

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE SUFFERING SAVIOUR'S SYMPATHY.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

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“For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.”—Hebrews ii. 18.

WE are told by the apostle in the fifth chapter that one special requisite in a high priest was that he could have compassion upon men. “For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins: who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.” You see God did not choose angels to be made high priests; because, however benevolent they might be in their wishes, they could not be sympathetic. They could not understand the peculiar wants and trials of the men with whom they had to deal. Ministers who of God are made to be a flame of fire could scarce commune familiarly with those who confess themselves to be as dust and ashes. But the high priest was one of themselves. However dignified his office, he was still a man. He was one of whom we read that he could lose his wife, that he could lose his sons. He had to eat and to drink, to be sick and to suffer, just as the rest of the people did. And all this was necessary that he might be able to enter into their feelings and represent those feelings before God, and that he might, when speaking to them for God, not speak as a superior, looking down upon them, but as one who sat by their side, “a brother born for adversity,” bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh.

Now this is peculiarly so in the case of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is sympathetic above all. There is none so tender as he. He has learnt it by his sufferings; but he proves it by his continual condescension towards his suffering people. My brethren, we that preach the gospel, you that teach it in the Sabbath-school—you will always find your greatest power to lie in love. There is more eloquence in love than in all the words that the most clever rhetorician can ever put together. We win upon men not so much by poetry and by artistic wording of sentences, as by the pouring out of a heart's love that makes them feel that we would save them, that we would bless them, that we would, because we belong to them, regard them as brethren, and play a brother's

part, and lay ourselves out to benefit them. Now, as it should be in the under-shepherds, so is it in that Great Shepherd of the sheep. He abounds in tenderness, and though he has every other quality to make up a perfect high priest, though he is complete, and in nothing lacking, yet if I must mention one thing in which he far outshines us all, but in which we should all try to imitate him, it would be in his tender sympathy to those who are ignorant and out of the way, and to all those who are suffering and sorely distressed.

It is in the spirit of brotherly sympathy that I would endeavour to preach on this occasion as the Good Spirit shall help me. May I ask my brethren whose hearts are full of joy at this hour to be praying for others who have not that joy, and to be helping me in my endeavour now to speak words of consolation to them? May the Holy Spirit, in answer to your prayers, make every sentence to be as wine and oil to the wounds of those who are left half dead in the King's highway! We have not to look far for "them that are tempted," for they are all around us, and deserve the thoughtful regard of each one of us. Do not overlook them, my more happy brother, "considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

In my text I think I see two things very clearly. *Jesus suffering*: "He himself hath suffered being tempted." *Jesus succouring*: "He is able to succour them that are tempted." And then I think I see a third thing most certainly there, namely, *Jesus sought after*: because in the word which is translated "succour" there is a latent meaning of crying. He is able to hear the cry of them that are tempted. It is a word that signifies a mother's quickness to answer her child's cry; and Jesus is able to answer to our cry, therefore we ought to lift up that cry when our soul is in distress. It shall be the best thing seen in this Tabernacle to-night if the third thing be seen, namely, Jesus sought after by every weary, heavy-laden spirit. Why should it not be? Come, Holy Spirit, and create in each mourner the spirit of prayer and the grace of supplication!

I. First, then, and to begin, here is JESUS SUFFERING.

I call your attention, first, to *the feeling* that is here expressed: "in that he himself hath suffered being tempted." Many persons are tempted, but do not suffer in being tempted. When ungodly men are tempted, the bait is to their taste, and they swallow it greedily. Temptation is a pleasure to them; indeed, they sometimes tempt the devil to tempt them. They are drawn aside of their own lusts and enticed; so that temptation, instead of being suffering to them, becomes a horrible source of pleasure. But good men suffer when they are tempted, and the better they are the more they suffer. I know some children of God to whom temptation is their constant misery day and night. If it took the form of external affliction, they would bravely bear it; but it takes the shape of evil suggestions and profane insinuations, which leap into their minds without their will, and though they hate them with their whole heart. These suggestions continue to annoy some dear saints whom I know, not only daily, but nightly, and that month after month. These thoughts beset them as a man may be surrounded by swarms of midges or flies, from which he cannot get away. Such brethren are tempted, and they suffer being tempted. Our Lord

Jesus Christ enters into this trying experience very fully; because his suffering through being tempted must have been much greater than any suffering that the purest-hearted believer can know, seeing that he is more pure than any one of us.

It was a trying thing to the Blessed Christ even to dwell here among men. He behaved himself with most condescending familiarity, but he must have been greatly sickened and saddened by what he saw in this world of sinners. They were no fit company for him, for their views of things and his were as different as possible, and they had no points of agreement in character with him. They were as much company for him as a patient may be to a surgeon; nay, not so much as an imbecile may be to his teacher, or as a madman to his keeper: they could not come much closer until his grace changed and renewed them. Our Lord and Master had such a delicate sensitiveness of soul with regard to holiness, that the sight of sin must have torn him as a naked man would be torn by thorns, and thistles, and briers. There was no callousness about his nature. He had not made himself familiar with sin by the practice of it, as many have done; neither had he so associated with those who indulge in evil as to become himself lenient towards it. We inherit the customs of our ancestors, and do not raise questions about that which has been commonly done: we begin at an evil point, and start from a wrong point in morals; but it was not so with our Lord; he had no original, or inherited, or birth sin; neither did he learn evil in his bringing up. We also commit sin through a comparative ignorance of its evil, but he knew the horror of it: he felt within his soul the shame, the wrong, the inherent baseness of sin against a holy law and a loving God. His infinite knowledge helped him to understand and measure the heinousness and hell-desert of it; and hence, to be in contact with it must have been a perpetual sorrow to him. He suffered in being placed where he could be tempted.

When sin actually assailed him, and he was bidden to prove his Sonship by working a miracle to feed himself, thus anticipating his Father's providence by a hasty act of self-seeking, how he must have loathed the suggestion! When Satan bade him presumptuously cast himself down from the temple's pinnacle, how he must have smarted at the horrible proposal! When the tempter hissed into his ear that abominable offer, "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me," it must have grieved the holy heart of Jesus most intensely. He could not yield to temptation, but he did suffer from it. He did not suffer from it morally, he was too pure for that; but he did suffer from it mentally because of his purity. His mind was grieved, and vexed, and troubled by the temptation that he had to bear. We specially see this when we find him in the garden. There he showed his grief when he sweat as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground. In many other ways he endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, such multiplied temptations, that it is said, and truly said, by the Holy Ghost in this verse, that he "suffered" being tempted.

Now, then, you poor creatures who can scarcely lift up your heads because of shame as you tremble at the memory of your own thoughts, come hither, and meet with One who suffered being tempted! He knows how you are hunted by hell-dogs, go where you may: he knows

that you cannot escape the presence of the tempter, and from his own experience he enters into your feelings to the full. He gives you a flood of sympathy in these deep distresses of your spirit, as you fight against Apollyon and agonize against temptation, for he suffered being tempted.

“Exposed to wounds most deep and sore,
The great Redeemer stood,
While Satan's fiery darts he bore,
And did resist to blood.”

Let us meditate for a while upon *the fact* that our Lord was tempted, tempted up to the suffering point. I must not omit to mention the particular use here made by the Spirit of that word *himself*. It is not only in that *he* suffered being tempted, but you see that he *himself* hath suffered being tempted. That word is sometimes used to make passages emphatic. “Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree.” We read again and again of Jesus Christ *himself*, as if to show that the matters referred to were really, truly, personally, actually his. He *himself* hath suffered. All that there was in him, that made up himself, suffered being tempted. Survey this fact carefully. Our Lord was tempted by his circumstances, just as you are; yea, more than many of you are; for he felt the woes of poverty, and poverty at times carried to the extreme. “Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.” You are sometimes tempted with the thought that you will be out of house and home before long. Where will you find a nightly shelter? Jesus can sympathize with you. He also was weary with incessant labours. “Being wearied, he sat thus on the well.” Weariness has its temptations. He that is weary is hardly in the condition to judge rightly of things. When we are weary, we are apt to be impatient, complaining, hasty. If you are weary, and can scarcely keep your eyelids from dropping down, remember before you quite yield to fatigue that your Lord was weary too. Once “they took him even as he was into the ship”; and I think it must mean that he was too weary to go into the ship himself, so that they took him in his absolute exhaustion, and gently laid him down, in the hinder part of the ship, placing his head upon a pillow. Do not blame yourself for feeling tired in the house of prayer, if after long watching or hard working you feel more fit for a sleep than for a sermon. I shall not blame you, certainly, for I remember how little my Lord blamed the disciples when they fell asleep in the garden during his agony. He said, “The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak”; and he never would have thought of so tender an excuse for their untender slumbers if his own flesh had not also been weak when he, too, was weary. So you see that the Lord knows from his own circumstances what are the temptations of poverty and of weariness. He himself was an hungered. He himself said, “I thirst.” Everything round about him contributed to fulfil the tale of his trials. He himself was, above us all, “a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.”

And then he himself suffered from temptations arising from men. He endured sadly much from good men. It would seem that even his beloved mother tried him. His mother was with his brethren when we read that they were without, desiring to speak with him. Was it not

at that time that they desired to take him, for they said, "He is beside himself"? The men of his own kindred thought that surely he was a man distraught, who ought to be put under restraint. "Neither did his brethren believe in him."

His disciples, though he loved them so intensely, yet each one tried him. Even John, the dearest of them all, must needs ask for places at the right and the left hand of his throne for himself and his brother James. Even Peter "took him and rebuked him." All the disciples were much of Peter's mind when he described himself as about to be crucified and slain. Their spirit was often so worldly, so selfish, so foolish, as greatly to grieve their Lord and Leader. While he was the Servant of all, they were seeking who should have the pre-eminence. While he was seeking the lost, they were for calling fire from heaven upon rebels. They spake unadvisedly with their lips, and committed their Master by their words. And you know how, worst of all, he had to complain in utmost bitterness of spirit, "He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me." So that from the circle of his own favoured ones he gathered more thorns than roses. He received wounds in the house of his friends, even as you may have done. Herein you see his power to exhibit sympathy with us. He suffered just as we do. He "suffered being tempted" even by the failures of those whom he loved.

"If wounded love my bosom swell,
Deceived by those I prized so well,
He shall his pitying aid bestow,
Who felt on earth severer woe;
At once betrayed, denied, or fled
By those who shared his daily bread."

As for his enemies, need I speak about them? Did they not all tempt him? Herodians and Sadducees—the openly sceptical; Pharisees and Scribes—the professedly religious, were equally his fierce foes. Those to whom he was a benefactor took up stones again to stone him; and Jerusalem, over which he had wept, cried, "Crucify him, crucify him," and would not rest till he was slain. Ah, Lord! we have none of us such foes as thou hadst. However cruel our adversaries, they are not so numerous or so fierce as thine. Besides, they have some cause to hate *us*; but of thine enemies it is true that they hated thee without a cause. They could bring no true charge against him, and therefore they forged the cruellest of falsehoods, until their reproaches broke his heart. So you see how he was tempted, and how he suffered.

Moreover, it is a very wonderful fact—one could scarcely have imagined it—but the record is most clear—he was tempted of the devil: *he* was tempted of the devil. He in whom all evil is personified dared to stand foot to foot in single duel with him in whom all goodness is concentrated. The fiend infernal dared to face the God incarnate. God in our mortal flesh encountered the devil in the wilderness of temptation. How could the fiend have ventured to assail our Lord? Truly Lucifer was lifted up to the extreme of pride when he dared thus to confront his Lord. But Christ was tempted of the devil early in his public career, and again near its close he exclaimed, "This is your hour, and the power of darkness." He seemed to hear the dragon's wings as they beat the midnight air; and he cried, "The prince of this world cometh."

Calmly he added, "And hath nothing in me"; yet his heart grew chill in the hideous presence of the great adversary. It was nothing less than an agony in Gethsemane—a painful wrestling between Jesus and the powers of darkness. You that are tempted of the devil; you that are troubled by mysterious whisperings in your ear; you that, when you sing or pray, have a blasphemy suggested to you; you that even in your dreams start with horror at the thoughts that cross your minds, be comforted, for your Lord knows all about temptation.

Some of you do not understand this, and I hope you never may; but I am speaking with a purpose to others, to whom this is a life's gloom. To you, I say, you can enter into fellowship with your Lord in his being tempted of the devil: that which is incomprehensible to others is plain enough to you. Be of good cheer, for in this respect your Lord himself has suffered being tempted.

"If aught should tempt my soul to stray
From heavenly wisdom's narrow way,
To fly the good I would pursue,
Or do the sin I would not do,
Still he, who felt temptation's power,
Shall guard me in that dangerous hour."

Once again: our Lord knew those temptations which arise out of being deserted by God. There come times to certain of us when our soul is cast down within us, when faith becomes feeble, and joy languishes, because the light of the divine countenance is withdrawn. We cannot find our God. We enter into the language of Job, "Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat." We cry with David, "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?" Nothing chills the marrow like an eclipse of the great Sun, whose presence makes our day. If the Lord withdraws from us, then the strong helpers faint.

"He frowns, and darkness veils the moon;
The fainting sun grows dim at noon;
The pillars of heaven's starry roof
Tremble and start at his reproof."

In this great temptation our Lord has suffered his full share. He cried, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani." There was condensed into that dying cry an infinity of anguish such as we cannot conceive of. Some of us know what the surface of this Black Sea is like, but we have never descended into its utmost depths as he did; and, if we have done so, this is our comfort—that HE has been there. He has been to the very bottom of it. He has suffered being tempted even by that heaviest of all the trials which ever fall upon the sons of God. There is the fact.

I desire to go a step farther, to comfort you upon *the fruit* of all this; for though our Lord thus suffered being tempted, he suffered not in vain; for he was made perfect through his sufferings, and fitted for his solemn office of High Priest to his people. From that fact I want you to gather fruit, because our heavenly Father means to bless you also. We cannot comfort others if we have never been comforted ourselves.

I have heard—and I am sure that it is so—that there is no comforter for a widow like one who has lost her husband. Those who have had no children, and have never lost a child, may talk very kindly, but they cannot enter into a mother's broken heart as she bows over yonder little coffin. If you have never known what temptations mean, you make poor work when attempting to succour the tempted. Our Lord obtained a blessing from suffering temptation; and you may do the same. Brother, the Lord means to make of you a man that shall be used like Barnabas to be a "son of consolation." He means to make a mother in Israel of you, my dear sister, that when you meet with others who are sorely cast down, you may know how to drop in a sweet word by which they shall be comforted. I think you will one day say, "It was worth while to go through that sorrow to be enabled to administer relief to that wounded heart." Will you not comfort others when you are delivered? I am sure you will. You will be ready and expert in the sacred surgery of consolation. Wherefore be content to suffer being tempted, and look for the comfortable fruit which all this shall produce in you.

So you have seen the feeling, and the fact, and the fruit. Now, what are the inferences to be drawn from this part of the subject? I must be short with them.

I want you that are tempted to draw the following inferences from the suffering and temptation of the Lord Jesus:—

First, that *temptation to sin is no sin*. It is no sin to be tempted; for in him was no sin, and yet he was tempted. "He suffered being tempted," but there was no sin in that, because there was no sin in himself. You may be horribly tempted, and yet no blame whatever may attach to you, for it is no fault of yours that you are tempted. You need not repent of that which has no sin in it. If you yield to the temptation, therein is sin; but the mere fact that you are tempted, however horrible the temptation, is no sin of yours.

And, in the next place, *temptation does not show any displeasure on God's part*. He permitted his Only-begotten Son to be tempted: he was always the Son of his love, and yet he was tried. "This is my beloved Son," said he at his baptism; and yet the next hour that Son was led of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. It does not even show displeasure on God's part that he permits you to be tempted; on the contrary, it may be consistent with the clearest manifestations of divine favour.

And again, *temptation really implies no doubt of your being a son of God: for the Son of God was tempted, even the unquestioned Son of the Highest*. The prime model and paragon of sonship, Christ himself, was tempted. Then why not you? Temptation is a mark of sonship rather than any reflection thereupon.

Note, next, that *temptation need not lead to any evil consequences in any case*. It did not in your Lord's case lead up to sin. The Lord Jesus was as innocent in temptation and after temptation as before it, and so may we be through his grace. It is written by the beloved John concerning the man that is born of God, that "He keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not."

Moreover, *do not make it any cause of complaint that you are tempted*. If your Lord was tempted, shall the disciple be above his Master, or

the servant above his Lord? If the Perfect One must endure temptation, why not you? Accept it, therefore, at the Lord's hands, and do not think it to be a disgrace or a dishonour. It did not disgrace or dishonour your Lord, and temptation will not disgrace or dishonour you. The Lord, who sends it, sends also with it a way of escape, and it will be to your honour and profit to escape by that way.

Far from your hearts be the idea that any temptation should lead you to despair. Jesus did not despair. Jesus triumphed, and so shall you; and therefore he cries, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." You are a member of his body; and when the Head wins the victory, the whole body shares the triumph. "Because I live," said he, "ye shall live also"; and so you shall: even in the poisonous atmosphere of temptation you shall be in health. They of old overcame through the blood of the Lamb, and you shall do the like. Wherefore comfort one another with these words, "He himself hath suffered being tempted"; for you who have his life in you shall first suffer with him, and then reign with him.

That is the first part of our discourse; and it is rich with comfort, if the Spirit of God shall but apply it to the tempted heart. I feel such a poor bungler: I have ointment here, and soft linen wherewith to bind on the healing ointment; but perhaps I have put it on too tightly, or too loosely, and if so, I may fail. O divine Comforter, undertake the work! It needs the pierced hand fitly to apply the sacred liniment.

II. But now I come, secondly and briefly, to notice JESUS SUCCOURING. Jesus suffering, is preparatory to Jesus succouring. Observe, then, "He is able to succour them that are tempted." In this we note *his pity*, that he should give himself up to this business of succouring them that are tempted. Have you a tempted friend living in your house? If so, you have a daily cross to carry; for when we try to comfort mourners we often become cast down ourselves; and the temptation is for us to get rid of them, or keep out of their way. Has it never occurred to any friend here to say, "That good brother, who sits in the pew near me, is rather a burden to me. I have spoken to him several times, but he is so unhappy that he drags me down. I go out of another door now to get out of his way"? So might your Lord have done to the unhappy, and to you, if he had not been your Lord; but he is such a pitiful One that he seeks out those that are cast down: he healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds. He lays himself out to succour them that are tempted, and therefore he does not hide himself from them, nor pass them by on the other side. What an example is this for us! He devotes himself to this divine business of comforting all such as mourn. He is Lord of all, yet makes himself the servant of the weakest. Whatever he may do with the strongest, he succours "them that are tempted." He does not throw up the business in disgust: he does not grow cross or angry with them because they are so foolish as to give way to idle fears. He does not tell them that it is all their nerves, and that they are stupid and silly, and ought to shake themselves out of such nonsense. I have often heard people talk in that fashion, and I have half wished that they had felt a little twinge of depression themselves, just to put them into a more tender humour. The Lord Jesus never overdrives a lame sheep, but he sets the bone,

and carries the sheep on his shoulders, so tenderly compassionate is he. Here is his pity.

The text, however, treats of *his fitness* also. He is just the very person to succour them that are tempted. I have been showing you this already. He has *the right*, acquired by his suffering, to enter in among sufferers, and deal with them. He is free of the company of mourners.

“ When our heads are bowed with woe,
When our bitter tears o'erflow,
When we mourn the lost, the dear,
Then the Son of Man is near.

“ Thou our throbbing flesh hast worn,
Thou our mortal griefs hast borne ;
Thou hast shed the human tear,
Son of Man, to mourners dear.”

He has the right to succour them that are tempted, for they are his own, since he has bought them with his blood. The feeble, the weak, the trembling, the desponding, are his care, committed to him by God. He said, “ Fear not, little flock ” ; which shows that his flock is little and timid. He says, “ Fear not, little flock,” because they have great tendency to fear, and because he does not like to see them thus troubled. He has bought them, and so he has the right to succour them, and preserve them to the end.

But he has also *the disposition* to succour them. He obtained that tender temper through suffering, by being himself tempted. The man that has seen affliction, when he is blessed of God, has the disposition to cheer those that are afflicted. I have heard speak of a lady who was out in the snow one night, and was so very cold that she cried out, “ Oh, those poor people that have such a little money, how little firing they have, and how pinched they must be ! I will send a hundredweight of coals to twenty families, at the least.” But I have heard say that, when she reached her own parlour, there was a fine fire burning, and she sat there with her feet on the fender, and enjoyed an excellent tea, and she said to herself, “ Well, it is not very cold, after all. I do not think that I shall send those coals ; at any rate, not for the present.” The sufferer thinks of the sufferer, even as the poor help the poor. The divine wonder is that this Lord of ours, “ though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor,” and now takes a delight in succouring the poor. Having been tempted, he helps the tempted : his own trials make him desire to bless those who are tried.

And then he has the special *ability*. “ He is able to succour them that are tempted.” I know certain good brethren whom I am very pleased to see, and I am very happy in their company, when I am perfectly well ; but I do not enjoy their presence when I am ill. Thank you ; no, I would rather not have their visits multiplied when I am unwell. They walk heavily across the room ; they have a way of leaving doors open, or banging them ; and when they talk, they talk so loudly and roughly that the poor head aches, and the sick man is worried. The things they say, though they are meant to be kind, are the sort of remarks that pour vinegar into your wounds. They do not understand the condition of a sufferer, and so they say all their

words the wrong way upwards. If Christians are to be comforters, they must learn the art of comforting by being themselves tried. They cannot learn it else. Our Blessed Master, having lived a life of suffering, understands the condition of a sufferer so well that he knows how to make a bed for him. "What a strange thing to say!" cries one of my audience. Not at all. David says, "Thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness." He would not have said that, if the Lord did not know how to make a bed. There is a dainty way of beating up a pillow, and a peculiar art in shaking up a bed when the sick man is lifted out of it; ay, and there is a way of putting on every piece of covering, so as to make it a comfort. By this figure we are taught that the Lord Jesus Christ knows how to deal with us in the weakness and pain of our affliction. He has become so good a Nurse, so divine a Physician, so tender a Sympathizer, because he has passed through our sorrows. "In all our affliction he was afflicted." "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses."

"He knows what sore temptations mean,
For he has felt the same."

He has a fitness for dealing with tempted ones.

Let me spend a minute or two in telling you *his methods* of succouring them that are tempted. He does it in many ways, and perhaps there may be many here who know more about those ways than I do.

Usually he succours the tempted by giving them a sense of his sympathy. They say, "Yes, my Lord is here. He feels for me." That is in itself a succour of no mean order.

Sometimes he succours them by suggesting to them precious truths which are the sweet antidote for the poison of sorrow. There is in the Bible a remedy exactly fitted for your grief if you could only find it. Sometimes you lose the key of a drawer, and you must have it opened, and therefore you send for the whitesmith, and he comes in with a great bunch of keys. Somewhere among them he has a key that will open your drawer. The Bible contains keys that will open the iron gates of your trouble, and give you freedom from your sorrow. The point is to find out the right promise; and the Spirit of God often helps us in that matter by bringing the words of the Lord Jesus to our remembrance. We had never known the richness of the Word of God if it had not been that in our varied distresses the Lord has shown us how he foresaw all, and provided for all in the covenant of promise.

Sometimes the Lord succours his people by inwardly strengthening them. "Oh," one has said, "I am under a heavy trouble, but I do not know how it is, I can bear it much better than I thought I should." Yes, through grace, a secret divine energy is poured into the soul. We are treated, as Mr. Bunyan puts it, by secret supplies of grace imparted in a hidden manner. We are like yonder fire. One is throwing water on it, and yet it burns on. Behind the wall another is secretly pouring oil on the fire, so that it still keeps burning.

I have known the Lord bless his people by making them very weak. The next best thing to being strong in the Lord is to be extremely weak in yourself. They go together, but sometimes they are divided in experience. It is grand to feel, "I will not struggle any more. I will give all up, and lie passive in the Lord's hand." Oh, it is the

sweetest feeling, I think, outside heaven! You may think it strange for me to say so, but I believe that, as in the centre of a cyclone there is a little spot where there is perfect calm, and as it is said that in the centre of the greatest fire that ever burned there is a spot where no fire is raging, so there is in a deep sense of yielding up to God, in the very centre of your pain, and your grief, and your misery, and your depression, a place of perfect repose when you have once yielded yourself fully up unto God. I know this to be true, even though I may not be understood.

In these ways he that was tempted himself succours those who are tempted.

III. I will close by thinking of JESUS SOUGHT AFTER. Let us seek him. Come, ye weary, heavy-laden, come to him who is able to succour you. Do not stay away until you are a little comforted, but come in your despair. Do not wait until you have a little more faith, but come just as you are, and say to him, "Dear Lord, thou hast felt all this, and I lie down at thy dear feet! Do help me, I beseech thee!" Let these few thoughts help to bring you now in prayer, and trust, and hope, to the feet of this Great High Priest.

First, *where else can you go?* Who can help a soul like you? Come to him, then. Men are nothing: miserable comforters are they all. The cisterns are all broken: come to the fountain. Come to my Lord. Every other door is shut, but yet you may not despair, for he says, "Behold I set before you an open door."

Where better can you go? Do you want to find a friend able to help you? Do you really want a comrade that can be a brother to you? To whom should you go but unto your own Lord, the sympathizing Son of Man? To whom better can you go? Do you say that you are down-cast? Do you tell me you are afraid you are no child of God? Never mind about that. Come as a sinner if you cannot come as a saint. Do you mourn that you have no good thoughts? Come and confess your bad ones. Do you lament that you are not broken-hearted for sin, as you ought to be? Come, then, to be broken-hearted. Do you mourn that you are unspeakably bad? Then, come at your worst. It is never a good thing if you want a surgeon, to say, "My bone is broken, but I shall not have it set until it begins to mend." Poor foolish thing! go while it is broken. O perishing sinner! cry to the Saviour. Ask him now to save you. Are you of all men the worst? Then go to him who is the best. Remember he never did cast any one out. Never yet! Never one! I have declared this everywhere, and I have said, "If Jesus Christ casts any one of you out when you come to him, pray let me know; for I do not want to go up and down the country telling lies." Again I give the challenge. If my Lord does cast out one poor soul that comes to him, let me know it, and I will give up preaching. I should not have the face to come forward and preach Christ after that; for he himself has said it, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out;" and he would be a false Christ if he acted contrary to his word. He cannot cast *you* out; why should he? "Oh, but then I am so bad." So much the less likely is he to refuse you, for there is the more room for his grace.

"I am lost," said Mr. Whitefield's brother to the Countess of

Huntingdon. "I am delighted to hear it," said the Countess. "Oh," cried he, "what a dreadful thing to say!" "Nay," said she, "'for the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost;' therefore I know he is come to save *you*." O sinner, it would be unreasonable to despair. The more broken thou art, the more ruined thou art, the more vile thou art in thine own esteem, so much the more room is there for the display of infinite mercy and power.

Come, then, just as you are, saint or sinner, whoever you may be. Have done with yourself, your good self and your bad self too, and say, "If I perish I will trust in Jesus." Trust in Jesus, and you cannot perish. If you perish believing in Jesus, I must perish with you. I am in the same boat with you. You may be a very sea-sick passenger, and I may be an able-bodied seaman; but if you are drowned, I shall be, for I cannot swim any more than you can. I depend upon the seaworthiness of this vessel of free grace in which we are embarked, and we must either reach the Fair Havens together, or sink together. You and I, poor broken-down one, oh, will we not sing when we get safe to land? Will we not sing? If we once get to heaven, will we not sing aloud, and clash the high-sounding cymbals with all our might? I will contend with you as to which shall praise God most. You say that you will. I say that I shall. Will we not vie with each other, and with all the blood-redeemed ones, to sing Hallelujah to God and the Lamb? If ever such sinners as you and I get inside the gates of heaven, we will give forth such outcries of holy joy and gladness as never came from angels' throats, but can only come from the lips of sinners bought with blood.

The Lord, who succoureth the tempted, himself bless and comfort you! Amen.

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