

A WORD FOR THE PERSECUTED

NO. 1188

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 16, 1874,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“What if your father answers you roughly?”
1 Samuel 20:10.*

IT was not an unlikely thing that his father would answer Jonathan roughly. Saul had taken great umbrage against David, while Jonathan, his eldest son, on the contrary, loved David as his own soul. Jonathan could hardly think that his father really meant harm to so good a man as David, and he expressed to David that opinion. And then David, to be prepared for the worst, asked him this question, “What if your father answers you roughly?” It did so happen. Saul answered his son with bitter words and in the desperation of his anger he even hurled a javelin at him! Yet Jonathan did not forsake David—he clung to him with all the faithfulness of love—and until his death, which was much mourned by David, he remained his fast and faithful friend.

Now, this question of David to Jonathan is one which I wish to put this morning to all believers in Christ, especially to the younger ones who have lately entered into covenant with the great Son of David, and who, in the ardor of their hearts, feel that they could live and die for Him. I want to put before them the supposition that they will meet with opposition from their dearest friends—perhaps their father, brother, husband, or uncle will answer them roughly—or perhaps their mother, wife, or sister will become a persecutor to them. What then? What will they do under such circumstances? Will they follow the Lord through evil report? “What if your father answers you roughly?”

Remember that this supposition is a very likely one. There *are* a few Christians so favorably circumstanced that all their friends accompany them in the pilgrimage to Heaven. What advances they ought to make in the sacred journey! What excellent Christians they ought to be! They are like plants in a conservatory—they ought to grow and bring forth the loveliest flowers of Divine Grace. But there are not very many who are altogether in that case. The large proportion of Christians find themselves opposed by those of their own family, or by those with whom they labor or trade. Is it not likely to be so?

Was it not so from the beginning? Is there not enmity between the seed of the serpent and the Seed of the woman? Did not Cain slay his brother Abel because he was accepted of the Lord? In the family of Abraham was there not an Ishmael, born after the flesh, who persecuted Isaac, who was born after the Spirit? Was not Joseph hated by his brothers? Was not David persecuted by Saul, Daniel by the Persian princes and Jeremiah by the kings of Israel? Has it not ever been so? Did not the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, meet with slander, cruelty and death—and did He not tell us that we must not look for favor where He found rejection? He said plainly, “I came not to send peace upon the earth, but a sword.” And He declared that the immediate result of preaching the Gospel would be to set the son against the father and the father against the son, so that a man’s foes should be they of his own household.

Did He not carefully inquire of every recruit who wished to enlist in His army, “Have you counted the cost?” Have you not admired His perfect honesty and admirable caution in dealing with men when He bids them remember that if they follow Him they must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and be content to be hated of all men for His sake? He warns us not to expect that the disciple will be above his Master, for if men have called the Master of the house, Beelzebub, they will assuredly confer no sweet titles upon His household! Since our Lord has forewarned us, it is well for us to stand ready for the trials which He predicts and to ask ourselves whether we are ready to bear oppression for Christ’s sake.

I press the question upon you who think of avowing yourselves Believers, for most likely it will come practically home to you and it is well when you begin to build a house, to calculate whether you will be able to finish it. There are very many of God’s servants here, whose life is made bitter by the continual worry they endure from their ungodly relatives and associates. Often do they sigh for the wings of a dove to fly away and be at rest. I feel the deepest sympathy

with them and it is not only with the intention of forearming the younger ones, but with the hope of cheering and consoling those who have been long in the fiery furnace, that I shall speak, this morning, upon this text, “What if your father answers you roughly?”

I. Our first point is this—WHAT YOU MAY DO. What will you do should your friends answer you roughly? In the first confidence of your love to Christ you go and tell your father of your conversion. Well, what if he should ridicule you? You run to your mother and communicate your change of heart. What if she should scoff at it? You tell a little of your heart to some friend—what if that friend should turn and laugh at you? I will tell you what, perhaps, you will do, though I earnestly pray that you may do no such thing. You may, “*by-and-by, be offended.*”

I mean that you may leave Christ altogether, because you cannot bear His Cross and, though willing enough to go to Heaven with Him if the way were smooth, it may be that, like Mr. Pliable, finding that there is a slough to be got through, you will turn your back upon the good country and return to the City of Destruction. Many have done so. Our Lord’s parable of the seed sown in stony places teaches us that many shoots which promise fair for harvest perish when the sun arises with burning heat because they have no root. Observation confirms this statement. If yonder fair-weather professors of religion could have been daily hailed with general acclamation, they would, after a certain fashion, have continued steadfast.

But inasmuch as they have met with rebuffs and chills which they never bargained for, they have cast off all religion and joined with the fashionable world. To such, the earthly father is dearer than the Father who is in Heaven. The brother after the flesh is dearer than that Brother who is born for adversity. And the ungodly husband is more precious than the everlasting Bridegroom. And so they desert their Lord. Or, it may happen to you that, instead of being by-and-by offended, you may continue for awhile, but *you may gradually give way and at last yield altogether*. There are many among us who could bear to lose our heads at a stroke for Christ—but to be burned in a slow fire—ah, that would try us!

And if that slow fire lasted not for a day or so, but for weeks, or months, or years! What then? If, after much patient endurance, the cruel mocking still continues. If the hard words and bitter speeches never cease—what then? Surely, unless Divine Grace sustains us, the flesh will clamor to be rid of this uneasy yoke and will look out for some by-path by which it may escape the rigor of the rough road and go back, again, to the world! Grace will hold on and out to the end, but Nature at her best, with firmest resolutions, has only to be tried up to a certain point and she will surely yield. This is what we *may* do—but may God grant that we may be preserved from such a wretched course of action, for, if we do give way because of opposition from ungodly friends, it involves tremendous guilt!

To give up religion because of persecution is to prefer *ourselves* to Christ—to be selfish enough to regard our own ease rather than His Glory—to consult our own peace rather than His honor though we have said that we love Him beyond all else for redeeming us by His blood. It will show that we love Him not, but are ungrateful, false and hypocritical. With all our true professions, if we flinch from persecution, it will prove that we only need our price and, like the traitor, Judas, we, too, will sell our Master, not for 30 pieces of silver, possibly, but to escape ridicule or avoid ill-will. It will become clear, also, that we prefer the praise of man to the approval of God. A smile from a face which is soon to die we value at a higher price than the love of God, or the Redeemer’s approbation!

Peter, for a moment, was more affected by the question of a silly maid than by his allegiance to his Lord! But how dreadful to fall into that condition *deliberately*—and think more of a man that shall die, and of the son of man that is but as a worm—than of the Lord, our Maker and Judge, who, alone, is to be feared! Is not this folly, treason and dire iniquity? To forsake the Lord through persecution is to set time before eternity, to barter Heaven for this world’s pleasures, to renounce eternal life for a few hours of ease and to involve ourselves in endless misery rather than endure a stupid jest or a senseless jibe! It comes to that.

Many a man has had life and death set before him—the life has been shaded with the Cross—the death has been gilded over with transient merriment. And he has chosen the everlasting death with its glitter in preference to eternal life with its momentary trial! May God grant we may never be of so insane a mind, for if we are, we shall be numbered with those mentioned in Revelation, of whom it is said that “the fearful,” which is being interpreted the *cowardly*, “and the unbelieving, the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars”—for that is

the class of persons with whom cowards are numbered—“shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death” (Rev. 21:8). May the mercy of God deliver us from that death!

Like true soldiers may we buckle on our harness and resolve that let the battle rage as it may, through Divine Grace we will not desert our colors. We prefer death, itself, to the disgrace of forsaking a cause so true, a doctrine so pure, a Savior so gracious, a Prince so noble and so worthy of our most loyal service. But if left to ourselves we may fall into what is as bad as open apostasy. When we find the father, or the wife, or the friend answering us roughly, *we may make a pitiful compromise between Christ and the world*. I warn you solemnly against this, above everything else. It has the look of being the prudent and proper thing to do. “Can I not please men and please God? May I not go a little way with Christ and a little way with the world?”

O Soul, if you attempt this, you must fail and, moreover, you will have chosen the roughest road of all, for if a man serves God and serves Him thoroughly, he will meet with many comforts to balance his crosses. And if a man thoroughly serves Satan, he will enjoy whatever poor comfort is to be gotten out of sin. But if he goes between, he will feel the discomforts of both and the pleasures of neither! Running the gauntlet on board ship is not worse than attempting to be friends with Christ and Satan at the same time. I believe many a professing woman has given way, at first, to her ungodly husband when she should have been decided—and she has been embittered the rest of her life. And many a husband, many a son, many a man of business, has been undecided in a minor matter for the sake peace—and from that very moment the other side has never believed in his sincerity. Having been given an inch, the world has demanded all and that has been an end to all liberty!

If you yield a single point of honesty or true religion, the unconverted will not believe in you as they would have done if you had been firm throughout. Men respect a thoroughbred Christian, but nobody has a good word for a mongrel. Be one thing or the other, either hot or cold, or Christ will reject you, and the world, too. If a thing is right, do it! If you resolve to serve the Lord, do it, offend or please! And if, on the other hand, you prefer the service of Satan, do at least be honest enough not to pretend to be on the Lord’s side. Remember the challenge of Elijah, “If God is God, serve Him. If Baal is God, serve him.” But do not attempt a compromise, which will end in a miserable breakdown. Mark Antony drove two lions yoked together through the streets of Rome, but no Mark Antony could ever drive the Lion of the tribe of Judah and the lion of the Pit in a leash together! They will never agree! Be you warned, then, against falling into the meanness of *compromise*, for compromise is nothing better than varnished rebellion against God, a mockery of His claims and an insult to His judgment. May the Grace of God keep us from this, for left to ourselves we shall fall into this snare.

I will tell you what you may also do, and I pray that the Holy Spirit may lead you to do it. *You may take up humbly, but firmly, this decided stand*—“If my father answers me roughly he must do so, but I have another Father who is in Heaven and I shall appeal to Him. If the world condemns me, I shall accept its condemnation as a confirmation of that gracious verdict of acquittal which comes from the great Judge of All, for I remember it is written, ‘If the world hates you you know that it hated Me before it hated you.’ And, ‘If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.’” Be it ours to endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ! May we count the reproach of Christ greater riches than all earth’s treasures!

May a coward blush never defile our cheeks because we are ashamed of Jesus—far rather may we be willing to be made a laughingstock than for a moment think of turning aside from our Beloved Lord! May we never be false or fearful, but firmly and calmly, with the confidence of a love which cannot falter, let us cleave to our Lord even though all men should forsake Him—

*Oh, learn to scorn the praise of men!
Oh, learn to lose with God.
For Jesus won the world through shame,
And beckons you His road.”*

II. The second head is WHAT THE TRIAL WILL DO FOR US IF WE ARE HELPED TO BEAR UP UNDER IT. “What if your father answers you roughly? “First, *it will grieve us*. It is by no means pleasant to be opposed in doing right by those who ought to help us in it. It is very painful to flesh and blood to go contrary to those we love. Moreover, those who hate Christians have a way of putting their reviling so that they are sure to make us wince. They watch our

weak points and with very wonderful skill they turn their discoveries to account. Trained by the old master of all malice, they are not slow to ply their lash where we are most tender. If one thing is more provoking than another, they will be sure to say it—and say it when we are least able to bear it.

It may be they are very polite people and, if so, your refined persecutors have a very dainty way of cutting to the bone and yet smiling all the while. They can say a malicious thing so delicately that you can neither resent it nor endure it. The art of persecuting has been so long studied by the seed of the serpent that they are perfect masters of it and know how to make the iron enter into the soul. Do not be astonished, therefore, if you are sorely vexed—neither be amazed, as though some strange thing had happened to you. The martyrs did not suffer sham pains. The racks on which they were stretched were not beds of ease, nor were their prisons, parlors of comfort. Their pains were agonies! Their martyrdoms were torments! If you had sham griefs you might expect counterfeit joys. Let the reality of your tribulation assure you of the reality of the coming Glory.

The opposition of your friends *will try your sincerity*. If you are a hypocrite you will soon yield to opposition. “The game is not worth the candle,” you say, and you will be off. And for the Church’s sake, very likely it will be a blessing, for the wheat is all the better for being rid of the chaff! And if the wind of persecution can blow you away, you are chaff. The rough answers of opponents will *try your faith*. You say you believe in Jesus—now we shall see if you do—for if you cannot bear a little trial from men and women, surely you will not be able to bear the worse trials from the devil and his angels. “If you have run with the footmen and they have wearied you, then how can you contend with horses? And if in the land of peace, where you rested, they wearied you, then how will you do in the swelling of Jordan?” If you cannot bear the trials of life, how will you endure the ordeals of *death*?

Persecution will *try your love to Jesus*. If you really love Him you will cheerfully stand in the pillory of reproach with Him, and when enemies have filth to hurl, you will say, “Throw it upon *me* rather than upon Him. If there is a hard thing to be said, say it about me rather than against my Lord.”—

*“If on my face for His dear name
Shame and reproach shall be,
I’ll hail reproach and welcome shame,
For He’ll remember me.”*

It will try your love, I say, and all your Graces in their turn—and this is good for you. These virtues will not increase in strength unless they are brought into action. And if they are not tested, who is to know of what sort they are? You valiant soldier in quiet barracks at home could fight, no doubt, but how do you know till he has passed through a campaign? He who has charged up to the cannon’s mouth. He who is adorned with a saber cut across his brow and bears many a wound beside, which he gained in the service of his king—he is brave beyond question! Good gold must expect to be tried in the fire—these oppositions are sent on purpose that our faith, our love and all our Graces should be proved genuine by enduring the test!

The rough answers of those who should be our friends *will keep us awake*. I think it was Erskine who used to say, “Lord, deliver me from a sleepy devil.” And truly it is a prayer well worth praying! When everything goes smoothly and nobody ridicules us, we are very apt to be off our guard. But when we are stung by undeserved reproaches and insults, and when for our love we receive only anger or unkindness, we are not very likely to go to sleep! Such afflictions *drive you to your knees*. Perhaps you have read the story of Mr. Eraser, one of the ministers in Rossshire, who had a cold, unfeeling woman for a wife. She was very cruel to him and would never allow light or fire in his study. He had actually worn two holes in the plaster at the ends of his room where his hand had touched as he paced to and fro in the dark.

At a meeting of ministers who were not of his mind in Divine things, one of them thought to make sport of him by remarking that he would, no doubt, very heartily agree with the toast of, “Health to our wives.” To their astonishment he answered, “Mine has been a better wife to me than any of yours has been to you. She has sent me to my knees seven times a day, when I would not otherwise have gone, which is more than any of you can say of yours.” Personally I should greatly prefer not to have such a perpetual blister applied to me! But had the good Physician appointed me so severe a trial, I doubt not that He would have had good reason for it. Out of what men call weeds, the wise man extracts a medicine. And out of these bitter trials the Lord produces a sacred tonic which braces us for a higher life of communion with Himself.

Trials from the enemies of Jesus *confirm our faith*. Those who are never tried usually possess a poor, tottering faith. But trial, especially persecution, is like the rough March wind which goes howling through the forest. While the young oaks are almost torn up by the roots, at first, it loosens the soil for them and they send out more roots till they get such a firm grip that they defy the hurricane. That which shakes them at first, strengthens them afterwards! The tried saint is the *bold* saint—and the *firm* saint—therefore take the rough answer joyfully and look for good results from it. A little persecution for the Church in England would be a grand thing for her! We have fallen on very velvety days when zeal for God is rare and decision for the Truth of God scarcely to be met with. The Church has made terms with the world and gone to sleep, Satan rocking her cradle. Many a man professes to be a Christian who is nothing better than a baptized worldling. And many a man sets up to be a minister of Christ who is a mere reader of other people's sermons and a hireling who cares not for the sheep. The fan of persecution, if it purged the threshing floor of the Church, would bestow great benefits upon her.

Rough speeches, too, will have this good effect upon genuine Christians—it will *lead them to plead for those who utter them*. I remember a good man who used to say of a certain swearing fellow who took delight to vex him with his horrid taunts and oaths, “Well, after all, I might forget to pray for him, but he reminds me of it, for he will not let me go by without a curse.” If our friends were all very smooth-spoken and concealed their enmity to Christ, we might entertain a false hope about them and might not pray for them. But when we see that the old nature is there, and very rampant, it drives us to intercession for them—and who can tell but what the Lord may give us their souls as our reward? Certainly opposition has another good effect, that *it drives those subject to it into the truly separated path*—they are known to be Christians and proclaimed as such by their revilers.

I do not think it is a bad thing, young man, when you go to that warehouse, that they should advertise you as a Christian by crying out, “Halloa, here comes one of the Methodist sort.” It is good for you to be known! If you are what you should be, you will not mind being labeled, nor being tested, either. It will help to keep you right when temptations arise and it will frequently deliver you from trials of a more fascinating kind, for, suppose they forsake your company because you are a Christian—will not that be well? Those who leave you on that account are a very gainful loss! An honorable lady, now with God, when she joined this Church, told me how, after her Baptism, many of her aristocratic friends had ceased to call upon her, or invite her to their houses. I congratulated her upon it, for it rendered it all the easier for her to select her own company!

Her real worth of character and kindness of spirit soon won back all who were worth having—and the rest were happily removed. Such as shun you for following the Lord are persons whom you, yourself, might shun. We gain nothing by the love of those who love not God. One good effect of being persecuted at home is this, it makes you gentler abroad. If, my brother Christian, you have those at home who make you unhappy. If you are a wise man, you will be the better able to have patience with outsiders. Men wondered why Socrates was so patient with his pupils and so good-tempered, but he ascribed it to having been hardened by the opposition of others and by being schooled at home by his shrewish wife, Xanthippe.

Perhaps you will have the greater patience with those who scoff, and the greater sympathy with those who are scoffed at, from having had your share in the common lot of the saints. Thus to you as to Samson, out of the eater comes forth meat, and out of the strong comes forth sweetness. This lion roars upon you, but the day shall come when you will find honey in it and bless the name of the Lord!

III. My third point is, HOW SHOULD YOU BEHAVE UNDER THE TRIAL? May the Holy Spirit enable you to act very discreetly as well as decidedly. *Never court opposition*. God forbid we should do so! Some zealots seem bent on making religion objectionable. The cup we hold to a sinful world is, in itself, repugnant enough to fallen nature—there can be no wisdom in making it yet more objectionable by presenting it with a scowling face. It is as well when you have medicine to give to a child to show him a piece of sugar, too—so let your kindness, cheerfulness and gentleness sweeten that which the world is not very likely to receive anyway—but which it will the less resent if you present it with love, showing a desire to live peaceably with all men and to consult the comfort of others rather than your own.

And then *endure whatever you have to endure with the greatest possible meekness*. There was a farmer whose wife was very irritated with him because of his attending a dissenting place of worship and joining with Christian people. She often declared that she would not bear it much longer. But he was very patient and made no harsh reply to her. One day

she fetched him out of the harvest field and said, “Now it is come to this—you will give up those people, or give me up.” And she brought out a web of cloth and said, “Now you take half of this and I’ll take the other half, for I am going.” He said, “No, my Dear, you are welcome to it all. You have always been a very good industrious wife, take it all.”

Then she proposed taking a part of their household goods and settling everything for a final separation, but again he said, “Take all there is. If you will really go away, take everything you like, for I should not wish you to be uncomfortable. And come back again whenever you please, I shall always be glad to see you.” Seeing that he talked in that way, she said, “Do you want me to go?” “No,” he said, “it is your own wish, not mine. I cannot give up my religion, but anything else I can do to make you stay and be happy, I will do.” This was too much for her. She resolved to cease her opposition, and in a short time went with her husband to his place of worship and became, herself, a Believer. This is the surest way to victory! Yield *everything* but what it would be *wrong* to yield. Never grow angry. Keep cool and let the railing be all on one side.

There was a poor godly woman who used to attend the ministry of Mr. Robinson, of Leicester, and her husband, a very coarse, brutal man, said to her one day in his wrath, “If you ever go to St. Mary’s Church again I’ll cut both your legs off.” He was a dreadful man and equal to any violence—but on the next occasion of worship his wife went as before. As she came home, she commended herself to the care of God, expecting to be assailed. Her husband said to her, “Where have you been?” “I have been to St. Mary’s Church,” she said. With that he felled her to the ground with a terrible blow on the face. Rising up, she gently said, “If you strike me on the other side I shall as freely forgive you as I do now.” She had been a very passionate woman before conversion, and had been accustomed to give her husband as good as he could send, and therefore he was struck with her gentleness. “Where did you learn this patience?” he asked. Her reply was, “By God’s Grace I learned it at St. Mary’s.” “Then you may go as often as you like.” Presently he went, also, and the war was over. There is nothing like meekness. It will conquer the strongest.

After bearing with meekness, *return good for evil*. For cruel words return warmer love and increased kindness. The most renowned weapon for a Christian to fight his antagonists is that of overcoming evil with good. Evil to evil is beast-like and no Christian will indulge in it. But good for evil is Christ-like and we must practice it. I think I have told you before the story of the husband who was a very loose, wild, depraved, man of the world. He had a wife who for many years bore with his ridicule and unkindness, praying for him day and night, though no change came over him except that he grew even more bold in sin. One night, being at a drunken feast with a number of his cursing companions, he boasted that his wife would do anything he wished—she was as submissive as a lamb.

“Now,” he said, “she has gone to bed hours ago. But if I take you all to my house, she will at once get up and entertain you and make no complaint.” “Not she,” they said, and the matter ended in a bet, and away they went. It was in the small hours of the night—but in a few minutes she was up and remarked that she was glad that she had two chickens ready, and if they would wait a little she would soon have a supper spread for them. They waited and before long, at that late hour, the table was spread and she took her place at it as if it was quite an ordinary matter, acting the part of hostess with cheerfulness. One of the company, touched in his better feelings, exclaimed, “Madam, we ought to apologize to you for intruding upon you in this way and at such an hour. I am at a loss to understand how it is you receive us so cheerfully, for being a religious person you cannot approve of our conduct.”

Her reply was, “I and my husband were both formerly unconverted, but, by the Grace of God, I am now a believer in the Lord Jesus. I have daily prayed for my husband and I have done all I can to bring him to a better mind. But as I see no change in him, I fear he will be lost forever—and I have made up my mind to make him as happy as I can while he is here.” They went away, and her husband said, “Do you really think I shall be unhappy forever?” “I fear so,” she said, “I would to God you would repent and seek forgiveness.” That night patience accomplished her desire. He was soon found, with her, on the way to Heaven! Yield on no point of principle, but in everything else be willing to bear reproach and to be despised and mocked for Christ’s sake! “This is a hard saying,” says one. I know it is, but Divine Grace can make the heaviest burden light and transform duty into delight.

Here let me also remark that to this gentle endurance there must be added by the persecuted Christian *much exactness of life*. We must be very particular when such lynx eyes are upon us, because if they can find us trespassing they will pounce upon us at once. If it is only a *little* wrong, a thing which they would not have noticed in anybody else, they will magnify it and raise quite a clamor about it. “Ah, that is your religion,” they say, as if we claimed to be absolutely

perfect. Be watchful, therefore. Walk circumspectly, do not put yourself into their hands—let them have nothing to say against you except upon the point of your religion. Nothing soothes opponents like integrity, truthfulness and holiness—they long to speak against you, but cannot find a fair opportunity. Take care that you daily pray for Grace to keep your temper, for if you fail *there* they will boast of having conquered you and will assail you, again, in the same way.

Ask for Grace to be patient and say as little as you can, except to God. Pray much for them, for prayer is still heard, and how know you, O believing woman, but you may save your unbelieving husband? Only watch on and pray on, and a blessing will come!

IV. IN DOING ALL THIS WHAT COMFORT MAY YOU EXPECT? You may have this for your comfort, that *the persecutor is in God's hands*. He cannot do more than God lets him. And if God permits him to annoy, you may cheerfully bear it. Next, remember, if you keep your conscience clear it is a great joy. Conscience is a little bird that sings more sweetly than any lark or nightingale. Rough answers outside need not trouble you while within there is the answer of a good conscience towards God. Injure your conscience and you lose that consolation—preserve it from evil and you must be happy. Remember that by patiently enduring and persevering *you will have fellowship with the most grand spirits that ever lived!* You cannot be a martyr and wear the blood-red crown these days, but you can at least suffer as far as you are called to do. Grace enabling you, you may have a share in the martyr's honors. "Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in Heaven: for so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you."

Remember, too, that if you have extraordinary troubles *Jesus will be doubly near to you*. This is the greatest comfort of all, for in all your afflictions *He is afflicted!* You will find His Presence in the ordinances to be very delightful. Those stolen waters which He gives you in secret fellowship are very choice. Those morsels which you get by stealth, how sweet they are! The old Covenanters said they never worshipped God with so much joy as in the glens and among the hills when Claverhouse's dragoons were after them. The living is very refreshing to the Lord's hunted harts. His bosom is very soft and warm for those who are rejected of all men for His sake. He has a marvelous way of unveiling His face to those whose faces are covered with shame because of their love to Him! Oh, be content, dear Friends, to watch with your Lord.

You have the sweet thought, also, that *you are doing more good* where you are than if you were placed altogether among the godly. Yonder light, set up in mid-ocean on the Eddystone Rock, see how the storm sweeps around it and the waters leap over it, threatening to put out its flame? But shall the light complain? Standing where it is, beaten by the Atlantic rollers and braving the full fury of the storm, it is doing more good than if it were set up in Hyde Park for my lords and ladies to look at. The persecuted saint occupies a place where he warns and enlightens and, therefore, suffers. He is like an advanced guard to whom the place of danger is the place of honor—only let him ask for strength to bear and forbear and he shall have glory at the last! Remember, the rougher the road, *the sweeter the rest*. And the greater the suffering, the brighter the crown at the last!

Those who have to bear most for Jesus will be those to whom He will most sweetly say, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter you into the joy of your Lord." Ah, Brothers and Sisters, if you have a little rough language to put up with, what is it compared with what many of the Lord's afflicted ones have to endure? I will tell you a little incident bearing upon that point and then have done. Yesterday the postman brought me, among many others, a letter from Australia, which I prize more than any that have come to hand for a long while. It has touched my heart. And when you hear it you will not wonder.

It is written at the desire of a man who is described by the gentleman who writes for him in the following terms—"I have known the writer for near eight years, during which time he has been quite helpless, being paralyzed. He has had one leg cut off, the sight has left his eyes and he cannot move hand or feet. As he is placed on his bed, so must he lie and endure the annoyance of flies or anything that may molest him. I am sure you will be pleased to know that you are the means of giving comfort to such an one, and he is mostly rejoicing. Few are more apt to teach and exhort those who come to see him and direct them to suitable portions of God's Word for their reading." Now this poor man, who has been helpless ever since the year 1858, or 16 long years, writes me thus—"Being moved by the Holy Spirit, I send you these few lines to thank you for the benefit I have received by reading your sermons.

"In the year 1850 I was brought to the knowledge of the Truth of God and found peace through believing in Jesus. In 1858 I met with a serious accident, so that I was not able to earn my bread, but trusting in the Lord He has led me in the right way. In 1866 it pleased Him to confine me entirely to my bed. I bless His Holy Name that I can say I am bound

by the cords of His love, that He has upheld and comforted me through all my long confinement, and enabled me to rejoice in hope of His Glory. The reading of your excellent sermons, which privilege I have enjoyed for some years, having been a source of great comfort and delight to my soul—causing me to soar on high and enjoy sweet communion, I am constrained by love to send you this acknowledgment hoping that, perhaps, you may be cheered a little by it in your arduous labors—and if our heavenly Father sees fit, this, my testimony to His faithfulness, may be blessed by Him to the comfort and encouragement of some afflicted ones in your flock, as I know that *all* these things work together for good to them that love God.”

Think of this unselfish sufferer having a letter written to comfort *me!* One would have thought he needed comforting himself, but the Lord so cheers him that, instead of asking for consolation—he does not mention in his letter that he has lost his leg, or that he is paralyzed, or has lost his sight—he only tells me of his joy and peace!

Now, if children of God in such extremities can yet bear testimony to His faithfulness, are you going to run away because some foolish person or other sneers at you? Will you in cowardly fashion desert the standard because fools point their fingers at you? If so, are you made of the same stuff as the true saints? Have you the same backbone of Divine Grace as they? Assuredly not! May the Lord in His infinite mercy give you such a sound conversion that, whatever trial comes, you may still sing, “Yet will I rejoice in the Lord and glory in the God of my salvation.”

If I am addressing anyone who has persecuted God’s saints in any way, let me say, “Mind what you are doing! There are many things a man will bear—but if you meddle with his children it will stir his soul—that is a tender point with all fathers.” Nothing provokes the Lord like interfering with His children. Mind what you are doing! And, oh, I pray the Lord, if you have done it ignorantly, really thinking them to be wrong and only scoffing at them because you thought them hypocrites, may He that spoke out of Heaven to Saul, and said, “Why do you persecute Me?” let you see that you have really been wounding Jesus, Himself!

May He make you see that those tears which you have forced from that faithful woman, and those sleepless nights which you have caused to that earnest man were so much of evil done unto Christ, for which He will reckon with you at the last. Turn unto the Lord Jesus and may the Holy Spirit grant you to repent of this, your wickedness, for Jesus is willing to receive and bless even you, as He did Paul of old. Believe on the Lord Jesus and you, also, shall be saved. God bless you all, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Mark 4.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—76, 670, 667.

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