

“Christian Sincerity”
(Matthew 5:48)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

1. We’ve been looking at how to walk with God - how to live in His presence, how to have a relationship with Him.

a. This was the hallmark of the greatest saints.

(i) Enoch walked with God, and God took him (Gen. 5:22-24).

(ii) Noah walked with God and the Lord saved him from the Flood (Gen. 6:9).

(iii) Abraham walked with God, and the Lord made His covenant with him (Gen. 17:1-2).

(iv) And of course, Jesus walked with God, perfectly, as our example, and the Lord exalted Him.

b. This is our privilege.

(i) The Lord desires communion with us.

(ii) “For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people’ (2 Cor. 6:16).

(iii) There could be no higher honor.

c. This is our duty.

(i) By virtue of our creation.

(ii) By way of command.

(a) “You are witnesses, and *so is* God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers; just as you know how we *were* exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father *would* his own children, so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory” (1 Thes. 2:10-12).

(b) “Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us *instruction* as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more” (1 Thes. 4:1).

d. If God wants to walk with us, we should also want to walk with Him; but if we are to walk with Him, we must walk where He walks.

(i) We must walk in the light and not in the darkness (1 John 1:6-7).

(ii) We must walk according to His commandments.

(iii) We must walk in the truth.

2. We’ve seen some practical ways we can walk more closely with Him.

- a. By reminding ourselves of the importance of spiritual things: wake up/resurrection, dress/righteousness of Christ (renew faith and repentance), sleep/sleep of death.
- b. By using and honoring lawful authority.
- c. By keeping recreation in its proper place – not as an addiction, nothing sinful or dangerous, but to refresh and renew us.
- d. By eating things that will help us better serve Him, not slow us down.
- e. By abstaining from food when we need to seek Him.
- f. By resting from the world on the Sabbath to worship Him.
- g. By reading and meditating when we're alone, applying these things to our lives.
- h. By being good witnesses around unbelievers.
- i. By promoting spiritual fellowship with other believers.
- j. By thanking/praising Him during times of blessing.
- k. And by learning how to thank Him in bad times, and how patiently to endure the trials He sends since He intends them for our good.

B. Preview.

1. This evening, let's consider how to walk with God in sincerity – with an honest and true heart.
 - a. This is one of the things meant by “perfect” – perhaps the most important.
 - (i) The Lord said to Abraham, “I am God Almighty, walk before Me and be blameless” (Gen. 17:1).
 - (ii) Jesus tell us, “Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matt. 5:48).
 - b. In one sense, He means be absolutely perfect.
 - (i) That is our goal.
 - (ii) But we know that's reserved for heaven.
 - c. But in another sense, He means to desire, and strive after, perfection: this is the best we can hope for in this life.
2. Let's consider two things:
 - a. First, why we should desire godly sincerity.
 - b. Second, what gracious sincerity is.

II. Sermon.

A. First, why should we desire a sincere and honest heart?

1. First, this is what God commands.
 - a. Joshua said to God's people, “Now, therefore, fear the LORD and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD” (Josh. 24:14).
 - b. David said to his son, “As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a whole heart and a willing mind; for the LORD searches all hearts, and understands every intent of the thoughts. If you seek

Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will reject you forever” (1 Chr. 28:9).

2. Second, this is the example of the saints we are called to follow.
 - a. “Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God” (Gen. 6:9).
 - b. “There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job; and that man was blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil” (Job 1:1).
 - c. “Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and said of him, ‘Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!’” (John 1:47).
 - (i) Why we don’t read anything more about Nathanael? He is Bartholomew.
 - (ii) Nathanael is mentioned only in John, but John doesn’t mention Bartholomew.
 - (iii) Philip and Bartholomew are always spoken of together in the other Gospels.
 3. Third, this is why Christ died: “Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are *in fact* unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Cor. 5:7-8).
 4. Fourth, we should seek a perfect/sincere heart because this is God’s nature, and we are called to be like Him (Matt. 5:48).
 - a. *To walk with God, we must be perfect.*
 - b. God is truth; He loves truth in the inward parts (Ps. 51:6).
 - c. The same is true of Christ: no deceit was ever found in His mouth (1 Pet. 2:22), and He is our example.
 - d. *Right actions aren’t enough; our heart must be right before God (1 Cor. 13:1-3).*
- B. Second, what is gracious sincerity? How can we recognize it when we see it?
1. We need to be careful.
 - a. Those who don’t have it are the first to believe they do.
 - b. Those who do are the first to question their sincerity (Ps. 51).
 2. First, it’s a saving work of the Spirit that inclines our hearts towards God.
 - a. It’s a change He creates that makes us want to be like Him, with all our heart, mind, soul, strength.
 - b. It makes us want to please Him in all things, not just some: God’s will becomes our will; His glory, our goal.
 - c. This is what Edwards summarized as godly love.
 - d. Only the converted have it, and all who are converted do.
 3. Second, can be summarized in two things:
 - a. It makes us desire God’s commandments, as the psalmist, “Behold, I long for Your precepts” (119:40).

- b. And it give us the resolve to live as much as possible according to His will, “Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a good conscience, desiring to conduct ourselves honorably in all things” (Heb. 13:18).
 - c. Paul said of himself, knowing there would be a resurrection of the righteous and wicked, “I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience both before God and before men” (Acts 24:16).
4. Finally, it is a strong desire.
- a. There are those who listen to the Word, pray now and again, receive the sacraments, and obey or refrain from sin when it isn’t too difficult or doesn’t cost them too much.
 - b. A godly sincerity is much stronger. It moves us:
 - (i) To study God’s Word that we might know His exact will.
 - (ii) To desire to be conformed to His will with our whole heart.
 - (iii) To work, with all our strength, for the Lord’s glory.
 - (iv) To fight against *every* sin, and to put on all of Christ.
 - (v) To break through everything that hinders from our duty.
 - (vi) To seek after all those things that will strengthen grace in our hearts.
 - (vii) Not only to want to be like Christ, but actually by His grace to become like Him.
 - (viii) To run the race as one who is trying to win (1 Cor. 9:24-27).
 - (ix) To strive to enter the narrow gate (Luke 13:24).
 - c. Again, it isn’t perfection: we will see neglect, faults, oversights, weakness in our lives.
 - d. But if we are grieved by our failures, repent, ask forgiveness, and strive to do better by God’s grace, then we have a gracious sincerity.
 - e. Our efforts won’t be perfect, but if they are genuine, God will accept them.
 - f. Next time, we’ll look further at how we can know we have a sincere heart.
 - g. Don’t be discouraged; every believer will be; look to Christ for greater strength and resolve to be like Him. Amen.