

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

"EVER THIS OUR WAR CRY,—VICTORY, VICTORY!"

A Sermon

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"Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors: and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."—Isaiah liii. 12.*

OUR great concern is concerning Christ. "For him shall constant prayer be made." It does not much matter what becomes of us, the common soldiers, so long as our great Captain is to the front. As the men of Napoleon's Old Guard could defy death for themselves, but were ever anxious about the emperor, so every loyal soldier of Christ feels that the one question in the present conflict is, "How goes it with the King?" Is he crowned? Is he exalted? Is he winning his way among the sons of men? Brothers, it may be that our star is waning. Does it matter, if *his* sun is reaching its noon? It may happen that the company with which we are associated is not so much to the front as it used to be, and the regimental flag is in the rear, but what of that? Let us do the best we can to retrieve its honour; but, after all, the main consideration is the royal standard. Where is that? "Let my name perish," said Whitefield, "but let Christ's name last for ever." Such a feeling should actuate us all. What are we, my brethren, and what is our father's house? What if ten thousand of us should fall merely to fill a ditch for him to march over? What if he took the whole of us, and crushed us to the dust, if he were lifted an

* Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon, upon the same text, is No. 2,070 in *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, "Christ's Connection with Sinners, the Source of His Glory."

inch the higher, it were none too costly a sacrifice for such an One as he is, who has redeemed us unto God by his precious blood.

Our first and last concern is about the result of our great warfare in regard to Christ; and my text will be consoling to your hearts in proportion as you are consecrated to Christ. If you are a worker for Jesus, and your heart is tremulous for the cause of God,—if you feel dismayed at times, and often anxious about the progress of the kingdom,—such an assurance as this will be like a voice from the Comforter himself. It is the Father who speaks, and he says concerning the Well-beloved, “Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong.”

I. The first truth taught us here is that **THE VICTORY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST IS SURE.**

Sure, first, because *these words are a divine promise*; and every word of promise that comes from God is established. “Hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?” If God has said, “I will divide him a portion,” that portion shall be divided. If the Lord has declared that he shall divide the spoil with the strong, who is he that shall keep him back from the prey? We might have doubted if this word had been a prediction as to the probabilities of the life of this religion or of that; we might have supposed that the religion of Christ would be crushed out by rougher faiths that could use the carnal weapon, or that its exceeding spirituality might cause it to wither away in an atmosphere so uncongenial. We might, I say, have had some trembling because of the ark of the Lord if this had been a mere inference or opinion; but we have none now; for as surely as this Book is the infallible Word of God, so surely must Christ win the day. As surely as God cannot lie, so surely must he, upon whom the Lord laid the iniquity of men, rise from all his sorrows to a glorious victory.

The text is a promise placed very singularly in connection with facts which have been accomplished. We are told that Christ shall divide the spoil with the strong, but that promise is set side by side with the declaration that he is “brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.” Just as surely, then, as that part of the prophecy is fulfilled in which Christ suffers, so surely shall that be fulfilled in which he triumphs. You have no doubt whatever about his being taken from prison and from judgment, about his making his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death. Well, the same Book and the same chapter which contains the prophecy of those sorrowful facts contains this prophecy that he shall divide the spoil with the strong. Therefore the ultimate victory of Christ is made sure by a divine promise.

Notice, moreover, that it is *the Father himself who here puts forth his hand to guarantee the victory.* He writes, “Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great.” “I will do it; I will see that he conquers; I will see that he has the reward of his labour. My own right hand and my holy arm shall so be with him that he shall

tread down his enemies, and he shall take from them mountains of prey.” Who is this that saith, “I will divide him a portion”? It is he at whose voice the earth trembles.

“The pillars of heaven’s starry roof
Tremble and start at his reproof.”

When he says, “I will do it,” who shall stay his hand, or resist his will? God, the everlasting Father, has staked his honour and his glory upon the success of Christ. I make bold to say that if Christ wins not the world, and if he be not crowned King of kings and Lord of lords, it is not Jesus that is dishonoured so much as the Great Father by whom he was ordained, sent, and anointed. The stain would not only be upon the manhood but upon the Godhead too; for God himself appointed the Lord Jesus, and said of him, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” He must see the Messiah through with it. It is the pleasure of the Lord that is in his hand, and that pleasure must prosper there, or else God’s name would be dishonoured. How sure I am that Jesus will win the victory.

I am delighted to notice a change of expression in the next sentence. *The Son of God himself also puts his hand to the work of ultimate victory.* Read the text again: “Therefore *will I* divide him a portion,” “and *he shall* divide.” God gives him the victory, and he takes it himself. The Father grants it, and the Son grasps it by his own right hand. The glorious Jehovah cries, “He shall divide,” and the ever-blessed Son of the Highest as a conqueror comes forth actually to divide the spoil. O my brethren, Jesus is as gentle as a lamb; but I might say of him as they at the Red Sea said of Jehovah, “The Lord is a man of war: the Lord is his name.” The Lamb is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, and who shall stand before him when he goes forth to war? Who shall rouse him up? They that came against him to take him in the days of his humiliation stumbled and fell when he uttered the words “I AM”; and if the full power of that “I AM” had been let loose upon them, they had not merely staggered to their falling, but each man among them had stumbled into his grave. It is he that stilled the waves upon Gennesaret: it is he that ruled the powers of the deep, and made the devils fly at his bidding: if he putteth his hand to the battle, woe to those that strive against him! The defeat of Christ! Laugh the idea to scorn. Nay, the thorn-crowned Prince is victorious. Well spake the apostate Julian in his dying moments, “Nazarene, thou hast conquered.” All his foes will have to own it. In the day of judgment trembling, and in the lowest pit of hell despairing, they shall acknowledge his supremacy. The despised and rejected of men with rod of iron shall break his enemies in pieces; yea, he shall break them in pieces like potters’ vessels. “Be wise now therefore, O ye kings:

be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

That is the first thing, then; the Christ will conquer. It is a divine promise; its fulfilment is guaranteed by the Father, it will certainly be achieved by the Son.

II. Secondly, THE VICTORY IS AS GLORIOUS AS IT IS SURE: "Therefore will I divide him a portion *with the great.*"

The great King rewards our Champion. You have heard of great champions who have been knighted on the battle-field by their sovereigns; deeds of special prowess have been thus rewarded. Others, amid the acclamations of their troops, and while yet their hands were unwashed from gore, have been crowned on the field only because of their superior valour and the decisive nature of the battle. Now, what is it to be knighted or crowned by kings or nations? It is as nothing. But to be crowned of God! For God himself to give the reward in the light of eternity! What must such a victory be? I trow that many an act which man applauds is despised by the Most High, and many a fierce fight that has stirred the heart of nations, and made the poets ring out their hymns for centuries, has been not only despicable but abominable in the sight of the Most High. But when God rewards, what must be the glory of the achievement! And here we have it: God, even the Father, the selfsame One whom it pleased to bruise his Son when he made the iniquity of us all to meet upon him,—that selfsame God who knows all things, and weighs all things aright, and is the very source and soul of honour, he shall crown our Lord Jesus. Must it not be a glorious victory? He has crowned him; he is crowning him; he shall continue to crown him; for thus it is written, "Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great."

The glory of this victory may be seen, next, not only in the reward coming from so high a source, but from *its being manifestly a great reward in the esteem of men*, since our Lord is to have "*a portion with the great.*" It is difficult to say what makes a great man. When I look over the lists of great men, some of them seem to me to be very little; but still men have among themselves a sort of standard by which to measure, and they say of such-and-such persons that they are "great." From different points of view they are so. Now, Christ is to have a portion with the great. Perhaps you have been grieved to see how certain ungodly men in these times make nothing of Christ; like Herod, they set him at nought; but these people are mostly very second-rate individuals, of small account even among their own order. Almost all intelligent men, even if they do not accept all that Christ says, agree that he is a great man, and many confess that there never was such another man as he. There have been sceptics whose admiration of Christ has been extreme. I, for one, cannot understand how any honest mind can do other than reverence his marvellous character and the grandeur of the truths which he has revealed. He is great, inexpressibly great, and the day will come, must come, is every day

coming nearer, when Christ will be seen even by his enemies to be supremely great. His cross to-day towers o'er the wrecks of time, and he himself rises before my faith's vision so much above all the sons of men that I see all philosophies, theories, and human dogmas crouching at his feet. His victories are not victories among pigmies, but victories among the great, such as shall make all men see that he himself is the greatest of the great.

My brethren, think for a minute what a battle Christ has waged with all the powers of evil; with all the wit, and craft, and unbelief, and pride, and lust of man; with all the foul devices, and cruelties, and wickednesses of the devil, and all the principalities and powers that obey his bidding; and with death and all that goes with it, and shall come of it. Against all these he has set the battle in array, and over all these he has triumphed, so that he divides the spoil with the great. Thy adversaries, O Prince Emmanuel, are not such as a common warrior might rout; they are foemen worthy of thy steel! What desperate tugs they gave thee when they forced the bloody sweat from out thee in the moment of thy sternest wrestling; but thou hast flung them to the ground, and trodden down strength.

Of course, this language can only be used as speaking part of the truth, because the portion which God has given to his dear Son is indisputably greater than the greatest things that earth can hold. I take it that the question that Christ has come to answer is the greatest question that ever moved eternity. The work that Christ has come to do is the grandest work that ever stirred the ages. It is God's work and God's question. How shall evil be driven out of the world? How shall justice, without a stain, smile on a sinner? How shall God be seen as the holy One with all the glory of his character manifested, receiving to his bosom the guilty sons of men? The grandest work that e'er was done of God himself Christ has come to perform, and not only has he his portion with the great, but of all the great he is the greatest, and his portion is above their portion. They are not to be mentioned in the selfsame day.

Notice, too, that a part of the description of this victory represents *the Lord as himself dividing the spoil "with the strong."* Not merely with great enemies did Christ wrestle, but with strong powers. I might give you a hundred illustrations of this, but I prefer to give you one. When the Lord Jesus Christ came into my heart,—came to battle there,—he did, indeed, divide the spoil with the strong, for I was strongwilled, and desperately set on mischief, and for a while I was in the hand of a strong despair, out of which it seemed impossible that I should escape. The bands which held me were of iron, tough as steel, hardened in the fires of hell; and yet this day I am his, for he has won me, and taken the prey from the mighty. I have been just now to see our venerable Elder White. He is dying. I looked at his venerable beard as he sat up in the bed, and I looked at the bright face that shone above it, and I was charmed

at the joyful sight. He said, "I have no trouble; I have not a troubled thought; I am the happiest man in the world; I am going home, and I rejoice in it; though I am perfectly satisfied to wait." Death is just nothing at all to him. Just like a dear sister who went from us some time ago; when I went to see her, you might have thought she was going to be married, she was so happy in prospect of departing. Charles Wesley once said, "They may say what they will about Methodism, but our people die well." That is my comfort; our people die well, they die gloriously triumphant in the Lord. When I think of it, I can see how my Lord divides the spoil with the strong. Death comes, and he says, "That is mine." He has taken the poor, wrinkled body; and Christ smiles, and lets him have it; for he takes for his share the soul, the life, and as he bears him off, he takes the best part of the spoil. He has left death the husk, but he has himself secured the kernel. Yea, the day will come when he will take the body, too, out of the custody of death; for not a wreck or a rag of all his saints shall remain in the domains of death. There is a resurrection of dead bodies as well as an immortality of spirits. Glory be to Christ! In this way, here and hereafter, he divides the spoil with the strong. Strong is death, but stronger still the omnipotent Son of God.

There is another aspect under which we may speak of the glory of Christ's victory, *he will share it with his people*. The second paragraph of the text is, "he shall divide the spoil with the strong." That is, he will divide it out, and allot portions to all those who came to the help of the Lord against the mighty. Just as David after Ziklag when he had taken the prey from the Amalekites, sent portions all round to his friends in Judah, so, when the King Eternal takes the spoil, he will give a share to you and to me, if we have been faithful to him. There shall be a portion e'en for us whom the Lord made strong for himself in the day of battle. Does it not make your heart laugh to think of it? Jesus wins the victory, but he will not enjoy it alone; he will glorify his people. Even the sick folk that go not down to the battle shall have their share of the spoil; for this is David's law, and the law of the Son of David, that they that abide with the stuff shall share with those that go down to the fight. He will give to each faithful sufferer or worker a portion of the prey. Make haste, O Champion, make haste to give to everyone of us a prey of divers colours, meet for the necks of them that take the spoil!

III. Thus we have seen that *Christ will win the victory, and the victory will be glorious*. Now let us declare, thirdly, that **THE RESULTS OF THIS VICTORY WILL BE VERY SUBSTANTIAL**.

Let me remind you that, in consequence of what our Lord has done, *myriads of souls will be redeemed*. How many will escape from sin and death and hell to live for ever is not revealed. We have every reason to believe that a number that no man can number, out of every nation, and people, and kindred, and tongue, shall praise their redeeming Lord. Christ's death will not spend its

force in the conversion of here and there one, but he will see of the travail of his soul, and will be satisfied; and we are convinced that no little thing will satisfy him. The great result of our Lord's death will be the eternal salvation of myriads untold.

Next to that will be *the overthrow of every form of evil* which now reigns in the world, and the extermination of religious falsehood, vice, drunkenness, war, and every horrible mischief born of the Fall and of human depravity. Christ will conquer these, and there shall be new heavens and a new earth, wherein shall dwell righteousness. For ever and ever boundless honours shall be given to Christ for his victory over every force of evil. The seed of the woman shall trample on the serpent.

As the result of Christ's death, *Satan's power will be broken*. He will no longer go forth to rule among the nations.

Death also will have lost its dominion over the sons of men. The Son of David shall restore that which he took not away. More than our first father lost shall Christ bring back. There shall be glory substantial to himself in the lives of his people on earth, in their deaths, and in their lives for ever. Glory shall be brought to God of a new and unusual kind. A light will be shed upon the character of God which, so far as we know, could not have come to us by any other means except by the death of the Only-begotten. Hallelujahs louder than before shall rise up before the throne. *Praises shall ascend unto God* such as creation never produced, “for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us unto God by thy blood, and we shall reign for ever and ever.”

Now, my brethren, do not get into a state of fright and fear about the Christian religion. Do not go to your chambers and sigh, “Everything is going to the bad, and we shall be all eaten up by the devil.” Nonsense! There is a stronger arm yet than that black arm of Satan. In God's eternal goodness resides a power and majesty that cannot be found in the infernal malevolence of the devil. I know which is the winning side,—I am sure of it. Though we may drearly imagine that things go amiss, and fancy that the vessel is ready to break up, and become a wreck, she will enter the harbour yet with all her cargo safe, and from every wave that tossed her and every wind that beat upon her she shall derive eternal advantage. Courage, brethren, we are not beaten, and we are not going to be beaten. We are succeeding all along the line. Shout victory, universal victory, from stem to stern of the good old ship. Not a foe has been able to live upon her deck. Give the enemy's black hull another broadside. When you think that the crew of the Black Prince are about to board us, grasp your pikes, and give them a warm reception. This good ship bears the red cross at her masthead, and shall never be taken, but shall win the victory as surely as God lives, and his Son lives who has risen from the dead.

IV. So I close with this last remark, **THE WHOLE OF THIS VICTORY RESULTS FROM CHRIST'S OWN WORK.**

Lend me your best attention for two or three minutes, because this is the pith and marrow of it all: "*Therefore* will I divide him a portion"—that is logic. Why this "*therefore*"? What is the argument? Christ shall divide with the strong because—. How does it run? "Because his doctrinal teaching is singularly in keeping with the progress of the age"? I have heard that observation, and smiled at it. "Because his gospel is preached with such remarkable eloquence and singular clearness"? Indeed, no. Why, then, will Christ win the victory? The answer is, "*Because he hath poured out his soul unto death.*" If God himself deigns to take upon himself our nature, and in that nature pours out his life like a libation even unto death,—if, I say, he thus pours out his life, it is impossible to conceive that he will be defeated. Blasphemy may imagine it, profanity may speak it, but truth abhors the idea that Jesus can be baffled. A dying God! It is an inaccurate expression, yet I know of no expression that is so accurate; God putting himself into human form, so as to be capable of suffering and death, cannot suffer and die in vain. He must, he shall, he will win that for which he died. He must reign, because he has poured out his soul unto death.

Listen again, here is the second reason, "*He was numbered with the transgressors*;" this is mentioned secondly, as if there was something even more in that than in the first. To die is wonderful condescension; but for the pure and holy One to deign to be numbered with the transgressors, and stand as if he had himself transgressed, though transgress he never did, nor could,—I say this is more wonderful. If Jesus did that, then he must win the victory. When I am dispirited, where do I find encouragement? Where the stars of Bethlehem burn, and where men make merry on their Christmas days? Nay, their mirth is weariness to a heavy heart. I will tell you where I go for comfort,—to Gethsemane, to Golgotha, to the garden, and to the tomb. Christ cannot have suffered there in vain; Christ cannot have been despised, slandered, and actually numbered with transgressors, and all for nothing. It cannot be; it cannot be. Death and hell, ye can defeat armies of men, but the Crucified treads you down. When our Champion of the pierced hand comes to the front the battle no longer wavers. We glory in his death, and in his making common cause with transgressors.

But this is not all; it is added, "*and he bare the sin of many,*" This denotes his actual and literal substitution,—his acting as the Sin-bearer. This is something more than being numbered with the transgressors; he actually takes the sin of the transgressors, and bears their burden upon his own shoulders by a wondrous system of substitution which is easier to be believed than to be explained. Because he did this he must conquer. He *must* conquer. Sin cannot be victorious if Jesus has carried it on his shoulders and hurled it into his sepulchre. If the darkest days were to come, and all the churches of Christ were to be extinguished, if there were left only one Christian, and he as good as dead by

reason of weakness, yet might he believe that God from the dead would raise up seed unto his Son, and fulfil his covenant, and keep his word. It must be so. The offering of Christ's soul for sin secures to him a seed for ever.

And lastly, there is this fourth reason given, "*He made intercession for the transgressors.*" I can conceive *you* praying, my dear friend, and God's not hearing you; but if the Man who was despised and rejected should say, "Rise, poor suppliant, rise, and I will take thy place;" and if the Blessed and Beloved of the Father whose eyes are as the eyes of the morning, and whose lips are as lilies dropping sweet-smelling myrrh, kneels down and prays, "My Father, by my blood, and wounds, and agony, save this sinner," why, it must be done! And if he says, "Father, give me those whom I have redeemed," it must be done. And if he pleads, "Father, keep them by thy word," it must be done. And if he prays, "Father, make them one, as we are," it must be done. And when he shall ask, "Father, give them power and victory," it must be done. And when he shall ask, "Father, let my servants all become champions, and send them forth, East, West, North, and South, against idolatry, and infidelity, and Popery, and clothe them with the Holy Ghost," why then it must be done! The power of Christ's intercession is irresistible. Queen Mary reckoned the prayers of John Knox to be worth many regiments; but what shall I say of the prayers of Jesus, the Son of God? They are with us to-day. While we are sitting here, and troubling our minds about the Lord's work, and saying, "What shall we do?" and, "What will come of it?" and all that, Jesus is pleading. Hush, till your hearts leave off beating,—till not a thought is heard! You may hear him saying, "Father, I will." Here is the power of the Church. The plea of Christ with authority before the throne is the majestic force upon which the Church depends. "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Wherefore pluck up courage. Jesus will yet win. You weak, faint-hearted ones, rejoice. The victory is sure, not because of anything you are, or of anything you can do, but for Jesus' sake. In the name of the Lord we set up our banners. Hallelujah!

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

JOHN XIX. 14—37.

Verse 14. *And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King!* *

They had accused him of being a king, or of pretending to be one. Pilate had scourged him, the soldiers had mocked him, and there he stood, a piteous spectacle of woe. What cruel sarcasm there was in the tones of the Governor when he said to the Jews, "Behold your King."

* See *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, No. 1,353, "Ecce Rex."