the stars and the countless wealth of empires, yet I would not do that which would dishonor God or disgrace my profession."

Put the true Christian where he might sin and be praised for it, and he will not do it. He does not hate sin for the sake of the company, but he hates it for its own sake. He says, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" You shall find him a *fallible* man, but not a *false* man. You shall find him full of infirmities, but not of intentional lust and of designed iniquity. As a Christian, you must follow Christ in the mire as well in the meads;⁵⁵ you must walk with Him in the rain as well as in the sunshine; you must go with Him in the storm as well as in fair weather. He is no Christian, who cannot walk with Christ come rags, come poverty, come contumely⁵⁶ or shame. He is the hypocrite who can walk with Christ in silver slippers and leave Him

⁵⁵ **meads** – meadows.

⁵⁶ **contumely** – insulting, contemptuous language or treatment.

when it becomes necessary for him to go barefoot....Is this true then of any of us? Can we say we desire to be evermore the same? Or do we change with our company and with the times? If so, we are hypocrites confessed, and let us own it before God, and may God make us sincere.

There is another sign of the hypocrite; and now the lash will fall on my own back and on most of us too. *Hypocrites, and other people besides hypocrites, are generally severe with others and very lenient with themselves.* Have you ever heard a hypocrite describe himself? I describe him thus: “you are a mean, beggarly fellow.” “No,” says he, “I am not; I am economical.” I say to him, “You are dishonest, you are a thief.” “No,” says he, “I am only cute⁵⁷ and sharp for the times.⁵⁸” “Well, but,” I say to him, “you are proud and conceited.” “Oh!” says he, “I have only a proper and manly respect.” “Ay, but you are a fawning,⁵⁹ cringing⁶⁰ fellow.” “No,” says he, “I am all things to all men.” Somehow or other he will make vice look like a virtue in himself, but he will deal by the reverse rule with others.

Show him a Christian who is really humble, and he says, “I hate his fawning ways.” Tell him there is one who is very courageous for Christ: “Oh! He is impudent,⁶¹” says he. Show him one who is liberal,⁶² doing what he can for his Master’s service, spending and being spent for Him. “Rash and imprudent,” says he, “extravagant! The man does not know what he is about.” You may point out a virtue, and the hypocrite shall at once say it is a vice. Have you ever seen a hypocrite turn doctor? He has a fine beam in his eye, large enough to shut out the light of heaven from his soul. Nevertheless, he is a very skillful oculist.⁶³ He waits upon some poor brother, whose eye is a little affected with a mote,⁶⁴ so tiny that the full blaze of the sun can scarce reveal it. Look at our beam-eyed friend; he puts on a knowing look and cries, “Allow me to extract this mote for you!” “Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye” (Mat 7:5). There are people of that sort who make virtues in others into vices, and vices in themselves they transform into virtues. Now, if thou be a Christian, I will tell thee what will be thy spirit: it will be the very reverse. Thou wilt be always making excuses for others, but thou wilt never be making excuses for thyself. The true Christian, if he sees himself sin, mourns over it and makes much ado⁶⁵

⁵⁷ **cute** – clever; shrewd.

⁵⁸ **sharp for the times** – businesslike; quick to take unfair advantage of others.

⁵⁹ **fawning** – seeking favor by flattery.

⁶⁰ **cringing** – bending or bowing the body like a slave; to flatter by acting in a servile way.

⁶¹ **impudent** – showing lack of respect and excessive boldness.

⁶² **liberal** – generous; open-hearted.

⁶³ **oculist** – a physician who treats eye diseases.

⁶⁴ **mote** – speck; splinter.

⁶⁵ **ado** – difficulty.

concerning it. He says to another, "Oh! I feel so sinful." And the other one cries, "I cannot really see it. I can see no sin in you; I could wish I were holy as you." "No," says the other, "but I am full of infirmity."

John Bunyan describes Mercy, Christiana, and the children after having been washed in the bath and sealed with the seal, as coming up out of the water and being all fair and lovely to look upon; and one began to say to the other, "You are fairer than I!" and, "You are more comely than I!" said another. And then each began to bemoan their own spots and to praise the beauty of the others. That is the spirit of a Christian. But the spirit of the hypocrite is the very reverse: he will judge and condemn and punish with lynch-law⁶⁶ every other man. And as for himself, he is exempt, he is a king, he knows no law, and his conscience slumbers and allows him to go on easily in the very sins which he condemns in others.

Delivered on Sabbath morning, February 6, 1859,
at The Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892): Influential Baptist minister in England. The collected sermons of Spurgeon during his ministry fill 63 volumes. The sermons' 20–25 million words are equivalent to the 27 volumes of the ninth edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* and stand as the largest set of books by a single author in the history of Christianity. Born at Kelvedon, Essex, England.



Hypocrisy is a weed naturally springing in all ground. The best heart is not perfectly clear or free of it.—*John Flavel*

⁶⁶ **lynch-law** – inflicting punishment upon an offender, by a self-constituted court armed with no legal authority.

HYPOCRITES AND CHRIST

Thomas Brooks (1608-1680)

THERE is never an hypocrite in the world that makes God, or Christ, or holiness, or his doing or receiving good in his station, relation, or generation his grand end, his highest end, his ultimate end of living in the world. Pleasures, profits, and honors are the hypocrite's all, [which] he aims at in this world. They are his trinity, which he adores and serves and sacrificeth himself unto (1Jo 2:16). An hypocrite's ends are corrupt and selfish. God may possibly be at the higher end of his work, but *self* is at the further end; for he that was never truly cast out of himself, can have no higher end than himself. An hypocrite is all for his own glory: he acts *for* himself and *from* himself. "So I may have the profit, the credit, the glory, the applause, come of God's glory what will!" This is the language of an unsound heart.

An hypocrite will seem to be very godly when he can make a gain of godliness. He will seem to be very holy when holiness is the way to outward greatness and happiness. But his religious wickedness will double-damn the hypocrite at last. Self-ends⁶⁷ are the operative ingredients in all an hypocrite does....When hypocrites take up religion, it is only to serve their own turns, to bring about their own carnal ends.⁶⁸ They serve not the Lord, but their own bellies (Rom 16:18; Phi 3:19)....An hypocrite always makes himself the end of all his service; but let such hypocrites know, that though their profession be never so glorious and their duties never so abundant, yet their ends being selfish and carnal, all their pretensions and performances are but beautiful abominations in the sight of God.

An hypocrite has always a squint-eye,⁶⁹ and squint-eyed aims and squint-eyed ends in all he does. Balaam spake very religiously, and he multiplied altars and sacrifices; but the thing he had in his eye was the wages of unrighteousness (Num 22:23; 2Pe 2:15). Jehu destroyed bloody Ahab's house, he executed the vengeance of God upon that wicked family; he readily, resolutely, and effectually destroyed all the worshippers of Baal, but his ends were to secure the kingdom to him and his (2Ki 10). Ahab and the Ninevites fasted in sackcloth, but it was merely that they might not feel the heavy judgments that they feared would overtake them (1Ki 21; Jon 3). The Jews in Babylon fasted and mourned, and mourned and fasted seventy years, but

⁶⁷ **self-ends** – selfish aims or purposes.

⁶⁸ **carnal ends** – fleshly, self-centered goals.

⁶⁹ **squint eye** – a manner that is not straightforward; dishonest manner.

it was more to get off their chains than their sins; it was more to be rid of their captivity than it was to be rid of their iniquity (*Zec 7:5, 6*)....It is the end that dignifies or debaseth the action, that rectifies it or adulterates it, that sets a crown of honor or a crown of shame upon the head of it. He that commonly, habitually, in all his duties and services, proposes to himself no higher ends than the praises of men or rewards of men, or the stopping the mouth of natural conscience, or only to avoid a smarting rod, or merely to secure himself from wrath to come, he is an hypocrite.

But now mark: a sincere Christian, if he prays or hears, or gives or fasts, or repents or obeys, God's glory is the main end of all. The glory of God is his highest end, his ultimate end (*Psa 115:1; 1Th 2:6*). A sincere Christian can be content to be trampled upon and vilified,⁷⁰ so God's name be glorified. The bent of such a heart is for God and His glory; nothing but sincerity can carry a soul so high as in all acts natural, civil, and religious to intend God's glory (*Rev 9:9-11*). A sincere Christian ascribes the praise of all to God. He sets the crown on Christ's head alone; he will set God upon the throne and make all things else His servants or His footstool (*Rom 14:7, 8*). All must bow the knee to God or be trodden in the dirt. He will love nothing, he will embrace nothing but what sets God higher or brings God nearer to his heart....He lives not to his own will, or lusts, or greatness, or glory in this world, but he lives to His glory, Whose glory is dearer to him than his own life (*1Co 10:28; Rev 12:11*)....The daily language of sincere souls is this: "Not unto us, Lord, not unto us, Lord, but to thy name give glory" (*Psa 115:1*).

Glory is God's right, and He stands upon His right; and this the sincere Christian knows, and therefore he gives Him His right, he gives Him the honor and the glory that is due unto His name. But pray do not mistake me: I do not say that such as are really sincere do actually eye the glory of Christ in all their actions. Oh no! This is a happiness desirable on earth, but shall never be attained till we come to heaven. Bye and base ends⁷¹ and aims will be still ready to creep into the best hearts; but all sincere hearts sigh and groan under them. They complain to God of them...and it is the earnest desires and daily endeavors of their souls to be rid of them....But now take a sincere Christian in his ordinary, usual, and habitual course, and you shall find that his aims and ends in all his actions and undertakings are to glorify God, to exalt God, and to lift up God in the world....He that sets up the glory of God as his chief end will find that his chief end will by degrees eat out all low and base ends.

⁷⁰ **vilified** – regarded as worthless; despised.

⁷¹ **bye and base ends** – secret selfish purposes or low, despicable aims for private advantage.

No hypocrite can live wholly and only upon the righteousness of Christ, the satisfaction of Christ, the merits of Christ for justification and salvation. The hypocritical scribes and Pharisees prayed, fasted, and kept the Sabbath and gave alms; and in this legal righteousness they rested and trusted (Mat 6; Luk 18:11, 12). Ponder upon that in Revelation 3:16-18. Upon the performance of these and such like duties, they laid the weight of their souls and the stress of their salvation and so perished forever.

An hypocrite rests upon what he doth and never looks so high as the righteousness of Christ. He looks upon his duties as so much good moneys laid out for heaven. He weaves a web of righteousness to clothe himself withal. He never looks out for a more glorious righteousness to be justified by than his own, and so puts a slight upon the righteousness of Christ. "For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" (Rom 10:3). The first step to salvation is to renounce our own righteousness. The next step is to embrace the righteousness of Christ, which is freely offered to sinners in the Gospel. But these things the hypocrite minds not, regards not. The righteousness of an hypocrite is not only imperfect, but impure—a rag, a filthy rag; and therefore he that rests upon such a righteousness must needs miscarry to all eternity (Isa 64:6). O sirs! Who will say that that man needs a savior, [who] can fly to heaven upon the wings of his own duties and services? If a man's duties can pacify an infinite wrath and satisfy an infinite justice, then farewell Christ, and welcome duties.

He that rests upon anything in him or done by him, as a means to procure the favor of God or the salvation of his soul will put such a cheat upon himself as will undo him for ever. Non-submission to the righteousness of Christ keeps Christ and the hypocrite asunder. Christ will never love nor like to put the fine, clean, white linen of His own righteousness upon the old garment, the old rags of an hypocrite's duties (Rev 19:7, 8)...An hypocrite's confidence in his own righteous-ness turns his righteousness into filthiness (Pro 21:27).

But now a sincere Christian, he renounces his own righteousness. He renounces all confidence in the flesh (Phi 3:3); he looks upon his own righteousness as dung, yea, as dogs' meat, as some interpret the word in Philippians 3:8. He will say no more to his duties, to the works of his hands, "Ye are our gods" (Hos 14:3). When they look upon the holiness of God's nature, the righteousness of His government, the severity of His Law, the terror of His wrath, they see an absolute and indispensable necessity of a more glorious righteousness than their own to appear before God in. A

sincere Christian sets the highest price and value upon the righteousness of Christ: "I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only" (Psa 71:16).

A sincere Christian rejoices in the righteousness of Christ above all: "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels" (Isa 61:10)...Oh then, what matter of joy must it be to a sincere Christian to have the rich and royal garment of Christ's righteousness cast upon him! (Isa 28:16). A sincere Christian rests on the righteousness of Christ as on a sure foundation: "Surely shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength" (Isa 45:24).

A sincere Christian looks upon the righteousness of Christ as that which renders him most splendid and glorious in the eyes of God: "And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Phi 3:9)...A sincere Christian looks upon the righteousness of Christ as his only security against wrath to come (1Th 1:10). Wrath to come is the greatest wrath, wrath to come is the purest wrath, wrath to come is infinite wrath, wrath to come is everlasting wrath. Now the sincere Christian, he knows no way under heaven to secure himself from wrath to come, but by putting on the robe of Christ's righteousness (Rom 13:14)...Well, for a close, remember this: there is never an hypocrite in the world that is more pleased, satisfied, delighted and contented with the righteousness of Christ, than with his own. Though an hypocrite may be much in duties, yet he never lives above his duties; he works for life, and he rests in his work, and this proves his mortal wound. But,

An hypocrite never embraces a whole Christ. He can never take up his full and everlasting rest, satisfaction, and content in the person of Christ, in the merits of Christ, in the enjoyment of Christ alone. No hypocrite did ever long and mourn after the enjoyment of Christ as the best thing in all the world. No hypocrite did ever prize Christ for a Sanctifier as well as a Savior. No hypocrite did ever look upon Christ or long for Christ to deliver him from the power of his sins, as much or as well as to deliver him from wrath to come. No hypocrite can really love the person of Christ or take satisfaction in the person of Christ. The rays and beams of Christ's glory have never warmed his heart. He never knew what bosom communion with Christ meant (1Th 1:10). An hypocrite may love to be healed by Christ, and to be pardoned by Christ, and to be saved by Christ; but he can never take

any complacency⁷² in the Person of Christ. His heart never seriously works after union with Christ. The love of a sincere Christian runs much out to the Person of Christ. Heaven itself without Christ would be to such a soul but a poor thing, a low thing, a little thing, an uncomfortable thing, an empty thing. It is the Person of Christ that is the sparkling diamond in the ring of glory (Phi 1:21; 3:7-10).

No hypocrite in the world is sincerely willing to receive Christ in all His office and to close with Him upon Gospel terms. The terms upon which God offers Christ in the Gospel are these, viz.,⁷³ that we shall accept of a whole Christ with a whole heart (Mat 16:24).

Now, mark, a whole Christ includes all His offices; and a whole heart includes all our faculties. Christ as Mediator is King, Priest, and Prophet; and so God the Father in the Gospel offers Him. Salvation was too great and too glorious a work to be perfected and completed by any one office of Christ. Christ as a prophet instructs us, as a priest He redeems us and intercedes for us, and as a king, He sanctifies and saves us. The apostle hit it when he said, “Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1Co 1:30). Consider Christ as our Prophet, and so He is made wisdom to us. Consider Him as our Priest, and so He is made righteousness and redemption to us. Consider Him as our King, and so He is made sanctification and holiness to us.

An hypocrite may be willing to embrace Christ as a priest to save him from wrath, from the curse, from hell, from everlasting burning, but he is never sincerely willing to embrace Christ as a prophet to teach and instruct him, and as a king to rule and reign over him. Many hypocrites may be willing to receive a Christ Jesus, [who] are not willing to receive a Lord Jesus. They may be willing to embrace a saving Christ, but they are not willing to embrace a ruling Christ, a commanding Christ: “This man shall not rule over us” (Luk 19:27)...“He came unto his own, and his own received him not” (Joh 1:11). An hypocrite is willing to receive Christ in one office, but not in every office; and this is that stumbling-stone at which hypocrites stumble and fall and are broken in pieces. Certainly Christ is as lovely and as comely, as desirable and delightful, as eminent and excellent in one office as He is in another; and therefore it is a just and righteous thing with God that hypocrites that won’t receive Him in every office should have no benefit by any one of His offices. Christ and His offices may be distinguished, but Christ and His offices can never be divided (1Co 1:13). Whilst many have been a-laboring to divide one office of Christ from

⁷² **complacency** – pleasure; satisfaction; delight.

⁷³ **viz.** – abbreviation for Latin *vidicet*, that is; namely.

another, they have wholly stripped themselves of any advantage or benefit by Christ.

Hypocrites love to share with Christ in His happiness, but they don't love to share with Christ in His holiness. They are willing to be redeemed by Christ, but they are not cordially willing to submit to the laws and government of Christ. They are willing to be saved by His blood, but they are not willing to submit to His scepter. Hypocrites love the privileges of the Gospel, but they don't love the services of the Gospel, especially those that are most inward and spiritual. But now a sincere Christian, he owns Christ in all His offices, he receives Christ in all His offices, and he closes with Christ in all His offices. He accepts of Him, not only as a Christ Jesus, but also as a Lord Jesus; he embraces Him, not only as a saving Christ, but also as a ruling Christ. The Colossians received Him as Christ Jesus the Lord (Col 2:6); they received a *Lord* Christ as well as a *saving* Christ; they received Christ as a king upon His throne, as well as a sacrifice upon His cross (2Co 4:5). God the Father in the Gospel tenders a whole Christ. We preach Christ Jesus the Lord; and accordingly, a sincere Christian receives a whole Christ, he receives Christ Jesus the Lord (Act 5:31)...An hypocrite is all for a saving Christ, for a sin-pardoning Christ, for a soul-glorifying Christ, but regards not a ruling Christ, a reigning Christ, a commanding Christ, a sanctifying Christ; and this at last will prove his damning sin (Joh 3:19, 20).

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Thomas Brooks (1608-1680): Nonconformist preacher and advocate of the Congregational way. Born into a Puritan family, he was sent to Emmanuel College, Cambridge. Author of *Precious Remedies against Satan's Devices*, *The Mute Christian under the Smarting Rod*, and many others. He was buried in Bunhill Fields, London, England.



HYPOCRITES DEFICIENT IN PRAYER

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

“Will he always call upon God?”—Job 27:10.

CONCERNING these words, I would observe, who it is that is here spoken of, *viz.*, the hypocrite....Job’s three friends, in their speeches to him, insisted much upon it, that he was a hypocrite. But Job, in this chapter, asserts his sincerity and integrity and shows how different his own behavior had been from that of hypocrites. Particularly he declares his steadfast and immovable resolution of persevering and holding out in the ways of religion and righteousness to the end; as you may see in the six first verses. In the text, he shows how contrary to this steadfastness and perseverance the character of the hypocrite is, who is not wont⁷⁴ thus to hold out in religion.

DOCTRINE: However hypocrites may continue for a season in the duty of prayer, yet it is their manner, after a while, in a great measure, to leave off....They do so for a while after they have received common illuminations and affections. While they are under awakenings, they may through fear of hell call upon God and attend very constantly upon the duty of secret prayer. And after they have had some melting affections, having their hearts much moved with the goodness of God or with some affecting encouragements, false joy, and comfort; while these impressions last they continue to call upon God in the duty of secret prayer.

It is the manner of hypocrites, after a while, in a great measure, to leave off the practice of this duty. We are often taught that the seeming goodness and piety of hypocrites is not of a lasting and persevering nature. It is so with respect to their practice of the duty of prayer in particular, and especially of secret prayer. They can omit this duty and their omission of it not be taken notice of by others, who know what profession they have made, so that a regard to their own reputation doth not oblige them still to practice it. If others saw how they neglect it, it would exceedingly shock their charity⁷⁵ towards them. But their neglect doth not fall under their observation; at least not under the observation of many. Therefore, they may omit this duty and still have the credit of being converted persons.

Men of this character can come to a neglect of secret prayer by degrees

⁷⁴ **wont** – accustomed; used to; in the habit of.

⁷⁵ **charity** – judging mercifully and hopefully, making allowance for apparent faults or shortcomings.

without shocking their peace. For though indeed for a converted person to live, in a great measure, without secret prayer is very wide of the notion they once had of a true convert; yet they find means by degrees to alter their notions and to bring their principles to suit with their inclinations. And at length they come to a notion that a man may be a convert and yet live very much in neglect of this duty. In time, they can bring all things to suit well together: a hope of heaven, an indulgence of sloth, gratifying carnal appetites, and living, in a great measure, a prayerless life. They cannot indeed suddenly make these things agree; it must be a work of time. And length of time will effect it. By degrees, they find out ways to guard and defend their consciences against those powerful enemies, so that those enemies and a quiet, secure conscience can at length dwell together.

Whereas it is asserted in the doctrine that it is the manner of hypocrites, after a while, in a great measure, to leave off this duty, I would observe to you that it is not intended but that they may commonly continue to the end of life in an external attendance on prayer with others. They may commonly be present at public prayers in the congregation and also at family prayer...they may continue to attend upon prayer as long as they live, and yet may truly be said not to call upon God. For such prayer, in the manner of it, is not their own. They are present only for the sake of their credit or in compliance with others. They may be present at these prayers, and yet have no proper prayer of their own.

But they in a great measure leave off the practice of secret prayer. They come to this pass by degrees. At first, they begin to be careless about it under some particular temptations. Because they have been out in young company or have been taken up very much with worldly business, they omit it once. After that, they more easily omit it again. Thus, it presently becomes a frequent thing with them to omit it; and after a while, it comes to that pass, that they seldom attend it. Perhaps they attend it on Sabbath-days and sometimes on other days. But they have ceased to make it a constant practice daily to retire to worship God alone and to seek His face in secret places. They sometimes do a little to quiet conscience and just to keep alive their old hope because it would be shocking to them, even after all their subtle dealing with their consciences, to call themselves converts and yet totally to live without prayer. Yet...they have, in a great measure, left off.

I come now to the reasons why this is the manner of hypocrites:

1. Hypocrites never had the spirit of prayer. They may have been stirred up to the external performance of this duty, and that with a great deal

of earnestness and affection, and yet always have been destitute⁷⁶ of the true spirit of prayer. The spirit of prayer is a holy spirit, a gracious spirit. We read of the spirit of grace and supplication:⁷⁷ “And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications” (Zec 12:10). Wherever there is a true spirit of supplication, there is the spirit of grace. The true spirit of prayer is no other than God’s own Spirit dwelling in the hearts of the saints. And as this Spirit comes from God, so doth it naturally tend to God in holy breathings and pantings. It naturally leads to God to converse with Him by prayer. Therefore, the Spirit is said to make intercession for the saints “with groanings which cannot be uttered” (Rom 8:26)...The truly godly have the spirit of adoption, the spirit of a child, to which it is natural to go to God and call upon Him, crying to Him as to a father.

But hypocrites have nothing of this spirit of adoption: they have not the spirit of children, for this is a gracious and holy spirit, given only in a real work of regeneration. Therefore, it is often mentioned as a part of the distinguishing character of the godly, that they call upon God. “The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth. He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them” (Psa 145:18, 19). “And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Act 2:21).

It is natural to one who is truly born from above to pray to God and to pour out his soul in holy supplications before his heavenly Father. This is as natural to the new nature and life as breathing is to the nature and life of the body. But hypocrites have not this new nature. Those illuminations and affections, which they had, went away and left no change of nature. Therefore, prayer naturally dies away in them, having no foundation laid in the nature of the soul. It is maintained awhile only by a certain force put upon nature. But force is not constant; and as that declines, nature will take place again.

The spirit of a true convert is a spirit of true love to God, and that naturally inclines the soul to those duties wherein it is conversant with God and makes it to delight in approaching Him. But a hypocrite hath no such spirit. He is left under the reigning power of enmity against God, which naturally inclines him to shun His presence.

The spirit of a true convert is a spirit of faith and reliance on the power, wisdom, and mercy of God; and such a spirit is naturally expressed in

⁷⁶ **destitute** – utterly lacking; devoid.

⁷⁷ **supplication** – earnest, humble request or plea.

prayer. True prayer is nothing else but faith expressed. Hence we read of the prayer of faith (Jam 5:15). True Christian prayer is the faith and reliance of the soul breathed forth in words. But a hypocrite is without the spirit of faith. He hath no true reliance or dependence on God, but is really self-dependent.

As to those common convictions and affections, which the hypocrite had, and which made him keep up the duty of prayer for a while—they not reaching the bottom of the heart nor being accompanied with any change of nature—a little thing extinguishes them. The cares of the world commonly choke and suffocate them; and often the pleasures and vanities of youth totally put an end to them; and with them ends their constant practice of the duty of prayer.

2. When a hypocrite hath had his false conversion, his wants are in his sense of things already supplied; his desires are already answered; and so he finds no further business at the throne of grace. He never was sensible that he had any other needs, but a need of being safe from hell. And now that he is converted, as he thinks, that need is supplied. Why then should he still go on to resort to the throne of grace with earnest requests? He is out of danger; all that he was afraid of is removed. He hath got enough to carry him to heaven, and what more should he desire? While under awakenings, he had this to stir him up to go to God in prayer: he was in continual fear of hell. This put him upon crying to God for mercy. But since in his own opinion he is converted, he hath no further business about which to go to God. And although he may keep up the duty of prayer in the outward form a little while, for fear of spoiling his hope, yet he will find it a dull business to continue it without necessity, and so by degrees he will let drop the practice. The work of the hypocrite is done when he is converted, and therefore he standeth in no further need of help.

But it is far otherwise with the true convert. His work is not done; but he finds still a great work to do and great wants to be supplied. He sees himself still to be a poor, empty, helpless creature, and that he still stands in great and continual need of God's help. He is sensible that without God he can do nothing. A false conversion makes a man in his own eyes self-sufficient. He saith he is rich, and increased with goods, and hath need of nothing; and knoweth not that he is wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked (Rev 3:17). But after a true conversion, the soul remains sensible of its own impotence and emptiness, as it is in itself, and its sense of it is rather increased than diminished. It is still sensible of its universal dependence on God for everything. A true convert is sensible that his grace is very imperfect; and he is very far from having all that he desires. Instead of that, by conversion are begotten in him new desires which he never had before. He now finds in him holy appetites, a hungering and thirsting after

righteousness, a longing after more acquaintance and communion with God. So that he hath business enough still at the throne of grace; yea, his business there, instead of being diminished, is rather increased.

The hope, which the hypocrite hath of his good estate, takes off the force that the command of God before had upon his conscience, so that now he dares neglect so plain a duty. The command which requires the practice of the duty of prayer is exceeding plain: “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation” (Mat 26:41). “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with *all perseverance*, and supplication for all saints” (Eph 6:18). “When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret” (Mat 6:6). As long as the hypocrite was in his own apprehension⁷⁸ in continual danger of hell, he durst not disobey these commands. But since he is, as he thinks, safe from hell, he is grown bold. He dares to live in the neglect of the plainest command in the Bible.

It is the manner of hypocrites, after a while, to return to sinful practices, which will tend to keep them from praying. While they were under convictions, they reformed their lives and walked very exactly. This reformation continues, after their supposed conversion, while they are much affected with hope and false comfort. But as these things die away, their old lusts revive; and by degrees, they return like the dog to his vomit and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. They return to their sensual, worldly, proud, and contentious practices, as before. And no wonder this makes them forsake their closets. Sinning and praying agree not well together.

I would exhort those who have entertained a hope of their being true converts—and who since their supposed conversion have left off the duty of secret prayer and ordinarily allow themselves in the omission of it—to throw away their hope. If you have left off calling upon God, it is time for you to leave off hoping and flattering yourselves with an imagination that you are the children of God. Probably it will be a very difficult thing for you to do this. It is hard for a man to let go a hope of heaven on which he hath once allowed himself to lay hold, and which he hath retained for a considerable time. True conversion is a rare thing. But that men should be brought off from a false hope of conversion—after they are once settled and established in it and have continued in it for some time—is much more rare.

⁷⁸ **apprehension** – understanding.

Insist not on that as a reason why you should not throw away your hope, that you had the judgment of others...It is a small matter to be judged of man's judgment, whether you be approved or condemned, and whether it be by minister or people, wise or unwise...if you be one of those who have forsaken God and left off calling upon His name, you have the judgment and sentence of God in the Scriptures against you, which is a thousand times more than to have the judgment of all the wise and godly men and ministers in the world in your favor.

Why will you retain that hope which by evident experience you find poisons you? Is it reasonable to think, that a holy hope, a hope that is from heaven, would have such an influence? No, surely, nothing of such a malignant influence comes from that world of purity and glory. No poison groweth in the paradise of God. The same hope, which leads men to sin in this world, will lead to hell hereafter. Why therefore will you retain such a hope, of which your own experience shows you the ill tendency, in that it encourages you to lead a wicked life?

If your own experience of the nature and tendency of your hope will not convince you of the falseness of it, what will? Are you resolved to retain your hope, let it prove ever so unsound and hurtful? Will you hold it fast until you go to hell with it? Many men cling to a false hope and embrace it so closely that they never let it go till the flames of hell cause their arms to unclench and let go their hold.

Certainly, it is foolish for men to imagine, that God had no more wisdom, or could contrive no other way of bestowing comfort and hope of eternal life, than one which should encourage men to forsake Him.

From "Hypocrites Deficient in the Duty of Prayer" in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol. 2, reprinted by The Banner of Truth Trust.

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758): Massachusetts Congregational preacher. Regarded as America's greatest evangelical theologian and well-known for his preaching in the Great Awakening along with George Whitefield. Author of *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*, *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections*, and numerous other titles. Born in East Windsor, Connecticut, America.

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HOW FAR MAY HYPOCRITES GO?

David Clarkson (1622-1686)

“Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity”—Matthew 7:22, 23.

OBSERVATION: Many think themselves sure of heaven, when it is sure they shall never come there. Many are persuaded they shall enter into heaven, whom Christ is resolved to shut out of it. This is clearly implied in the text. Yet because it is but implied, I shall not much insist on it...Only it will be necessary to take notice of the grounds of this woeful mistake, [so] that they may be avoided. And they are such as these:

(1) *Ignorance and inadvertency*:⁷⁹ there are many who know not or at least consider not what is necessary to bring a soul to heaven, where the way lies, and what Christ requires of those that would enter into it.

They consider not that there must be *regeneration*,⁸⁰ that “except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (Joh 3:3); that there must be a new creation; that the new Jerusalem is only for new creatures. There must be an universal change in every part of the soul, in the whole course of their lives; old things must pass away and all things become new—new heart and new way. There must be a *holiness* in the life, growth, power, and exercise of it, “without which no man shall see the Lord” (Heb 12:14). There must be *self-denial*: a denying of their own wisdom, will, humor,⁸¹ interests. A *renouncing of the world*: they must be crucified to the world. They understand scarce what it is to be crucified. *Mortification*: they must mortify the flesh with the affections and lusts [and] die daily. *A taking up the cross*: that if any man will come after Christ, it may cost him tears, sighs, bonds, imprisonment, his estate, his relations, his limbs, his blood, his life, and all...that it requires all diligence (2Pe 1:5); that he must strive and break through all difficulty, what sweat and toil soever it cost to crowd in (Luk 13:24); that he must wrestle, employ all his strength (Eph 6:12); that he must run, put out all his might, [and] so run as he may obtain; that he must fight, be in a continual war, fight the good fight; that he must beat his body⁸² (1Co 9:27); that he must take heaven by force, if he will have it. If they did know

⁷⁹ **inadvertency** – not giving proper attentiveness or observation; carelessness.

⁸⁰ **regeneration** – God’s act of creating new life in a sinner by the power of the Holy Spirit, resulting in repentance and faith in Christ and holiness of life; the new birth.

⁸¹ **humor** – one’s natural disposition or temperament; mood.

⁸² **beat his body** – spiritual discipline, not literal abuse of one’s body.

and consider this, they would not be confident of heaven, when they are strangers to these things which are required⁸³ of all those for whom heaven is intended.

(2) *Negligence, slothfulness*: if they know these things, yet [they] will not take the pains to examine their state by them. They will not be at the trouble to compare their hearts with the rule. They will not spare a few hours seriously to inquire whether they come up to what the Word requires. Alas, for the wretched carelessness of men as to their own souls and their everlasting state! One that seriously observes would think that the greatest part of people amongst us are either atheists or madmen: either they believe not that there is a God or that the Scriptures are His Word; or that their souls are immortal; or that there is a state of everlasting misery or happiness for every one after death; or that there are evidences in the Word by which they may know whether they shall be eternally damned or saved. Either they believe not these things, and so are plain atheists; or if they believe there is such a God and such a soul and such an eternal state and such a Word, wherein they may have directions to know whether their souls are bound for heaven or hell, would they not make use of these directions? Would they not spare some hours to examine seriously whether heaven or hell be their portion? Would they not do this presently? Would they not do it seriously, as a matter of eternal life or death requires, if they were not madmen indeed, if they were not quite bereaved⁸⁴ of all spiritual sense and reason?

No. Rather than thus trouble themselves, they will take it upon trust that they shall go to heaven, when, alas, they have no ground for a trust but what Satan suggests or their own deceitful hearts prompt them. And thus, they hang the whole weight of eternity upon a cobweb. Thus, they pin the everlasting concerns of their souls upon a shadow, as though it would hang there safe enough, where it can have no hold at all. Would any do this but a madman? What! Trust without trial⁸⁵ in a matter of eternal consequence to body and soul? “What need I put myself to this trouble? I will trust God with my soul,” say some. “What need I take any care further?” But alas, wretched creature! This is not to trust God, but to trust Satan with the soul! And, oh, what a woeful account will he give thee of it one day! Now, when men are so careless of their souls, when they will not trouble themselves to inquire after their eternal state, no wonder if they be so

⁸³ **things which are required** – the author does not mean these works *merit* salvation: he is describing the life of self-denial unto which the Lord Jesus calls every disciple.

⁸⁴ **bereaved** – deprived; robbed.

⁸⁵ **trust without trial** – believing one’s self to be in a state of grace without examining one’s hope by God’s Word.

woefully mistaken as to promise themselves heaven, when nothing but hell is reserved for them.

(3) *Self-love*: this possesses men with a good conceit⁸⁶ of themselves, a good opinion of their souls' condition, so that if they come to examine their state or be called to try it in the public ministry, they come to the work prepossessed.⁸⁷ Self-love will not suffer them to deal impartially with their souls. They catch greedily at anything that seems to make for them⁸⁸ and are careful to stave off⁸⁹ everything that would make against them. Or if they cannot yet put such a favorable construction on it as partial men will do when they are resolved to defend a bad cause, they look upon that word as an enemy that would shake the rotten pillars of a false hope. They deal with it as the prophet did with the king's messenger: [they] make sure to shut him out.

As self-love makes them flatter themselves, so they would have the Word of God to flatter them. They love not plain, searching, awakening truths. They will have a good opinion of themselves, whatever be said to the contrary. They say as Laodicea that they are "rich and increased," though Christ in the ministry says the contrary: they are "poor, wretched" (Rev 3:17). Though this be plainly manifested, yet self-love makes them both unable and unwilling to discern it. A blind man cannot judge of colors, and self-love blinds them. They cannot judge of the complexions⁹⁰ of soul, whether the features, the characters of heaven or hell be on it. [They] care not for looking in a true glass⁹¹ lest the visage⁹² of their soul, if truly represented, should trouble them. Satan blinds one eye, self-love closes the other, and the deceitfulness of sin seals both. No wonder if they call darkness light! No wonder if they fancy themselves in the way to heaven, when they are in the high road to hell. [When] the blind leads the blind, you know what will be the issue;⁹³ no wonder if when they think they shall be safe ashore in heaven and their feet near the very banks of happiness, at that very moment they are falling into the ditch.

(4) *Misapprehensions of God*: if light and conviction proceed so far as to discover to a sinner that he comes short of the rule and that [which] the

⁸⁶ **good conceit** – favorable opinion.

⁸⁷ **prepossessed** – having a good or bad opinion of something beforehand.

⁸⁸ **make for them** – works in their favor.

⁸⁹ **stave off** – to drive off or beat back with a staff.

⁹⁰ **complexions** – character; temperament.

⁹¹ **glass** – mirror.

⁹² **visage** – face; appearance.

⁹³ **issue** – outcome; result.

Word calls for as necessary to salvation is not to be found in him; if he cannot misapprehend his own state any longer, rather than quit his vain deceiving hopes, he will misapprehend God and think Him more merciful than the Word represents Him. "It is true," says the sinner, "in this case, the rule is strict and the way to heaven seems to be strait, and much is required of a sinner that he may be saved, and I am to seek in this or that. But God is merciful. And He *may* save me, though I find not this or that which seems to be required. Though I allow myself this or that sin and fall into it now and then, why it is but a little one. And God is gracious. He is not so strict and rigid as some would make Him. What? Though I be not so strict and precise as some others, must none be saved but such as they? God forbid! Though I come not up to the rule, God is gracious. He may dispense with me, [and] I may be saved as well as the best of them."

But alas, poor deluded sinner! If here be all thy hopes, thy case is hopeless. Will God be so merciful as to contradict Himself and go contrary to His Word? Will He show thee so much mercy as to neglect His truth? Will He save thee when He cannot do it without making Himself a liar? Doest thou not tremble to see that thou hast nothing to bear up thy hopes of heaven but plain blasphemy? If thou find not what He requires as necessary to salvation, if He should save thee without it, He should deny Himself [and] abandon His truth. Dost thou think He will make Himself no God that He may make thee happy? Oh, how sad is thy case, when even as thyself has stated it, thou hast no hopes of heaven, but upon such terms as the very thought of them deserves hell forever!

OBSERVATION: Many shall go far towards heaven and yet never reach it. They may go far in the ways of Christ and yet miss heaven in the conclusion. This is evident in the text. Here are many who had professed Christ and been zealous professors; who professed Him not in word only, but had really worshipped Him, had been much in hearing, preaching, praying, praising Him....And yet for all this, when they shall come to allege these things at the Day of Judgment for their admission into heaven, Christ tells us here that He will shut them out. He will disclaim⁹⁴ them and profess to them that He knows them not, i.e., that He never loved them, never approved them. He will command them to depart from Him and give them their portion with the workers of iniquity. There needs nothing more for evidence to this truth....But the question here will be, "How far may professors go in the ways of Christ, and yet come short of heaven?"

⁹⁴ **disclaim** – deny any connection with someone or something.

I shall resolve this according to the method of the text by endeavoring to show how far they may go in both ordinaries and extraordinaries.⁹⁵

1. In *extraordinaries*:

(1) **Revelations, dreams, visions:** God may reveal Himself by dreams and visions. It is no peculiar privilege of the godly, which is promised, “your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions” (Joe 2:28; Act 2:16). For dreams, it is evident in Nebuchadnezzar, to whom “the Revealer of secrets,” as Daniel speaks, by dreams made known what should be hereafter (Dan 2:47). His dream arose not from an ordinary cause: it was sent from the Lord, the Revealer of secrets. The subject of his dream was not ordinary, but secrets and things future. [It revealed] even the most remarkable acts of providence that should come to pass to the end of the world: the rise, periods, and revolutions of the world’s monarchies and the erecting of the kingdom of Christ, [Who is] the stone cut out without hands, which should crush all the kingdoms of the world and raise His throne upon their ruins (Dan 2:34). Here is a remarkable revelation, almost comparable to any mentioned in Scripture.

Pharaoh also had a revelation by a dream (Gen 41:25, 28). And when Saul complains that the Lord answered him not either by dreams or prophets, it implies that He did reveal Himself by these before [Saul] was cast off (1Sa 28:6). This is confirmed [by] Deuteronomy 13:1, 2.

For visions, we have a clear instance in Balaam, the wizard or enchanter, who used to seek for enchantments (Num 24:1). Even to him did the Lord reveal Himself by visions. God came unto him, conferred with him, and revealed to him both what he should say and what he should do (22:9, 12, 20). He had the vision of an angel (22:31)...God met Balaam and put a word into his mouth (23:4, 5). Two immediate revelations we have in that chapter and two in chapter 24, whereto the preface is observable: “And the spirit of God came upon him. And he took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man whose eyes are open. . . which heard the words of God, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open” (24:2-4); and, “...and knew the knowledge of the most High, which saw the vision of the Almighty” (v. 16).

(2) **The gift of prophecy:** those, whom Christ shuts out of His kingdom and will take no notice of them, had this plea for themselves, “In thy name

⁹⁵ **ordinaries and extraordinaries** – normal Christian experiences, such as hearing the Word of God, and out of the ordinary experiences, such as miraculous gifts, dreams, and visions.

have we prophesied.” It is known that Saul was at best but an hypocrite; yet, “and the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them” (1Sa 10:10, 19, 23). Hence the proverb, “Is Saul also among the prophets?” And there is scarce a clearer prophecy of Christ at such a distance than that of Balaam’s, where he also foretells the ruin of several nations—Moab, Edom, Amalek, the Kenites, Assyrians, and Romans—and who should ruin them, which the event has proved true (Num 24:17-24).

(3) **The power to work miracles:** they may do signs and wonders, heal all diseases, cast out devils; yea, it is possible for them to remove mountains. For proof, see Deuteronomy 13:1, 2: “If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, And the sign or the wonder come to pass...saying, Let us go after other gods...” Idolaters may do these. They may also cast out devils. This they plead, whom Christ will not own: “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?” (Mat 7: 22). Yet what they were appears by Christ’s profession, “Depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (v. 23)...it is express that Judas had power to work miracles. For Christ “called unto him his twelve disciples,” whereof Judas was one, “he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease” (Mat 10:1). We cannot doubt but Judas was one, since he is named amongst them, verse four; and immediately after Judas [is] named, [Matthew] adds, “These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying...heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give” (Mat 10:4-8).

(4) **The gift of tongues:** “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels” (1Co 13:1). For these are not saving gifts, and therefore may be given to those who shall never be saved.

2. In ordinaries:

In knowledge, they may go far: this we may discover in the text. It is included in the word *prophesy*. For whether we take it for teaching and publishing the truth or foretelling things to come, it necessarily supposes and imports *knowledge*. And this knowledge may be,

(1) **Great for the extent of it:** it may reach many truths that are out of the reach of many sincere Christians. Their minds may grasp more of truth than the understanding of others is capable of; may admit more light than others can let in. They may dig further into the mines of truth and make greater discoveries. No question Judas knew more than many of those he preached to, though we may suppose some of them sincerely converted. If he had not

known more than his hearers, he had not been apt to teach [or] fit to be their teacher. And Christ, who would have this to be observed as a qualification in those that we choose, would not Himself choose one destitute of it.

But that their knowledge may be exceeding great, the Apostle puts it out of question (1Co 13). . .They may know not only all necessary truths, those that are vital and radical,⁹⁶ being the foundation of religion, but those which raise the structure and tend to edifying, nay, those which are for the finishing and completing of an intelligent Christian, which tend to make him a thoroughly furnished and accomplished man as to his intellectuals.⁹⁷

“All knowledge” is a large expression and will reach thus far and farther without stretching. He may far outgo a true saint in the largeness and extent of his knowledge...He may apprehend truth not only truly, but clearly, distinctly, evidently so as the clearness of his conceptions may convince his conscience and satisfy his judgment of the truth he apprehends. His notions may appear in his mind with such a clear ray of evidence as may scatter all doubt [and] leave no room for question or contradiction. He may be able to convey his notions clearly to others so as to convince and satisfy them. A sincere soul, as to many things, may be much in the dark compared with him.

(2) Divine as to the object of it: they may have great and clear knowledge of the things of God, of the truths of Christ, [and] of the doctrine of the Gospel; not only of those truths that are more common and obvious, but of the more mysterious and subtle parts thereof, those which are called the mysteries of the kingdom. “Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven” (Mat 13:11). Mysteries of God: “Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God” (1Co 4:1). The Apostle’s discourse implies that he, who has no true grace, may know all mysteries, all Gospel mysteries (1Co 13:2). [The hypocrite may understand] a divine secret, such as could not have been known but by divine revelation, such as no light of nature, no human understanding could have ever reached had they not been brought down by the Spirit of revelation. He may see far into these mysteries; he may have access unto the most retired⁹⁸ of those secrets; he may wade far into the deep things of God, as if all were fordable.⁹⁹ Those things, which are difficult to others, may be easy to him...

As for *experimentals*,¹⁰⁰ though they have but this knowledge second-

⁹⁶ **radical** – fundamental.

⁹⁷ **intellectuals** – mental powers; faculties of the mind by which one knows or reasons.

⁹⁸ **retired** – hidden; secret.

⁹⁹ **fordable** – shallow enough to cross over.

hand, yet they may have more at the second than those of experience have at the first. By experimental discourses and conversing with experienced Christians, they may come to great attainments in this kind. They may draw the lineaments¹⁰¹ of a new creature and to the life so exactly, as though they had a pattern thereof in their own souls. They may give such an account of the work of grace, as you may think they were transcribing their own hearts, and that their expressions were but copies of some original there. They may hold forth the conflicts betwixt the flesh and the spirit, as though the combat were in their own quarters, as though they had really felt some such thing as you hear. They may express the actings of grace in such and such a duty, such an occasion, under such a temptation, in such a manner, as you would think nothing could teach them but their own experience. They may have the exact idea, the true notion of these things in their heads, when there is nothing of all this in their hearts.¹⁰²

As for *textual divinity*,¹⁰³ the understanding of the Scriptures, they may excel herein. They may overcome those difficulties, which some obscure places make impassable and unfordable¹⁰⁴ to others. They may understand not only the words and phrases, and so become masters of the letter of the Scripture, but they may with a great sagacity,¹⁰⁵ find out the sense and meaning of the Holy Ghost and may outstrip many herein who have the Holy Spirit dwelling in them.

(3) Spiritual as to the author of it (such as proceeds from the Spirit of God): they may attain their knowledge, not only by their pains and industry in searching after it, by not only reading, study, conference, etc.; but the Holy Spirit may dart this light into them, either in the use of means or immediately¹⁰⁶ (Heb 6:4-6). Those who were never in a sav-ing condition are said to be “enlightened.” And who it was that enlightened them, we may learn by another clause in that verse: “partakers of the Holy Ghost.” They partook of the Holy Ghost because they were partakers of the light and other gifts and operations of the Holy Ghost. They did partake of Him, as He communicated Himself to them. This was one way He enlightened them—not only in a common way, as all light and knowledge in the world may be said to come from the Father of light and as Christ is said to enlighten every man that comes into the world, viz., by implanting in their

¹⁰⁰ **experimentals** – experiences; in this context, spiritual experiences.

¹⁰¹ **lineaments** – definitive or distinctive characteristics.

¹⁰² **heads . . . hearts** – Scripture does not make the kind of distinction between head and heart as the author does here and as many Christians do today. But the underlying point is correct: there are those who have some notion of God’s truth in their minds, who do not have the regenerating power of the Spirit moving them to love and live God’s truth.

¹⁰³ **textual divinity** – sound theology based on the text of Scripture.

¹⁰⁴ **impassable and unfordable** – impossible to travel through or to cross over.

¹⁰⁵ **sagacity** – sound in judgment; discernment.

¹⁰⁶ **immediately** – without the use of means.

minds that light which we call “natural”...But He enlightens them in a more special and peculiar manner, though not the most peculiar, as He is Mediator¹⁰⁷ and the great Prophet of His church. [Christ sends] His Spirit in the execution of His prophetic office to spread abroad a divine light in the minds of some who enjoy the Gospel, whereby they may discover the deep things of God. The Spirit of God may come upon such a man as Balaam, or Saul, or Caiaphas, and may shine into their souls, if not ordinarily now with a prophetic light, yet with an evangelical light to discover to them the secrets of Christ, the mysteries of the Gospel, and the things of the world to come....They may partake of the Holy Ghost and be thereby so enlightened as to see these things and so see them as to taste them. They may by this light discover the excellency, goodness, [and] sweetness of these things so clearly and convincingly as if they did taste them. Such a light, such a knowledge, they may have from the Spirit of Christ in that respect a spiritual knowledge, and yet have their portion in outer darkness.

(4) Operative: their knowledge may be in great measure effectual. It may have a mighty efficacy¹⁰⁸ both upon their souls and lives, both upon heart and affections, and upon their conversation.¹⁰⁹ It may have an influence both upon inward and outward man, powerful to change both in some degree.

Now since this knowledge may have such power upon the affections, and seeing affections are but the acts and motions of the will, it follows that it may have some efficacy upon the will. Now the will being the great wheel that [being] moved sets all the parts of the whole man on motion, it is hence evident that their knowledge may be operative upon the whole man. It may have a working influence upon every faculty within, upon every part and member without. For the inward efficacy of it, we have said sufficient at present. It may excite fear, hope, joy, sorrow, etc....See here the efficacy of this knowledge as to reformation of life: it may make them not only avoid sin, but fly from it, fly from it as from a pollution, as though they loathed and abhorred it—fly from it, as we do from that we are greatly afraid of and to fly so far, so fast, as one would think it could never overtake, one would hope they had made a clear escape. Such, so powerful may be the knowledge of those that are no better than hypocrites.

Oh, consider your sad condition! Will you stay far short of those who fall short of heaven? If those who come so near Canaan as they can descry it,¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ **Mediator** – one who interposes himself between two hostile parties with a view to reconciling them.

¹⁰⁸ **efficacy** – the power to produce a desired effect; effectual power.

¹⁰⁹ **conversation** – behavior; lifestyle.

¹¹⁰ **descry** – to catch sight of from a distance.

so near it as they taste some of it, shall yet fall in the wilderness and never enjoy it, how can they come to Canaan, who will not stir out of Egyptian darkness? How can you come to the land of promise, come to heaven, who stay in your ignorance, that which is worse than Egyptian darkness and a condition further from heaven than Egypt is from Canaan? A man with thus much knowledge may possibly perish, but an ignorant person shall certainly perish.

From "The Conviction of Hypocrites" in *The Works of David Clarkson*, Vol. 2,
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David Clarkson (1622-1686): Independent Puritan preacher and author. Colleague of John Owen and successor to Owen's pulpit. Clarkson wrote powerful, experimental works. Born in Bradford, Yorkshire, England.



An hypocrite cannot mourn for sin as sin, nor grieve for sin as sin, nor hate sin as sin, nor make head against sin as sin. Mark, (1.) to hate sin is not merely to refrain from sin, for so Balaam did, even then when he was tempted to it (Num 22). (2.) To hate sin is not merely to confess sin, for so Pharaoh and Judas did, (Exo 10:16, Mat 27:4). (3.) To hate sin is not merely to be afraid to sin, for this may be where the hatred of sin is not. (4.) To hate sin is not merely to mourn because of the dreadful effects and fruits that sin may produce, for so Ahab did, and the Ninevites did. He that fears sin for hell, fears not to sin but to burn, but he hates sin indeed who hates sin as hell itself.—*Thomas Brooks*

SURPRISED BY GOD'S JUDGMENT

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

"The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?"—Isaiah 33:14.

THERE are two kinds of persons among God's professing people: the one, those who are truly godly, spoken of in the verse following the text, "He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly" (Isa 33:15a). The other kind consists of "sinners in Zion" or hypocrites. It is to be observed that the Prophet in this chapter speaks interchangeably, first to the one and then to the other of these characters of men, awfully threatening and denouncing the wrath of God against the one and comforting the other with gracious promises.

It may be inquired, "Who are the sinners in Zion?" I answer, "They are those who are in a natural condition among the visible people of God." Zion, or the city of David of old, was a type of the church; and the church of God in Scripture is perhaps more frequently called by the name of Zion than by any other name. And commonly by Zion is meant the true church of Christ, or the invisible church of true saints. But sometimes by this name is meant the visible church, consisting of those who are outwardly, by profession and external privileges, the people of God. This is intended by Zion in this text.

The greater part of the world are sinners: Christ's flock is and ever hath been but a little flock. And the sinners of the world are of two sorts: those who are visibly of Satan's kingdom, who are without the pale of the visible church; and those who do not profess the true religion nor attend the external ordinances of it. Beside these there are the sinners in Zion. Both are the objects of the displeasure and wrath of God; but His wrath is more especially manifested in Scripture against the latter. Sinners in Zion will have by far the lowest place in hell. They are exalted nearest to heaven in this world, and they will be lowest in hell in another. The same is meant by *hypocrites*. Sinners in Zion are all hypocrites, for they make a profession of the true religion. They attend God's ordinances and make a show of being the worshippers of God; but all is hypocrisy.

They will hereafter be afraid: now many of them seem to have little or no fear. They are quiet and secure. Nothing will awaken them: the most

awful threatenings and the loudest warnings do not much move them. They are not so much moved with them, but they can eat, and drink, and sleep, and go about their worldly concerns without much disturbance....Though now preaching will not awaken them, and the death of others will not make them afraid; though seeing others awakened and converted will not much affect them...yet the time will come, when they will be awakened and fear will take hold of them.

They will be surprised with fear: this seems to imply two things, viz., the *greatness* of their fear and the *suddenness* of it.

1. The *greatness* of their fear: surprise argues a high degree of fear. Their fears will be to the degree of astonishment. Some of the sinners in Zion are somewhat afraid now: they now and then have some degree of fear. They are not indeed convinced that there is such a place as hell; but they are afraid there is....They have at certain times inward molestations¹¹¹ from their consciences, but they have no such degrees of fear as to put them upon thorough endeavors to escape future wrath.

However, hereafter they will have fear enough—as much, and a great deal more than they will be able to stand under....terrors will take hold on them as waters. Thus, we read of their fear coming as desolation and of distress and anguish coming upon them (Pro 1:27). It is also very emphatically said of the wicked that trouble and anguish shall prevail against him as a king ready to the battle (Job 15:24).

The stoutest heart of them all will then melt with fear. The hearts of those who are of a sturdy spirit, and perhaps scorn to own themselves afraid of any man, and are even ashamed to own themselves afraid of the wrath of God, will then become as weak as water, as weak as the heart of a little child. And the most reserved of them will not be able to hide his fears. Their faces will turn pale; they will appear with amazement in their countenances; every joint in them will tremble; all their bones will shake; and their knees will smite one against another. Nor will they be able to refrain from crying out with fear and from rending the air with the most dismal shrieks.

2. They will be *suddenly seized with fear:* the sinners in Zion often remain secure, until they are surprised as with a cry at midnight. They will be, as it were, awakened out of their secure sleep in a dismal fright. They will see an unexpected calamity coming upon them, far more dreadful than they were aware of and coming at an unexpected season.

¹¹¹ **molestations** – troubles; vexations.

With respect to the *time when the wicked shall be thus surprised with fear: it is often so on a deathbed.* Many things pass in their lifetime, which one would think might well strike terror into their souls; as when they see others die, who are as young as they, and of like condition and circumstances with themselves, whereby they may see how uncertain their lives are and how unsafe their souls. It may well surprise many sinners to consider how old they are grown and are yet in a Christless state, how much of their opportunity to get an interest in Christ is irrecoverably gone and how little remains...

But when death comes, then the sinner is often filled with astonishment. It may be, when he is first taken sick, he has great hope that he shall recover; as men are ready to flatter themselves with hopes that things will be as they fain¹¹² would have them. But when the distemper¹¹³ comes to prevail much upon him, and he sees that he is going into eternity; when he sees that all the medicines of physicians are in vain, that all the care and endeavors of friends are to no purpose, that nothing seems to help him, that his strength is gone, that his friends weep over him and look upon his case as desperate; when he sees by the countenance and behavior of the physician, that he looks upon his case as past hope, and perhaps overhears a whispering in the room, wherein his friends signify one to another, that they look upon it that he is struck with death, or wherein they tell one another that his extreme parts grow cold, that his countenance and manner of breathing and his pulse show death, and that he begins to be in a cold death-sweat; and when perhaps by and by some one thinks himself bound in duty and faithfulness to let him know the worst, and therefore comes and asks him whether or no he be sensible that he is dying—then how doth fearfulness surprise the sinner in Zion! How doth his heart melt with fear!

At the same time, he cried to God to spare him and made promises how he would live, if God would spare him. And he hoped that God would hear him. He observed also that his friends and perhaps the minister seemed to pray earnestly for him; and he could not but hope that those prayers would be answered, and he should be restored. But now how doth his heart sink and die within him! How doth he look about with a frightened countenance! ...How doth everything look to him when he sees pale, grim death staring him in the face and a vast eternity within a few hours or minutes of him... like a poor drowning man, he catches at slender and brittle twigs and clinches his hands about whatever he sees within his reach. But as death creeps more and more on him, he sees his twigs break, all his hopes of life

¹¹² **fain** – gladly; willingly.

¹¹³ **distemper** – disease.

fail, and he sees he must die. O! There is nothing but death before him! He hath been hoping, but his hopes are all dashed. He sees this world and all that belongs to it are gone. Now come the thoughts of hell into his mind with amazement. O! How shall he go out of the world? He knows he hath no interest in Christ. His sins stare him in the face. O the dreadful gulf of eternity! He had been crying to God, perhaps since he was sick, to save him. And he had some hope, if it were his last sickness, that yet God would pity him and give him pardoning grace before he should die. He begged and pleaded, and he hoped that God would have pity on his poor soul. At the same time he asked others to pray for him, and he had been looking day after day for some light to shine into his soul. But, alas! Now he is dying, and his friends ask him, how death appears to him. Whether any light appears? Whether God has not given him some token of His favor? And he answers, "No," with a poor, faltering, trembling voice, if able to speak at all.

Now death comes on him more and more, and he is just on the brink of eternity. Who can express the fear, the misgivings, the hangings back, and the horrible fright and amazement of his soul? Some who in such circumstances have been able to speak, have been known to err out, "O eternity! eternity!" and some, "O! A thousand worlds for an inch of time!" O! If they might but live a little while longer! But it must not be; go they must. They feel the frame of nature dissolving and perceive the soul is just going; for sometimes the exercise of reason seems to hold to the last.

What in such a case is felt in the soul in those last moments, when it is just breaking its bands with the body, about to fetch its leap on the edge of eternity and the very brink of hell without any Savior or the least testimony of divine mercy—I say, what is sometimes felt by Christless souls in these moments, none can tell nor is it within the compass of our conception.

The misery of the departed soul of a sinner, besides what it now feels, consists in a great part in amazing fears of what is yet to come. When the union of the soul and body is actually broken, and the body has fetched its last gasp, the soul forsakes its old habitation and then falls into the hands of devils, who fly upon it and seize it more violently than ever hungry lions flew upon their prey. And with what horror will it fall into those cruel hands!

And when the soul is carried to hell, and there is tormented, suffers the wrath of the Almighty, and is overwhelmed and crushed with it, it will also be amazed with the apprehensions of what shall yet remain. To think of an eternity of this torment remaining, O how will it fill, and overbear, and sink down the wretched soul! How will the thought of the duration of this

torment without end cause the heart to melt like wax! How will the thought of it sink the soul into the bottomless pit of darkness and gloominess! Even those proud and sturdy spirits, the devils, tremble at the thoughts of that greater torment which they are to suffer at the Day of Judgment. So will the poor damned souls of men. They have already more than they will be able to bear: how then will they tremble at the thought of having their misery so vastly augmented.¹¹⁴

Persons sometimes in this world are afraid of the Day of Judgment....O how then do the poor souls in hell fear it, who know so much more about it, who know by what they feel already and know certainly that whenever it comes they shall stand on the left hand of the Judge to receive the dreadful sentence...then, in soul and body, they must enter into those everlasting burnings which are prepared for the devil and his angels, and who probably know that their misery is to be an hundred-fold greater than it is now.

Fearfulness will surprise them at the last Judgment. When Christ shall appear in the clouds of heaven, and the last trumpet shall sound, then will the hearts of wicked men be surprised with fearfulness. The poor damned soul in expectation of it trembles every day and every hour from the time of its departure from the body. It knows not, indeed, when it is to be; but it knows it is to be. But when the alarm is given in hell that the day is come, it will be a dreadful alarm indeed. It will, as it were, fill the caverns of hell with shrieks; and when the souls of the damned shall enter into their bodies, it will be with amazing horror of what is coming! And when they shall lift up their heads out of their graves and shall see the Judge, it will be a most terrible sight. Gladly would they return into their graves and hide themselves there if that might be; and gladly would they return into hell, their former state of misery, to hide themselves from this awful sight, if that would excuse them.

So those sinners in Zion, who shall then be found alive on the earth, when they shall see this sight, will be surprised with fearfulness. The fear and horror, which many poor sinners feel when they are dying, is great and beyond all that of which we can have any idea. But that is nothing to the horror that will seize them when they shall come to see this sight.

There will not be a wicked man upon earth who will be able to bear it, let him be who he will. Let him be rich or poor, old or young, male or female, servant or master, king or subject, learned or unlearned; let him be ever so

¹¹⁴ **augmented** – made greater; intensified.

proud, ever so courageous, and ever so sturdy. There is not one who will be able at all to support himself. When he shall see this sight, it will immediately sink his spirit; it will loose the joints of his loins [and] make his countenance more ghastly than death. The rich captains, valiant generals, and princes, who now scorn to show any fear at the face of an enemy, who scorn to tremble at the roaring of cannon, will tremble and shriek when they hear the last trumpet and see the majesty of their Judge. It will make their teeth to chatter and make them fly to hide themselves in the caves and rocks of mountains, crying to the rocks and mountains to fall on them and cover them from the wrath of the Judge.

Fearfulness will surprise them when they shall be dragged before the judgment-seat. The wicked hang back when they are about to meet death; but in no measure as they will hang back when they come to meet their great Judge. And when they come to stand before the Judge and are put on His left hand, fearfulness and amazement will surprise them. The majesty of the Judge will be intolerable to them. His pure and holy eye, which will behold and search them and pierce them through, will be more terrible to their souls a thousand times than flashes of lightning piercing their hearts. There will they stand in a trembling expectation that by and by they shall hear the words of that dreadful sentence proceed out of the mouth of Christ: they will have a horrible expectation of that sentence. And what shall they do, whither shall they fly, so as to be out of its hearing? They cannot shut their ears so as not to hear it.

Fearfulness will surprise them when the sentence shall come to be pronounced. At the close of the Judgment, that dreadful doom will be uttered by the Judge. And it will be the most terrible voice that ever was heard.

Lastly, fearfulness will surprise them, when they shall come to see the fire kindle upon the world, in which they are to be tormented forever. When the sentence shall have been pronounced, Christ with His blessed saints and glorious angels will leave this lower world and ascend into heaven. Then will the flames begin to kindle, and fire will probably be seen coming down from heaven. And soon will the fire lay hold of that accursed multitude. Then will their hearts be surprised with fearfulness; that fire will appear a dreadful fire indeed....What shall they do, whither shall they go, to avoid those flames? Where shall they hide themselves? If they creep into holes, or creep into caves of the earth, yea if they could creep down to the center of the earth, it will be in vain; for it will set on fire the bottoms of the mountains and burn the lowest hell. They will see no place to fly to, no place to hide themselves....Then their hearts will be filled with fearfulness and will utterly sink in despair. Thus, it shall hereafter be with every one that

shall then be found to be a sinner, and especially with sinners in Zion.

From “Sinners in Zion Tenderly Warned” in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*,
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An hypocrite may be troubled for sin as it blots his name, and wounds his conscience, and brings a scourge, and destroys his soul, and shuts him out of heaven, and throws him to hell. But he is never troubled for sin, he never mourns for sin, he never hates sin because it is contrary to the nature of God, the being of God, the Law of God, the glory of God, the design of God, or because of the evil that is in the nature of sin, or because of the defiling and polluting power of sin.

—*Thomas Brooks*

As the Mediator, then, of His people, [Jesus] keeps them in perfect safety by night and by day. No man, no power, can pluck them out of His hands; He has undertaken their full salvation. To die for their sins and to rise again for their justification, and yet not to provide for their security while traveling through a world of sin and temptation—to leave them to their own guardianship and unprotected prey to their own hearts’ corruptions, the machinations of Satan, and the power of worldly entanglement—would have been but a *partial* salvation of His people. Opposed by a threefold enemy—Satan and the world in league with their own imperfectly renewed and sanctified hearts, that treacherous foe dwelling within the camp, ever ready to betray the soul into the hands of its enemies—how could a poor, weak child of God bear up and breast this powerful phalanx? But He, Who was mighty to save, is mighty to keep; in Him provision is made for all the trying, intricate, perilous circumstances in which the believer may be placed. Grace is laid up for the subjection of every inbred corruption—an armor is provided for every assault of the foe—wisdom, strength, consolation, sympathy, kindness—all, all that a poor believing sinner can possibly require, is richly stored in Jesus, the covenant Head of all the fullness of God to His people.

—*Octavius Winslow*

INSIDE RELIGION

Thomas Boston (1676-1732)

THE true Christian has inside religion, not in the letter only,¹¹⁵ but in the spirituality thereof: “We—worship God in the spirit, and—have no confidence in the flesh” (Phi 3:3). He does not satisfy himself with the thing itself, but labors to get it and maintain it as of the right stamp,¹¹⁶ such as God will approve. Here lies sincerity, that ornament of all religion or rather the spirit and life of all (Joh 1:47). Now, this spirituality consists in two things:

1. In the graciousness of the principle (1Ti 1:5): their inward religion is the fruit of their new nature influenced by the Lord the Spirit. It is natural and not violent or forced out by terrors or from necessity as screening them from the wrath of God. The new nature makes it their absolute choice, in whatever circumstances they may be, whereas it is the choice of others only because they cannot otherwise act safely. It consists,

2. In the holiness of their aim: their chief aim is to please the Lord (Col 1:10). The stress of their salvation is laid on the obedience of Christ, not their own, whether outward or inward; and hence their aim in all their duties is not to please themselves, but Him Who has called them to be partakers of His glory. The hypocrite is servile¹¹⁷ in his aims to please God, as he is mercenary¹¹⁸ for his own profit, so that himself and not God is his chief end. But the sincere soul acts like a son by virtue of the Spirit of adoption. From all this we may learn,

That this shows they are not true Christians, whose religion lies all in externals and have no concern about their hearts (Mat 23:25). A whited sepulcher is the emblem of a hypocrite, not of a true Christian. Persons also may be at much pains inwardly, who yet never come the length of the spirit of religion. What, then, will become of these, whose case is entirely confined to the outward man? Let those who carry religion inwardly also examine well, what are the principles and ends they act from, lest their inside religion be found a spiritless, lifeless corpse of religion, the mere product of their own exertions. Such may perceive whether or not they have the spirit of religion by,

¹¹⁵ **in the letter only** – an appearance that lies on the surface; in appearance only.

¹¹⁶ **stamp** – the distinguishing mark of God’s approval.

¹¹⁷ **servile** – cringing, acting like a slave.

¹¹⁸ **mercenary** – acting in one’s own interest; working merely for reward.

1. Their endeavoring to approve themselves to the Lord as an all-seeing, holy God, not in some things only, but in *all* things (Col 1:10): being content to know the whole Word of God as to duty and what they know not to be discovered to them, in order to their setting about it (Job 34:32; Psa 139:23, 24). They will know it by,

2. Their endeavoring to purge their inward as well as their outward religion of all carnal and selfish motives, principles, and ends (Joh 3:21): self is an insinuating¹¹⁹ thing, and much of our spirituality lies in persons endeavoring to be spiritual in what they do...It is a good sign with those who are unsatisfied with their performance of duty and are lamenting that they are not spiritual in it (Rom 7:22, 23). They will know it,

3. By being denied to their outward and also their inward religion (Phi 3): though they endeavor to do all as if they were to gain heaven by doing, yet they renounce all in point of confidence before the Lord as naked and bare. This is a good sign (Mat 5:3).

In pursuance of this point touching inside religion, I shall offer the following observations touching the hypocrite's attainments in this respect and at the same time show wherein the true Christian goes beyond him.

1. A person may be under heavy exercise of soul after the commission of some sin, especially a gross sin, and yet be but a Christian in the letter. This is manifest in the case of Judas. Though there are some sins, which every un sanctified heart makes no bones of, yet there are some which may stick in the throat even of a person void of the grace of God; nay, more, in this exercise of soul there may be (1.) great restlessness and anxiety of mind, which the person cannot divert, as he was wont to do; (2.) indignation at himself for doing as he has done; (3.) taking shame to himself before men by a plain and open confession of guilt (Mat 27:3, 4). Lastly, strong resolutions to guard against that sin in all time to come. Thus Exodus 9:27, in which Pharaoh was morally serious, speaking as he thought in the time. But here there are four things wanting,¹²⁰ which are to be found in the exercises of true Christians after their falls into sin. There is,

(1.) Kindly humiliation of soul before the Lord: the Christian in spir-it sees not only an evil in sin which affrights him, but a loathsomeness in it which turns his stomach at it, as being contrary to God's holy nature and

¹¹⁹ **insinuating** – making one's way into or penetrating by subtle methods.

¹²⁰ **wanting** – lacking.

will: "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:5, 6). He owns himself unworthy of God's grace and casts himself down at the Lord's feet, stopping his mouth from quarrelling with God, however He dispose of¹²¹ him.

(2.) The dishonor done to God and grieving His Spirit is what does most touch the heart of the true Christian: "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest" (Psa 51:4). The consideration of God's glorious majesty, His loving-kindness and gracious benefits towards the person furnishes a quiver of arrows to pierce his heart; and he calls himself beast and fool for thus requiting¹²² the Lord.

(3.) No peace will that person have, but that which God Himself speaks and what flows from the application of the Redeemer's blood (Rom 1:5): others may be for peace at any rate, build up their peace on their sorrows, repentance, and confession; but [there is] no peace for the true Christian, till he get it under the covert¹²³ of the blood of Christ (Heb 9:14).

(4.) Their exercises under their trials drive them out of themselves to Christ for sanctification. "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me" (Psa 51:10, 11); whereas trials drive others *into* themselves, [resolving], that if God, for Christ's sake, will but pardon their sin, they will see to their own holiness of life. After which in some, they issue in faithless blind vows against such and such sins, not sensible of their own weakness and not fleeing to Christ under a sense of it. But the true Christian will be equally concerned for sanctification of his spirit, [as well] as justification of his person by blood, knowing he equally needs both. In like manner,

2. A person may have a great struggle in himself against sin and against temptation to it, and yet be but only a Christian in the letter. It is a dangerous mistake to think that every inward struggle against sin is the combat between the flesh and the spirit. Herod had no small struggle with himself, before he could yield to the beheading of John (Mat 14:9). Pilate also, before he could yield to the condemning of Christ. Nay, a hypocrite may not only have this struggle, but may carry the day against the

¹²¹ **dispose of** – deals with.

¹²² **requiting** – paying back.

¹²³ **covert** – covering; hiding place.

temptation, in so much that he will not yield to it. This is clear in the case of Balaam, when all Balak's entreaties and rewards could not engage him to curse Israel.

There are five things wherein the true Christian goes beyond the hypocrite in this respect. As,

(1.) His struggle arises from the new nature with which he is endowed; he has an habitual bent to holiness and an aversion to evil. "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Gal 5:17). The hypocrite's struggle does arise only from a slavish fear, or at best from a civil disposition,¹²⁴ which is easily overcome, as being but a part of the old nature, and so reaches but to some things. Which brings me to observe,

(2.) That a true Christian's struggle is against all sin—everything which is discovered by him to be sin, of whatever sort it be, whether it be of those which are more gross or more subtle, those that are brought to the light by some external action, or those that are in the soul or spirit only. Thus the psalmist, "Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way" (Psa 119:128). Hence, the struggle of the true Christian is against unbelief, the actings and workings of self in the various shapes which it assumes, and against predominant idols. But the struggle of others is confined to the grosser kinds of sin and is never taken up against all known sin, but only against some one lust or other, which has often at length a respite¹²⁵ given to or rather [a] league¹²⁶ concluded with it. A hypocrite gives evidence that the cause of this war is not a natural antipathy,¹²⁷ as in the true Christian, but an accidental quarrel.

(3.) The Christian's struggle tends to the mortification and extirpation¹²⁸ of sin, the plucking up of it by the roots, the destroying of the tree with its fruit (Gal 5:24). It tends to no less than the perfection of sanctification and the utter abolition of sin as the cause of this war. This, the new nature lusteth and longeth after and cannot be satisfied to lay down the sword while there is a Canaanite in the land. And since it is not obtained in this life, the war is continued till death make the sword drop and victory is obtained: "Brethren...this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward

¹²⁴ **civil disposition** – refined, well-bred frame of mind.

¹²⁵ **respite** – a delay specially granted in carrying out a capital punishment.

¹²⁶ **league** – an alliance; a covenant.

¹²⁷ **antipathy** – that which is contrary in nature; hostile feeling towards.

¹²⁸ **extirpation** – plucking up by the roots; total destruction.

the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phi 3:13, 14). The other is not so violent, but strives only to repress certain lusts, which are troublesome or dishonorable.

(4.) The Christian’s struggle prevails to the constituting of the habitual course of his life, a holy course. This is the chief strain in which he runs on, although mixed with many slips (Joh 3:9, 10); so that he has that noble testimony with the Apostle, “That with simplicity, and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world” (2Co 1:12). But the other still lives a life habitually unholy.

(5.) The Christian’s struggle is betwixt a new and gracious quality in the will and the old corrupt inclinations, its neighbors there, whose reign is broken, though their molestation still continue. “For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would” (Gal 5:17). But the struggle of the hypocrite is betwixt his will and his partially enlightened conscience, which takes up the cudgels¹²⁹ against the corrupt will, and fights against it with the fire and terror of a holy law; or, at most, between a slight inclination of the will, and the reigning corrupt inclinations.

From “The Christian Described, the Hypocrite Detected” in *The Complete Works of Thomas Boston*, Vol. 9, reprinted by Richard Owen Roberts, Publishers.

Thomas Boston (1676-1732): Scottish Presbyterian minister and scholar. Author of *Human Nature in Its Fourfold State*, *Notes to the Marrow of Modern Divinity*, and many other helpful treatises and sermons. Born in Duns, Berwickshire, Scotland.

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I am vile in my religious pretenses: how often I am anxious to make “a fair show in the flesh” and be thought highly of by others. What hypocrisies have I been guilty of in seeking to gain a reputation for spirituality. How frequently have I conveyed false impressions to others, making them suppose it was far otherwise within me than was actually the case. What pride and self-righteousness have swayed me. And of what insincerity have I, at times, been guilty of in the pulpit: praying to the ears of the congregation instead of to God, pretending to have liberty when my own spirit was bound, speaking of those things which I had not first felt and handled for myself. Much, very much cause has the writer to take the leper’s place, cover his lips, and cry, “Unclean, unclean!” —*A.W. Pink*

¹²⁹ **cudgels** – clubs; metaphorically, to engage in a vigorous contest.

WHAT IF I FIND HYPOCRISY IN ME?

Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892)

WELL, dear friends, if our hearts condemn us not, then have we peace towards God; but if our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts and knoweth all things (1Jo 3:20). Let us confess to Him all past failures. And though we may not be conscious of hypocrisy, yet, let us say, "Lord, search and try me, and know my ways; see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psa 139:24)...I have great confidence in the sincerity of any Christian man who says habitually and truthfully, "Lord, let me know the very worst of my case, whatever it is; even if all my fair prospects and bright ideals should be but dreams, the fabric of a vision...so be it; only let me know the truth. Lead me in a plain path; let me be sincere before thee, O thou heart-searching, re-in-trying God!" Let us with such frank candor, such ingenuous simplicity come before the Lord. Let as many of us as fear the Lord and distrust ourselves take refuge in His omniscience against the jealousies and suspicions which haunt our own breasts. And let us do better still: let us hasten anew to the cross of Jesus and thus end our difficulties by accepting afresh the sinners' Savior. When I have a knot to untie as to my evidence of being a child of God, and I cannot untie it, I usually follow Alexander [the Great's] example with the Gordian knot and cut it. How cut it? Why, in this way: "Thou sayest, O conscience, this is wrong, and thus is wrong. Thou sayest, O Satan, thy faith is a delusion, thy experience a fiction, thy profession a lie. Be it so then, I will not dispute it, I end that matter. If I am no saint, I am a sinner; there can be no doubt about that! The devil himself is defied to question that. Then it is written that 'Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners,' and to sinners is the Gospel preached. 'He that believeth on him is not condemned.' I do believe on Him. If I never did before, I will now; and all my transgressions are therefore blotted out! And now, Lord, grant me grace to begin again; and from this time forth let me live the life of faith, the life of prayer. Let me be one of those who will pray always, let me be one of those who will pray when they are dying, having prayed all their lives." Prayer is our very life: ceasing prayer we cease to live. As long as we are here preserved in spiritual life, we must pray. Lord, grant it may be so with each one here present, through the power of Thy Spirit and the merit of Jesus' blood. Amen and Amen.