

The Jeer Of Sarcasm, And The Retort Of Piety

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BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

“Then David returned to bless his household. And Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David and said, How glorious was the king of Israel today, who uncovered himself today in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovers himself! And David said unto Michal, It was before the Lord, which chose me before your father and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the Lord, over Israel: therefore will I play before the Lord. And I will yet be more vile than thus and will be base in my own sight: and of the maidservants which you have spoken of, of them shall I be had in honor.” [2 Samuel 6:20-22](#).

You will remember the remarkable passage of Sacred History which I related to you this morning, [See Sermon #307] how David sought on one occasion to bring up the Ark of God from Kirjath-Jearim to Jerusalem; but neglecting God’s Law, they put the Ark upon a cart, instead of carrying it upon the shoulders of the Levites. And as one mistake very soon leads to another, when the oxen stumbled, Uzzah put forth his hand to steady the Ark and prevent its falling, and God smote him there for his error and he died. It was an awful moment. The pulse of that vast assembly beating high with solemn festivity, receives a sudden jerk. The trumpet which erstwhile sent forth its cheerful blast, with the sacred melody of cornet, of psaltery and of harp—all are hushed in one instant! Dullness and terror seize the minds of all. They separate to their homes; the Ark is carried into a private house adjoining the residence of that eminent servant of God, Obed-edom, and there it tarried for the space of three months. David at last recovered his spirits and a second time, having carefully read over God’s Law concerning the removal of the Ark, he went down to the house of Obed-edom to carry it away. The priests, this time, lift up the Ark upon their shoulders by means of the golden staves which passed through golden rings and so uphold the Ark. Finding that they were not smitten, but that they lived and were able to carry the Ark, David paused and offered seven bullocks and seven rams as a sacrifice to God. Then, putting off his royal robe, laying aside his gown, he dressed himself like a priest, put on a linen ephod in order that he might have ease in the exercise which he meant to take and so, in the midst of all the people, like the poorest and meanest of them, he went before the Ark, and playing with his harp, he danced before the Lord with all his might.

While he was so doing he passed by his own house, and Michal, his wife, looking out, thought it was a strange thing to see the king wearing so paltry a robe as a linen ephod! She had rather see him arrayed in some goodly Babylonian garment of fine linen; or she desired to see him clothed with his usual garments, and she despised him in her heart. When David

came in, the first words she uttered were a taunt—“How glorious was the king of Israel today!” Then she exaggerated what he did—her spleen found vent in sarcasm; she made it out that he had behaved worse than he could have done. He had simply divested himself of his robes and acted like the rest of the people in playing before God, but she accused him of immodesty. This was, of course, but a pitiful satire, he having in all things acted blamelessly, though humbly, like the rest of the people. His reply to her was with unusual tartness. Seldom did he seem to lose his temper for a moment, but in this case he half did so at any rate. His answer was, “It was before the Lord which chose me before your father, and before all his house.” Thus significantly and, as it were, ominously, did he remind her of her pedigree. And because she had slighted her husband when he had acted in God’s service according to the dictates of his heart, the Lord struck her with a curse—the greatest curse which an Eastern woman could possibly know—a curse, moreover, which wiped out the last expiring hope of her family pride—she went childless to the day of her death.

Well now, this picture is designed to teach us some wholesome lesson. I want you to look at it. You remember that old saying of ours—“We should expect some danger near, when we receive too much delight.” When I see David dancing, I am quite sure there will be a darkening of his heart before long. How happy he looked! His whole countenance radiant with joy! I think I hear him shouting loudest of that crowd, “Sing unto the Lord; sing Psalms unto Him. Sing unto Him. Sing unto Him. Call on His holy name!” And then awakening all the strings of his heart to ecstasy, he sings again, “Sing unto the Lord. Come sing unto Him! Sing Psalms unto His name!” Perhaps he was never in a more holy excitement; his spirits were all heated; he was in a flow of heavenly joy! Ah, David, there is a sting for you somewhere. Now there is a calm, but there is a tempest rising—

“More the treacherous calm I dread,

Than tempests rolling overhead.” This joy is on the threshold of a grief. He blesses the people. After he has ceased from his worship of God, he distributes to every man a flagon of wine, and a loaf of bread, and a good piece of meat, and they all eat and are merry before their God. And now David says, “I have blessed the people; I have made them all glad. I will go into my house and I will give them a blessing there.” But he is met on the threshold by his own wife, and she in the most sarcastic manner sneers at him—“How glorious was the king of Israel today!” Poor David is angry, heart-broken and sad. His joy is scattered to the winds for a while; though he puts her off with a rebuke, doubtless the irony went to his soul; the joy of that day was sorely marred—

“A Christian is seldom long at ease,

When one trouble’s gone, another does him seize.” So says old John Bunyan; and we may truly say, when we are at the top of a mountain, we are not far from the bottom of a valley! When we are riding on the top of one wave, it is not long before we shall be in the trough of another! Uphill and downhill is the way to Heaven! Checkered must be our path;

golden shades are interwoven with a black ground. We shall have joy, but we must have trial; we shall have transport, but we must have trouble in the flesh.

This evening I am just going to discourse a little, first, about David's trouble; secondly, the vindication of his conduct, and thirdly, his noble resolution. But my main purpose will be to stir you all up, if you are ever subject to a trial like his, to make his resolve and ground it upon his reasoning .

I. First, DAVID'S TROUBLE. His trouble was peculiar. It came from a quarter where he ought least to have expected it—"Oh," says old master Frampton, "Joab smote Abner under his fifth rib; there is many a man who has been smitten in his rib, too." Another says, "It is a strange strategy of Satan to break a man's head with his own bones, and yet many a man has encountered such rough usage. They who have been the chief joy of our hearts have often been the means of causing us the most grievous pain." Has it not been to many a Christian woman that her husband has been her greatest enemy in religion and many a Christian man has found the partner of his own bosom the hardest obstacle in the road to Heaven? I will just give you some pictures such as I know to have occurred and to be occurring every day—they will suit some of you now present. A man of God has been up to the Lord's House. There was a great work going on—he helped that work—but when he went home, as soon as he entered the door, Michal, Saul's daughter, was there and she says, "You are mad, you are! You are crazy; you don't know what to do with your money. You give it away to this and to that; and you leave your children beggars. You are a fool," she says, "you are deceived! You have gone mad with your religion." The man puts up with it and bares it patiently, though it enters into his very heart and he turns away sorely troubled. There is another—a woman this time. She went up to the house of her Master's Brothers and Sisters, and they made merry there and there was joy in that place! Her heart was carried away with elevated emotions, and on her road home there is an unspeakable bliss in her soul. As soon as she enters the door, the question is asked, "What brings you home so late?—why didn't you just stay out all night? You look very happy; I dare say you have been among those canting hypocrites, haven't you?" She says nothing—handles it patiently—but the dart has gone into her heart and she feels it sorely that when she serves her God with a good conscience, it is thrown in her teeth as if she had done wrong!

There is many a young man who dances before God with all his might when he has heard about the joyous things of the Covenant of Grace! He has forgotten all his cares, and all his troubles, and he goes back, and perhaps this time it is his own brother, who when they retire to rest, begins to ridicule him. "Where have you been today? How have you been spending your Sunday? I dare say you have been hearing So-and-So! What good can he do you? What has he got to tell you?" And there is a laugh. No names are contemptuous enough; you are called a "fool." It is supposed that no man in his senses will be a Christian; to think about eternal things is the highest mark of folly—for one short hour to turn one's thoughts

away from this poor earth and muse upon eternal things is the mark of madness! Now, we judge the madness on the other side. As we weigh the levities of this life, and the realities of the life to come in the scales of judgment, the madness is found in the extreme on the other hand with the despisers and not with ourselves! The children of this world never did understand the children of the next and they never will. "The light came into the world, and the darkness comprehended it not." How could it—how could darkness do anything to light except oppose it? It could not be expected that they who serve sin should love those who serve righteousness. Oil and water will not mix. Fire and water will never lie to sleep in the same cradle. And it cannot be expected that that man-child, the Church of God, shall have peace and be happy in the same house with that old giant, the Church of Satan—the synagogue of the devil! There must be war and lightning; there must be opposition and conflicts, while there are two natures in the world and two sorts of men!

This, then, was the trial David had to endure. And I want you to notice how peculiarly sharp this trial must have been. Natural affections are so interwoven with a thousand ligaments that they cannot be easily broken. They are delicate as the finest nerves and can never be injured without causing the most dolorous sensation. Surely David must remember that Michal was the wife of his youth, and there was gladness in his heart on the day he married her, and after all, she had been a good wife to him in many respects. Such reflections would make her alienation from him all the harder to bear. "Oh," he might have said, "she preserved my life once at the risk of her own, when I lay sick in bed and her father, Saul, had said, 'Bring him in the bed even as he is, that I may slay him.' Did she not let me down the wall in a basket and then lay an image in the bed and stuff the pillar with goat's hair and deceive her father that so I might escape? Ah, there was love in that woman's bosom and how long did she remain faithful while I was hunted like a partridge on the mountains?" It is true he might call to recollection that in his worst times she had forgotten him, but now she had come back to him and David sincerely loved her; for you remember that when Abner wanted to make peace with David, his stipulation was, "Except you bring Michal unto me, I will not see your face," so that he had a thorough affection for her and she had done him good. Yet the delight of his heart is become the foe of his spirit! She it is who now laughs at him for what he had done with a pure desire to serve God, and with a holy joy in doing it. Yes, that is the unkindest cut of all; that goes to the very quick of a man when the one he loves and the one who is worth all his love, notwithstanding throws in his teeth his zeal for Christ! Ah, Brothers and Sisters, it is a happy thing when we are enabled to rejoice together in our family relationships; when husband and wife help each other on the path to Heaven. There can be no happier position than that of the Christian man or woman who finds, in every holy wish he has for God, a helper! He finds that often she outstrips him—that when he would do something, she suggests something more—when he would serve his Master, there is a hint given that more yet might be done and no obstacle put in the way, but every assist-

ance rendered! Happy is that man and blessed is he! He has received a treasure from God, the like of which could not be bought for diamonds, and much fine gold could not be exchanged for it. That man is blessed of the Most High! He is Heaven's favorite and he may rejoice in the special favor of his God!

But, back to our example of David's trouble—"You," she said, "you who are so cautious in everything else, you seem to have lost your head when you think about your religion." So she will be sarcastic and shoot words like arrows at David in such a way that all of them may cause a wound. And now let me say here, that this is more frequently done by the husband against the wife and still more frequently by the two fellow apprentices or workmen against one another. It is a curious thing that when men are going to Hell, there is no one to stop them. "Make way, make way! Open the toll bars there; stand clear, do not let there be a dog in his path! Make way for him!" Is not that the cry of the world? But here comes a man who wants to go to Heaven—"Block his path up! Throw stones in the way! Block it up; make it as difficult as ever it can be!" Yes, and good people, too, good people not knowing what they are doing—they are employed by Satan to impede our path to Heaven! Poor souls, they do not know better. Satan enters into them and sets them upon us, to see if they cannot in some way or other mar our integrity because we love the whole Gospel and will not be content to have a part only. Ah, Brothers and Sisters, this is a sore trial, but know that your afflictions are not strange or unusual; the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren who are in the world.

II. I shall now turn away from the consideration of the trouble, to look at holy David as he meets and encounters it. We have had David's trial; now we will have DAVID'S JUSTIFICATION. What did David say in extenuation of what he had done? He said, "It was before the Lord, which chose me before your father, and before all his house, and appointed me ruler over the people, over Israel, therefore will I play before the Lord." David's justification of his acts was God's election of him! Do you not see the Doctrine of Election here? God had chosen him before her father Saul. "Now," says David, "inasmuch as by special love and Divine favor I was lifted up from the common people and made a king, I will stoop down to the common people once again, and I will praise my God as the people do, robed in their vestments, dancing as they dance, and playing on the harp even as the rest of the joyous crowd are doing." Gratitude was the key note of his worship. Let the worldling say of the Christian when he is acting true to his Master, "You are enthusiastic;" our reply is, "Yes, we are. We may be considered enthusiastic if you judge us by ordinary rules, but we are not to be judged so; we consider that we have been loved with special love; that God has been pleased to forgive us our sins, to accept us by His Sovereign Grace, and give us the privileges of His children—

'Loved by our God, for Him again
With love intense we burn!

Chosen of Him before time began,
We choose Him in return!

We do not expect ordinary men to do for God what the Christian would. No,” he says—
“Love I much, I’ve more forgiven!

I’m a miracle of Grace.”

If he gives more to the cause of God than other men think of giving, still it seems very little to him, for he says—

“Were the whole realm of nature mine,

That were a tribute far too small!

Love so amazing so Divine,

Demands my soul, my life, my all!”

Michal may say we have acted madly; she would act the same if she felt as we felt. Men of the world may say we act extravagantly, and go beyond the rule of prudence. They would go beyond the rule of prudence, too, if they had been partakers of like love and received like favor! The man who feels himself to have been chosen of God from before the foundation of the world—who has a solid conviction that his sins are all blotted out; that he is God’s own child; that he is accepted in the Beloved; that his Heaven is secure—I say there is nothing extravagant for that man to do! He will go and be a missionary to the heathen, cross the seas with his life in his hands, and live in the midst of a heathen population. Men say, “What for? He calls gain but a miserable pittance to sustain life, after giving up the most flowery prospects. He must be mad.” Mad no doubt you may account him, if you judge as Michal judged—but if you consider that God has chosen him and loved him with a special love, it is but reasonable, even less than might have been expected—that such a man is ready to sacrifice for Christ!

Take another example. Let me cull a picture from the memoir of one in years gone by. He preaches in a Church in Glasgow; he is just inducted into the Church, preferment lies open before him, he may speedily be made a Bishop if he likes. He seeks it not! Without miter or benefice he takes to Kennington Common and Moorfields—goes to every stump and hedge in the country—so that he is Rural Dean of all the commons everywhere and Canon Residentiary nowhere! He is pelted with rotten eggs; he finds one time that his forehead has been laid open in the midst of a sermon. Why does he do it? Men say he is fanatical. What did Whitefield need to do this for? What did John Wesley need to go all over the country for? Why, there is the Rev. Mr. So-and-So, with his 14 weeks vacation and he never preaches at all—good man he is! “Oh,” say the world, “and he makes a good thing of it, depend upon it.” That is a common saying, “He makes a good thing of it.” And when he died, he did make a good thing of it, for he silenced the tongue of slander, leaving nothing but an imperishable reputation behind! When Mr. Wesley was laboring abundantly, they said, “He is a rich man.” And they taxed him very heavily for his plate. He said, “You may

take my plate at any rate if you like, for all I have is two silver spoons. I have one in London and one in York, and by the Grace of God, I shall never have any more as long as there are poor people about." But the people said, "Depend upon it, they are making a good thing of it. Why cannot they be still as other people?" The only reason why they could not was just this—that God had chosen them before the rest of mankind! They felt that they were special objects of Divine favor and they knew their calling—it was not only to make them blessed, but to make them a blessing! What other men could not do, or would not do, they did—they could not rest before they did it. They could dance like David before the Ark, degrading the clerical character; they could bring down the fine dignity of the parson, to stand like a mountebank before the shows of Moorfields, or in the Spafields' riding-schools. They could come down on stage boards to preach the Gospel! They were not ashamed to be like David, shamelessly uncovering themselves like lewd fellows, in the eyes of the handmaidens of their servants—they thought all this disgrace was honor, and all this shame was glory, and they bore it all, for their justification was found in the fact that they believed God had chosen them! And therefore they chose to suffer for Christ's sake, rather than reign without Christ.

And now, Brothers and Sisters, I say this to you—if you think God has chosen you and yet do not feel that He has done great things for you, or holds any strong claims upon your gratitude, then shun the Cross! If you have never had much forgiven, get over the stile and go down the green land into Bye-Path Meadow. If is comfortable walking; go down there. If you do not owe much to the Lord Jesus Christ, shirk His service; go up in the corner there when the trumpet plays and tell Michal you are very sorry you have displeased her. Say, "I will never do the like again, trust me. I am sorry you do not like it; I hope you will now forgive me. But as I hold religion to be a thing to please everyone as well as myself, I will never dance before the Ark again." Do that, now, if you are under no very great obligation to the Father of spirits and have never tasted the distinguishing love of God to your souls. But oh, my dear Brothers and Sisters, there are some of you ready to start up from your seats, and say, "Well, I am not that person!" And assuredly, as your pastor, I can look on some of you who have had much forgiven. Not long ago you were up to the throat in drunkenness! You could blaspheme God! Not very long ago, perhaps, you carried on dishonesty and never entered the House of God. Some of you were frivolous, gay, careless, despisers of God, without hope, without Christ, strangers to the commonwealth of Israel! Well, and what brought you here now? Why, Sovereign Grace has done it! You would not have been here if you had been left to yourselves; if God had done no more for you than for other men, you would have been left to go on in the same course as before! Now the shutters are closed; that shop which used to be open all day Sunday is closed. Now the pipe and the beer, or dissipation's more refined, that used to occupy the whole of the Sunday afternoon, with five or six jolly companions, are put away! And there is the Bible, and there is prayer now, and now the oath is not heard

as before. I suppose you set this change of character down to Sovereign Grace and you are ready to sing with all of us—

“Grace led my roving feet
To tread the heavenly road!
And new supplies each hour I meet
While pressing on to God!”

Then the mercy you have received is a complete justification for anything that you may do in God’s service; any ecstasy that you may feel when you are worshipping Him, and any excess of liberality you may display when you are engaged in pressing on to the Kingdom of your Lord and Master. If the Church could once feel this, what an influence it would exert! Truly, I may say without the slightest flattery, I never met with any people on the face of the earth who seemed to have a more thorough belief in this fact, who lived more truly up to this Doctrine—that chosen of God and loved with special love, they should do extraordinary things—than those among whom I minister. I have often gone on my knees before God to thank Him for the wondrous things I have seen done by some of the Christians now present. In service they have gone beyond anything I could have asked; I should think that they would have considered me unreasonable if I had requested it! They have done it without request. At the risk of everything, they have served their Master and not only spent all that they could spare, but have even spared what they could ill afford to spare for the service of Jesus! They have given up social comfort and personal ease that they might be serving their Master. Such Brothers and Sisters doubtless meet their reward, and if any should say of them, “It is ridiculous. It is absurd—they are carried away with fanatical zeal,” I put this answer in their mouths, “Yes, I should be ridiculous; I should be absurd, if I owed no more to God than you; but He has loved me so that I cannot love Him enough, much less love Him too much. He has loved me at such a rate that I cannot do too much for Him; in fact I feel I cannot do half enough.” You being special characters you have given to God special service and God bless you for it; yes, He does bless you in it. Such was David’s justification.

III. Not less worthy of our notice was his RESOLUTION, of which I now come briefly to speak. What did he say? Did he draw back and play the coward? Did he bend his back to the lash of rebuke and give up the extravagances of his devotion? No. He said, and said frankly, “I will yet be more vile than thus and I will be base in my own sight,” and so forth. Now God grant your resolution may be the same! Whenever the world reproaches you, say, “Well, I thank you for that word; I will strive to deserve it better—if I have incurred your displeasure by my consistency, I will be more consistent and you shall be more displeased, if you will. If it is a vile thing to serve Christ, I will serve Him more than I have ever done and be viler, still! If it is disgraceful to be numbered with the poor, tried and afflicted people, I will be disgraced! No, the more disgraced I am, the more happy I shall be; I shall feel that disgrace is honor, that ignominy is glory, that shame and spitting from the lips of enemies

is but the same thing as praise and glory from the mouth of Christ.” Instead of yielding, go forward—show your enemies that you do not know how to go back—that you are not made of the soft metal of these modern times. It is said by an old writer that in the olden times men used to take care of their houses, but now the houses take care of the men. That they used to eat off oaken porringers and then they were oaken men. But now they are willow men—they can bend. They are earthenware men, which can be dashed to pieces. Scarcely in politics, in business, or in religion, have you got a man. You see a lot of things which are called men—who turn the way the wind blows. A number of preachers turn north, south, east and west, just according as the times shall dictate, and their circumstances, and the hope of gain shall drift them. I pray God to send a few men with what the Americans call, “grit,” in them—men who when they know a thing to be right, will not turn away, or turn aside, or stop; men who will persevere all the more because there are difficulties to meet or foes to encounter. Lord, bring us men who stand all the more true to their Master because they are opposed—who, the more they are thrust into the fire, the hotter they become! Men who, just like the bow, the further the string is drawn, the more powerfully will it send forth its arrows, and so the more they are trod upon, the more mighty will they become in the cause of Your Truth against error!

Resolve, Brothers and Sisters, when you are in any sort of persecution, to face it with a full countenance! Like a nettle is the persecutor, touch it gently and it will sting you, but grasp it and it hurts you not. Lay hold of those who oppose you, not with rough vengeance, but with the strong grip of quiet decision and you have won the day! Yield no principle, no, not the breadth of a hair of that principle. Stand up for every solitary grain of Truth of God—contend for it as for your life! Remember your forefathers—not merely your Christian forefathers, but those who are your progenitors in the faith as Baptists. Remember those who of old were cast out of the Christian Church with contempt because they would not bend to the errors of their times. Think of the snows of the Alps and call to mind the Waldenses and the Albigenses, your great forerunners! Think again, of the Lollard’s, the disciples of Wickliffe; think of your Brethren in Germany, who, not many centuries, no, but a century ago, were sewn up in sacks, had their hands chopped off and bled and died—a glorious list of martyrs! Your whole pedigree, from the beginning to the end is stained with blood! From the days of John the Baptist until now, the Kingdom of Heaven has been made to suffer the violence of men. And you? Will you yield? Shall these soft times, these gentle ages, take away your pristine valor—make you the coward sons of heroic fathers? No—if you are not called to the sufferings of a martyr—yet bear the spirit of a martyr! If you cannot burn as he did in the flesh, burn as he did in the spirit! If you have nothing to endure but the trial of cruel mockings, take it patiently, endure it joyfully; for happy are you, inasmuch as you are made partakers of the sufferings of your Divine Master! Never, I entreat of you, grow faint in your course, but bring more of the love of your hearts into the service of your

lives. Never yield one little bit of the Truth which God has committed to you! Take up the Cross and bear it! However weighty, however ignominious, carry it manfully! If the father is turned against the child, and the child against the father, weep over it and mourn it. If the husband is turned against the wife, and the wife against the husband, take care that it is not through your own fault. But if it is for Christ's sake, bear it joyfully! Bear it with transport and delight; you are highly honored! You cannot wear the ruby crown of martyrdom and fire—that blazing diadem—but you have got at least a stray jewel out of it! Thank God for it and never shrink; never blush to suffer for His name's sake. And give to every laughing Michal, the answer, "If this is vile, I purpose to be viler still; if this is shameful, I will be more shameful; if this excites your derision, you shall laugh louder than ever. Your opportunities for making fun of me shall never be wanting, till your disposition to ridicule shall be changed."

Oh, that is a glorious way of dealing with adversaries! Is a lion roaring at you? Look at him, and smile, and he will leave off roaring, by-and-by. When some big dog comes out to bark at you, keep quiet; it is marvelous how easily he is tamed. I was once staying in the north of Scotland where there was a ferocious dog chained up. He came out and I patted him and he jumped up with his front paws upon me. I caressed him and he seemed particularly fond of me. The master came out. "Come away, my dear Sir," he said, "that dog will tear you to pieces." But I did not know it, and when I passed by, he seemed to know I was not at all afraid of him, so he didn't meddle with me. In like manner, Christians, be not terrified at your adversaries! They may growl, or they may snarl, but do not shrink back with fear. It will make them bark the more! Take as little notice of them as possible. Ah, poor things, you can well say, "Father forgive them, they know not what they do." Just leave them all alone, and if they must know the reason, tell them what David told Michal—God has chosen you to show forth His praise. I dare say you may be insane enough in their eyes. A good friend of mine, when he was told he was mad, said, "Well, if I am mad, you ought to be very patient with me, for fear I should grow worse. If I am mad, now, perhaps I might grow wild. So be gentle with me." There is a good-humored way of rallying in return—only it must be without bitterness. Tell the people who take needless offense they must try to teach you better. If you have gone so far astray, they ought to lead you back again! By degrees they will have done with this nonsense, and begin to respect you. If there is one in a family who is looked up to most of all, it is usually that one which all the family abused at one time. He has borne the brunt of opposition; he has held his ground; and he has won the palm of consistency. Give way an inch and you will have to give way a mile! Yield a single yard and your enemy will drive you out. Stand right still—calmly, quietly with the determination that you can die—but you will not fly—that you could suffer anything, but you could not deny your Master—and your victory is won!

Never forget to give thanks to God if you are a child of pious parents who, so far from opposing you, have done all they could to help you. Be very thankful for it—as a privilege to be prized—because so many lack it. It is a happy thing for some of you flowers who grow in a conservatory where the air is so very warm and so very mild. But there are some who have to be outside in the frost—pray for these. When you think of the sheep in the fold, take care that you think of those out in the wilderness exposed to the snowstorm coming on; perhaps buried in a hollow and ready to expire. Think of them! You may suppose there is very little suffering for Christ now—I speak what I know—there is still a vast deal of suffering! I do not mean burning, I do not mean hanging, I do not mean persecution by law. It is a sort of slow martyrdom. I can tell you how it is effected. Everything a young man does is thrown in his teeth; things harmless and indifferent in themselves are twisted into accusation that he does wrong. If he speaks, his words are brought up against him. If he is silent it is worse. Whatever he does is misrepresented and from morning to night there is the taunt always ready; everything that can be said against his minister is generally used—because the world knows when they find fault with the minister, it stings the people, if they are a loving people, to the quick. And there are insinuations thrown out against the minister for his motives, and there are all kinds of things said about God’s people, too. One says the minister is a, “yes-no” preacher. Another says he is too high in Doctrine. One will accuse him of being sanctimonious. Another will charge him with laxness. Ah, Brothers and Sisters, you need not fear, you can bear witness for the Truth of God whatever is said—you must bear with the slanderer and forbear. If they throw anything in your teeth, still stand up for your Lord Jesus. I don’t ask you to stand up for me. You will do that, I know, but stand up for your Lord and Master. Don’t yield a single inch, and the day shall come when you shall have honor even in the eyes of those who in the world once laughed at you and put you to open shame.

Before closing, let me just say a word or two more generally to this whole congregation. There are three sorts of people upon which my text looks with a dark and appalling frown. First, there are those whose lips are always quick to curl; whose countenance is always prompt to sneer; whose tongues are always ready with a profane jest when the service of God crosses their path. I only say to you, beware, lest that come upon you—“As he loved cursing, so let it come upon him—as he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him.” Secondly, there are those who up to a certain point favor the worship of God and the services of the Church. But there comes a season of extraordinary service, a revival that demands uncommon energy—and almost before they are aware of it, the repugnance of their hearts finds some strong and unkindly expression. Now let me point you to Saul’s daughter and remind you how in one hour she proved her pedigree, identified herself with a family which the Lord had rejected, and sealed her own irrevocable doom! Then, thirdly, there is the professor of religion, who with David’s trial is awaiting David’s constancy. Have I sown the

seed of Gospel Truth broadcast among you so often and has none fallen in stony places? You may have heard the Word and later with joy received it. And you may have “endured awhile, though you have no root in yourselves.” But let me ask you, when tribulation or persecution arises because of the Word, are you offended? Does it prove a stumbling block to you? If so, your case is deplorable! Do you parry off the first breath of ridicule with flippant tongue? Did I hear that you said the other day, “Oh, I don’t profess anything . I only just go into that Chapel now and then to hear the preacher. He rather takes my fancy.” What? Young man, let your conscience witness that you are shrinking back unworthily! You may only dissemble a little at first, but if you are coward enough to dissemble, you may, before long, prove infidel enough to apostatize!

Brothers and Sisters in the Lord, “stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel, in nothing terrified by your adversaries.” “For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe in His name, but also to suffer for His sake.” Amen.