

The Sacred Import of the Christian Name

by Samuel Davies

The sermon emphasizes the importance of wearing the name of Christ alone, rather than the name of a particular denomination, and living a life that is like to Christ, from whom the name is taken.

Scripture: Matthew 7:23, Luke 9:23, Acts 11:26, Romans 8:29, 1 Corinthians 11:1, 2 Timothy 2:19, 1 Peter 2:21

Topics: "Christian Living", "Discipleship"

Description

Samuel Davies preaches about the sacred importance of the Christian name, emphasizing the significance of living up to the name we bear. He delves into the origins of the name 'Christian' and the divine appointment associated with it. Davies highlights the need for Christians to depart from iniquity, deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow Christ, urging them to imitate Christ in their thoughts, character, and actions. He challenges believers to embody the true essence of Christianity, warning against the hypocrisy of merely professing the faith without living it out authentically.

Transcript

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"The disciples were first called Christians at Antioch." Acts 11:26

Mere names are empty sounds, and but of little consequence. And yet it must be owned, that there are names of honor and significance; and, when they are attended with the things signified by them, they are of great and sacred importance! Such is the Christian name; a name about seventeen hundred years old. And now when the name is almost lost in party-distinctions, and the things signified by the name are almost lost in ignorance, error, vice, hypocrisy, and formality--it may be worth our while to consider the original import of that sacred name, as a proper expedient to recover both name and thing.

The name of Christian was not the first by which the followers of Christ were distinguished. Their enemies called them Galileans, Nazarenes, and other names of contempt. And among themselves they were called Saints, from their holiness; Disciples, from their learning their religion from Christ as their teacher; Believers, from their believing in him as the Messiah; and Brethren, from their mutual love and their relation to God and each other.

But after some time they were distinguished by the name of 'Christians'. This name, they first received in Antioch, a heathen city, a city infamous for all manner of vice and debauchery: a city that had its name from Antiochus Epiphanes, the bitterest enemy the church ever had. Antioch was a very rich and powerful city, from whence the Christian name would have an extensive circulation; but it is long since laid in ruins, unprotected by that sacred name. In such a city was Christ pleased to confer his name upon his followers; and you cannot but see that the very choice of the place reveals his wisdom, grace, and justice.

The original word, which is here rendered "called", seems to intimate that they were called Christians by divine appointment, for it generally signifies a declaration from God; and to this purpose it is generally translated. Hence it follows that the very name Christian, as well as the thing, was of a 'divine original'; assumed not by a private agreement of the disciples among themselves--but by the appointment of God! And in this view it is a remarkable accomplishment of an old prophecy of Isaiah, chapter 62:2, "The nations will see your righteousness, and all kings your glory; you will be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will bestow." So Isaiah 65:15, "Your name will be a curse word among my people, for the Sovereign LORD will destroy you and call his true servants by another name."

This name was at first confined to a few; but it soon had a surprisingly extensive propagation through the world. In many countries, indeed, this name was lost. Yet the European nations still retain the honor of wearing it. A few scattered Christians are also still to be found here and there in Asia and Africa, though crushed under the oppressions of Mohammedans and Pagans. This name has likewise crossed the wide ocean to the wilderness of America, and is worn by the sundry European colonies on this continent.

We, in particular, call ourselves Christians, and would take it badly, to be denied the honor of that distinction. But do we really understand the MEANING and sacred import of that name? Do we really know what it IS to be Christians indeed? That is: are we in reality--what we are in name? Certainly it is time for us to consider the matter; and it is my present design that we should do so.

Now we may consider this name in various views; particularly as a name of distinction from the rest of the world, who know not the Lord Jesus, or reject him as an impostor.

It is also a family name, pointing out the Father and Founder of our holy religion and the Christian church; as a badge of our relation to Christ as his servants, his children, his bride.

It intimates our unction by the Holy Spirit, or our being the subjects of his influences; as Christ was anointed by the Holy Spirit, or replenished with his gifts above measure, (for you are to observe that anointed is the English of the Greek name Christ, and of the Hebrew, Messiah).

It signifies that we are the property of Christ, and his peculiar people.

Each of these particulars might be properly illustrated. But my present design confines me to consider the Christian name only in two views: namely, as a universal name, intended to bury all party denominations; and as a name of obligation upon all that wear it to be Christians indeed, or to form their temper and practice upon the sacred model of Christianity.

1. Let us consider the Christian name, as a UNIVERSAL name, intended to bury all party denominations. The name Gentile was odious to the Jews, and the name Jew was odious to the Gentiles. The name Christian swallows up both in one common and agreeable appellation. He who has taken down the partition-wall, has taken away partition names, and united all his followers in his own name--as a common

denomination. For now, says Paul, "there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free--but Christ is all and in all." Col. 3:11. "And you are all one in Christ Jesus." Galatians 3:28. According to a prophecy of Zechariah, "The LORD shall be king over all the earth; and in that day there shall be one LORD, and his name one." Zech. 14:9.

It is but a due honor to Jesus Christ, the founder of Christianity, that all who profess his religion should wear his name alone. They pay an extravagant and even idolatrous compliment to his subordinate officers and ministers, when they take their denomination from them! Had this evil attitude prevailed in the primitive church, instead of the common name 'Christians', there would have been as many party-names as there were apostles or eminent ministers! There would have been:

Paulites from Paul;

Peterites from Peter;

Johnites from John;

Barnabites from Barnabas, etc.

Paul took pains to crush the first risings of this party spirit in those churches which he planted; particularly in Corinth, where it most prevailed. While they were saying, "I am of Paul; and I am of Apollos; and I am of Cephas; and I am of Christ!" Paul puts this pungent question to them: "Is Christ divided?" Are his servants the ringleaders of so many parties? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in or into the name of Paul--that you should be so fond to take your name from him!

Paul counted it a happiness that Providence had directed him to such a conduct as gave no umbrage of encouragement to such an evil attitude. "I thank God," says he, "that I baptized none of you--but Crispus and Gaius: lest any should say, that I baptized in my own name, and was merely gathering a party for myself." 1 Corinthians 1:12-15.

But alas! how little has this convicting reasoning of the apostle Paul--been regarded in the future ages of the church! What an endless variety of denominations have been derived from some leading men, or from some little theological peculiarities! What 'denominations' have prevailed in the Christian world, and crumbled it to pieces, while the Christian name is hardly regarded!

Not to take notice of Jesuits, Jansenites, Dominicans, Franciscans, and other denominations and orders in the popish church, where having corrupted the the whole Christian system--they act very consistently to lay aside the name.

But what 'party names' have been adopted by the Protestant churches, whose religion is substantially the same common Christianity, and who agree in much more important articles--than in those in which they differ; and who therefore might peaceably unite under the common name of Christians! We have Lutherans, Calvinists, Arminians, Methodists, Churchmen, Presbyterians, Independents, Baptists--and a long list of names which I cannot now enumerate!

To be a Christian now-a-days is not enough--but a man must also be something more and better! That is, he must be an active bigot to this or that particular denomination. But where is the reason or propriety of all this? I may indeed believe the same things which Luther or Calvin believed--but I do not believe them on the authority of Luther or Calvin--but upon the sole authority of Jesus Christ, and therefore I should not

call myself by their name, as one of their disciples--but by the name of Christ, whom alone I acknowledge as the Author of my religion, and my only Master and Lord.

If I learn my religion from one of these great MEN--then it is indeed proper that I should assume their name. If I learn it from an assembly of men, and make their beliefs the rule and ground of my faith--then it is enough for me to be of their religion, be that what it will. I may then, with propriety be called a mere conformist; for that is my highest character! But I cannot be properly called a Christian--for a Christian learns his religion, not from an assembly of men, or from the determinations of councils--but from Jesus Christ and his gospel!

To guard against mistakes on this head, I would observe that every man has a natural and legal right to judge and choose for himself in matters of religion; and that is a foolish person indeed, who unthinkingly accepts the teachings of any man, or body of men upon earth--whether pope, king, parliament, convocation, or synod.

Yet, in the exercise of this right and searching for himself, a serious person will find that he agrees more fully in lesser as well as more important articles--with some particular church than others; and thereupon it is his duty to join in stated communion with that particular church. And he may, if he pleases, assume the name which that church wears, by way of distinction from others; this is not what I condemn.

But for me to glory in the denomination of any particular church as my highest character; to lay more stress upon the name of a Presbyterian or a Churchman, than on the sacred name of Christian; to make a punctilious agreement with my sentiments in the little peculiarities of a certain church party--the test of all religion; to make it the object of my zeal to gain proselytes to some other name, than the Christian name; to connive at the faults of those of my own party, and to be blind to the good qualities of other churches; or invidiously to misrepresent or diminish them--these are the things which deserve universal condemnation from God and man! These proceed from a spirit of bigotry and faction--directly opposite to the generous universal spirit of Christianity, and subversive of it!

And yet how common is this unloving spirit among all denominations! and what mischief has it done in the world! Hence proceed contentions and animosities, uncharitable suspicions and censures, slander and detraction, partiality and unreasonable prejudices, and a hideous group of evils, which I cannot now describe!

This spirit also hinders the progress of serious practical religion, by turning the attention of men from the great concerns of eternity, and the essentials of Christianity--to vain jangling and disputes about non-essentials and trifles. Thus the Christian is swallowed up in the partisan, and the fundamentals lost in non-essentials. My brethren, I would now warn you against this wretched, mischievous spirit of denominationalism.

I would not have you entirely undetermined even about the smaller points of religion, the modes and forms, which are the matters of contention between different churches; nor would I have you quite indifferent what particular church to join with in stated communion. Endeavor to find out the truth even in these non-essentials, at least so far as is necessary for the direction of your own conduct. But do not make these non-essentials, the whole or the principal part of your religion. Do not be excessively zealous about them, nor break the peace of the church by magisterially imposing them upon others. Have you definite beliefs in these little disputables? It is well; "but have it to yourself before God," and do not disturb others with it!

You may, if you please, call yourselves Presbyterians and Dissenters etc.; but a Christian! a Christian! let that be your highest distinction; let that be the name which you labor to deserve! God forbid that my ministry should be the occasion of diverting your attention to anything else! But I am so happy that I can appeal to yourselves, whether I have during several years of my ministry among you, labored to instill into you the principles of bigotry, and make you zealous proselytes to a denomination; or whether it has not been the great object of my zeal--to inculcate upon you the grand essentials of our holy religion, and make you sincere, practical Christians. Alas! my dear people, unless I succeed in this, I labor to very little purpose, though I should presbyterianize the whole colony of Virginia!

But some of you may hear strange surmises, wild conjectures, and most dismal insinuations about me. And if you would know the truth at once, if you would be fully informed by one that best knows what religion I hold to--then I myself will plainly tell you: "I am a Christian, a mere Christian! I have no other religion! My church is the Christian church. The Bible! the Bible is my religion! And if I am a dissenter, I dissent only from modes and forms of religion which I cannot find in my Bible; and which therefore have nothing to do with religion, much less should they be made terms of Christian communion, since Christ, the only lawgiver of his church, has HE not made them such! Let this congregation be that of a Christian assembly, and I little care what other name it wears. Let it be a little Antioch, where the followers of Christ shall be distinguished by their old common name, 'Christians!' To bear and deserve this character, let this be our ambition, and this our labor. Let popes pronounce, and councils decree what they please; let statesmen and ecclesiastics prescribe what to believe; as for us, let us study our Bibles--let us learn of Christ; and if we are not dignified with the smiles, or enriched with the emoluments of a denomination--we shall have His approbation, who is the only Lord and Sovereign of the realm of conscience, and by whose judgment we must stand or fall forever!"

But it is time for me to proceed to consider the other view of the Christian name, on which I intend principally to insist; and that is,

II. As a name of OBLIGATION upon all who bear it--to be Christians indeed, and to form their temper and practice upon the sacred model of Biblical Christianity. The prosecution of this subject will lead me to answer this important inquiry, "What is it to be a Christian?"

To be a Christian, in the popular and fashionable sense, is no really difficult or excellent thing. It is to be baptized, to profess the Christian religion; to believe, like our neighbors, that Christ is the Messiah, and to attend upon public worship once a week, in some church or another. In this sense a man may be a Christian--and yet be habitually careless about eternal things. He may be a Christian--and yet fall short of the morality of many of the heathen. He may be a Christian--and yet a drunkard, a swearer, or a slave to some vice or other. He may be a Christian--and yet a willful, impenitent offender against God and man. To be a Christian in this sense--is no high character; and, if this be the whole of Christianity, it is very little matter whether the world is Christianized or not.

But is this to be a Christian--in the original and proper sense of the word? No! that is something of a very different and superior kind. To be a Christian indeed--is the highest character and dignity of which the human nature is capable! It is the most excellent thing that ever adorned our world! It is a thing that heaven itself beholds with approbation and delight.

To be a Christian indeed--is to be like to Christ, from whom the name is taken!

To be a Christian indeed--is to be a follower and imitator of Christ!

To be a Christian indeed--is to have Christ's spirit and temper; and to live as He lived in the world!

To be a Christian is to have those just, exalted, and divine beliefs of God and divine things; and that just and full view of our duty to God and man, which Christ taught. In short, to be a Christian, is to have our sentiments, our character and practice, formed upon the sacred model of the gospel. Let me expatiate a little upon this amiable character.

1. To be a Christian--is to depart from iniquity. To this, the name obliges us; and without this we have no right to the name. "Let every one who names the name of Christ--depart from iniquity," 2 Timothy 2:19. That is, let him depart from iniquity--or not even dare to take that sacred name. Christ was perfectly free from sin: he was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." His followers also shall be perfectly free from sin--in a little time! Before long they will enter into the pure regions of perfect holiness, and will drop all their sins, along with their mortal bodies--into the grave! But this, alas! is not their character in the present state--but the remains of sin still cleave to them. Yet even in the present state, they are laboring after perfection in holiness. Nothing can satisfy them--until they are fully conformed to the image of God's dear Son!

They are hourly conflicting with every temptation, and vigorously resisting every iniquity in its most alluring forms. And, though sin is perpetually struggling for the mastery, and sometimes, in an inadvertent hour, gets an advantage over them--yet, as they are not under the law--but under grace, they are assisted with divine grace, so that no sin has any habitual dominion over them. Romans 6:14.

Hence they are free from the gross vices of the age, and are men of good morals. This is their habitual, universal character; and to pretend to be Christians without this prerequisite, is the greatest absurdity!

What then shall we think of the drunken, swearing, debauched, defrauding, worldly, profligate, profane 'Christians', who have overrun the Christian world? Can there be a greater contradiction?

A loyal subject in arms against his sovereign;

an ignorant scholar;

a sober drunkard,

a charitable miser;

an honest thief--

are not greater absurdities, or more direct contradictions!

To depart from iniquity--is essential to Christianity, and without it there can be no such thing as a Christian!

There was nothing that Christ was so remote from--as sin! And therefore, for those that indulge themselves in sin--and yet to wear His name, is just as absurd and ridiculous as for a coward to denominate himself a great hero; or an illiterate dunce to call himself a university professor!

Therefore, if you will not renounce iniquity--then renounce the Christian name! You cannot consistently retain both!

Alexander the Great had a fellow in his army who had his same name--but was a mere coward. "Either be like me," said Alexander to him, "or lay aside my name!"

You servants of sin, it is in vain for you to wear the name of Christ! It renders you the more ridiculous, and only aggravates your guilt! You may with as much propriety call yourselves 'princes' or 'kings', as 'Christians', while you are so unlike to Christ! You are a scandal to His precious name! His name is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you.

2. To be a Christian--is to deny yourselves and take up the cross and follow Christ. These are the terms of discipleship fixed by Christ himself. He said to them all, "If any man will come after me--let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." Luke 9:23.

To deny ourselves, is to abstain from the pleasures of sin, to moderate our sensual appetites, to deny our own interest for the sake of Christ. In short, it is to sacrifice everything inconsistent with our duty to him, when these come in competition.

To take up our cross, is to bear sufferings, to encounter difficulties, and break through them all--in imitation of Jesus Christ, and for his sake.

To follow Christ, is to trace his steps, and imitate his example, whatever it cost us.

But this observation will coincide with the next head, and therefore I now dismiss it. These, sirs, and these only, are the terms, if you would be Christians, or the disciples of Christ. He honestly warned people of these terms when he first called them to be his disciples. He did not take an advantage of them--but let them know beforehand upon what terms they were admitted. "Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters--yes, even his own life--he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me, cannot be my disciple!" Luke 14:25-27

By 'hating' is here meant a smaller degree of love, or a comparative hatred. That is, if we would be Christ's disciples, we must be willing to part with our dearest relations, and even our lives, when we cannot retain them consistently with our duty to him.

He goes on: "And anyone who does not carry his cross", and encounter the greatest sufferings after my example, "cannot be my disciple." The love of Christ is the ruling passion of every true Christian, and for his sake he is ready to give up all, and to allow all that earth or hell can inflict. He must run all risks, and cleave to Christ's cause at all hazards.

This is the essential character of every true Christian. What then shall we think of those crowds among us, who retain the Christian name--and yet will not deny themselves of their sensual pleasures, nor part with their temporal interest, for the sake of Christ? Who are so far from being willing to lay down their lives, that they cannot stand the force of a laugh or a sneer in the cause of Christ--but immediately stumble and fall away?

Are they Christians, whom the commands of Christ cannot restrain from what their depraved hearts desire? No! A Christian, without self-denial, mortification, and a supreme love to Jesus Christ, is as great a contradiction as fire without heat, or a sun without light, a hero without courage, or a friend without love!

Does not this strip some of you of the Christian name, and prove that you have no right at all to it?

3. A true Christian must be a follower or imitator of Christ. "Be followers of me," says Paul, "as I also am of Christ." 1 Corinthians 11:1. Christ is the model after whom every Christian is formed; for, says Peter, "He left us an example--that we should follow his steps!" 1 Peter 2:21. Paul tells us, that we must be conformed to the image of God's dear Son, Romans 8:29; and that the same mind must be in us--which was also in Christ Jesus. Phil. 2:5. Unless we partake of his spirit, and resemble him in practice; unless we are as he was in the world--we have no right to partake of his name!

Here I would observe, that whatever was miraculous in our Lord's conduct, and peculiar to him as the Son of God and Mediator, is not a pattern for our imitation--but only what was done in obedience to that law of God which was common to him and us.

Christ's heart glowed with love to His Father! He delighted in universal obedience to Him; it was His food and drink to do His will, even in the most painful and self-denying instances! He abounded in devotion, in prayer, meditation and every pious duty.

He was also full of every grace and virtue towards mankind! He was meek and humble, kind and benevolent, just and charitable, merciful and compassionate towards all. Beneficence to the souls and bodies of men was the business of his life; for he went about doing good. Acts 10:38.

In regard to Himself--He was patient and resigned--and yet undaunted and brave under sufferings. He had all His appetites and passions under proper government. He was heavenly-minded, above this world in heart--while He dwelt in it.

This is an imperfect sketch of his amiable character; and in these things every one who deserves to be called after his name, does in some measure resemble and imitate him. This is not only his earnest endeavor--but what he actually attains, though in a much inferior degree; and his imperfections are the grief of his heart.

This resemblance and imitation of Christ is essential to the very being of a Christian, and without it, all profession is a vain pretense!

Does your Christianity, my friends, stand this test? May one know that you belong to Christ--by your living like him, and manifesting the same temper and spirit? Does the temper of the divine Master spread through all his family; and do you show that you belong to it by your temper and conduct? Alas! if you must be denominated from hence, would not some of you with more propriety be called Epicureans from Epicurus, the sensual atheistic philosopher; or mammonites from Mammon, the imaginary god of riches; or Bacchanals from Bacchus, the god of wine; rather than Christians from Christ, the most perfect pattern of living holiness and virtue that ever was exhibited in the world!

If you claim the name of Christians, where is . . .

that ardent devotion,

that affectionate love to God,

that zeal for His glory,

that alacrity in His service,

that resignation to His will,

that generous benevolence to mankind,
that zeal to promote their best interests,
that meekness and forbearance under ill usage,
that unwearied activity in doing good to all,
that self-denial and heavenly-mindedness

which shone so conspicuous in Christ, whose holy name you bear?

Alas! while you are destitute of those graces--and yet wear his name--you only mock it, and turn it into a reproach both to him and yourselves.

I might add, that the Christian name is not hereditary to you by your natural birth--but you must be born anew by the Spirit to entitle you to this new name.

Every Christian is also a believer; believing in him whom he calls his only Savior and Lord.

Every Christian is also a true penitent. Repentance was incompatible with Christ's character, who was perfectly righteous, and had no sin of which to repent. But it is a proper virtue in a sinner, without which he cannot be a Christian.

On these and several other particulars, I might enlarge--but my time will not allow; I shall therefore conclude with a few PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS.

First, You may hence see that the Christian character is the highest, the most excellent and sublime in the world; it includes everything truly great and amiable. The Christian has . . .

exalted sentiments of the Supreme Being,

just notions of duty, and

a proper temper and conduct towards God and man.

A Christian is a devout worshiper of the God of heaven, a cheerful observer of his whole law, and a broken-hearted penitent for his imperfections.

A Christian is a compilation of all the amiable and useful graces and virtues: temperate and sober, just, liberal, compassionate and benevolent, humble, meek, gentle, peaceable, and in all things conscientious.

A Christian is a good parent, a good child, a good master, a good servant, a good husband, a good wife, a faithful friend, an obliging neighbor, a dutiful subject, a good ruler, and an honest citizen. And as far as he is such, so far, and no farther--he is a Christian.

And can there be a more amiable and excellent character exhibited to your view? It is an angelic, a divine character. Let it be your glory and your ambition to wear it with a good grace, to wear it so as to adorn it. To acquire the title of kings and princes, is not in your power. To spread your fame as scholars, philosophers, or heroes, may be beyond your reach. But here is a character more excellent, more amiable, more honorable than all these, which it is your business to deserve and maintain.

And blessed be God, this is a dignity which the lowest among you, which beggars and slaves may truly attain to. Let this therefore be an object of universal ambition and pursuit, and let every other name and title be despised in comparison of it. This is the way to rise to true honor in the estimate of God, angels, and holy men. What though the pseudo-Christians of our age and country ridicule you? let them consider their own absurd conduct and be ashamed. They think it an honor to wear the Christian name--and yet persist in unchristian practices; and who but a fool, with such palpable contradiction, would think so? A beggar who imagines himself a king and trails his rags with majesty, as though they were royal robes--is not so ridiculous as one that will usurp the Christian name without a Christian practice! And yet such 'Christians' are the favorites of the world. To them--to renounce the profession of Christianity is barbarous and profane; but to live according to that profession, and practice Christianity, is preciseness and fanaticism!

Can anything be more preposterous? This is as if one should ridicule learning--and yet glory in the character of a scholar! And are they fit to judge of the wisdom and propriety; or their censures to be regarded--who fall into such an absurdity themselves?

Secondly, Hence you may see that, if all the professors of Christianity should behave in character, the religion of Christ would soon appear divine to all mankind, and spread through all nations of the earth. Were Christianity exhibited to the life--in all its native inherent glories, it would be as needless to offer arguments to prove it divine, as to prove that the sun is full of light; the conviction would flash upon all mankind by its own intrinsic evidence.

Did Christians exemplify the religion they profess--all the world would immediately see that that religion which rendered them so different a people from all the rest of mankind--is indeed divine, and every way worthy of universal acceptance. Then would Heathenism, Mohammedanism, and all the false religions in the world, fall before the heaven-born religion of Jesus Christ. Then it would be sufficient to convince an infidel--just to bring him into a Christian country, and let him observe how different things are there--from all the world beside. But alas!

Thirdly, How different is the Christian world--from the Christian religion! Who would imagine that those who take their name from Christ--have any relation to him, if we observe their spirit and practice?

Should a stranger learn Christianity from what he sees in POPISH countries--he would conclude that it principally consisted in bodily austerities, in worshiping saints, images, relics, and a thousand trifles, in theatrical fopperies and insignificant ceremonies, in believing implicitly all the determinations of a fallible man as infallibly true, and in persecuting all that differ from them, and showing their love to their souls--by burning their bodies.

In PROTESTANT countries, alas! the face of things is but little better as to good morals and practical religion. Let us take our own country for a sample. Suppose a Heathen or Mohammedan should take a tour through Virginia to learn the religion of the inhabitants from their general conduct. What would he conclude? Would he not conclude that all the religion of the generality consisted in a few Sunday formalities, and that the rest of the week they had nothing to do with God, or any religion--but were at liberty to live as they please?

And were he told these were the followers of one Christ, and were of Christ's religion, would he not conclude that Christ was certainly an impostor, and the minister of sin?

But when he came to find that, notwithstanding all this licentiousness, they professed the pure and holy religion of the Bible--how would he be astonished, and pronounce them the most inconsistent, bare-faced hypocrites!

My friends! Great and heavy is the guilt that lies upon our country upon this account. It is a scandal to the Christian name; it is guilty of confirming the neighboring heathen in their prejudices, and hinders the propagation of Christianity through the world. Oh let not us be accessory to this dreadful guilt--but do all we can to recommend our religion to universal acceptance! I add,

Fourthly, and lastly, Let us examine whether WE have any just entitlement to the Christian name; that is, whether we are Christians indeed; for if we have not the thing, to retain the name--is the most inconsistent folly and hypocrisy, and will answer no end but to aggravate our condemnation! A lost 'professing Christian' is the most shocking character in hell! And unless you are such Christians as I have described--it will before long be your character!

Therefore, be followers of Christ, imbibe his spirit, practice his precepts, and depart from iniquity. Otherwise he will sentence you from him at last--as workers of iniquity. "And then will I profess unto them" (these are Christ's own words!) "I never knew you; depart from me, you who work iniquity!" Matthew 7:23.

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