

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE SHAME AND SPITTING.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 27TH, 1879, BY

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair : I hid not my face from shame and spitting."—Isaiah l. 6.

Of whom speaketh the prophet this? Of himself or of some other? We cannot doubt but what Isaiah here wrote concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. Is not this one of the prophecies to which our Lord himself referred in the incident recorded in the eighteenth chapter of Luke's gospel at the thirty-first verse? "Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on : and they shall scourge him, and put him to death." Such a remarkable prophecy of scourging and spitting as this which is now before us must surely refer to the Lord Jesus ; its highest fulfilment is assuredly found in him alone.

Of whom else, let me ask, could you conceive the prophet to have spoken if you read the whole chapter? Of whom else could he say in the same breath, "I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair." (Verses 3 and 6.) What a descent from the omnipotence which veils the heavens with clouds to the gracious condescension which does not veil its own face, but permits it to be spat upon ! No other could thus have spoken of himself but he who is both God and man. He must be divine : how else could he say, "Behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness" ? (Verse 2.) And yet he must at the same time be a "Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," for there is a strange depth of pathos in the words, "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair : I hid not my face from shame and spitting." Whatever others may say, we believe that the speaker in this verse is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews, the Son of God and the Son of man, our Redeemer. It is the Judge of Israel whom they have smitten with a rod upon the cheek who here plaintively declares the griefs which he has undergone.

We have before us the language of prophecy, but it is as accurate as though it had been written at the moment of the event. Isaiah might have been one of the Evangelists, so exactly does he describe what our Saviour endured.

I have already laid before you in the reading of the Scriptures some of the passages of the New Testament wherein the scourging and the shame of our Lord Jesus are described. We saw him first at the tribunal of his own countrymen in Matthew xxvi., and we read, "Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands." It was in the hall of the high priest, among his own countrymen, that first of all the shameful deeds of scorn were wrought upon him. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." His worst foes were they of his own household; they despised and abhorred him, and would have none of him. His own Father's husbandmen said among themselves,—“This is the heir; let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance.” This was his treatment at the hand of the house of Israel.

The same treatment, or the like thereto, was accorded him in Herod's palace, where the lingering shade of a Jewish royalty still existed. There what I might venture to call a pattern mixture of Jew and Gentile power held court, but our Lord fared no better in the united company. By the two combined the Lord was treated with equal derision (Luke xxiii. 11). "Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe."

Speedily came his third trial, and he was delivered altogether to the Gentiles. Then Pilate, the governor, gave him up to the cruel process of scourging. Scourging as it has been practised in the English army is atrocious, a barbarism which ought to make us blush for the past, and resolve to end it for the future. How is it that such a horror has been tolerated so long in a country where we are not all savages? But the lash is nothing among us compared with what it was among the Romans. I have heard that it was made of the sinews of oxen, and that in it were twisted the hucklebones of sheep, with slivers of bone, in order that every stroke might more effectually tear its way into the poor quivering flesh, which was mangled by its awful strokes. Scourging was such a punishment that it was generally regarded as worse than death itself, and indeed, many perished while enduring it, or soon afterwards. Our blessed Redeemer gave his back to the smiters, and the ploughers made deep furrows there. O spectacle of misery! How can we bear to look thereon? Nor was that all, for Pilate's soldiers, calling all the band together, as if there were not enough for mockery unless all were mustered, put him to derision by a mock enthronement and a mimic coronation; and when they had thus done they again buffeted and smote him, and spat in his face. There was no kind of cruelty which their heartlessness could just then invent which they did not exercise upon his blessed person: their brutal sport had full indulgence, for their innocent victim offered neither resistance nor remonstrance. This is his own record of his patient endurance, "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting."

Behold your King! I bring him forth to you this morning in spirit

and cry, "Behold the Man!" Turn hither all your eyes and hearts and look upon the despised and rejected of men! Gaze reverently and lovingly, with awe for his sufferings and love for his person. The sight demands adoration. I would remind you of that which Moses did when he saw the bush that burned and was not consumed—fit emblem of our Lord on fire with griefs and yet not destroyed; I bid you turn aside and see this great sight, but first attend to the mandate—"put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." All round the cross the soil is sacred. Our suffering Lord has consecrated every place whereon he stood, and therefore our hearts must be filled with reverence while we linger under the shadow of his passion.

May the Holy Spirit help you to see Jesus in four lights at this time. In each view he is worthy of devout attention. Let us view him first as *the representative of God*; secondly, as *the substitute of his people*; thirdly, as *the servant of Jehovah*; and fourthly, as *the Comforter of his redeemed*.

I. First, I invite you to gaze upon your despised and rejected Lord as **THE REPRESENTATIVE OF GOD**. In the person of Christ Jesus, God himself came into the world, making a special visitation to Jerusalem and the Jewish people, but at the same time coming very near to all mankind. The Lord called to the people whom he had favoured so long and whom he was intent to favour still. He says, in the second verse, "I came" and "I called." God did in very deed come down into the midst of mankind.

Be it noted, that when our Lord came into this world as the representative of God, he came with all his divine power about him. The chapter before us says, "Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? or have I no power to deliver? behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness." The Son of God, when he was here, did not perform those exact miracles, because he was bent upon marvels of beneficence rather than of judgment. He did not repeat the plagues of Egypt, for he did not come to smite, but to save; but he did greater wonders and wrought miracles which ought far more powerfully to have won men's confidence in him because they were full of goodness and mercy. He fed the hungry, he healed the sick, he raised the dead, and he cast out devils. He did equal marvels to those which were wrought in Egypt when the arm of the Lord was made bare in the eyes of all the people. It is true he did not change water into blood, but he turned water into wine. It is true he did not make their fish to stink, but by his word he caused the net to be filled even to bursting with great fishes. He did not break the whole staff of bread as he did in Egypt, but he multiplied loaves and fishes so that thousands of men and women and children were fed from his bounteous hand. He did not slay their first-born, but he restored the dead. I grant you that the glory of the Godhead was somewhat hidden in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, but it was still there, even as the glory was upon the face of Moses when he covered it with a veil. No essential attribute of God was absent in Christ, and every one might have been seen in him if the people had not been wilfully blind. He did the works of his Father, and those works bare witness of him that he was come in his Father's name. Yes, God was personally in the world when Jesus walked the blessed fields of the Holy Land, now, alas, laid under the curse for rejecting him.

But when God thus came among men he was unacknowledged. What saith the prophet? "Wherefore when I came was there no man? when I called was there none to answer?" A few, taught by the Spirit of God, discerned him and rejoiced; but they were so very few that we may say of the whole generation that they knew him not. Those who had some dim idea of his excellence and majesty yet rejected him. Herod, because he feared that he was a king, sought to slay him. The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers took counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed. He was emphatically and beyond all others "despised and rejected of men." Though, as I have said, the Godhead in him was but scantily veiled, and gleams of its glory burst forth ever and anon, yet still the people would have none of it, and the cry, "Away with him, away with him, let him be crucified," was the verdict of the age upon which he descended. He called and there was none to answer; he spread out his hands all the day long unto a rebellious people who utterly rejected him.

Yet our Lord when he came into the world was admirably adapted to be the representative of God, not only because he was God himself, but because as man his whole human nature was consecrated to the work, and in him was neither flaw nor spot. He was untouched by any motive other than the one desire of manifesting the Father and blessing the sons of men. Oh, beloved, there was never one who had his ear so near the mouth of God as Jesus had. His Father had no need to speak to him in dreams and visions of the night, for when all his faculties were wide awake there was nothing in them to hinder his understanding the mind of God; and therefore every morning when his Father wakened him he spake into his ear. Jesus sat as a scholar at the Father's feet that he might learn first, and then teach. The things which he heard of the Father he made known unto men. He says that he spake not his own words but the words of Him that sent him, and he did not his own deeds, but "my Father," saith he, "that dwelleth in me, he doeth the work." Now, a man thus entirely agreeable to the mind and will of the great God was fitted to be the representative of God. Both the alliance of his manhood with the Godhead and its perfect character qualified it to be the fittest dwelling of God among men. Yes, dear friends, our Saviour came in a way which should at once have commanded the reverent homage of all men. Even his great Father said, "They will reverence my Son." Enough of the Godhead was manifested to impress and no more, lest it should alarm. With a soul of gentlest mould and a body like our own he was altogether adapted to be the representative of God. His errand, too, was all gentleness and love, for he came to speak words in season to the weary, and to comfort those that were cast down: surely such an errand should have secured him a welcome. His course and conduct were most conciliatory, for he went among the people, and ate with publicans and sinners; so gentle was he that he took little children in his arms, and blessed them; for this, if for nothing else, they ought to have welcomed him right heartily and rejoiced at the sight of him. Our text tells us how contrary was their conduct towards him to that which he deserved: instead of being welcomed he was scourged, and instead of being honoured he was scorned. Cruelty smote his back and plucked off the hair from his face, while derision

jeered at him and cast its spittle upon him. Shame and contempt were poured upon him, though he was God himself. That spectacle of Christ spat upon, and scourged, represents what man virtually does to his God, what he would do to the Most High if he could. Hart well puts it :—

“ See how the patient Jesus stands,
Insulted in his lowest case !
Sinners have bound the Almighty hands,
And spit in their Creator's face.”

When our parents broke the command of their Maker, obeying the advice of the devil rather than the word of God, and preferring a poor apple to the divine favour, they did as it were spit into the face of God ; and every sin committed since has been a repetition of the same contempt of the Eternal One. When a man will have his pleasure, even though it displeases God, he as good as declares that he despises God, prefers himself, and defies the wrath of the Most High. When a man acts contrary to the command of God he does as good as say to God, “ This is better for me to do than what thou bidst me do. Either thou art mistaken, in thy prohibitions, or else thou dost wilfully deny me the highest pleasure, and I, being a better judge of my own interests than thou art, snatch at the pleasure which thou dost refuse me. I judge thee either to be unwise or unkind.” Every act of sin does despite to the sovereignty of God : it denies him to be supreme, and refuses him obedience. Every act of sin does dishonour to the love and wisdom of God, for it seems to say that it would have been greater love to have permitted us to do evil than to have commanded us to abstain from it. All sin is in many ways an insult to the majesty of the thrice Holy God, and he regards it as such.

Dear friends, this is especially the sin of those who have heard the gospel and yet reject the Saviour, for in their case the Lord has come to them in the most gracious form, and yet they have refused him. The Lord might well say, “ I have come to you to save you, and you will not regard me. I have come saying to you, ‘ Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth,’ and you close your eyes in unbelief. I have come saying, ‘ Let us reason together : though your sins be as crimson, they shall be as wool,’ but you will not be cleansed from your iniquity. I have come with the promise, ‘ All manner of sin and iniquity shall be forgiven unto men.’ What is your reply ? ” In the case of many the answer is, “ We prefer our own righteousness to the righteousness of God.” If that is not casting spittle into the face of God I know not what is, for our righteousnesses are well described as “ filthy rags,” and we have the impudence to say that these are better than the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. Or if we do not say this when we reject the Saviour we tell him that we do not want him, for we do not need a Saviour : this is as good as to say that God has played the fool with the life and death of his own Son. What greater derision can be cast upon God than to consider the blood of atonement to be a superfluity ? He who chooses sin sooner than repentance prefers to suffer the wrath of God rather than be holy and dwell in heaven for ever. For the sake of a few paltry pleasures men forego the love of God, and are ready to run the risk of an eternity of divine wrath. They think so little of God that he is of no account with

them at all. All this is in reality a scorning and despising of the Lord God, and is well set forth by the insults which were poured upon the Lord Jesus.

Woe's me that it should ever be so. My God ! my God ! To what a sinful race do I belong. Alas, that it should treat thine infinite goodness so spitefully ! That thou shouldst be rejected at all, but especially that thou shouldst be rejected when dressed in robes of love and arrayed in gentleness and pity is horrible to think upon. Do you mean it, O men ? Can you really mean it ? Can you deride the Lord Jesus who died for men ? For which of his works do ye stone him, when he lived only to do good ? For which of his griefs do you refuse him, when he died only that he might save ? "He saved others, himself he cannot save," for he had so much love that he could not spare himself. I can understand your resisting the thunder of Jehovah's power, for I know your insanity ; but can you resist the tenderness of Jehovah's love ? If you do I must charge you with brutality, but therein I wrong the brutes, to whom such crimes are impossible. I may not even call this cruel scorning *diabolical*, for it is a sin which devils never did commit, perhaps would not have committed had it been possible to them. They have never trifled with a Redeemer, nor rejected the blood of atonement, for our Lord took not up the fallen angels, but he took up the seed of Abraham. Shall the favoured race spit upon its friend ? God grant we may be brought to a better mind. But there is the picture before you. God himself set at nought, despised, rejected, put to shame, perpetually dishonoured in the person of his dear Son. The sight should breed repentance in us. We should look to him whom we have scourged, and mourn for him. O Holy Spirit, work this tender grace in all our hearts.

II. And now, secondly, I want to set the Lord Jesus before you in another light, or rather beseech him to shine in his own light before your eyes :—AS THE SUBSTITUTE FOR HIS PEOPLE. Recollect when our Lord Jesus Christ suffered thus it was not on his own account nor purely for the sake of his Father, but he "was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities : the chastisement of our peace was upon him ; and with his stripes we are healed." There has risen up a modern idea which I cannot too much reprobate, that Christ made no atonement for our sin except upon the cross : whereas in this passage of Isaiah we are taught as plainly as possible that by his bruising and his stripes, as well as by his death, we are healed. Never divide between the life and the death of Christ. How could he have died if he had not lived ? How could he suffer except while he lived ? Death is not suffering, but the end of it. Guard also against the evil notion that you have nothing to do with the righteousness of Christ, for he could not have made an atonement by his blood if he had not been perfect in his life. He could not have been acceptable if he had not first been proven to be holy, harmless, and undefiled. The victim must be spotless, or it cannot be presented for sacrifice. Draw no nice lines and raise no quibbling questions, but look at your Lord as he is and bow before him.

Understand, my dear brothers and sisters, that Jesus took upon himself our sin, and being found bearing that sin he had to be treated as sin should be treated. Now, of all the things that ever existed sin is the

most shameful thing that can be. It deserves to be scourged, it deserves to be spit upon, it deserves to be crucified ; and because our Lord had taken upon himself our sin, therefore must he be put to shame, therefore must he be scourged. If you want to see what God thinks of sin, see his only Son spat upon by the soldiers when he was made sin for us. In God's sight sin is a shameful, horrible, loathsome, abominable thing, and when Jesus takes it he must be forsaken and given up to scorn. This sight will be the more wonderful to you when you recollect who it was that was spat upon, for if you and I, being sinners, were scourged, and smitten, and despised, there would be no wonder in it ; but he who took our sin was God, before whom angels bow with reverent awe, and yet, seeing the sin was upon him, he was made subject to the most intense degree of shame. Seeing that Jesus stood in our stead, it is written of the eternal Father that "He spared not his own Son." "It pleased the Father to bruise him : he hath put him to grief"; he made his soul an offering for sin. Yes, beloved, sin is condemned in the flesh and made to appear exceeding shameful when you recollect that, even though it was only laid on our blessed Lord by imputation, yet it threw him into the very depths of shame and woe ere it could be removed.

Reflect, also, upon the voluntariness of all this. He willingly submitted to the endurance of suffering and scorn. It is said in the text, "*He gave his back to the smiters.*" They did not seize and compel him, or, if they did, yet they could not have done it without his consent. He gave his back to the smiters. He gave his cheek to those that plucked off the hair. He did not hide his face from shame and spitting : he did not seek in any way to escape from insults. It was the voluntariness of his grief which constituted in great measure the merit of it. That Christ should stand in our stead by force were a little thing, even had it been possible ; but that he should stand there of his own free will, and that being there he should willingly be treated with derision, this is grace indeed. The Son of God was willingly made a curse for us, and at his own desire was made subject to shame on our account. I do not know how you feel in listening to me, but while I am speaking I feel as if language ought scarcely to touch such a theme as this : it is too feeble for its task. I want you to get beyond my words if you can, and for yourselves meditate upon the fact that he who covers the heavens with blackness, yet did not cover his own face, and he who binds up the universe with the girdle which holds it in one, yet was bound and blindfolded by the men he had himself made ; he whose face is as the brightness of the sun that shineth in its strength was once spit upon. Surely we shall need faith in heaven to believe this wondrous fact. Can it have been true, that the glorious Son of God was jeered and jested at ? I have often heard that there is no faith wanted in heaven, but I rather judge that we shall want as much faith to believe that these things were ever done as the patriarchs had to believe that they would be done. How shall I sit down and gaze upon *him* and think that his dear face was once profaned with spittle ? When all heaven shall lie prostrate at his feet in awful silence of adoration will it seem possible that once he was mocked ? When angels, and principalities, and powers shall all be roused to rapture of harmonious music in his praise, will it seem possible that once the most abject of men plucked out the hair ? Will it not

appear incredible that those sacred hands, which are "as gold rings set with the beryl," were once nailed to a gibbet, and that those cheeks which are "as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers," should have been battered and bruised? We shall be quite certain of the fact, and yet we shall never cease to wonder, that his side was gashed, and his face was spit upon? The sin of man in this instance will always amaze us. How could you commit this crime? Oh, ye sons of men, how could ye treat such an one with cruel scorn? O thou brazen thing called sin, thou hast, indeed, as the prophet saith, "a whore's forehead"; thou hast a demon's heart, hell burns within thee. Why couldst thou not spit upon earthly splendours? Why must heaven be thy scorn? Or if heaven, why not spit on angels! Was there no place for thy base deed but the Well-beloved's face? Was there no place for thy spittle but *his* face? *His* face! Woe is me! His face! Should such loveliness receive such shame as this? I could wish that man had never been created, or that, being created, he had been swept into nothingness rather than have lived to commit such horror.

Yet here is matter for our faith to rest upon. Beloved, trust yourselves in the hands of your great Substitute. Did he bear all this shame? then there must be more than enough merit and efficacy in this, which was the prelude of his precious death—and especially in his death itself—there must be merit sufficient to put away all transgression, iniquity, and sin. Our shame is ended, for he has borne it! Our punishment is removed: he has endured it all. Double for all our sins has our Redeemer paid. Return unto thy rest, O my soul, and let peace take full possession of thy weeping heart.

III. But time fails us, and therefore we will mention, next, the third light in which it is our desire to see the Saviour. Beloved, we desire to see the Lord Jesus Christ **AS THE SERVANT OF GOD**. He took upon himself the form of a servant when he was made in the likeness of man. Observe how he performed this service right thoroughly, and remember we are to look upon this third picture as our copy, which is to be the guide of our life. I know that many of you are glad to call yourselves the servants of God; take not the name in vain. As Jesus was, so are you also in this world, and you are to seek to be like him.

First, as a servant, Christ was personally prepared for service. He was thirty years and more here below, learning obedience in his father's house, and the after years were spent in learning obedience by the things which he suffered. What a servant he was, for he never went about his own errands nor went by his own will, but he waited always upon his Father. He was in constant communication with heaven, both by day and by night. He says, "He wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned." The blessed Lord or ever the day broke heard that gentle voice which called him, and at its whisper he arose before the sunrise, and there the dawning found him, on the mountain side, waiting upon God in wrestling prayer, taking his message from the Father that he might go and deliver it to the children of men. He loved man much, but he loved his Father more, and he never came to tell out the love of God without having as man received it fresh from the divine heart. He knew that his Father heard him always, and he lived in the spirit of conscious acceptance. Have you ever noticed

that sometimes a passage will begin, "At that time Jesus answered and said," and yet there is no notice that he had been speaking to anybody before, or that anybody had been speaking to him? What he said was an answer to a voice which no ear heard but his own, for he was always standing with opened ear, listening to the eternal voice. Such service did Jesus render, and you must render the same. You cannot do your Lord's will except you live near to him. It is of no use trying to preach with power unless we get our message from our heavenly Father's own self. I am sure you as hearers know the difference between a dead word which comes from a man's own brain and lip, and a living word which the preacher delivers fresh as the manna which fell from heaven. The word should come from the minister like bread hot from the oven, or better still, like a seed with life in it; not as a parched grain with the germ dead and killed, but as a living seed which roots itself in your souls, and springs up to a harvest. This made our Lord such a good servant that he listened to his Father's voice and yielded himself to the Father's will to perfection.

Our text assures us that this service knew no reserve in its consecration. *We* generally draw back somewhere. I am ashamed to say it, but I mourn that I have done so. Many of us could give to Christ all our health and strength, and all the money we have, very heartily and cheerfully; but when it comes to a point of reputation we feel the pinch. To be slandered, to have some filthy thing said of you; this is too much for flesh and blood. You seem to say, "I cannot be made a fool of, I cannot bear to be regarded as a mere impostor;" but a true servant of Christ must make himself of no reputation when he takes upon himself the work of his Lord. Our blessed Master was willing to be scoffed at by the lowdest and the lowest of men. The abjects jeered at him; the reproach of them that reproached God fell upon him. He became the song of the drunkard, and when the rough soldiery detained him in the guard-room they heaped up their ridicule, as though he were not worthy of the name of man.

"They bow their knees to me, and cry, 'Hail, King':

Whatever scoffs or scornfulness can bring,

I am the floor, the sink, where they it fling:

Was ever grief like mine?

"The soldiers also spit upon that face

Which angels did desire to have the grace

And prophets once to see, but found no place:

Was ever grief like mine?"

Herod and Pilate were the very dross of men, and yet he permitted them to judge him. Their servants were vile fellows, and yet he resigned himself to them. If he had breathed upon them with angry breath, he might have flashed devouring fire upon them, and burned them up as stubble; but his omnipotent patience restrained his indignation, and he remained as a sheep before her shearers. He allowed his own creatures to pluck his hair and spit in his face. Such patience should be yours as servants of God. We are to be willing to be made nothing of, and even to be counted as the offscouring of all things. It is pitiful for the Christian to refuse to suffer, and to become a fighting man, crying, "We must stand up for our rights." Did you ever see Jesus in that posture? There is a

propensity in us to say, "I will have it out." Yes, but you cannot picture Jesus in that attitude. I defy a painter to depict him so: it is somebody else, and not Christ. No! he said, "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting."

There is something more here than perfect consecration in the mere form of it, for its heart and essence are manifest in an obedient delight in the will of the Father. The words seem to me to express alacrity. It is not said that he reluctantly permitted his enemies to pluck his hair, or smite his back, but it is written, "I gave my back to the smiter, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair." He could not delight in it; how could he delight in suffering and shame? These things were even more repugnant to his sensitive nature than they can be to us; and yet, "For the joy that was set before him he endured the cross, despising the shame." He was ready for this dreadful treatment, for he said, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished!" He was ready for the cup of gall, and willing to drink it to its dregs, though it was bitterness itself to him. He gave his back to the smiters.

All this while—now follow me in this next point—there was no flinching in him. They spat in his face, but what says he in the seventh verse. "I have set my face like a flint." If they are about to defile his face he is resolved to bear it; he girds up his loins, and makes himself more determined. Oh, the bravery of our Master's silence! Cruelty and shame could not make him speak. Have not your lips sometimes longed to speak out a denial and a defence? Have you not felt it wise to be quiet, but then the charge has been so excessively cruel, and it has stung you so terribly that you hungered to resent it. Base falsehoods aroused your indignation, and you felt you must speak and probably you did speak, though you tried to keep your lips as with a bridle while the wicked were before you. But our own beloved Lord in the omnipotence of his patience and love would not utter a word, but like a lamb at the slaughter he opened not his mouth. He witnessed a good confession by his matchless silence. Oh, how mighty—how gloriously mighty was his patience! We must copy it if we are to be his disciples. We, too, must set our faces like flints, to move or to sit still, according to the Father's will, to be silent or to speak, as most shall honour him. "I have set my face like a flint," saith he, even though in another place he cries, "My heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels."

And do you notice all the while the confidence and quiet of his spirit? He almost seems to say, "You may spit upon me, but you cannot find fault with me. You may pluck my hair, but you cannot impugn my integrity; you may lash my shoulders, but you cannot impute a fault to me. Your false witnesses dare not look me in the face: let me know who is mine adversary, let him come near to me. Behold, Adonai Jehovah will keep me, who is he that shall condemn me! Lo, they all shall wax old as a garment, the moth shall eat them up." Be calm then, O true servant of God! In patience possess your soul. Serve God steadily and steadfastly though all men should belie you. Go to the bottom of the service, dive even to the very depth, and be content even to lie in Christ's grave, for you shall share in Christ's resurrection. Do

not dream that the path to heaven is up the hill of honour, it winds down into the valley of humiliation. Imagine not that you can grow great eternally by being great here. You must become less, and less, and less, even though you should be despised and rejected of men, for this is the path to everlasting glory.

I have not time to expound the last two verses of the chapter, but they read you a noble lesson. "He gave his back to the smiters;" if, then, any of you walk in darkness and have no light, this is no new thing for a servant of God. The chief of all servants persevered, though men despised him. Follow him, then. Stay yourselves upon God as he did, and look for a bright ending of your trials. He came out into the light ultimately, and there he sits in inconceivable splendour at his Father's right hand, and so shall all the faithful come out of the cloud and shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Only bear on with resolute patience, and glory shall be *your* reward, even as it is his.

IV. Lastly, I am to set him forth in his fourth character, as **THE COMFORTER OF HIS PEOPLE**; but I must ask *you* to do this, while I just, as it were, make a charcoal sketch of the picture I would have painted.

Remember, first, our blessed Lord is well qualified to speak a word in season to him that is weary, because he himself is lowly, and meek, and so accessible to us. When men are in low spirits they feel as if they could not take comfort from persons who are harsh and proud. The comforter must come as a sufferer; he must come in a lowly, broken spirit, if he would cheer the afflicted. You must not put on your best dress to go and visit the daughter of poverty, or go with your jewels about you to show how much better off you are than she. Sit down by the side of the downcast man and let him know that you are meek and lowly of heart. Your Master "gave his back to the smiters, and his cheek to them that plucked off the hair," and therefore he is the Comforter you want.

Remark not only his lowliness, but his sympathy. Are you full of aches and pains this morning? Jesus knows all about them, for he "gave his back to the smiters." Do you suffer from what is worse than pain, from scandal and slander? "He hid not his face from shame and spitting." Have you been ridiculed of late? Have the graceless made fun of your godliness? Jesus can sympathise with you, for you know what unholy mirth they made out of him. In every pang that rends your heart your Lord has borne his share. Go and tell him. Many will not understand you. You are a speckled bird, differing from all the rest, and they will all peck at you; but Jesus Christ knows this, for he was a speckled bird too. He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners," but not separate from such as you. Get you to him and he will sympathise with you.

In addition to his gentle spirit and his power to sympathise, there is this to help to comfort us—namely, his example, for he can argue thus with you, "I gave my back to the smiters. Cannot you do the like? Shall the disciple be above his master?" If I can but get on the doorstep of heaven and sit down in the meanest place there I shall feel I have an infinitely better position than I deserve, and shall I think of my dear, blessed Lord and Master giving his face to be spit upon, and then

give myself airs, and say, "I cannot bear this scorn, I cannot bear this pain"! What, does the King pass over the brook Kedron, and must there be no brook Kedron for you? Does the Master bear the cross, and must your shoulders never be galled? Did they call the Master of the house "Beelzebub," and must they call you "Reverend Sir"? Did they laugh at him, and scoff at him, and must you be honoured? Are you to be "gentleman" and "lady" where Christ was "that fellow"? For his birth they loaned him a stable, and for his burial he borrowed a grave. O friends, let pride disappear, and let us count it our highest honour to be permitted to stoop as low as ever we can.

And, then, his example further comforts us by the fact that he was calm amid it all. Oh, the deep rest of the Saviour's heart! They set him up upon that mock throne, but he did not answer with an angry word; they put a reed into his hand, but he did not change it to an iron rod, and break them like potters' vessels, as he might have done. There was no wincing and no pleading for mercy. Sighs of pain were forced from him, and he said, "I thirst," for he was not a stoic; but there was no fear of man, or timorous shrinking of heart.

The King of Martyrs well deserves to wear the martyr's crown, for right royally did he endure: there was never a patience like to his. That is your copy, brother, that is your copy, sister—you must write very carefully to write as well as that. You had need your Master held your hand; in fact, whenever children in Christ's school do write according to his copy, it is always because he holds their hand by his Spirit.

Last of all, our Saviour's triumph is meant to be a stimulus and encouragement to us. He stands before us this morning as the Comforter of his people. Consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself lest ye be weary and faint in your minds; for though he was once abased and despised, yet now he sitteth at the right hand of God, and reigns over all things; and the day is coming when every knee shall bow before him, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. They that spat upon him will rue the day. Come hither, ye that derided him! He has raised you from the dead, come hither and spit upon him now! Ye that scourged him, bring your rods, see what ye can do in this day of his glory! See, they fly before him, they invoke the hills to shelter them, they ask the rocks to open and conceal them. Yet it is nothing but his face, that selfsame face they spat upon, which is making earth and heaven to flee away. Yea, all things flee before the majesty of his frown who once gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. Be like him, then, ye who bear his name; trust him, and live for him, and you shall reign with him in glory for ever and ever. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah l.; liii. 1—7; Matthew xxvi. 62—68; Luke xxiii. 8—11; Matthew xxvii. 27—30.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—327, 937, 268.