

The Upright Man's Character

by Thomas Watson

The sermon emphasizes the importance of an upright character, defined by a heart for God, a commitment to the word of God, and a life of faith working by love, resulting in peace and a right standing with God.

Scripture: Psalm 32:2, Psalm 37:37, Psalm 51:6, Proverbs 23:26, Mark 9:24, John 14:1, Romans 2:5, Galatians 5:6, Ephesians 5:9, 1 Peter 1:18

Topics: "Christian Character", "Holiness"

Description

Thomas Watson preaches about the importance of sincerity and uprightness in a Christian's character, highlighting the significance of having a heart for God, working by an upright rule, and acting from a principle of faith and love. He emphasizes the traits of an upright man, including being uniform in piety, zealous for God, and progressive in holiness. Watson contrasts the end of the upright man, which is peace with God, conscience, and the saints, with the end of the wicked, which is to be cut off. He provides comfort to the upright by assuring them of the peaceful and honorable end awaiting them.

Transcript

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"Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace." Psalm 37:37

Sincerity is of universal importance to a Christian. It is the sauce which seasons piety and makes it savory. Sincerity is the jewel which God is most delighted with, Psalm 51:6. "Behold you desire truth in the inward parts." To speak plainly--all our pompous show of holiness, without this soul of sincerity to enliven it--it is but 'pious folly'. It is but going to hell in a more devout manner than others!

This consideration has put me upon this subject in this place of solemn worship and concourse; and to quicken your attention, you have God himself calling to you to take notice in these words, "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace."

The Hebrew word for upright has two significations.

1. It signifies plainness of heart; the upright man is not plaited in folds; he is without collusion or double-dealing, "in whose spirit is no deceit," Psalm 32:2.

The upright man has no subterfuges, his tongue and his heart go together, as a well-made dial goes with the sun; he is downright sincere.

2. This word upright signifies a man approved. The upright man is one whom God thinks highly of. Better have God's approbation, than the world's acclamation. The plainer the diamond is--the richer; the more plain the heart is--the more it shines in God's eyes.

In the words there are three parts:

1. The Prospect, the Upright man.
2. The Aspect, Behold.
3. The Reason, for the end of that man is peace.

Or thus.

1. Here is the godly man's character, He is upright.
2. His crown, the end of that man is peace.

The words present us with this doctrinal conclusion--the end of an upright man is crowned with peace.

That I may illustrate this, I shall show you:

1. Who this upright man is, that we may know him when we meet him.
2. The blessed end he makes, the end of that man is peace.

I. The upright man's character.

I will delineate who this upright man is. I shall show you the innocency of Christ's dove. We live in an age wherein most pretend to saintship, but it is to be feared they are not upright saints; but, like the woman in the gospel, whom "Satan has bent over," Luke 13:11, I shall give you several characteristic signs of an upright Christian.

1. The upright man's HEART is for God. Hence that phrase "upright in heart," Psalm 64:10. It is the heart which God calls for, Proverbs 23:26, "My son give me your heart!" The heart is a virgin, which has many suitors, and, among the rest, God Himself becomes a suitor. The heart is like the primum mobile, which carries all the other orbs along with it. If the heart is for God, then our tears, our alms, all is for God. The heart is the fort-royal that commands all the rest. When he high-priest was to cut up the animal for sacrifice, the first thing he looked upon was the heart, and if that had any blemish, it was rejected. It is not the gift, but the heart which God respects. "These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips--but their hearts are far from me!" Isaiah 29:13. They are like those statues which have their eyes and hands lifted up to heaven, but no heart to animate that devotion. In religion the heart is all, Eph. 5:9. "Making melody in your hearts to the Lord." It is the heart which makes the music. The upright man gives God his heart. It is reported of Cranmer, that after his flesh and bones were consumed in the flame, his heart was found whole. Just so, an upright man in the midst of his infirmities--his heart is kept whole for God--he does not have two hearts--a heart for God, and a heart for sin. God loves a broken heart, not a divided heart!

2. The upright man works by an upright RULE. There are many false crooked rules which the upright man dares not go by. As,

False Rule #1. Public Opinion. "It is the opinion of such as are pious and learned." This is a false rule, it is not the opinion of others, which can make a thing unlawful, or warrantable. If a synod of divines, or if an assembly of angels, should say we might worship God by an image, their opinion could not make this lawful. An upright Christian will not make another's opinion, his Bible.

The best guides may sometimes go wrong. Peter preaches circumcision, the very doctrine of the false apostles, Gal. 2:1. Peter himself was not infallible. The upright man is no adorer of public opinion. when the stream of Arianism swelled so high that it overflowed a great part of the world, Athanasius swam against the stream; he was invincible in the truth.

False Rule #2. Custom. "It has been the custom of the place, or the religion of our ancestors." This is a false rule; "The customs of the people are vain," Jer. 10:3, and as for our ancestors, a son should better take his land from his father, than his religion. How many of our forefathers lived in times of popery--and stumbled to hell in the dark? Are we therefore bound to follow their blind zeal? A wise man will not set his watch by the clock, but by the sun!

False Rule #3. Conscience. "My conscience tells me so." This is no rule for an upright man; the conscience of a sinner is defiled, Titus 1:15. Conscience being defiled, will err; an erring conscience cannot be a rule, Acts 26:9. "I truly thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus"; he who is a heretic may plead his conscience. Once admit conscience to be a rule, and we open the door to all anarchy and massacres. If the devil gets into a man's conscience--where will he not carry him!

False Rule #4. Providence. Providence sits at the helm, and disposes of all events and contingencies; but providence is not a rule for the upright man to walk by. We are indeed to observe God's providence, Psalm 107:43. "Whoever is wise will observe these things"; but we are not to be infallibly led by it. Providence is a Christian's diary--not his Bible!

When the wicked prosper, it does not follow that their way is good, or that God favors them. God's candle, as Job says, "may shine upon their head," and yet his wrath hang over their head! It is the greatest judgment from God--to thrive in a way of sin! Dionysius, when he had robbed the temple, afterwards had a fair gale to bring home his stolen plunder. "See," says he, "how the gods love sacrilege!" A calm is sometimes the forerunner of an earthquake. Haman's banquet did but usher in his execution. God may let men succeed, that their judgment may exceed! "You are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed." Romans 2:5.

The upright man will not go by these rules. But leaving such false guides, he makes the word of God his star to follow. This is the judge and umpire of all his actions; "To the law, to the testimony," Isaiah 8:20. The Old and New Testaments are the two lips by which God speaks to us! They are the pair of compasses by which the upright man draws the whole circumference of his life.

The Montanists and Enthusiasts talk of revelations, and some talk now-a-days of "a light within them." The Scripture is above any supposed revelation. "Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions." Colossians 2:18. The apostle speaks of a voice from heaven, 1 Pet. 1:18. "And this voice which came from heaven, we heard when we were with

him in the holy mount"; yet, says he, "we have a more sure word," ver. 19. The word of God ought to be more sacred and infallible to us, than a voice from heaven!

3. An upright man works from an upright PRINCIPLE. And that is, "Faith working by love," Gal. 5:6.

1. An upright man acts from a principle of FAITH. Hab. 2:4, "The just shall live by his faith."

1. The upright man hears in faith. It is called "the hearing of faith," Gal. 3:2. Faith receives the word.

2. The upright man prays in faith. It is called the "prayer offered in faith," James 5:15. David sprinkles faith in his prayer, Psalm 51:7, "Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean, wash me," etc.; in the Hebrew it runs in the future, "You shall purge me, you shall wash me." It is the voice of one who believes as well as prays. Prayer is the arrow, and faith is the bow out of which we shoot to the throne of grace; a faithless prayer is a fruitless prayer. Prayer without faith is like a gun discharged without a bullet. The upright man prays in faith.

3. The upright man weeps in faith. Mark 9:24, "The father of the child cried out with tears, Lord, I believe." When his tears dropped to the earth, his faith reached heaven.

2. An upright man acts from a principle of LOVE. Cant. 1:4, "The upright love you." Love is as the spring in the watch, it moves the wheels of obedience. The upright Christian is carried to heaven in a fiery chariot of love. Love amends and ripens every duty, and makes it come off with a better relish. Divine love is like musk among linen, which perfumes it. Love gives a fragrant redolency to all our services. A small token sent in love is accepted by God. "The upright love you."

Hypocrites serve God only for fear--as the slave works in the galley; or as the Parthians worship the devil--that he should do them no hurt. Hypocrites' obedience is forced like water out of a still--by the fire. The thoughts of hell-fire make the water of tears drop from their eyes! The upright Christian acts purely from love, 2 Cor. 5:14, "The love of Christ constrains me!" An upright soul loves Christ, more than he fears hell.

4. An upright Christian works to an upright END. He makes God's glory his ultimate end; his aims are right. God's glory is the upright man's mark, and though he shoots short of the mark, yet because he aims at it, it is accepted. This is the question the upright man propounds to himself, "Will this bring glory to God?" He labors still to bring in some revenues into the treasury of heaven. He prefers the glory of God before whatever comes in competition with, or stands in opposition against it. If life is laid in one balance, and God's glory in the other--the glory of God outweighs. "They loved not their lives to the death," Rev. 12:11. "If my wife and children," says Hieroni, "should hang about me, and dissuade me from doing my duty--I would trample upon all, and I would fly to the cross!"

The upright man prefers the glory of God, before his own salvation, Romans 9:1. "I could wish myself accursed from Christ for my kinsmen according to the flesh." Paul knew it was impossible he could be accursed from Christ. The book of life has no errata in it; besides, Paul knew it unlawful to wish he were accursed from Christ; but the meaning is, supposing, that by his breaking off, and some of the Jews grafting into Christ, God might be more honored, such was his zeal for God's glory, that he could even wish himself accursed from Christ. God's glory was dearer to him than his own salvation.

1. The hypocrite serves God for GAIN. He looks at the benefits and profits which come in by religion. It is not the power of godliness the hypocrite loves, but the gain of godliness. It is not the fire of the altar, but

the gold of the altar which he adores. This is a religious wickedness. It is the loaves, not the miracles, which draw them to religion. Demetrius cries up the goddess Diana, Acts 19:27, but it was not her temple, but her silver shrines which he cared for. Many fall in love with religion, not for her beauty but her jewels.

There is a story of a monk, who walked like a humble man with his eyes down upon the ground, who afterwards was made abbot; and being asked why he went in that humble posture with his eyes down? says he, "I was looking for the keys of the abbey, and now I have found them!" The hypocrite is like the wasp which comes to the gally-pot--for the honey! The hypocrite makes use of religion, only as the fisherman does of his net, to catch some benefit for himself.

2. The hypocrite serves God for APPLAUSE. Hypocrites look not at God's glory, but their own vain-glory. They serve God rather to save their credit, than to save their souls. Hypocrites pray "to be seen by men," Mat. 6:5, that they may be set upon a theater, and have spectators. When they give alms "they blow a trumpet," Mat 6:2, and their hearts were as hollow as their trumpets! They did it "that they might be honored by men," ver. 2. It was not giving alms, but selling them; they sold them for praise and applause! "Truly I say unto you," says Christ, "they have their reward in full." The hypocrite may make his acquittance, and write, "Received in full payment!" The applause of men--is all the payment which they will get. An upright heart makes the glory of God his center.

5. An upright man is UNIFORM in piety. He looks with an equal eye at all God's commands. "The tables were written on both sides," Exod. 32:15. An upright Christian turns both sides of the tables; he looks at duties of the second table as well as duties of the first; he knows all have the same stamp of divine authority upon them. It is said in the honor of Zachariah and Elizabeth, they walked "in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord." An upright Christian, though he fails in every duty, yet he makes conscience of every duty. He will as well worship God in the closet as in the temple; he often casts up the accounts between God and conscience. He is pious at home--as well as abroad. He had rather use the looking-glass of the word to look into his own heart--than the broad spectacles of censure to look into the faults of others. He walks soberly, in acts of temperance. He walks righteously, in acts of justice. He walks godly, in acts of piety.

A hypocrite will pick and choose in religion. In some duties he is zealous, in others remiss. "Hypocrites! For you are careful to tithe even the tiniest part of your income, but you ignore the important things of the law--justice, mercy, and faith," Matt 23:23. Jehu was zealous against the idolatry of Ahab, but gives a toleration to the golden calves, 2 Kings 10:29. Jehu's obedience was lame on one foot. Some will go over the smooth way of religion--they are for easy duties; but they like not the rugged way of self-denial and mortification. He is like the plough, when it comes to a hard piece of earth--it makes a baulk. An upright Christian, with Caleb, follows God fully, Numb. 14:24. Where we are so sincere as to do our best, God will be so indulgent as to pass by our worst.

6. An upright Christian does not go STOOPING. The Hebrew for upright signifies to go straight.

The upright man will not stoop to anything against his conscience. The Greek for upright, signifies a man that does not bend. The upright Christian does not whirl about, or sinfully prostitute himself to the lusts and desires of men. The apostles could neither flatter or cringe, Acts 4:19. "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God."

The upright Christian dares not palliate or justify the sins of men; this were to wash the devil's face with holy water. Isaiah 50:20, 26. "Woe to them that call evil good, which justify the wicked for reward."

Propertius speaks of a spring in Italy which makes the black oxen that drink of it, look white. This is a fit emblem of those hypocrites who can make the worst men look white.

An upright man dares not keep back any part of God's truth, Acts 20:27. "I have declared unto you all the counsel of God." It is cowardice and treason, to conceal any part of our commission.

An upright man will not neglect a known duty for fear of losing a party. Some upon this very ground have forborne to declare against error--for fear of a party falling off from them. If men will leave us for doing our duty, my opinion is, they are better lost than kept. The upright man had rather that men should account him a fool, than God should accuse him for unfaithful. An upright man will not let any interest bias him from the truth. The saints are compared to pillars, Rev. 3:12; the pillar stands upright. Unsound Christians are like willows which will bend every way. A godly Christian is like the "palm tree which grows upright," Jer. 10:5. When we let men lord it over our consciences--if they bid us break our vows, sell our religion, we are pliable, and malleable to anything, like hot iron which may be beaten into any form; or like wool, which will receive any die. This argues much unsoundness of heart. An upright Christian will not be bent awry, he goes without stooping.

7. An upright Christian is ZEALOUS for God. Rev. 2:2, "You can not bear those who are evil." Uprightness and zeal make the right complexion of a Christian. Zeal is a mixed affection; it is a compound of love and anger, it boils up the spirits to the height, and makes them run over; zeal is a fire kindled from heaven. Blessed be its anger, for it is without sin, and its wrath, for it is against sin. When Paul saw their idolatry at Athens, "his spirit was stirred in him," Acts 17:16; he was in a burning fit of zeal. Moses, a meek man, though cool in his own cause, yet hot in God's, when Israel had committed idolatry, "Moses" anger waxed hot," Ex. 32:19. He breaks the tablets, grinds the calf to powder, strews it on the water, and makes the children of Israel to drink of it!

An upright Christian takes a dishonor done to God more heinous than a disgrace done to himself; can the true child endure to hear the father reproached? When Croesus son, though born mute, saw them go about to kill his father, his tongue strings unloosed, and he cried out, "Kill not king Croesus!" He who can hear Christ's divinity spoken against by the Socinian, his ordinances cried down by the libertine, and his blood not rise, and his zeal not sparkle forth--is a traitor to the crown of heaven. Did Christ open his side for us when the blood ran out; and shall not we open our mouth in his vindication? how were the saints in former times fired with zeal for God? They were, as Cyprian affirms, like lions breathing forth the heavenly flame of zeal.

8. An upright Christian will not allow himself in any known SIN. He dares not touch the forbidden fruit, Gen. 39:9. "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Though it is a besetting-sin, he disinherits it. There is no man but has a propensity and inclination more to one sin, more than another; as in the body there is one predominant trait, or as in the hive there is one master-bee; so in the heart there is one master-sin: there is one sin which is not only near to a man as the garment, but dear to him as the right eye! This sin is Satan's fort-royal, all his strength lies here; and though we beat down his out-works, gross sin, yet if we let him hold this fort of besetting-sin, it is as much as he desires. The devil can hold a man as fast by this one link, as by a whole chain of vices. The fowler has the bird held fast enough by one wing.

Now an upright Christian will not indulge himself in this besetting-sin, Psalm 18:23. "I was also upright before him, and kept myself from my iniquity." An upright Christian takes the sacrificing knife of

mortification, and runs it through his dearest sin! Herod did many things, but there was one sin so dear to him, that he would sooner behead the prophet, than behead that sin! Herod would have a gap for his incest. An upright heart is not only angry with sin (which may admit of reconciliation), but hates sin; and if he sees this serpent creeping into his bosom, the nearer it is, the more he hates it.

9. An upright Christian is right in his JUDGMENT. He does not lean to error; his head does not turn around. Though there will be differences in lesser matters, things indifferent and disputable (and indeed where there are not such clear footings in scripture, there must be some grains of allowance), yet in the fundamentals of true religion, the upright Christian keeps his standing.

Error is dangerous; a man may as well go to hell by error--as by moral vice. Gross sins stab to the heart--error poisons. There is less hopes for an erroneous person than a profane person. The profane person sins, and does not repent; the erroneous sins, and holds it to be a sin, to repent. The one is without tears, the other cries down tears. The upright Christian is not tainted with this leprosy; he has rectitude in his mind.

10. An upright man is of a SYMPATHIZING spirit. He lays to heart the miseries of Zion. This argues much sincerity. Pliny speaks of the golden vine, which feels no injury from wind or storms. The church triumphant may be compared to this golden vine, which is above all storms of injury, and flourishes in perpetual glory; but the church militant is not a golden vine, but a bleeding vine. Now where there is sincerity, there is sympathy.

A hypocrite may be affected with his own miseries, but an upright heart is affected with the church's miseries. I confess a hypocrite may be sensible of the miseries of the public, so far as he himself is concerned, as a man may be troubled to hear of such a ship cast away, because he himself had a share in it; but an upright Christian, though he be not touched in his own particular, yet because it goes ill with the church, and religion seems to lose ground, he counts the church's loss his loss, he weeps in Zion's tears, and bleeds in her wounds.

Jeremiah, that weeping prophet, makes the church's miseries his own, Lam. 3:1. "I am the man that has seen affliction." He suffered least in his own person, for he had a protection granted; the king gave order that he should be well cared for, Jer. 39:11, 12; but he felt most in regard of sympathy. Though they were Zion's miseries, they were Jeremiah's lamentations; he felt Israel's hard cords through his soft bed. Nehemiah lays to heart the miseries of the church, his complexion begins to alter, and he looks sad, Neh. 2:3. "Why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres lies waste?" What, sad, when the king's cupbearer and wine is so near? Oh, but it fared ill with the church of God; therefore he grows weary of the court, he leaves his wine, and mingles his drink with weeping. Here was an upright man.

True grace ennobles the heart, dilates the affections, and carries out a man beyond the sphere of his private concerns, making him mind the church's condition as his own. Oh, how few upright saints! may not that charge be drawn up against sundry persons? "How terrible it will be for you who sprawl on ivory beds surrounded with luxury, eating the meat of tender lambs and choice calves. You sing idle songs to the sound of the harp, and you fancy yourselves to be great musicians, as King David was. You drink wine by the bowlful, and you perfume yourselves with exotic fragrances, caring nothing at all that your nation is going to ruin." Amos 6:4-6.

It is with most people as with a drunken man fast asleep, he is not sensible of anything that is done; let others be killed near him, and lie a-bleeding, he is not sensible. He sleeps securely in his wine. Thus it is with too many who are drunk with the wine of prosperity, and fallen fast asleep. Though the church of God lies bleeding of her wounds near them, and ready to bleed to death; they are not sensible, they have quite forgotten Jerusalem. Like Themistocles, who when one offered to teach him the Art of Memory, he desired that he would teach him the Art of Forgetfulness. The devil has taught many men this art. They have forgotten the miseries of the church; such may suspect themselves to be unsound. The saints are called living stones, 1 Pet. 2:5; therefore if there is any breach in the spiritual house they must be sensible. Is not the church Christ's spouse? and to see her smitten, and Christ through her--will not this affect our hearts? The church is "the apple of God's eye," Zech. 2:8, and to see the apple of his eye weep, will not this draw tears from us? An upright heart cannot but grieve to sit by the church's bedside, and hear her dying groans.

11. The upright man is LIBERAL and giving.

1. He has a liberal heart towards the maintenance of God's worship. He will not let the fire of God's altar go out for lack of pouring on a little oil. What vast sums of gold and silver did David prepare for the house of God! 1 Chron. 29:3. "And now because of my devotion to the Temple of my God, I am giving all of my own private treasures of gold and silver to help in the construction. This is in addition to the building materials I have already collected for his holy Temple. I am donating more than 112 tons of gold from Ophir and over 262 tons of refined silver to be used for overlaying the walls of the buildings and for the other gold and silver work to be done by the craftsmen." Hypocrites, if they may have golden purses, are content to have wooden priests. They love a cheap gospel, they are loath to be put to too much expense. How many have lost their souls to save money! The upright Christian will not offer that to God, which costs him nothing.

2. The upright man has a liberal heart to Christ's poor. Psalm 112:9, "He has dispersed abroad, he has given to the poor, his righteousness endures forever." The Hebrew word for godly signifies merciful. The upright man pours the golden oil of mercy into the wounds of others. The poor man's hand is Christ's treasury; the upright saint is ever casting into Christ's treasury. Mercy and liberality is the ensign that integrity displays.

The more excellent anything is, the more diffusive. The clouds pour down their silver showers, the sun sends abroad its golden beams. "The end of life is usefulness." What benefit is there of a diamond in the rock; and what better is it to have a great estate, if this diamond be shut up in a rocky heart.

What shall we say to selfish men? are these upright? "All seek their own," Phil. 2:21. You may as well extract oil out of a flint--as a drop of charity from them. Some observe the ground is most barren near golden mines; and indeed it is too often so in a spiritual sense; those whom God has most enriched with estates, are most barren in good works. How can he say he has an upright heart--who has a withered hand? how dares he say he loves God in sincerity? 1 John 3:17, "If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?"

What shall we think of such, as instead of scattering abroad the seeds of mercy and compassion to others--care not how they wrong others! Are these to be accounted upright? Christ made himself poor to make us rich, 1 Cor. 6:8, and these make others poor, to make themselves rich! Instead of giving the poor a covering, they take away their covering from them! Like the hedge hog that wraps itself in its own soft

down, and turns out the bristles to others; an emblem of these, who if they may gratify themselves, they turn out the bristles, they care not what mischief or harm they do to others. These are those who raise the wealth of their own families, out of the ruin of others. They are not birds of paradise, but birds of prey. Some do this under the mask of profession; this is just as if a thief should commit a robbery in the judge's own robes; or as if a woman should play the harlot having the Bible lying before her. These are none of the race of the upright. The upright man is a public good in the place where he lives; he is given to works of mercy. He is like God, who "makes his springs to run among the valleys," Psalm 104:10, so does the upright man make his springs of charity to run among the valleys of poverty.

12. The upright man is PROGRESSIVE in holiness. He pursues after further degrees of sanctity, Job 17:9. "The righteous will move onward and forward, and those with pure hearts will become stronger and stronger." Uprightness is in the heart, as seed in the earth, which will increase, Col. 2:9. Unsound Christians rest in some faint desires and formalities; it is with hypocrites as with the body in an atrophy, which, though it receives food, yet thrives not. The upright Christian "follows on to know the Lord," Hos. 6:3. They say of the crocodile, that it never stops growing. Hierom writes of Paulinus, that in the first part of his life he excelled others, in the latter part he excelled himself. The upright man is not like Hezekiah's sun, which went backward; nor like Joshua's sun, which stood still; but like David's sun, which goes forward, and as a champion does run his race.

Objection. But may a child of God say, I fear I am not upright, for I do not perceive that I become stronger?

Answer. You may thrive in grace, though you do not perceive it. The plant grows, but not always in one place. Sometimes it grows in the branches, sometimes secretly in the root. Just so, an upright soul still grows, but not always in the same grace; sometimes higher in the branches, in knowledge; sometimes he thrives in the root, in humility; which is as needful as any other growth. If you are not more tall, yet if you are more lowly, here is a progress, and this progress evidences the vitals of sincerity.

13. The upright man orders his LIFE aright. Psalm 50:23, "To him that orders his conduct aright will I show the salvation of God." The upright man is a pattern of holiness; he treads evenly, he walks as Christ did, 1 John 2:6. Though the main work of religion lies within, yet "our light must so shine," that others may behold it. The foundation of sincerity is in the heart, yet its beautiful frontispiece appears in the conduct. The saints are called jewels, because they cast a sparkling luster in the eyes of others. An upright Christian is like Solomon's temple, gold within and without. Sincerity is a holy leaven, which if it is in the heart, will work itself into the life, and make it swell and rise as high as heaven, Phil. 3:20.

Some brag they have good hearts, but their lives are crooked. They hope to go to heaven, but "their steps take hold of hell," Proverbs 5:5. An upright Christian sets a crown of honor upon the head of religion, he does not only profess the gospel, but adorns it--he labors to walk so regularly and holily, that if we could suppose the Bible to be lost, it might be found again in his life.

14. The upright man will be GOOD in bad times. The laurel keeps its freshness and greenness in the winter season. Job 27:6, "My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go, my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live." Uprightness is a complexion which will not alter. The upright man's zeal is like the fire which the vestal virgins kept in Rome always burning.

The hypocrite seems upright, until times of trial come. The crystal looks like pearl until it comes to the hammering. The hypocrite is good only in sunshine; he cannot sail in a storm, but retreats to the shore. Naturalists report of the Chelydonian stone, that it will retain its virtue no longer than it is enclosed in gold.

This is a fit emblem of hypocrites, who are good only while they are enclosed in golden prosperity; take them out of the gold, and they lose that virtue they seemed to have. Unsound professors, like green timber, shrink in the hot sun of persecution. The heat of the fiery trial cools their zeal.

An upright man--whatever he loses, he holds fast his integrity. He is like wine full of spirits, which is good to the last drawing. The three Hebrew children, or rather the three champions, were invincible in their courage, Dan. 3:18. Neither Nebuchadnezzar's music could flatter them, nor could his furnace scare them out of their religion. Paul glories in his sufferings, Romans 5:3; he rattles his chain, and displays it as an ensign of honor. Ignatius calls his fetters his spiritual pearls; they were as precious to him as a necklace of pearl; thus the upright man, though death lies in the way, spurs on to the end of the race; he is most swift towards the center. Of him it may be said, "You have kept the best wine until now."

15. An upright man endeavors to make OTHERS upright. It is his work to "make crooked things straight." Where there is life, there is a power of propagation. 1 Cor. 4:14, "In Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel"; a good man labors to make others good; as fire does assimilate, and turn everything into its own nature, Luke 21:32. "When you are converted, strengthen your brethren." The upright man is in the place of God to his brother, he increases his knowledge, confirms his faith, inflames his love. If he sees his brother declining, he labors to bring him back; when the house begins to lean, you put under a straight piece of timber to support it. Another beginning to lean to error, the upright Christian, as straight timber, does underprop and support him.

And thus I have set before you the character of the upright man, he is worth a marking and beholding. I have drawn the upright man's picture. The use I would make of all is this--That you would fall in love with this picture, and that you would endeavor to resemble it.

And there is a great motive in the text to make you fall in love with uprightness. See what a badge of honor is put upon the upright man. God calls him perfect, "Mark the perfect man."

Question. But can any man be perfect in this life? "Who can say--I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?" Proverbs 20:9.

Answer. Far be it from me to hold that a Christian is pure from sin in this life. If there were no Bible to confute that opinion, a Christian's own experience would do it. We find the continual motions of sin working in our members. Paul cries out of "a body of death," Romans 7:24. The saints, though they are lovely, yet black, Cant. 1:5. Grace in this life is like gold in the ore, full of mixture. But yet, in an evangelical sense, the upright man is said to be perfect, and that five manner of ways.

1. An upright man is perfect with a perfection of PARTS, though not of degrees. There is no part of him but is embroidered, and bespangled with grace. Though he be sanctified but in part--yet he is sanctified in every part; therefore grace in a believer is called a new man, Col. 3:10. The work of the Spirit in the heart is a thorough work; Psalm 51:2, "Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity." Grace in the heart is like air in the twilight; there is no part of the air but has some light in it, and in this sense the upright man is perfect.

2. The upright man is perfect COMPARATIVELY, in regard to others. Thus Noah was perfect in his generation, Gen. 6:9. Noah, compared with the profane world, was a perfect man. Gold in the ore compared with lead or brass is perfect. A field of wheat, though it may have some thistles growing in it, yet, compared with a field of tares, is perfect.

3. The upright man is perfect in regard of his AIMS. He aims at the mark of perfection. The upright man breathes after perfection, and therefore he is said "not to sin," 1 John 3:9, because though he is not without sin, yet his will is against sin. He has voted sin down, though this bosom-traitor rebels. When he fails, he weeps; and this is a gospel-perfection.

4. The upright man is perfect through the RIGHTEOUSNESS of Christ. He is perfectly justified, Col. 2:10. "You are complete in him." Through the red glass, everything appears red; so through the glass of Christ's blood, the soul is looked upon as beautiful and glorious! He who has on Christ's seamless coat, is perfect. He who has the righteousness of God, is perfect, 2 Cor. 5:21.

5. God calls the upright man perfect, because he intends to make him so. Christ calls his spouse his undefiled, Cant. 5:2. "Open to me, my dove, my undefiled one," or as the original is, "my perfect one; my flawless one." Not that the spouse is so, she has her spots and blemishes, but yet undefiled, because Christ intends to make her so. God has chosen us to perfection, Ephes. 1:4. A painter who has begun the crude draught of a picture, he looks upon it what he intends to make it; he intends to lay it in its own orient colors. Just so, in this life there is but the first draft, the imperfect lineaments of grace drawn in our souls. Yet God calls us perfect, because he intends by the pencil of the Holy Spirit to draw us out in our orient beauty, and lay the golden color of glory upon us. Thus the upright man is perfect, it is as sure to be done as if it were done already.

And so much for the first part of my text. The upright man's CHARACTER. I proceed now briefly to the second, which is,

II. The upright man's CROWN. "The end of that man is peace!" As the upright is honorable while he lives, he is perfect; so he is happy when he dies. "His end is peace." The word peace, encircles all blessedness in it. "The end of that man is peace;" a wise man looks to the end of a thing; Eccl. 7:8, "Better is the end of a thing than the beginning." So peaceable is the end of an upright man, that Balaam desired it, Numb. 23:10. "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!"

Now the upright man goes off the stage of this world wearing a triple crown of peace.

1. He has peace with GOD. God says to him, "Be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven you." I have nothing against you; you have laid your sins to heart, and I will not lay them to your charge. The Jewish Rabbis say that Moses died with a kiss from God's mouth. I am sure of thi--the upright man dies embracing Christ and kissing the promises.

2. He has peace with CONSCIENCE. 1 John 5:10, "He who believes has the witness in himself." His end must needs be peace--who has a smiling God, and a smiling conscience. Augustine calls it, "the paradise of a good conscience." A godly man is in this paradise before he dies. What sweet music does the bird of conscience make in the breast of a believer! "Be of good comfort," says conscience, "you have walked uprightly in a crooked generation! Do not fear death!" This is the foretaste of heaven; here is manna in the golden pot; he who dies with peace of conscience, flies to heaven as Noah's dove to the ark--with an olive branch in his mouth.

3. The upright man has peace with the SAINTS. He has their good word, they embalm his memory, and erect for him monuments of honor in their hearts. Thus the upright man's end is peace, he is renowned among the people of God; he inherits not their censure, but their praise. He is carried to his grave with a shower of tears.

Use 1. INFORMATION. See a great difference between the godly and the wicked in their end. "The end of the upright man is peace," but "the end of the wicked is to be cut off," Psalm 37:38. A wicked man's end is shame and horror, he dies with convulsion-fits of conscience. He lives in a calm, but dies in a storm, Job 27:20. "A tempest steals him away in the night." Like those Pliny speaks of, who swim along pleasantly until they fall into the dead sea. To every sinner I say as Abner to Joab, 2 Sam. 2:26, "Don't you realize that this will end in bitterness?"

What is the end of hypocrites? Job 8:13. "Their hope shall be cut off!" What is the end of apostates? 2 Pet. 2:20, "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, their latter end is worse with them." "The end of the wicked is to be cut off." When they are at their lives end, they are at their wits end, Psalm 107:27.

Objection. But do we not see the worst men go out of the world as quietly and smoothly as any? Do not they die in peace?

Answer. 1. If a wicked man seems to have peace at death, it is not from the knowledge of his happiness, but from the ignorance of his danger! Haman went merrily to the banquet, but little did he think what a second course was to be served!

Answer. 2. A wicked man may die in a lethargy, but not in peace. Nabal died quietly; but he is a fool, who would wish his soul with Nabal's. Conscience may be like a lion asleep, but when this lion awakes, it will roar upon the sinner!

Ans. 3. A wicked man may die in presumption, but not in peace. He hopes all is well with him, but there is a great deal of difference between presumption and peace. It will be so much the worse--to go to hell, with hopes of heaven! A wicked man imagines himself in a good condition; he dies in presumption, but not in peace. Observe, for the most part, God drives a sinner out of his fool's paradise before he dies. God lets loose conscience upon him, guilt spoils his music; and before his life is cut off, his hope is cut off. I will conclude this with that saying of Christ, Luke 11:21, "While the strong man keeps possession, all his goods are in peace." The peace a sinner seems to have, is but the devil's peace. His serenity is but false security, and whatever he may promise himself, Satan does but quiet him with rattles. He who lives graceless, dies peaceless!

Use. 2. Here is infinite COMFORT to the upright man. His end is peace. His life is interwoven with troubles, "We are troubled on every side," 2 Cor. 4:8, like a ship which has the waves beating on both sides. But the end is peace; and the smoothness of the end may make amends for the ruggedness of the way. The upright man, though he lives in a storm, he dies in a calm, Jer. 31:17. "There is hope in your end." The end crowns all; the upright man, though he drinks wormwood while he lives--yet he swims in honey when he dies! The upright man with Simeon, "Departs in peace," Luke 2:29, and his ending in peace is but his "entrance into peace," Isaiah 57:2. He shall enter into peace; his dying day is his marriage day. Grace gives both the flowers and the harvest--the sweet flowers of peace here, and the full harvest of glory hereafter.

Paula, that pious lady, when one had read to her that scripture, Cant. 2:11, "The singing of birds is come"-- "Yes" says she, "the singing of birds is now come!" And so being full of peace mounted off from her death-bed, and went triumphing, and as it were, singing into heaven! Then, "shout for joy all you who are upright in heart!" Psalm 32:11. Peace is that never-fading garland, which shall be set upon the head of

the upright, so says my text, "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace."

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