

THE FRUITLESS VINE

NO. 125

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JULY 18, 1856,
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 AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

*“And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying: Son of man, What is the vine tree more than any tree, or than a branch which is among the trees of the forest?”
 Ezekiel 15:1, 2.*

THE Jewish nation had arrogant ideas of themselves. When they sinned against God, they supposed that on account of the superior sanctity of their forefathers, or by reason of some special sanctity in themselves, they would be delivered—sin as they pleased. In consequence of the infinite mercy of Jehovah, which He had displayed towards them in delivering them out of so many distresses, they gradually came to imagine that they were the favorite children of Providence and that God could by no means ever cast them away. God, therefore, in order to humble their pride, tells them that they in themselves were nothing more than any other nation.

He asks them what there was about them to recommend them—“I have often called you a vine. I have planted you and nurtured you in a very fruitful hill but now you bring forth no fruit. What is there in you why I should continue you in My favor? If you imagine there is anything about you more than about any other nation, you are mightily mistaken.” “What is the vine tree more than any tree, or than a branch which is among the trees of the forest?”

Let us remember that these things might be said without implying that God in the least degree alters His eternal purpose towards any chosen vessel of mercy. For the Israelite nation was not chosen to eternal salvation as a *nation*, but chosen to special privileges—a type and shadow of that eternal personal election, which Christ has given to His Church. From His own elect Church God will never withdraw His love. But from the outward and visible Church He sometimes may. From His own people He never will take away His affection but from professors, from those who merely stand in His people’s external condition and are not His children, He may.

Yes, and He will withdraw every token of His favor. God humbles Israel by reminding them that they had nothing which other nations had not—that in fact they were a contemptible nation, not worthy to be set side by side with the cedar of Lebanon, or with the oak of Samaria. They were of no use—they were “worthless, unless they brought forth fruit to Him.” He checks their pride and humbles them with the parable we have here before us.

Beloved, we shall, by God’s help, use this parable for ourselves and learn two lessons from it. The first shall be *a lesson of humility for saints*. And the second, *a lesson of searching for all who are professors*.

I. First, here is A LESSON OF HUMILITY for all you who have “tasted that the Lord is gracious.” “What is the vine tree more than any tree, or than a branch which is among the trees of the forest?”

In looking upon all the various trees, we observe that the vine is distinguished among them—so that in the old parable of Jotham, the trees waited upon the vine tree and said unto it, “Come you and reign over us.” But merely looking at the vine, without regard to its fruitfulness, we should not see any kingship in it over other trees. In size, form, beauty, or utility, it has not the slightest advantage. We can do nothing with the wood of the vine. “Shall wood be taken thereof to do any work? Or will men make a pin of it to hang a vessel thereon?”

It is a useless plant apart from its fruitfulness. We sometimes see it in beauty, trained up by the side of our walls and in the east it might be seen in all its luxuriance and great care is bestowed in its training. But leave the vine to itself and consider it apart from its fruitfulness—it is the most insignificant and despicable of all things that bear the name of trees. Now, Beloved, this is for the humbling of God’s people. They are called God’s vine. But what are they by nature more than others? Others are as good as they. Yes, others are even greater and better than they.

They, by God’s goodness, have become fruitful, having been planted in a good soil. The Lord has trained them upon the walls of the sanctuary and they bring forth fruit to His glory. But what are they without their God? What are they

without the continual influence of the Spirit begetting fruitfulness in them? Are they not the least among the sons of men and the most to be despised of those that have been brought forth of women? Look upon this, Believer—

*“What was there in you to merit esteem,
Or give the Creator delight?”*

Yes, look upon yourself as you are now. Does not your conscience reproach you? Do not your thousand wanderings stand before you and tell you that you are unworthy to be called His son? Does not the weakness of your mental power, the frailty of your moral power, your continual unbelief and your perpetual backsliding from God tell you that you are less than the least of all saints? And if He has made you anything, are you not thereby taught that it is grace, free sovereign grace, which has made you to differ? Should any here, supposing themselves to be the children of God, imagine that there is some reason in them why they should have been chosen, let them know that as yet they are in the dark concerning the first principles of grace and have not yet learned the Gospel.

If ever they had known the Gospel they would, on the other hand, confess that they were less than the least—the off-scouring of all things—unworthy, ill-deserving, undeserving and Hell-deserving. They would ascribe it all to distinguishing grace, which has made them to differ and to discriminating love which has chosen them out from the rest of the world. Great Christian, you would have been a great sinner if God had not made you to differ. Oh, you who are valiant for Truth—you would have been as valiant for the devil if grace had not laid hold upon you!

A seat in Heaven shall one day be yours but a chain in Hell would have been yours if grace had not changed you. You can now sing His love but a licentious song might have been on your lips if grace had not washed you in the blood of Jesus. You are now sanctified. You are quickened. You are justified. But what would you have been tonight if it had not been for the interposition of the Divine hand? There is not a crime you might not have committed. There is not a folly into which you might not have run.

Even murder itself you might have committed if grace had not kept you. You shall be like the angels. But you would have been like the devil if you had not been changed by grace. Therefore, never be proud. All your garments you have from above—rags were your only heritage. Be not proud though you have a large estate, a wide domain of grace. You had not once a single thing to call your own except your sin and misery. You are now wrapped in the golden righteousness of the Savior and accepted in the garments of the Beloved but you would have been buried under the black mountain of sin and clothed with the filthy rags of unrighteousness if He had not changed you.

And are you proud? Do you exalt yourself? Oh, strange mystery, that you, who have borrowed everything, should exalt yourself! That you, who have nothing of your own but have still to draw upon grace, should be proud! A poor dependent pensioner upon the bounty of your Savior and yet proud. One who has a life which can only live by fresh streams of life from Jesus and yet proud! Go, hang your pride upon the gallows, as high as Haman—hang it there to rot and stand beneath it and denounce it to all eternity. For surely of all things most to be cursed and despised is the pride of a Christian.

He of all men has ten thousand times more reason than any other to be humble and walk lowly with his God and kindly and humbly towards his fellow creatures. Let this then humble you, Christian, that the vine tree is nothing more than any other tree, save only for the fruitfulness which God has given it

II. But now here comes A LESSON OF SEARCH. As the vine without its fruit is useless and worthless—so, too, the professor, without fruit, is useless and worthless. Yes, he is the most useless thing in the whole wide world. Now, let us dwell upon this point—a *fruitless profession*. And while I am preaching on it, let the words go round to each one and let the minister and let his deacons and let his hearers all try their hearts and search their reins and see whether they have a fruitless profession.

1. First, a fruitless professor. *How do we know him? What is his character? Secondly, What is the reason he is fruitless? Thirdly, What is the estimation God holds him in? He is good for nothing at all. And then, fourthly, What will be his end? He is to be burned with fire.*

First, *Where are we to find fruitless professors?* Everywhere, dear Friends, everywhere—down here, up there, everywhere. In pulpits and in pews. False professors are to be found in every Church. Let us leave other denominations alone, then. They are to be found in this Church. They are to be found in this present assembly. To whatever denomination you may belong, there are some false and fruitless professors in it. How do you know that you may not belong to those who

bring forth no fruit? There are fruitless professors to be found in every position of the Church and in every part of society.

You may find the false professor among the rich. He has much wealth and he is hailed with gladness by the Church. God has given him much of this world's good. And therefore, the Church, forgetful that God has chosen the poor, gives him honor and what does she get from him? She gets but little help. Her poor are still neglected and her means not in the least recruited by his riches. Or if she gain a portion of his riches yet she gets none of his prayers. Nor is she in the least supported by his holy living. He that has riches often lives in sin and rolls in uncleanness. He wears his profession as a uniform, wherewith to cover his guilt.

Rich men have sometimes been false professors and they are to be found among poor men, too. Full many a poor man has entered into the Church and been cordially received. He has been poor and they have thought it a good thing that poverty and grace should go together—that grace should cheer his hovel and make his poverty-stricken home a glad one. But then, this poor man has turned aside to follies and has degraded himself with drunkenness, has sworn and by unworthy conduct dishonored his God. Or, if not, he has been idle and sat still and been of little service to the Church. And so he has been false and fruitless in his profession.

False professors are to be found in the men that lead the vanguard of God's army. The men who preach eloquently, whose opinion is Law, who speak like Prophets and whose language seems to be inspired. They have brought forth the fruit of popularity—yes, and the fruit of philanthropy, too—but their heart has not been right with God, therefore, the fruit, good in itself, was not fruit unto holiness. The moral benefit of their labors does not extend to everlasting life. They have not brought forth the fruits of the Spirit, seeing that they were not living branches of the living vine.

Then there have been false professors in obscurity—modest people who have said nothing and seldom been heard of. They have glided into their pews on the Sunday morning, taken their seats, gone out and satisfied themselves that by their presence they had fulfilled a religious duty. They have been so silent, quiet and retired. Lazy fellows, doing nothing. You may think that all the fruitless trees grow in the hedge outside of the garden. No they don't. There are some fruitless trees in the inside of it, in the very center of it. There are some false professors to be found in obscurity as well as in publicity. Some among the poor as well as among the rich.

And there are false professors to be found among men that doubt a great deal. They are always afraid they do not love Jesus and always saying, "Ah, if I did but know I were His I—

*"Tis a point I long to know
Oft it causes anxious thought."*

Yes, and it ought to cause them anxious thought, too, if they are bringing forth no fruit and giving no "diligence to make their calling and election sure." Fruitless professors are to be found, on the other hand, among the confident men, who say, without a blush, "I know whom I have believed. I know I am a Christian, let who will, doubt. I am sure and certain my sins cannot destroy me and my righteousness cannot save me. I may do what I like, I know I am one of the Lord's." Ah, fruitless professor again—just as fruitless as the other man—who had all doubts and no faith and did nothing for his Master.

And then there is the fruitless professor, who, when he is asked to pray at the prayer meeting, never does so. And who neglects family prayer. We will not say anything about private devotion—no doubt he neglects that too—he is a fruitless one. Ah, but there may be another who stands up and prays such an eloquent prayer for a quarter of an hour, perhaps, just as fruitless a professor as the silent one. He has plenty of words but no realities—many leaves but no fruits—great gifts of utterance but no gifts of consistency. He is able to talk well but not to walk well—to speak piously but not to walk humbly with his God and serve Him with gladness.

I do not know your individual characters tonight. But I know enough of you to say that your position, however honorable in the Church, and your character, however fair before men, is not enough to warrant any of you in concluding at once that you are not a fruitless professor. For fruitless professors are of every character and every rank—from the highest to the lowest—from the most talented to the most illiterate, from the richest to the poorest, from the most retiring to the most conspicuous. Fruitless professors there are in every part of the Church.

Now, shall I tell you who is a fruitless professor? The man who neglects private prayer and does not walk with his God in public. That man whose carriage and conversation before God are hypocritical—who cheats in trade and robs in

business yet wraps it up and comes out with a fair face, like the hypocrite with a widow's house sticking in his throat and says, "Lord, I thank you I am not as other men are!" There is a man for you, who brings forth no fruit to perfection. Another one is he who lives right morally and excellently and depends upon his works and hopes to be saved by his righteousness. He comes before God and asks for pardon with a lie in his right hand, for he has brought his own self-righteousness with him. Such a man is a fruitless professor. He has brought forth no fruit.

That man, again, is a fruitless professor who talks big words about high doctrine and likes sound Truth but he does not like sound living—his pretensions are high but not his practice. He can bear to hear it said—

"Once in Christ, in Christ forever"

but as for himself he never was in Christ at all, for he neither loves nor serves his Master but lives in sin that grace may abound. There is another fruitless vine for you.

But why need I stop to pick you out? May the Lord find you out tonight. There are many of you here, concerning whom the curse of Meroz might be uttered "Curse you, Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse you bitterly the inhabitants thereof. Because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty." Many of you are content to eat the fat and drink the sweet and bring forth no fruit to God. Nor do you serve Him—lazy Issachars—crouching down like a strong ass between two burdens. You neither speak for Christ, nor pray for Christ, nor give to Christ, nor live to Christ. But having a name to live, while you are dead, wrapping yourselves up in a profession, while you are not living to Christ, nor consecrating your being to Him.

Judge what I say. If you were put into the sieve this night, how many of you would come out clean in this matter? Are there not many high-flying professors here, who fly high but who do nothing? Who can talk fast but live as slowly as you like? Who, perhaps, delight in hearing the Truth but who never practice the Truth in serving their God, nor living to His honor? Such as you Sirs, are the most useless and worthless of all creatures in the world! For, like the vine, you would be honorable if you were fruitful. But without fruit, as the vine is despicable, so are you good for nothing but to be cast out and burned.

2. And now I come to the second question—*Why is it that these men are fruitless and must be cast away?* The reason is because they have no roots. Many, many professors have not roots. Fine professors they are, beautiful to look at but they have no roots whatever. Don't you remember your childhood—when you had a little garden of your own when you plucked some flowers and put them in the ground and said that was your garden? And when you went the next day you found that all the flowers were withered and dead? Such are many professors—pretty flowers, plucked off without roots, having no adherence to the soil, drawing no sap and no nourishment from it.

And therefore it is they die and bring forth no fruit. You come to us and say, "I wish to join the Church." We question you as far as we are able. You solemnly tell us that your hearts are right with God. We baptize you, receive you into our number. But then there was no root in many of you and after a while you die. When the sun has risen with a burning heat you perish. Or if you maintain a tolerably fair profession there is never any fruit upon you, because you did not get the root first. You got the notion first and then thought you would get the root afterwards. I do tremble for many young people in my Church—I will not exclude my own Church.

They get an idea into their heads that they are converted—the work was not true, not genuine not real. It was an excitement—it was a stir in the conscience for awhile and it will not last. But the worst of it is that though it does not last, they last as professors. When they have been received into the Church, they say, "I am sure enough!" Preach about them as long as you please, you cannot get at them. They are Church members, they are baptized persons, they have passed the Rubicon. What do they want more? You can do little for them. I do tremble for these. For my most hard-hearted hearers I weep before God. But for these people I need to have four eyes to weep with. For who can make an impression upon them when they are firmly persuaded that they are right? They have had the seal of the Church that they are right—though notwithstanding that, they are deceiving themselves and others and are still "in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity."

My young Friends, I do not want to prevent any of you from joining a Church. But I do say to you, make sure work of it before you make a profession. I would say to as many of you as love the Lord, come forward and unite with God's people. But, I beseech you, do be sure, do "search your hearts and try your reins." Many have thought themselves converted when they were not. Hundreds of thousands have had an impression—a kind of conversion, not real—which for a

while endured but afterwards it passed away as a summer's dream. It was but a little while ago that I had in my house a gentleman, an excellent man and I believe a true child of God. He told me he had been brought seriously under conviction, on account of sin, through hearing a sermon of late.

"But," said he, "I was baptized in my childhood. When I was but young there was a revival in our village, in New England. Mine was the hardest heart in the village but I was found out at last. There was scarcely a boy or girl that did not join the Church and I was at last brought under deep conviction. I used to weep before God and pray to Him. I went to the minister and told him I was converted, deceived him and was baptized." And then he went on to tell me that he had dived into the blackest crimes and gone far away, even from the *profession* of religion. After going to College he had been struck off the Church roll on account of wickedness and that up to this time he had been an infidel and had not so much as thought of the things of the Kingdom.

Take heed, many of you, that you do not get a sham religion. Many jump into godliness as they would into a job. But they are very glad to jump out of it again, when they find the world pays them better. And many there are who will just come and say they are the Lord's and they think they are but there is no root in them. Therefore by-and-by their impressions pass away. Oh, we have many fruitless professors in our midst because they did not look well to their beginnings. They did not take heed at their starting point. They did not watch well the first dawn—they thought the little farthing daylight of their own hopes was the dawning of the sun of righteousness.

They thought the bleeding of their own conscience was a killing by the hand of God. Whereas it was a deeper and better and surer and more entire work that they needed, than that which they received. Let us take heed, my Brethren, that we do not put too much trust in our experiences, while it is not yet proved in our beginnings. Let us often go back and begin again. Let us often go to Christ with the old cry—

***"Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to Your Cross I cling."***

For remember that these bad beginnings have had a great effect in making a man fruitless.

3. And again, thirdly, *what is God's estimation of fruitless professors?* I shall not ask you their own. For there are many men who are professors of religion with whom you might make your fortune very speedily if you could buy them at your price and sell them at their own. There are many, too, that have a very good opinion of themselves which they have gained from the Church. The minister thinks well of them, the Church thinks well of them, they are respectable people. It is so nice to have them come, it helps the cause so, to see such respectable persons sitting in the pews! Really, I do think he would do for a deacon! Everybody thinks well of him, everybody praises him.

Now we have nothing to do with this kind of opinion tonight, our business is with *God's opinion* of such a man. And God's opinion of a man who makes a profession without being sincere is this—that he is the most useless thing in the world. And now let me try to prove it. Is there anyone that will prove that this man is any use at all? I will ask the Church—Here is a man that brings forth no fruit and has only a profession. Members of the Church, what is the use of this man? Will he comfort any of you in your distress? Will he hold up the pastor's hands in prayer when he is weary? Will he lead the troops to battle? Will he be of any service to you?

I see you unanimously lift up your hands and say, "The man is of no use to us whatever if he brings forth no fruit. If his life is not consistent with his profession, strike his name off the Church roll. Let him go, he is of no use." Where has he gone to? He has gone to the world. Bring the worldling up. What do you think of this man? He makes a profession of religion. Is he of any use to you? "No," they say, "we do not want such a fellow as that. The man is Jack-of-both-sides. He is sometimes a professor of religion and sometimes a sinner in the world. We will have nothing to do with him. Turn him out of our company."

Where shall we send him, then? How shall we dispose of him? He seems to be of no use either to the Church or the world. Is he of any use to his family? Ask his eldest son. "John, is your father any good to you?" "No, Sir. None at all. He used to pray the Lord to save us with seeming earnestness and rise from his knees to give vent to his temper. Many a violent blow has he given me without any reasonable provocation. He was always a passionate man. He used to go to Chapel on Sunday and take us with him and then we know what he used to do on Monday. He would get drunk, or swear. He was never any use to me! He made me an infidel, Sir!"

Ask his wife. “Well, what do you think of this good husband of yours? He has long made a profession of religion.” “Ah! Sir, it is not for me to say a word about my husband but he has made me a miserable woman. I think I should have joined your Church long ago if it had not been for his miserable inconsistencies. But really he has grieved my heart, he has always been a stumbling block to me. And what to do with him I do not know.”

Well, Jane, we will have you out of the kitchen. “What think you of your master? He makes a profession of religion, yet does not live a right life. What do you think of him?” “Well, I did think that Christians were a good sort of people and that I should like to live with them but if this is Christianity, Sir, I will take five pounds a year less to work for a worldly man. That’s all I can say.” Well, what is the use of him? I suppose he does something in business. He is a grand professor. He keeps a shop. Everybody thinks him a most respectable man. Has he not given a hundred pounds just now to the building of a new Church? Is he not always known to subscribe liberally to ragged schools? We will ask his men. What do you think of your master?

“What do we think of him? Why, we would think a great deal more of him if he would give us a half-crown a week more wages for he is the worst paymaster in the parish.” “That is nothing perhaps. But what do you think of him?” “Why, that he is an unutterable cant! Some of us did go to a place of worship but we are honest and we would rather stay away than go with such a miserable hypocrite.” I am describing real cases and not fictions. I need not to go farther than between this and London Bridge to knock at the door and wake them up, some of them.

What is the good of such professors? If they would speak fairly out and say, “I am no Christian,” there would be some sense in it. For if Baal is God, let Baal be served. And if the world is worth serving, let a man serve it outright. But if God is God and a man lives in sin and talks about grace, then of what use is he? God Himself will disown him. Ask Him if this man has been of any use and He replies, “No, of no use whatever.” The vine is of no use unless it brings forth fruit—and this man, making a profession, is worse than worthless—because he does not live up to it.

My dear Friends, I would not say an extravagant thing but I will say this very coolly—if any of you who make a profession of religion are deceiving others by not living up to it, I do request you—and I say it advisedly—I do request you to give up your profession unless God gives you grace to live up to it. Do not, I beseech you, halt between two opinions. If God is God serve Him and do it thoroughly. Do not tell lies about it. If Baal is God, if he is a nice master, if you would like to serve him and win his wages, serve him. But do not mix the two together. Be one thing, or else the other. Renounce your profession and serve the devil thoroughly, or else keep your profession and serve God with all your heart—one thing, or else the other.

I solemnly exhort you to choose which you will have but never think that you can keep both. For “no man can serve two masters.” “You cannot serve God and mammon.”

4. And now let me close up by mentioning *what is to become of this fruitless tree*. We are told it is to be devoured in the fire. When an old vine is pulled off the wall, after having brought forth no fruit, what becomes of it? You know there are a lot of weeds raked up in a corner of the garden and the gardener, without taking any notice of it, just throws the vine on the heap of weeds and it is burned up. If it were any other kind of tree he would at least reserve it for chopping up to make a fire within the master’s house. But this is such an ignominious thing he throws it away in the corner and burns it up with the weeds.

If it were a stout old oak, it might have the funeral of the Yule log, with honor in its burning and brightness in its flame. But the fruitless vine is treated with contempt and left to smolder with the weeds the refuse and the rubbish. It is a miserable thing. Just so with professors. All men that love not God must perish. But those who profess to love Him and do not, shall perish with singular ignominy. “They shall not come into the sepulchers of the kings.” Something like that ancient king of whom it was said, “He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem.” The damnation of a professor will be the most horrible and ignominious sight that ever Hell itself has seen!

When Satan fell from Heaven with his black Satanic malice against God, there was a kind of grandeur in his devilry. There was an awful, terrific sublimity in his damnation. And when a great blasphemer and a hard swearer shall be sent at last to perdition there shall be something of sublimity in it—because he has been consistent with his profession. But when a professor of religion finds himself in Hell, it shall be the most miserable, contemptible and yet terrible mode of damnation wherewith men were ever damned.

I think I see honest blasphemers lifting themselves from their chains of fire and hissing between their teeth at the minister who comes there, after having been a deceiver—“Aha! Aha! Aha! Are you here with us? You did warn us of our drunkenness and tell us of our curses! Ah, are you come into the drunkard’s Hell yourself!” “Pshaw!” says another, “that is your strict Pharisee. Ah, I remember how he told me one night that I should perish, unless I made a profession of religion. Take that, Sir!” And he spits upon him. “You are a loathsome thing. I perished but I served my master well. You—you did pretend to serve God and yet you are a sneaking hypocrite!”

Says another, yelling from the corner of the pit, “Let us have a Methodist hymn, Sir—quote a promise from the Bible! Tell us about election. Let us have a little of your fine preaching now.” And round Hell there goes the hiss and the “Aha! Aha! Aha!” And the yell of spitefulness and scorn upon the man who professed to be a Christian but became a castaway because his heart was not right in the matter. I confess I should dread above all things the unutterable Hell of hells of hypocritical apostates—of men that stand in the ranks, profess to love God, prate of godliness, sit in the pews and uphold Christianity. They take the Sacrament and speak about communion, stand up to pray and talk about being heard for their faith—who are all the while committing abominations and under cover of their profession are cheating the poor, robbing the fatherless and doing all kinds of iniquity.

I confess, I as much dread the excess of their damnation above the damnation of others, as I dread to be damned at all. It is as if in Hell another Hell had been made to damn those that sin above others—to damn them after being damned—for hypocrites, for men who have been with us and not of us, who professed to be Christ’s and yet have been mean deceivers after all. Oh, Sirs, if you would not make your chains more heavy, if you would not stir the fire to a more furious heat, if you would not make your yells more hideous—quit your professions this night—if you are not worthy of them.

Go out of this place and send in your resignation to the Church. Or else, Sirs, be honest and bend your knee before God and ask Him to search you and try you and make you sincere and upright before Him. Be one thing, or else the other. Do not cloak yourselves in the robes of sanctity to hide the corruptions that all the while fester beneath. Stand out, bold, brave sinners and do not be mean, sneaking sinners that wear the masks of saints. “What is the vine more than any other tree?” Without fruit it is worse than any other. It must perish more dolefully, more horribly than any other if there be on it no fruit brought to perfection.

Does not that shake us? Ah, it will shake you, very likely, that do not want the shaking but the men that want arousing will keep just as they were. It will go into the hearts of some of you, like the cry, “Howl, Moab, howl, Moab!” But alas, Moab will not howl. You will weep for Kirhareseth but Kirhareseth will not weep for herself. You will weep for your hypocritical friends. But they will rub their eyes and say, “A strong sermon. But it has nothing to do with me.” And they will go out with cool presumption—sin with one hand and take the sacramental cup with the other—sing the lascivious song one night and then sing—

“Jesus, lover of my soul,”

the day after.

Meet Christ here and take the devil yonder and bid him God speed in all his freaks of devilry. Ah, Sirs, Sirs, Sirs! Take heed, take heed, I beseech you, of this matter! Let us each search our hearts lest we should have been deceived. And may God bring us to a right understanding in this matter that we may be clear before Him. “Search me, O God and know my ways, try me and know my thoughts and see if there are any wicked ways in me. And lead me in the way everlasting.”

And, now I must not send you away until I have had a word with my Friend in the aisle there. He says, “I like that, I like that. I am no professor, I am not, I am all right. No one can call me a hypocrite.” Well, my dear Friend, I am very glad you are not, because you say you are no Christian. But let me tell you, you must not expect to be a wonderful deal the better off for that. Suppose two men are brought up before the Lord Mayor and one says, “Your worship, I am an honest man and not guilty.” And he blushes that an imputation should be cast on his character.

Well he is proved to be guilty and gets committed to prison for three months. Up comes the other one and says, “Your worship, I am a guilty man. I always was a rogue and I always shall be. I don’t make any profession at all.” “I think I must give you six months,” says His Worship, “for really I think you must be the more determined rascal of the two.” So if any of you say, “I do not make a profession, I shall be all right,” let me tell you that to make a lying profes-

sion is a very fearful thing. But for you to think of getting off because you make no profession at all is equally bad. Take heed you do not deceive yourselves.

It must be the new heart and the right spirit with God, or else profession or no profession, we must perish. Oh, that God would give us grace to go to our houses and cry to Him for mercy and would help us to repent of our sins and bring us to put our trust simply and wholly upon the Lord Jesus Christ! So should we be saved now and saved forever. Amen.

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