

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

OUR LORD'S TRIAL BEFORE THE SANHEDRIM.

A Sermon

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“And they all condemned him to be guilty of death.”—Mark xiv. 64.

THIS one sentence is selected because custom demands a text ; but in reality we shall follow the entire narrative of our Lord's trial before the high-priests. We shall see how the Sanhedrim arrived at their unrighteous sentence, and what they did afterwards, and so, in a sense, we shall be keeping to our text. We have just been reading three passages—John xxiii. 12—24 ; Mark xiv. 53—65 ; and Luke xxii. 66—71. Please to carry these in your minds while I rehearse the mournful story.

The narrative of our Lord's grief, if it be carefully studied, is harrowing in the extreme. One cannot long think of it without tears ; in fact, I have personally known what it is to be compelled to leave my meditations upon it from excess of emotion. It is enough to make one's heart break fully to realize the sufferings of such an One, so lovely in himself and so loving toward us. Yet this harrowing of the feelings is exceedingly useful : the after result of it is truly admirable. After mourning for Jesus we are raised above our own mourning. There is no consolation under heaven at all like it ; for the sorrows of Christ seem to take the sting out of our own sorrows, till they become harmless and endurable. A sympathetic contemplation of our Lord's grief so dwarfs our griefs that they are reckoned to be but light afflictions, too petty, too insignificant, to be mentioned in the same day. We dare not write ourselves down in the list of the sorrowful at all when we have just seen the sharp pains of the Man of Sorrows. The wounds of Jesus distil a balm which heals all mortal ills.

Nor is this all, though that were much in a world of woe like this ; but there is a matchless stimulus about the passion of the Lord. Though you have been almost crushed by the sight of your Lord's agonies, you have risen therefrom strong, resolute, fervent, consecrated. Nothing stirs our hearts' depths like his heart's anguish. Nothing is too hard for us to attempt or to endure for One who sacrificed himself for us. To be reviled for his dear sake who suffered such shame for us becomes no great affliction ; even reproach itself when borne for him

becomes greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt. To suffer in body and in mind, even unto death, for him were rather a privilege than an exaction : such love so swells our hearts that we vehemently pant for some way of expressing our indebtedness. We are grieved to think that our best will be so little ; but we are solemnly resolved to give nothing less than our best to him who loved us and gave himself for us.

I believe also that full often careless hearts have been greatly affected by the sufferings of Jesus : they have been disturbed in their indifference, convinced of their ingratitude, weaned from their love of sin, and attracted to Christ by hearing what he bore on their behalf. No loadstone can draw human hearts like the cross of Christ. His wounds cause even hearts of stone to bleed. His shame makes obstinacy itself ashamed. Men never so plentifully fall before the great bow of God as when its arrows are dipped in the blood of Jesus. Those darts which are armed with his agonies cause wounds such as never can be healed except by his own pierced hands. These are the weapons which slay the sin and save the sinner ; killing at one stroke both his self-confidence and his despair, and leaving him a captive to that conqueror whose glory it is to make men free.

This morning I would not only preach the doctrines that come out of the cross, but the cross itself. I suppose that was one of the great differences between the first preaching of all and the preaching after the Reformation. After the Reformation we had clearly ringing out from all pulpits the doctrine of justification by faith and other glorious truths, which I hope will be made more and more prominent ; but the first fathers of the church set forth the same truths in a less theological fashion. If they dwell little upon justification by faith they were wonderfully full upon the blood and its cleansing power, the wounds and their healing efficacy, the death of Jesus and our eternal life. We will go back to their style for awhile, and preach the facts about our Lord Jesus Christ rather than the doctrinal inferences therefrom. Oh, that the Holy Spirit would so bring the sorrows of our Lord near to each heart that every one of us may know the fellowship of his sufferings, and possess faith in his salvation and reverent love for his person.

I. We will begin our narrative this morning by first asking you to think of **THE PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION OF OUR BLESSED LORD AND MASTER BY THE HIGH PRIEST**. They brought in our Lord from the garden bound ; but they also kept fast hold upon him, for we read of "the men that held him." They were evidently afraid of their prisoner, even when they had him entirely in their power. He was all gentleness and submission ; but conscience made cowards of them all, and they therefore took all a coward's care to hold him in their grasp. As the court had not yet gathered in sufficient numbers for a general examination, the high priest resolved that he would fill up the time by personally interrogating his prisoner.

He commenced his malicious exercise. The high priest asked Jesus *concerning his disciples*. We cannot tell what were the questions, but I suppose they were something like these : "How is it that thou hast gathered about thee a band of men ? What did they with thee ? What was thine ultimate intention to do by their means ? Who were they ?

Were they not a set of fanatics, or men discontented and ready for sedition?" I do not know how the crafty Caiaphas put his questions; but the Saviour gave no reply to this particular enquiry. What could he have said if he had attempted to answer? Ah, brothers, what good could he have said of his disciples? We may be sure he would say no ill. He might have said, "Concerning my disciples, one of them has betrayed me; he has still the blood-money in his hand which you gave him as my price. Another of them, down in the hall there, before the cock crows will deny that he ever knew me, and add oaths and cursing to his denial: and as for the rest, they have all forsaken me and fled." Therefore our Lord said nothing concerning his disciples, for he will not turn the accuser of his own, whom he came, not to condemn, but to justify.

The high priest also asked him concerning *his doctrine*. I suppose he said to him, "What new teaching is this of thine? Are *we* not sufficient to teach the people—the Scribes so learned in the law, the Pharisees so attentive to ritual, the Sadducees so philosophical and speculative? Why needest thou intrude into this domain? I suppose thee to be little more than a peasant's son: what is this strange teaching of thine?"

To this enquiry our Lord did answer, and what a *triumphant reply* it was! Oh that we could always speak, when it is right to speak, as meekly and as wisely as he! He said, "I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort, and in secret I have said nothing. Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I have said." Oh, brethren, no reply to slander can be compared with a blameless life. Jesus had lived in the full blaze of day where all could see, and yet he was able to challenge accusation and say, "Ask them which heard me." Happy is the man who has no need to defend himself because his works and words are solid testimonials to his uprightness and goodness. Our Saviour answered his questioner very gently, but yet most effectually, by his appeal to facts. He stands before us at once the mirror of meekness and the paragon of perfection, with slander like a wounded snake writhing at his feet. What a delight to have this triumphant pleader for our advocate, to urge his own righteousness in our defence! None can impugn his absolute perfection, and that perfection covers all his saints this day. Who shall accuse us now that Jesus has undertaken to plead for us?

This overwhelming answer, however, brought the Saviour *a blow from one of the officers of the court* who stood by. Was not this a most shocking deed? Here was the first of a new order of assaults. Hitherto we have not heard of strokes and blows; but now it is fulfilled, "They shall smite the Judge of Israel with a rod upon his cheek." This was the first of a long series of assaults. I wonder who the man was that struck the Master so. I could wish that the Master's reply to him may have influenced his heart to repentance; but if not, it is certain that he led the van in personal assaults upon our Lord's person: his impious hand first struck him. Surely if he died in impenitence the memory of that blow must remain as a never-dying worm within him. To-day he cries, "I was the first to smite him: I struck him on the mouth with the palm of my hand." The old writers upon the Passion give us

various details of the injuries inflicted upon the Saviour by that blow; but we attach no importance to such traditions, and therefore will not repeat them, but simply say that there was general belief in the church that this blow was a very grievous one, and caused the Saviour much pain. Yet while he felt that blow, and was perhaps half staggered by it, the Master did not lose his composure, or exhibit the least resentment. His reply was everything it ought to be. There is not a word too much. He does not say, "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall," as did the Apostle Paul. We will not censure the servant, but we will far more commend the Master. He meekly said, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?" Enough, surely, if there remained any tenderness in the heart of the aggressor, to have made him turn his hand upon his own breast in penitential grief. One would not have wondered had he cried out, "Forgive me, O thou divinely meek and gentle One, and let me henceforth be thy disciple."

Thus have we seen the first part of our Lord's sufferings in the house of the high priest, and the lesson from it is just this—Let us be meek and lowly in heart as the Saviour was, for herein lay his strength and dignity. You tell me I have said that before. Yes, brethren, and I shall have to say it several more times before you and I have learned the lesson well. It is hard to be meek when falsely accused, meek when roughly interrogated, meek when a cunning adversary is on the catch, meek when smarting under a cruel blow which was a disgrace to a court of justice. You have heard of the patience of Job, but it pales before the patience of Jesus. Admire his forbearance, but do not stop at admiration; copy his example, write under this head-line and follow every stroke. O Spirit of God, even with Christ for an example, we shall not learn meekness unless thou dost teach us; and even with thee for a teacher we shall not learn it unless we take his yoke upon us and learn of him; for it is only at his feet, and under thy divine anointing that we shall ever become meek and lowly of heart, and so find rest unto our souls.

The preliminary examination is therefore over, and it has ended in no success whatever for the high priest. He has questioned Jesus and he has smitten him, but the ordeal brings nothing to content the adversary. The prisoner is supremely victorious, the assailant is baffled.

II. Now comes a second scene, THE SEARCH FOR WITNESSES AGAINST HIM. "The chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death; and found none." A strange court that meets with the design to find the prisoner guilty, resolved in some way or other to compass his death. They must proceed according to the forms of justice, and so they summon witnesses, though all the while they violate the spirit of justice, for they ransack Jerusalem to find witnesses who will perjure themselves to accuse the Lord. Every man of the council is writing down somebody's name who may be fetched in from the outside, for the people have come from all parts of the land to keep the Passover, and surely some may be hunted up who, in one place or another, have heard him use an actionable mode of speech. They fetch in, therefore, everyone that they can find of that degraded class who will venture upon perjuring themselves if the bribe be forthcoming.

They scour Jerusalem to bring forth witnesses against Jesus ; but they had great difficulty in accomplishing their design, because they were bound to examine the witnesses apart, and they could not make them agree. Lies cannot be easily made to pair with each other, whereas truths are cut to the same pattern. Moreover, many sorts of witnesses that they could readily find they did not dare to bring forward. Witnesses were forthcoming who could testify that Jesus had spoken against the tradition of the elders ; but in that some who were in the council, namely, the Sadducees, were agreed with him to a large extent. It would never do to bring forward a charge about which they would not be unanimous. His denunciations of the Pharisees could not be the charge, for these pleased the Sadducees ; neither could they allege his outcry against the Sadducees, for in this the Pharisees were agreed with him. You recollect how Paul, when brought before this Sanhedrim, took advantage of their division of opinion and cried, " I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee ; of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question " ; and in this manner created a dissension among the conclave, which for a time wrought in his favour. Our Lord took higher and nobler ground, and did not stoop to turn their folly to his own benefit ; yet, they being conscious of their internal feuds, cautiously avoided those points upon which they were not in harmony. They might have brought forward their old grievance that the Lord Jesus did not observe the Sabbath after their fashion ; but then it would have come out more publicly that he had healed the sick on the Sabbath. It would not do to publish that fact, for who would think of putting a person to death for having opened the eyes of one born blind, or having restored a withered arm on the Sabbath-day ? That kind of witness was therefore set aside. But might they not have found some witnesses to swear that he had talked about a kingdom that he was setting up ? Might not this readily have been made to mean sedition and rebellion ? Yes, but then that was rather a charge to allege against him before Pilate's civil court, whereas theirs was an ecclesiastical tribunal. Moreover, there were Herodians in the council who were very restive under the Roman yoke, and could not have had the face to condemn anyone for being a patriot ; and beside, the people outside would have sympathized with Jesus all the more if they had supposed that he would lead them on rebelling against Cæsar. Therefore they could not urge that point. They must have been greatly puzzled to know what to do ; especially when even on those points which they decided to bring forward the witnesses no sooner opened their mouths than they contradicted each other. At last they had it. There came two whose evidence was somewhat agreed ; and they asserted that on a certain occasion Jesus Christ had said, " I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands." Here was blasphemy against the holy and beautiful house of the Lord, and this would serve their turn. Now, the Saviour had said something which was a little like the testimony of these false witnesses, and a misunderstanding had made it more like it ; but still their statement was a lie, and none the less a lie because a shadow of truth had fallen upon it, for the worst kind of lie is that which is manufactured out of a truth : it does more mischief a great deal than if it were a falsehood from stem to stern.

The Saviour had not said, "I will destroy this temple": he said, "Destroy this temple," that is to say, "Ye will destroy it, and ye may destroy it." He had not referred to the Jerusalem temple at all; this spake he concerning the temple of his body which would be destroyed. Christ has never said, "Destroy this temple which is made with hands, and I will build another without hands": in his language there is no allusion to hands at all. These refinements were of their own inventing, and his language gave no colour for them. He had not said, "I will build another"; he had said, "I will raise it up," which is quite a different thing. He meant that his body, after being destroyed, would be raised up again on the third day. They had altered a word here and a word there, the mood of one verb and the form of another, and so they made out our Lord to say what he never thought of. Yet even on that charge they did not agree. One said one thing upon it, and another said another, so that even this paltry accusation could not be brought against the Saviour. Their patched-up falsehood was made of such rotten stuff that the pieces would not hold together. They were ready to swear to anything that came into their perjured imaginations, but they could not be got to swear any two of them to the selfsame thing.

Meanwhile the Lord himself *stands silent*; like the sheep before her shearers, he is dumb, and openeth not his mouth; and I suppose the reason was partly that he might fulfil the prophecy, partly because the grandeur of his soul could not stoop to contend with liars, and most of all because his innocence needed no defence. He that is in some measure guilty is eager to apologize and to extenuate: his excuses usually suggest to men of experience the belief that there may be some ground for the accusation. He that is perfectly innocent is in no haste to answer his slanderers, for they soon answer one another. Our Lord did not desire to get into a vain jangle with them, and so to lead them on to utter still more falsehoods. If speech can do no good then indeed silence is wise: when the only result would have been to provoke his enemies to add to their iniquities it was magnanimous compassion which led the slandered Saviour to hold his speech.

We must not refrain from noticing *the comfort* which in some degree had been ministered to our Lord by the accusation which came most to the front. He stands there, and he knows they are about to put him to death, but they themselves remind him that their power over him has no longer lease than three days, and at the end of that short time he will be raised up again, no more to be at their disposal. His enemies witnessed the resurrection to him. I say not that his memory was weak, or that he would possibly have forgotten it amid his sorrows, but yet our Lord was human, and modes of comfort which are valuable to us were also useful to him. When the mind is tortured with malicious falsehood, and the whole man is tossed about by pains and griefs, it is good for us to be reminded of the consolations of God. We read of some who were "tortured, not accepting deliverance," and it was the hope of resurrection which sustained them. Our Lord knew that his soul would not be left in the abodes of the dead, neither should his flesh see corruption, and the false witnesses brought this vividly before his mind. Now, indeed, could our Redeemer say, "Destroy this temple, and in

three days I will raise it up." These ravens have brought the Saviour bread and meat. In these dead lions our glorious Samson has found honey. Sustained by the joy that was set before him he despises the shame. Strange that out of the mouths of those who sought his blood there should come the memorial of one of his greatest glories.

Now, brethren, here again we learn the same lesson as before, namely, let us gain meekness, and prove it by our power to hold our tongues. Eloquence is difficult to acquire, but silence is far more hard to practise. A man may much sooner learn to speak well than learn not to speak at all. We are in such a hurry to vindicate our own cause that we damage it by rash speech: if we were calm, gentle, quiet, forbearing as the Saviour was, our pathway to victory would be much more easy.

Observe, again, the armour with which Christ was clad: see the invulnerable shield of his holiness. His life was such that slander could not frame an accusation against him which would last long enough to be repeated. So frail were the charges that, like bubbles, they vanished as soon as they saw the light. Our Lord's enemies were utterly baffled. They hurled their darts against him, but, as if they fell upon a shield of blazing diamond, every arrow was broken and consumed.

Learn also this other lesson that we must expect to be misrepresented: we may reckon that our words will have other meanings to ungracious ears than those which we intended; we may expect that when we teach one thing which is true they will make us out to have stated another which is false; but let us not be overwhelmed by this fiery trial as though it were some strange thing. Our Lord and Master has endured it, and the servants must not escape. Wherefore endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, and be not afraid.

Amid the din of these lies and perjuries, I hear the still small voice of a truth most precious, for like as Jesus stood for us at the bar, and they could not cause an accusation to abide upon him, so when we shall stand in him at the last great day, washed in his blood and covered with his righteousness, we too shall be clear. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" If Satan should appear as the accuser of the brethren, he will be met by the voice, "The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan, even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the burning?" Yes, beloved, we too shall be cleared of slander. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. The glorious righteousness of him who was falsely accused shall deliver the saints and all iniquity shall stop her mouth.

III. But I must not dwell too long even on such themes as these, and therefore I pass on to THE PERSONAL INTERROGATION which followed upon the failure to bring forward witnesses. The high priest, too indignant to sit still, rises and stands over the prisoner like a lion roaring over his prey, and begins to question him again. It was an unrighteous thing to do. Should the judge who sits to administer law set himself to prove the prisoner guilty, or, what is worse, shall he try to extort confession from the accused which may be used against him? It was a tacit confession that Christ had been proved innocent up till then. The high priest would not have needed to draw something out

of the accused one if there had been sufficient material against him elsewhere. The trial had been a dead failure up to that point, and he knew it, and was red with rage. Now he attempts to bully the prisoner, that he may extract some declaration from him which may save all further trouble of witnesses, and end the matter. The question was forced home by a solemn adjuration, and it effected its purpose, for the Lord Jesus did speak, though he knew that he was thereby furnishing a weapon against himself. He felt under bond to answer the high priest of his people when he used such adjuration, bad man as that high priest was; and he could not draw back from a charge so solemn lest he should seem by his silence to deny the truth upon which the salvation of the world is made to hinge. So when the high priest said to him, "Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" how distinctly and outspoken was the Master's reply. Though he knew that his death would thus be compassed, he witnessed a good confession. He plainly said, "I am," and then he added to that declaration, "Ye shall see the Son of man,"—so he brings out his humanity as well as his deity, "sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." What a majestic faith! It is wonderful to think that he should be so calm as to confront his mockers, and assert his glory while he was in the depths of shame. He did as good as say, "You sit as my judges, but I shall soon sit as your judge: I seem to you to be an insignificant peasant, but I am the Son of the Blessed; you think that you will crush me, but you never will; for I shall speedily sit at the right hand of the power of God, and come in the clouds of heaven." He speaks boldly, as well became him. I admire the meekness that could be silent, I admire the meekness that could speak gently, but I still more wonder at the meekness that could speak courageously, and still be meek. Somehow or other, when we rouse ourselves to courage, we let in harshness at the same door, or if we shut out our anger, we are very apt to forget our firmness. Jesus never slays one virtue to make room for another. His character is complete, full-orbed, perfect, whichever way we look at it.

And surely, brethren, this must have brought another sweet consolation to our divine Master's heart. While smarting under that cruel blow, while writhing under those filthy accusations, while enduring such contradiction of sinners against himself, he must have felt satisfied from within in the consciousness of his Sonship and his power, and in the prospect of his glory and triumph. A well of water springs up within his soul as he foresees that he shall sit at the right hand of God, and that he shall judge the quick and the dead, and vindicate his redeemed. It is a wise thing to have these consolations always ready to hand. The enemy may not see their consolatory power, but we see it. To us from beneath the altar there issues forth a stream whose gentle flow supplies our spirits with a quiet gladness such as all earth's waters can never rival. Even now we also hear the Father say, "I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward."

Notice, ere we pass away from this point, that, practically, the trial and the interrogation ended in our Lord's being *condemned because of his avowal of his deity*. They said, "Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death."

I cannot make out at all those people who call themselves Unitarians, and deny our Lord's deity. Unitarians we also are, for we believe in one God, and one God only; but they tell us that this blessed Christ our Master is not God, and yet they own that he was the most excellent of men, the most perfect of human beings. I cannot see it myself. He seems to me to be a blasphemer, and nothing else, if he be not God; and the Jews evidently held that opinion, and treated him accordingly. If he had not said that God was his Father, they would not have been so enraged against him. They put him to death because of the assertion of his deity, and the declaration that he would sit at the right hand of power and judge the world. To-day multitudes are willing to take Christ as a teacher, but they will not have him as the Son of God. I do not doubt that the Christian religion might be received in many places if it were shorn of its strength; if, in fact, its very soul and bowels were torn out of it, by setting forth Jesus as one of the prophets and nothing more. Hear how our wise men talk of him as one of a line of great reformers, such as Moses, Samuel, Elijah, and they often add Confucius and Mahomet. Do we give place to this? No, not for an instant. He is verily the Son of the Blessed. He is divine, or false. The accusation of blasphemy must lie against him if he be not the Son of the Highest.

IV. We must now pass on and linger for a second or two over THE CONDEMNATION. They condemned him out of his own mouth: but this, while it wore the semblance of justice, was really unjust. The prisoner at the bar has affirmed that he is the Son of God. What next? May he not speak the truth? If it be the truth he must not be condemned, but adored. Justice requires that an enquiry be made as to whether he be the Christ, the Son of the Blessed, or not. He has claimed to be the Messiah. Very well, all those in the court are expecting the Messiah; some of them expect him to appear very speedily. May not this be the sent one of the Lord? Let an enquiry be made into his claims. What is his lineage? Where was he born? Have any prophets attested him? Has he wrought miracles? Some such enquiries are due to any man whose life is at stake. You cannot justly condemn a man to die without examining into the truth of his defence, for it may turn out that his statements are correct. But, no, they will not hear the man they hate, the mere claim condemns him; it is blasphemy, and he must die.

He says he is the Son of God. Come, then, Caiaphas and council, call for witnesses for the defence. Enquire whether blind eyes have been opened and the dead raised up. Ask whether he has wrought miracles such as no man ever wrought in the midst of Israel throughout all time. Why not do this? O no, he must be taken from prison and from judgment, and none shall declare his generation. The less enquiry the more easy to condemn him unjustly. He has said he is the Christ and the Son of God, he is therefore guilty of death. Alas, how many there are who condemn Christ's doctrine without making due enquiries into it,—condemn it on the most trivial grounds. They come to hear a sermon, and perhaps find fault with the mannerism of the preacher, as if that were sufficient reason for denying the truth which he preaches; or else they say, "This is so strange—we cannot believe it." Why not? Are

not strange things sometimes true, and is not many a truth wondrously strange until you get familiar with it? These men will not condescend to hear Christ's proof of claim: they will make no enquiry. In this, like the Jewish priests, they practically cry, "Away with him! Away with him!"

He is condemned to die, and the high priest rends his clothes. I do not know whether he wore at that time the robes in which he ministered, but doubtless he wore some garb peculiar to his sacerdotal office, and this he rent. Oh, how significant! The house of Aaron and the tribe of Levi had their garments rent, and the temple, within a few hours, rent its veil from the top to the bottom: for priests and temple were alike abolished. They little knew it, but in all they did there was a singular significance: those rent garments were an index of the fact that now the Aaronic priesthood was for ever rent, and the great Melchisidec priesthood had come in, for the true Melchisidec there and then stood before them in all the majesty of his patience.

Observe that they were all agreed; there were no dissentients; they had taken care, I have no doubt, not to let Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathæa know anything about this meeting of theirs. They held it in the night, and they only rehearsed it in the early morning, for the sake of keeping their old Rabbinical law that they must try prisoners by daylight. They hurried up the trial, and any that might have spoken against their bloodthirsty sentence were kept out of the way. The assembly was unanimous. Alas for the unanimity of ungodly hearts against Christ! It is wonderful that there should be such quarrels among Christ's friends, and such unity among his foes, when the point is to put him to death. I never heard of quarrels among devils, nor did I ever read of sects in hell: they are all one in their hatred of the Christ and of God. But here are we split up into sections and parties, and often at war with one another. O Lord of love, forgive us: King of concord, come and reign over us, and bring us into a perfect unity around thyself.

The sentence was "death." I say nothing of it but this. Death was the sentence due to me, the sentence due to you, and they laid it upon our Substitute. "Worthy of death,"—they said—all of them. All hands were held up; all voices said "Yea, yea" to the verdict. Yet there was no fault in him. Say rather, there was every excellence in him. As I hear Jesus condemned to die my soul falls at his feet and cries, "Blessed Lord, now hast thou taken my condemnation; there is, therefore, none for me. Now hast thou taken my cup of death to drink, and henceforth it is dry to me. Glory be to thy blessed name, henceforth and for ever."

V. I am almost glad that my time is so far advanced, for I must needs set before you the fifth and most painful scene. No sooner have these evil men of the Sanhedrim pronounced him guilty of death, than the servants, the guards, and those that kept the high-priests' hall, eager to please their masters, and all touched with the same brute-like spirit which was in them, straightway began to *abuse* the infinite majesty of our Lord. Consider THE ABUSE. Let me read the words: "Some began to spit on him." "Began to spit on him!" Thus was contempt expressed more effectively than by words. Be astonished, O heavens,

and be horribly afraid. His face is the light of the universe, his person is the glory of heaven, and they "began to spit on him!" Alas, my God, that man should be so base! Some went further, and they "covered his face." It is an Eastern custom to cover the face of the condemned, as if they were not fit to see the light, nor fit to behold their fellow men. I know not whether for this reason, or in pure mockery, they covered his face, so that they could not see it, and he could not see them. How could they thus put out the sun and shut up bliss. Then when all was dark to him we read that they began to say, "Prophecy, Who is he that smote thee?" Then another did the like, and many were the cruel cuffs they laid about his blessed face. The mediæval writers delighted to talk about the teeth that were broken, the bruises on the cheeks, the blood which flowed, the flesh that was bruised and blackened; but we dare not thus imagine. Scripture has cast a veil, and there let it abide. Yet it must have been an awful sight to see the Lord of glory with his face bestained by their accursed phlegm and bruised with their cruel fists. Here insult and cruelty were combined: ridicule of his prophetic claims and dishonour to his divine person. Nothing was thought bad enough. They invented all they could of shame and scorn, and he stood patient there though a single flash of his eye would have consumed them in a moment.

Brothers, sisters, this is what our sin deserved. A shameful thing art thou, O sin! Thou dost deserve to be spit upon! This is what sin is constantly doing to Christ. Whenever you and I sin we do, as it were, spit in his face: we also hide his eyes by trying to forget that he sees us; and we also smite him whenever we transgress and grieve his Spirit. Talk not of cruel Jews: let us think of ourselves, and let us be humbled by the thought. This is what the ungodly world is ever doing to our blessed Master. They also would hide his eyes which are the light of the world: they also despise his gospel, and spit upon it as an utterly worn out and worthless thing: they also do despite to the members of his body through his poor afflicted saints who have to bear slander and abuse for his dear sake.

And yet over all this I seem to see a light most blessed. Christ must be spit upon, for he has taken our sin: Christ must be tortured, for he is standing in our stead. Who is to be the executioner of all this grief? Who shall take upon himself the office of putting Christ to shame? Our redemption was being wrought out this way,—who shall be the drudge to perform this miserable work? Fling in the clusters richer than the grapes of Eshcol; fling them in, but who shall tread them out and laboriously extract the wine, the generous wine which cheereth God and man? The feet shall be the willing feet of Christ's own adversaries: they shall extort from him that which shall redeem us and destroy all evil. I rejoice to see Satan outwitted, and his malice made to be the means of his own overthrow. He thinks to destroy Christ, and by that deed he destroys himself. He pulls down evil upon his own head and falls into the pit which he has digged. Thus shall all evil ever work for the good of the Lord's people; yea, their greatest good shall oftentimes come out of that which threatened their ruin, and wrought in them the utmost anguish. Three days must the Christ suffer and die and lie in the grave; but after that he must bruise the serpent's head

and lead captivity captive, and that by the means of the very suffering and shame which he is now enduring ; in like manner shall it happen to his mystical body, and Satan shall be bruised under our feet shortly.

I leave this subject, hoping that you will pursue it in your meditations. Here are three observations.

First, how ready should we be to bear slander and ridicule for Jesus' sake. Do not get into a huff, and think it a hard thing that people should mock at you. Who are you, dear sir? Who are you? What can you be if compared with Christ? If they spat upon him, why should they not spit upon you? If they buffeted him, why should they not buffet you? Shall your Master have all the rough of it? Shall he have all the bitter, and you all the sweet? A pretty soldier you, to demand better fare than your Captain!

How earnestly, next, ought we to honour our dear Lord. If men were so eager to put him to shame, let us be ten times more earnest to bring him glory. Is there anything we can do to-day by which he may be honoured? Let us set about it. Can we make any sacrifice? can we perform any difficult task which would glorify him? Let us not deliberate, but at once do it with our might. Let us be inventive in modes of glorifying him, even as his adversaries were ingenious in the methods of his shame.

Lastly, how surely and how sweetly may all who believe in him come and rest their souls in his hands. Surely I know that he who suffered this, since he was verily the Son of the Blessed, must have ability to save us. Such griefs must be a full atonement for our transgressions. Glory be to God, that spittle on his countenance means a clear, bright face for me. Those false accusations on his character mean no condemnation for me. That putting him to death proves the certainty of our text last Sabbath morning, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life." Let us sweetly rest in Jesus, and if ever our faith is agitated, let us get away to the hall of Caiaphas, and see the Just standing for the unjust, the Faultless One bearing condemnation for sinners. Let us in the high-priest's hall judge and condemn every sin and every doubt, and come forth glorying that the Christ has conquered for us, and that we now wait for his appearing with delight. God bless you, brothers, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John xxiii. 12—24

Mark xiv. 53—65; Luke xxii. 66—71.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—333, 275, 286.