

John and Herod

by C.H. Spurgeon

The sermon highlights the flaws in Herod's character, including his failure to receive the Word of God as God's Word and his lack of spiritual growth, which ultimately led to his downfall.

Duration: 34:36

Scripture: Matthew 3:10, Matthew 14:1, John 1:29

Topics: "Conscience And Sin", "Following God"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the flaws in the character of Herod, focusing on his failure to fully accept and follow the word of God. The preacher emphasizes the importance of having a sensitive conscience that responds to the preaching of the word. He highlights how Herod selectively chose which parts of the word of God to accept and which to ignore, particularly when it came to addressing sins and vices. The preacher concludes by sharing a personal anecdote about a young man who initially seemed virtuous but ultimately fell into dishonor, emphasizing the need for a genuine commitment to God.

Transcript

The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit John and Herod The sermon delivered by C.H. Spurgeon at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington Mark 6 verse 20 For Herod feared John knowing that he was a just man and unholy and observed him and When he heard him he did many things and heard him gladly John sought no honor among men It was his delight to say concerning our Lord Jesus. He must increase, but I must decrease Yet though John sought no honor of men he had honor for it is written Herod feared John Herod was a great monarch John was but a poor preacher whose garment and diet were of the coarsest kind But Herod feared John John was more royal than royal Herod His character made him the true king and the nominal king trembled before him A man is not to be estimated according to his rank, but according to his character The peerage which God recognizes is arranged according to a man's justice and holiness he is first before God and holy angels who is first in obedience and He reigns and is made a king and a priest whom God hath sanctified and clothed with the fair white linen of a holy life Be not covetous of worldly honors For you will have honor enough even from wicked men if your lives are holiness unto the Lord Let it be written on John's tomb If he needs an epitaph Herod feared John Only there is one better testimonial which any minister of the gospel might be glad to receive and it is this John did no miracle, but all things which he spake concerning this man were true He wrought no marvelous work which astonished his generation But he spake of Jesus and all that he said was true God grant that our master's servants may win such praise My subject at this time does not need me to speak so much of

John as of Herod. I desire to have no Herod in this congregation But I am anxious about some of you lest you should be like him Therefore I will speak out of the tenderness of my heart With the desire that none of you may follow the steps of this evil King I would ask you to consider the hopeful points in Herod's character First we find that Herod respected justice and holiness For Herod feared John knowing that he was a just man and unholy I like to see in every man a respect for virtue even if he himself has it not For it may be that the next step will be to desire it And he that desires to be just is almost so Some have brought their minds to such a pitch of sinfulness that they despise goodness and ridicule justice and devotion May God grant that we may never by any process be brought into such a fearful condition as that When the conscience comes to be so confused as to lose its reverence for that which is good and holy Then is a man in a sad plight indeed Herod was not in that condition He honored justice, honesty, truth, courage, and purity of life Though he had not these things himself yet.

He had a salutary dread of them, which is a near approach to respect for them. I know I am speaking to a great many who respect everything that is good and right They only wish they were good and right themselves So far so good The next good point I see in Herod was that he admired the man in whom he saw justice and righteousness And that is a step further For you may admire an abstract virtue and yet when you see it actually embodied in a man you may hate him The ancients recognized justice in Aristides and yet some of them grew sick of hearing him called the just A man may be acknowledged to be just and holy and for that very reason he may be dreaded You like to see lions and tigers in the zoological gardens, but you would not like to see them in your room You would very much prefer to view them behind bars and within cages And so very many have respect for religion, but religious people they cannot bear They admire justice How eloquently they speak of it, but they do not like to deal justly They admire holiness, but if they come across a saint they persecute him Herod feared John and Tolerated John and went the length of even keeping John for a while out of the hands of Herodias Many of you like the company of God's people in fact you are out of your element when you get with the profane you cannot endure them and From those that practice debasing vices you fly at once You delight in choice company So far so good But that is not enough We must go much further or else we may remain like Herod after all A third good point about Herod was that he listened to John It is nothing wonderful that you and I should listen to sermons But it is rather wonderful that a king should do so and such a king as Herod Monarchs do not often care for religious discourses except such as come from court preachers who wear fine raiment and use soft speech John was not the kind of man for a king's palace Too rough too blunt too plain speaking his words thrust too much home Yet Herod heard him gladly It was a hopeful point in his character that he would hear a man who preached justice Holiness and the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world It is a fine point and a hopeful point in any man that he will hear and listen to an honest Proclamation of God's Word even though it come home to his conscience Perhaps I address some of you who hear the gospel only now and then and When you drop into a religious meeting you are like the dog in the library who would gladly have changed all the books for a single bone There are many such people in London Religion does not suit them Places of entertainment are much more to their minds Some say of the preacher I won't hear him again. He cuts too closely.

He is too personal John said to Herod that it was not lawful for him to have his brother's wife But though he spoke so plainly Herod listened to him Because he was a just man and unholy That was well of Herod and it is well in you my friend if you are willing to hear the gospel However, practically it is spoken so far So good, but there was a better point still in Herod He obeyed the word to which he listened Herod heard John gladly and when he heard him he did many things Many of our hearers do nothing They hear they hear they hear and that is the end of it They learn the way they know the way they are expert in the way,

but they do not follow the way They hear the gospel invitation, but they come not to the feast Some seem to think that religious duty lies in hearing first and talking afterwards, but they are mistaken Herod knew better than that He was not a hearer only he did do something And it is remarkable that the text tells us that he did many things Perhaps these were some of the many things he discharged a tax gatherer who imposed upon the people or righted the wrongs of a neglected widow or Altered a cruel law, which he had promulgated or changed his habits and manners in certain respects Certainly in many points. He was an improved man For John the Baptist had an influence with him for good For Herod feared John and when he heard him he did many things I'm speaking to some who when they hear a sermon put a part of it into practice And they have done many things since they have first attended here for which we are very grateful. I His Sabbath breaking and he has tried and succeeded in a great measure in leaving off profane language and thus he has greatly improved And yet he is only a Herod after all for Herod Was Herod? After he had done many things and in his heart.

He was still prepared for all sorts of wickedness Yet he did amend somewhat and so far So good there was another point about Herod namely That he continued to hear the preacher gladly For it is put into the end of the verse as if to indicate that he heard John still John touched his conscience, but after all he still heard him gladly He said send for John the Baptist again Herod the eighth would listen to Hugh Latimer though He denounced him to his face and even sent him on his birthday a handkerchief on which was marked the text whoremongers and adulterers God will judge How cried let us hear honest Hugh Latimer Even bad men admire those who tell them the truth However unwelcome the warning they believe it to be honestly spoken and therefore they respect the preacher a Good point this You who are present and unconverted have heard most cutting sentences from me You've heard of judgment to come and of that eternal wrath which rests upon those who die in their sins Let me warn you then that if after hearing the denunciations of God's Word you are still willing to hear I Have great hopes of you so far So good there was yet one other point about Herod and that is His conscience was greatly affected through the preaching of John For I am inclined to think that a certain translation which renders the passage Herod did many things in another way May be a correct one Herod was perplexed or Herod was made to hesitate Such a sense is found in some manuscripts He loved his sin, and he could see a beauty of holiness in religion, and he wished to be holy but there was Herodias and He could not give her up when he heard a sermon.

He was like a relative of his in after days almost persuaded Yet he did not give up his last He could not go the whole length John would have him go He could not leave his bosom sin and yet he felt as if he wished to leave it there was a halting between two opinions a hesitating a wavering He was inclined to good if he could have good and have his pleasure too But his pleasure was so very much his master that he could not escape from it It was like a bird taken with lime twigs He wanted to fly but sad to say he was willingly held limed by his last This is the case with many of our here's Their consciences are not weaned from their sins.

They cannot give them up and yet they wish they could They linger on the brink and fear to launch away They are almost out of Sodom have almost escaped the fire shower and yet in all Probability they will stand like lots wife a pillar of salt because they will look back and love the sin that lingers in their heart Consciencs nowadays seem to have gone out of fashion But to have a conscience sensitive to the preaching of the word is an admirable thing And if you have such a thing so far So good there were six good points about Herod then But now very sorrowfully I want to indicate the flaws in the case of Herod The first flaw was this That though he loved John He never looked to John's master John never wanted

anybody to be his disciple, but he cried behold the Lamb of God Herod was after a sort of follower of John, but never a follower of Jesus It is easy for you to hear the preacher and love him and admire him and Yet the preacher's master may be all unknown to you.

I Pray you dear friends. Do not let this be the case with any of you. I Am the bridegroom's friend and I shall rejoice greatly when the bridegroom wins your hearts God forbid that my ministry should ever lead you to myself and cause you to stop there We are only signposts pointing to Christ go beyond us Be followers of us as far as we are followers of Christ, but in no other respect It is to Christ you must go the end of all our ministry is Christ Jesus We want you to go to him direct to seek from him pardon from him redemption from him a change of heart from him a new life for vain will it be if you have listened to the most faithful of Preachers and have not listened to the preacher's master and obeyed his gospel You will be Herod's and nothing more Unless grace leads you to Jesus Christ the second flaw about Herod's case was this That he had no respect for goodness in his own heart.

He admired it in another But there was none of it in himself our Savior described Herod admirably What a master sketcher of human portraits was Christ He said of Herod Go ye and tell that Fox Herod was a foxy man selfish full of tricks Timid when he was in the presence of his superiors But both cruel and bold when he was in the presence of those who could not defend themselves We sometimes meet with these foxy people They want to go to heaven But they like the road to hell They will sing a hymn to Jesus, but a good roaring song they like also when they get merry companions together by all manner of means a Guinea to the church oh Yes, admirable thing But how many guineas are spent upon some secret last? So many tried to dodge between God and Satan They do not want to fall foul of either they hold with the hair and run with the hounds They admire all that is good, but they do not want to have too much of it themselves It might be inconvenient to carry the cross of Christ on their own shoulders and become precise and exact in their own lives If they never say a word against other people doing so It is a fatal flaw to have no root in yourself a damning flaw condemning your own self To know the right and disregard it to feel respect for it and yet trample it underfoot I Judge the doom of such will be far more dreadful than that of those who never knew the good who were trained up in the perlose of vice and never had a glimpse of holiness or purity and therefore Never deliberately turned away from them another flaw in Herod's character Was that he never loved the Word of God as God's Word? he admired John and Probably said That is the man for me See how boldly he delivers his master's message That is the man. I should like to hear But he never said to himself God sent John God speaks to me through John. Oh That I might learn what John is speaking and be instructed and improved by the word John is uttering Because it is God's Word.

No, no, I Do pray you ask yourselves dear hearers whether this may not apply to you May it not be that you listen to a sermon because it is mr. So-and-so's discourse and you admire the preacher It will be fatal to you if you treat the word in that way It must be to you what it is in truth the Word of God or it will not save you it will never impress your soul unless you accept it as the Word of God and bow before it and Desire to feel all its power is coming to you fresh from the lips of God and sent into your heart by his Holy Spirit Now we know Herod did not receive the word as the Word of God because he was a picker and chooser in reference to it He did not like John's discourse when he spoke of the Seventh Commandment If he spoke of the fourth commandment, he would say that is admirable the Jews ought to keep it But when he dealt with the seventh commandment Herod and Herodias would say We do not think preacher should allude to such subjects. I've always noticed That people who live in the practice of vice think the servants of God ought not to allude to things so coarse We are allowed to denounce the sins of the man in the moon and the vices of savages in the middle of Africa But as to the everyday vices of the city of London If

we put our finger upon them in God's name then straightway someone cries. It is indelicate to allude to these things John dealt with the whole Word of God And he did not only say behold the Lamb of God, but he cried the axe is laid to the root of the trees He spoke plainly to the conscience Herod therefore Had this fatal flaw in his character That he did not attend to all that John delivered of the Word of God He liked one part and did not like another He resembled those who prefer a doctrinal discourse, but cannot endure the precepts of God's Word I hear one exclaim I like practical discourses.

I do not want any doctrine Don't you? There is doctrine in God's Word and you are to receive what God gives you not half a Bible But the whole truth as it is in Jesus That was a great fault in Herod He did not receive the testimony of John as the Word of God next Herod did many things But he did not do all things He who receives the Word of God in truth does not only attempt to do many things, but he tries to do all that is right He does not give up one vice or a dozen vices But he endeavors to forsake every false way and seeks to be delivered from every iniquity Herod did not care for a thorough reformation for that would call for too great a self-denial He had one sin he wished to keep And when John spoke plainly about that He would not listen to him.

Another fault with Herod Was that he was under the sway of sin he had given himself up to Herodias She was his own niece and had been married to his own brother and Was the mother of children by his own brother and yet he led her away from his own brother's house that she might become his wife He himself casting off one who had been a good and faithful wife to him for years It is a mess of filthy incest one hardly likes to think of The influence of this woman was his curse and ruin How many men have been destroyed in that way?

How many women are ruined daily in this city by coming under the vicious influence of others? My dear men and women you will have to stand before God on your own account Do not let anyone cast a spell over you I Pray you escape for your life run for it when vice hunt you I May be sent at this moment with a word on purpose for you to stir up your conscience and arouse you to a sense of your danger It is always perilous to be under the influence of an unconverted person However moral he may be But it is supremely dangerous to be under the fascination of a wicked woman or a vicious man God help you to rise above it by his spirit For if you are heirs of the word and doers of evil You will end in being Herod's and nothing more.

I will only allude to another point in Herod's character That his religion Although it made him do many things Was rather one of fear Than of love it is not said that Herod feared God But that he feared John he did not love John he feared John The whole thing was a matter of fear He was not a lion you see he was a fox Fearful timid ready to run away from every barking car There are many people whose whole religion lies in fear With some it is the fear of men The fear of what people would say if they did not pretend to be religious The fear of what their Christian associates would think of them if they were not reputable With others there is the fear that some awful judgment would come upon them But the mainspring of the religion of Christ is love oh To love the gospel to delight in the truth to rejoice in holiness This is genuine conversion the fear of death and the fear of hell Create a poor poor faith Which leaves men on Herod's level still I conclude by showing you very Sorrowfully what became of Herod with all his good points he ended most wretchedly first He slew the preacher Whom he once respected it was he who did it though the executioner was the instrument He said go and fest John the Baptist head in a charger So it has happened with many hopeful here's They have become slanderers and Persecutors of the very preachers before whom they once trembled and far as they could they have taken off their heads after a time in dislike being rebuked And they proceed in their dislike till they scoff at the things they once revered

and make the name of Christ a football for their own jests Beware, I pray you beware For the way of sin is Downhill Herod feared John and yet he beheaded him a person may be Evangelical and Calvinistic and so on and yet if he is placed under certain conditions He may become a hater and a persecutor of the truth.

He once avowed Herod went a step lower however for this Herod Antipas was the man Who afterwards mocked the Savior? It is said Herod with his men of war set him at naught and mocked him and Arrayed him in a gorgeous robe. This is the man that did many things under the leading of John His court is altered now He spits on the Redeemer and insults the Son of God Certain of the most outrageous Blasphemers of the gospel were originally Sunday school scholars and teachers young men who were almost persuaded yet they halted and hesitated and Wavered until they made the plunge and became much worse than they possibly could have become if they had not seen the light of truth If the devil wants raw material to make a Judas the son of perdition He takes an apostle to work upon When he takes a thoroughly bad character like Herod it is necessary to make him plastic as Herod had been in the hands of John Somehow or other Border men are the worst enemies in the old wars between England and Scotland the borderers were the fighting men and So the border people will do more harm than any until we get them on this side of the frontier Oh that the grace of God may decide those who now hesitate.

I may mention to you that before long Herod lost all the power he possessed He was a foxy man and always tried to win power But in the end he was recalled by the Roman Emperor in disgrace That was the end of him Many a man has given up Christ for honor and has lost himself as well as lost Christ Like the man who in the old Catholic persecuting times was brought to prison for the faith He said he loved the Protestant faith, but he cried I cannot burn So he denied the faith and in the dead of night his house took fire The man who could not burn was forced to burn, but he had no comfort in that burning For he had denied his Lord If you sell Christ for a mess of pottage It will scald your lips It will burn within your soul like molten lead forever For the wages of sin is death However bright the golden coin shines and however musical may be its chink It will prove an awful curse to the man who sells his Lord to gain it today The name of Herod is infamous forever As long as there is a Christian Church the name of Herod will be execrated And Is it not a solemn reflection that Herod feared John and did many things and hurt him gladly I know that no young man here believes that he will ever turn out to be a Herod I might like the Prophet say Thou will do this and do that and you would answer is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing But you will do it Unless you are decided for God an appeal like this once startled me When I was young and tender there was a hopeful youth who went to school with me who was held up to me as an example He was a good boy And I used to feel no particular affection for his name because I was so perpetually chided by his goodness And I was so far removed from it being younger than he Saw him enter upon his apprenticeship Enter upon the gaities of a great city and come back dishonored It horrified me Might not I Dishonor my character and when I found that if I gave myself to Christ He would give me a new heart and a right spirit and when I read that promise of the Covenant I will put my fear in their hearts that they shall not depart from me It seemed to me like a character insurance society If I believed in Jesus Christ my character was insured For Christ would enable me to walk in the path of holiness This charmed me into desiring an interest in Christ If you would not like to be a Herod be a disciple of Jesus Christ For there will be no choice for some of you Some of you are of such powerful natures That you must either thoroughly serve Christ or serve the devil An old Scotsman was once looking at Roland Hill And the good old gentleman said What are you looking at?

He said the lines of your face What do you think of them? He replied I think that if you had not been a Christian man, you would have been an awful sinner Some people are of that sort They are like a

pendulum They must swing one way or the other.

Oh That you may swing Christ's way tonight Cry Lord Help me to cleanse my way Help me to be holy thine help me to possess the righteousness. I admire the holiness. I respect Help me not only to do some things, but everything thou wouldst have me to do Take me make me thine and I will rejoice and joy in him who helps me to be holy God bless you dear friends for Jesus Christ's sake Amen

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