

OUR LORD'S TRIAL BEFORE THE SANHEDRIN NO. 1643

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BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And they all condemned Him to be guilty of death.”
Mark 14:64.*

THIS one sentence is selected because custom demands a text. But in reality we shall follow the entire narrative of our Lord's trial before the High Priests. We shall see how the Sanhedrin arrived at their unrighteous sentence and what they did afterwards, and so, in a sense, we shall be keeping to our text. We have just been reading three passages—John 23:12-24; Mark 14:53-65 and Luke 22:66-71. Please carry these in your minds while I rehearse the mournful story. The narrative of our Lord's grief, if it is carefully studied, is harrowing in the extreme. One cannot long think of it without tears. In fact, I have personally known what it is to be compelled to leave my meditations upon it from excess of emotion.

It is enough to make one's heart fully break to realize the sufferings of such an One, so lovely in Himself and so loving toward us. Yet this harrowing of the feelings is exceedingly useful and the after result of it is truly admirable. After mourning for Jesus we are raised above our mourning! There is no consolation under Heaven at all like it, for the sorrows of Christ seem to take the sting out of our own sorrows till they become harmless and endurable. A sympathetic contemplation of our Lord's grief so dwarfs our griefs that they are reckoned to be but light afflictions, too petty, too insignificant to be mentioned in the same day. We dare not write ourselves down in the list of the sorrowful at all when we have just seen the sharp pains of the Man of Sorrows. The wounds of Jesus distil a balm which heals all mortal ills.

Nor is this all, though that were much in a world of woe like this, but there is a matchless stimulus about the passion of the Lord. Though you have been almost crushed by the sight of your Lord's agonies, you have risen from them strong, resolute, fervent, consecrated. Nothing stirs our hearts' depths like His heart's anguish. Nothing is too hard for us to attempt or to endure for One who sacrificed Himself for us. To be reviled for His dear sake who suffered such shame for us becomes no great affliction—even reproach, itself, when borne for Him, becomes greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt! To suffer in body and in mind, even unto death, for Him, were rather a privilege than an exaction—such love so swells our hearts that we vehemently pant for some way of expressing our indebtedness. We are grieved to think that our best will be so little, but we are solemnly resolved to give nothing less than our best to Him who loved us and gave Himself for us.

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

This morning I would not only preach the doctrines that come out of the Cross, but the Cross, itself. I suppose that was one of the great differences between the first preaching of all and the preaching after the Reformation. After the Reformation we had clearly ringing out from all pulpits the Doctrine of Justification by Faith and other glorious Truths of God which I hope will be made more and more prominent. But the first fathers of the Church set forth the same Truths in a less theological fashion. If they dwell little upon Justification by Faith they were wonderfully full upon the blood and its cleansing power, the wounds and their healing efficacy, the death of Jesus and our eternal life.

We will go back to their style for a while and preach the facts about our Lord Jesus Christ rather than the doctrinal inferences from them. Oh, that the Holy Spirit would so bring the sorrows of our Lord near to each heart, that every one of us may know the fellowship of His sufferings and possess faith in His salvation and reverent love for Him!

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

He commenced his malicious exercise. The High Priest asked Jesus concerning His disciples. We cannot tell what were the questions, but I suppose they were something like these—"How is it that You have gathered about You a band of men? What did they do with You? What was Your ultimate intention to do by their means? Who were they? Were they not a set of fanatics, or men discontented and ready for sedition?" I do not know how the crafty Caiaphas put his questions, but the Savior gave no reply to this particular enquiry. What could He have said if He had attempted to answer? Ah, Brothers and Sisters, what good could He have said of His disciples? We may be sure He would say no ill. He might have said, "Concerning My disciples, one of them has betrayed Me. He has still the blood-money in his hands which you gave him as My price. Another of them, down in the hall there, before the cock crows will deny that he ever knew Me and add oaths and cursing to his denial. And as for the rest, they have all forsaken Me and fled."

Therefore our Lord said nothing concerning His disciples, for He will not become the accuser of His own, whom He came not to condemn, but to justify. The High Priest also asked Him concerning His doctrine. I suppose he said to Jesus, "What new teaching is this of Yours? Are we not sufficient to teach the people—the Scribes so learned in the Law, the Pharisees so attentive to ritual, the Sadducees so philosophical and speculative? Why need you intrude into this domain? I suppose You to be little more than a peasant's son—what is this strange teaching of Yours?" To this enquiry our Lord did answer and what a triumphant reply it was! Oh that we could always speak, when it is right to speak, as meekly and as wisely as He!

He said, "I spoke openly to the world; I always taught in the synagogue and in the Temple, where the Jews always resort and in secret I have said nothing. Why ask you Me? Ask them which heard Me what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I have said." Oh, Brothers and Sisters, no reply to slander can be compared with a blameless life! Jesus had lived in the full blaze of day, where all could see, and yet He was able to challenge accusation and say, "Ask them which heard Me." Happy is the man who has no need to defend himself because his works and words are solid testimonials to his uprightness and goodness! Our Savior answered His interrogator very gently, but yet most effectually, by His appeal to facts.

He stands before us the mirror of meekness and the paragon of perfection, with slander like a wounded snake writhing at His feet. What a delight to have this triumphant Pleader for our Advocate, to urge His own righteousness in our defense! None can impugn His absolute perfection and that perfection covers all His saints this day! Who shall accuse us, now that Jesus has undertaken to plead for us? This overwhelming answer, however, brought the Savior a blow from one of the officers of the court who stood by. Was not this a most shocking deed? Here was the first of a new order of assaults. Up to now we have not heard of strokes and blows—but now it is fulfilled—"They shall smite the Judge of Israel with a rod upon His cheek."

This was the first of a long series of assaults. I wonder who the man was that struck the Master? I could wish that the Master's reply to him may have influenced his heart to repentance. But if not, it is certain that he led the van in personal assaults upon our Lord's Person—his impious hand first struck Him. Surely if he died in impenitence, the memory of that blow must remain as a never-dying worm within him. Today he cries, "I was the first to smite Him! I struck Him on the mouth with the palm of my hand." The old writers upon the Passion give us various details of the injuries inflicted upon the Savior by that blow, but we attach no importance to such traditions and, therefore, will not repeat them, but simply say that there was general belief in the Church that this blow was a very grievous one and caused the Savior much pain.

Yet while He felt that blow and was, perhaps, half staggered by it, the Master did not lose His composure, or exhibit the least resentment. His reply was everything it ought to be. There is not a word too much. He does not say, "God shall smite you, you whited wall," as did the Apostle Paul. We will not censure the servant, but we will far more commend the Master. He meekly said, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why did you strike Me?" Enough, surely, if there remained any tenderness in the heart of the aggressor, to have made him turn his hand upon his own breast in penitential grief! One would not have wondered had he cried out, "Forgive me, O You divinely meek and gentle One, and let me, from now on, be Your disciple!"

Thus have we seen the first part of our Lord's sufferings in the house of the High Priest. And the lesson from it is just this—Let us be meek and lowly in heart as the Savior was, for herein lay His strength and dignity. You tell me I have said that before. Yes, Brothers and Sisters, and I shall have to say it several more times before you and I have learned the lesson well. It is hard to be meek when falsely accused. It is difficult to be meek when roughly interrogated. It is hard to be meek when a cunning adversary is on the catch, or when smarting under a cruel blow which was a disgrace to a court of justice.

You have heard of the patience of Job, but it pales before the patience of Jesus! Admire His forbearance, but do not stop at admiration—copy His example! Write under this headline and follow every stroke. O Spirit of God, even with Christ for an Example, we shall not learn meekness unless You teach us! And even with You for a Teacher, we shall not learn it unless we take His yoke upon us and learn of Him, for it is only at His feet; and under Your Divine anointing that we shall ever become meek and lowly of heart—and so find rest unto our souls. The preliminary examination is therefore over and it has ended in no success whatever for the High Priest. He has questioned Jesus and he has struck Him, but the ordeal brings nothing to content the adversary. The prisoner is supremely victorious, the assailant is baffled.

II. Now comes a second scene, THE SEARCH FOR WITNESSES AGAINST HIM. "The chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put Him to death; and found none." A strange court that meets with the design to find the prisoner guilty, resolved in some way or other to compass his death! They must proceed according to the forms of justice and so they summon witnesses, though all the while they violate the spirit of justice, for they ransack Jerusalem to find witnesses who will perjure themselves to accuse the Lord!

Every man of the council is writing down somebody's name who may be fetched in from the outside, for the people have come from all parts of the land to keep the Passover and surely some may be hunted up who, in one place or another, have heard Him use an objectionable mode of speech. They fetch in, therefore, everyone that they can find of that degraded class who will venture upon perjuring themselves if a bribe is forthcoming. They scour Jerusalem to bring forth witnesses against Jesus—but they had great difficulty in accomplishing their design because they were bound to examine the witnesses separately and they could not make them agree! Lies cannot be easily made to pair with each other, whereas truths are cut to the same pattern.

Moreover, many sorts of witnesses that they could readily find, they did not dare to bring forward. Witnesses were forthcoming who could testify that Jesus had spoken against the tradition of the elders, but in that, some who were in the council, namely, the Sadducees, were agreed with Him to a large extent! It would never do to bring forward a charge about which they would not be unanimous. His denunciations of the Pharisees could not be the charge, for these pleased the Sadducees! Neither could they allege His outcry against the Sadducees, for in this the Pharisees were agreed with Him! You remember how Paul, when brought before this Sanhedrin, took advantage of their division of opinion and cried, "I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question"—and in this manner created a dissension among the conclave, which, for a time worked in his favor.

Our Lord took higher and nobler ground and did not stoop to turn their folly to His own benefit. Yet, they being conscious of their internal feuds, cautiously avoided those points upon which they were not in harmony. They might have brought forward their old grievance that the Lord Jesus did not observe the Sabbath after their fashion, but then it would have come out more publicly that He had healed the sick on the Sabbath. It would not do to publish *that* fact, for who would think of putting a person to *death* for having opened the eyes of one born blind, or having restored a withered arm on the Sabbath? That kind of witness was, therefore, set aside.

But might they not have found some witnesses to swear that He had talked about a kingdom that He was setting up? Might not this readily have been made to mean sedition and rebellion? Yes, but then that was rather a charge to allege

against Him before Pilate's *civil* court, whereas theirs was an *ecclesiastical* tribunal. Moreover, there were Herodians in the council who were very restive under the Roman yoke and could not have had the face to condemn anyone for being a patriot. And besides, the people outside would have sympathized with Jesus all the more if they had supposed that He would lead them on a rebellion against Caesar. Therefore they could not urge that point.

They must have been greatly puzzled to know what to do! Especially when even on those points which they decided to bring forward the witnesses, they no sooner opened their mouths than they contradicted each other! At last they had it. There came two whose evidence was somewhat agreed and they asserted that on a certain occasion Jesus Christ had said, "I will destroy this Temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands." Here was blasphemy against the holy and beautiful House of the Lord! This would serve their turn. Now, the Savior *had* said something which was a little like the testimony of these false witnesses and a misunderstanding had made it more like it. But still their statement was a lie and none the less a lie because a shadow of truth had fallen upon it, for the worst kind of lie is that which is manufactured out of a truth—it does a great deal more mischief than if it were a falsehood from stem to stern.

The Savior had not said, "I will destroy this Temple." He said, "Destroy this Temple," that is to say, "You will destroy it and you may destroy it." He had not referred to the Jerusalem Temple at all—this spoke He concerning the Temple of His body which would be destroyed. Christ has never said, "Destroy this Temple which is made with hands, and I will build another without hands." In His language there is no allusion to hands at all. These refinements were of their own inventing and His language gave no color for them. He had not said, "I will build another." He had said, "I will raise it up," which is quite a different thing! He meant that His body, after being destroyed, would be raised up, again, on the third day. They had altered a word here and a word there, the mood of one verb and the form of another—and so they made out our Lord to say what He never thought of.

Yet even on that charge they did not agree! One said one thing upon it and another said another, so that even this paltry accusation could not be brought against the Savior. Their patched-up falsehood was made of such rotten stuff that the pieces would not hold together! They were ready to swear to *anything* that came into their perjured imaginations, but they could not be gotten to swear, any *two* of them, to the same thing! Meanwhile the Lord Himself stands silent. Like the sheep before her shearers, He is dumb and opens not His mouth. And I suppose the reason was partly that He might fulfill the prophecy, partly because the grandeur of His soul could not stoop to contend with liars, but most of all because His innocence needed no defense!

He that is in some measure guilty, is eager to apologize and to extenuate—his excuses usually suggest, to men of experience, the belief that there may be some ground for the accusation. He that is perfectly innocent is in no haste to answer his slanderers, for they soon answer one another! Our Lord did not desire to get into a vain jangle with them and so to lead them on to utter still more falsehoods. If speech can do no good then, indeed, silence is wise! When the only result would have been to provoke His enemies to add to their iniquities, it was magnanimous compassion which led the slandered Savior to hold His tongue.

We must not refrain from noticing the comfort which, in some degree, had been ministered to our Lord by the accusation which came most to the front. He stands there and He knows they are about to put Him to death, but they, themselves, remind Him that their power over Him has no longer lease than three days. And at the end of that short time He will be raised up again, no more to be at their disposal! His enemies reminded Him of the Resurrection! I say not that His memory was weak, or that He would possibly have forgotten it and His sorrows, but yet our Lord was human and modes of comfort which are valuable to us were also useful to Him. When the mind is tortured with malicious falsehoods and the whole man is tossed about by pains and griefs, it is good for us to be reminded of the consolations of God.

We read of some who were "tortured, not accepting deliverance," and it was the hope of Resurrection which sustained them! Our Lord knew that His soul would not be left in the abodes of the dead and neither should His flesh see corruption—and the false witnesses brought this vividly before His mind. Now, indeed, could our Redeemer say, "Destroy this Temple and in three days I will raise it up." These ravens have brought the Savior bread and meat! In these dead lions our glorious Samson has found honey! Sustained by the joy that was set before Him, He despises the shame! Strange that out of the mouths of those who sought His blood there should come the memory of one of His greatest glories!

Now, Brothers and Sisters, here, again, we learn the same lesson as before, namely, let us gain meekness and by it our power to hold our tongues. Eloquence is difficult to acquire, but silence is far more difficult to practice. A man may much sooner learn to speak well than learn not to speak at all. We are in such a hurry to vindicate our own cause that we damage it by rash speech! If we were calm, gentle, quiet, forbearing as the Savior was, our pathway to victory would be much easier. Observe, again, the armor with which Christ was clad—see the invulnerable shield of His holiness! His life was such that slander could not frame an accusation against Him which would last long enough to be repeated. So frail were the charges that, like bubbles, they vanished as soon as they saw the light! Our Lord's enemies were utterly baffled. They hurled their darts against Him, but, as if they fell upon a shield of blazing diamond, every arrow was broken and consumed!

Learn, also, this other lesson that we must *expect* to be misrepresented. We may reckon that our words will have other meanings to ungracious ears than those which we intended. We may expect that when we teach one thing which is true, they will make us out to have stated another which is false. But let us not be overwhelmed by this fiery trial as though it were some strange thing! Our Lord and Master has endured it and the servants must not escape it! Therefore endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ and be not afraid! Amid the din of these lies and perjuries, I hear the still small voice of a Truth of God most precious, for like as Jesus stood for us at the bar and they could not cause an accusation to abide upon Him, so when we shall stand in Him at the Last Great Day, washed in His blood and covered with His righteousness, we, too, shall be clear!

“Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?” If Satan should appear as the accuser of the Brethren, he will be met by the voice, “The Lord rebuke you, O Satan, even the Lord that has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you!” “Is not this a brand plucked out of the burning?” Yes, Beloved, we, too, shall be cleared of slander. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father! The glorious righteousness of Him who was falsely accused shall deliver the saints and all iniquity shall stop her mouth!

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

The High Priest would not have needed to draw something out of the accused One if there had been sufficient material against Him elsewhere. The trial had been a dead failure up to that point and he knew it! And he was red with rage. Now he attempts to bully the Prisoner that he may extract some declaration from Him which may save all further trouble of witnesses and end the matter. The question was forced home by a solemn adjuration and it effected its purpose, for the Lord Jesus *did* speak, though He knew that He was, thereby, furnishing a weapon against Himself. He felt under bond to answer the High Priest of His people when He used such adjuration, evil man as that High Priest was. And He could not draw back from a charge so solemn lest He should seem, by His silence, to deny the truth upon which the salvation of the world is made to hinge.

So when the High Priest asked Him, “Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?” How distinctly and outspoken was the Master's reply. Though He knew that His death would thus be compassed, He witnessed a good confession. He plainly said, “I am,” and then He added to that declaration, “You shall see the Son of Man”—so He brings out His humanity as well as His Deity—“sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of Heaven.” What a majestic faith! It is wonderful to think that He should be so calm as to confront His mockers and assert His Glory while He was in the depths of shame! He did as good as say, “You sit as My judges, but I shall soon sit as your Judge! I seem to you to be an insignificant peasant, but I am the Son of the Blessed! You think that you will crush Me, but you never will, for I shall speedily sit at the right hand of the power of God and come in the clouds of Heaven.”

He speaks boldly, as well became Him. I admire the meekness that could be silent. I admire the meekness that could speak gently, but I still wonder more at the meekness that could speak courageously and still be meek! Somehow or other, when we awaken ourselves to courage, we let in harshness in the same door, or if we shut out our anger, we are very apt to forget our firmness. Jesus never slays one virtue to make room for another. His Character is complete, full-

orbed, perfect, whichever way we look at it. And surely, Brothers and Sisters, this must have brought another sweet consolation to our divine Master's heart. While smarting under that cruel blow; while writhing under those filthy accusations; while enduring such contradiction of sinners against Himself, He must have felt satisfied from within in the consciousness of His Sonship and His power—and in the prospect of His Glory and triumph!

A well of water springs up within His soul as He foresees that He shall sit at the right hand of God and that He shall judge the quick and the dead and vindicate His redeemed. It is a wise thing to have these consolations always ready to hand. The enemy may not see their consolatory power, but we see it. To us, from beneath the altar, there issues forth a stream whose gentle flow supplies our spirits with a quiet gladness such as all earth's waters can never rival. Even now we also hear the Father say, "I am your shield and your exceeding great reward." Notice, before we pass away from this point, that, practically, the trial and the interrogation ended in our Lord's being condemned because of His avowal of His Deity. They said, "You have heard the blasphemy: what do you think? And they all condemned Him to be guilty of death."

I cannot make out at all those people who call themselves Unitarians and deny our Lord's Deity. Unitarians we also are, for we believe in one God, and only one God—but they tell us that this blessed Christ, our Master, is not God! And yet they admit that He was the most excellent of men, the most perfect of human beings! I cannot see it myself. He seems to me to be a blasphemer and nothing else, if He is not God—and the Jews evidently held that opinion and treated Him accordingly. If he had not said that God was His Father, they would not have been so enraged against Him. They put Him to death because of the assertion of His Deity—and the declaration that He would sit at the right hand of power and judge the world.

Today multitudes are willing to take Christ as a teacher, but they will not have Him as the Son of God. I do not doubt that the Christian religion might be received in many places if it were shorn of its Strength—if, in fact, its very soul and heart were torn out of it by setting forth Jesus as one of the Prophets and nothing more. Hear how our wise men talk of Him as one of a line of great reformers, such as Moses, Samuel, Elijah—and they often add Confucius and Mohammed. Do we give place to this? No, not for an instant! He is verily the Son of the Blessed. He is Divine or false! The accusation of blasphemy must lie against Him if He is not the Son of the Highest!

IV. We must now pass on and linger for a second or two over THE CONDEMNATION. They condemned Him out of His own mouth—but this, while it wore the semblance of justice, was really unjust. The Prisoner at the bar has affirmed that He is the Son of God. What next? May He not speak the truth? If it is the truth, He must not be *condemned*, but adored! Justice requires that an enquiry be made as to whether He *is* the Christ, the Son of the Blessed, or not. He has claimed to be the Messiah. Very well, all those in the court are expecting the Messiah—some of them expect Him to appear very speedily. May not this be the Sent One of the Lord?

Let an enquiry be made into His claims! What is His lineage? Where was He born? Have any Prophets attested Him? Has He worked miracles? Some such enquiries are due to any man whose life is at stake! You cannot justly condemn a man to die without examining into the truth of his defense, for it may turn out that his statements are correct. But, no, they will not hear the Man they hate! The mere claim condemns Him—it is blasphemy and He must die. He says He is the Son of God. Come, then, Caiaphas and council, call for witnesses for the defense! Enquire whether blind eyes have been opened and the dead raised up! Ask whether He has worked miracles such as no man ever worked in the midst of Israel throughout all time! Why not do this? O no, He must be taken from prison and from judgment—and none shall declare His generation. The less enquiry the more easy to condemn Him unjustly!

He has said He is the Christ and the Son of God—He is therefore guilty of death. Alas, how many there are who condemn Christ's doctrine without making due enquiries into it—condemn it on the most trivial grounds! They come to hear a sermon and perhaps find fault with the mannerism of the preacher, as if *that* were sufficient reason for denying the Truth of God which he preaches! Or else they say, "This is so strange—we cannot believe it." Why not? Are not strange things sometimes true and is not many a truth wondrously strange until you get familiar with it? These men will not condescend to hear Christ's proof of claim—they will make no enquiry! In this, like the Jewish priests, they practically cry, "Away with Him! Away with Him!"

He is condemned to die and the High Priest tears his clothes. I do not know whether he wore, at that time, the robes in which he ministered, but doubtless he wore some garb peculiar to his sacerdotal office—and this he tore. Oh, how

significant! The house of Aaron and the tribe of Levi had their garments torn and the Temple, within a few hours, tore its veil from the top to the bottom—for priests and temple were, alike, abolished! They little knew it, but in all they did there was a singular significance—those torn garments were an index of the fact that now the Aaronic priesthood was forever torn—and the great Melchisedec priesthood had come in, for the true Melchisedec, then and there, stood before them in all the majesty of His patience!

Observe that they were all agreed. There was no dissention—they had taken care, I have no doubt—not to let Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathaea know anything about this meeting of theirs. They held it in the night and they only rehearsed it in the early morning for the sake of keeping their old Rabbinical Law that they must try prisoners by daylight. They hurried up the trial and any that might have spoken against their bloodthirsty sentence were kept out of the way. The assembly was unanimous! Alas for the unanimity of ungodly hearts against Christ! It is amazing that there should be such quarrels among Christ's friends and such unity among His foes, when the point is to put Him to death! I never heard of quarrels among devils, nor did I ever read of sects or denominations in Hell—they are all one in their hatred of the Christ and of God!

But here are we split up into sections and parties and often at war with one another. O Lord of Love, forgive us! King of Concord, come and reign over us and bring us into a perfect unity around Yourself. The sentence was "death." I say nothing of it but this. Death was the sentence due to *me*, the sentence due to *you*—and they laid it upon our Substitute. "Worthy of death"—they said—all of them. All hands were held up. All voices said, "Yes, yes" to the verdict. Yet there was no fault in Him! Say rather, there was every excellence in Him! As I hear Jesus condemned to die, my soul falls at His feet and cries, "Blessed Lord, now have You taken my condemnation. There is, therefore, none for me. Now have You taken my cup of death to drink, and from now on it is dry to me. Glory be to Your blessed name, from now on and forever."

V. I am almost glad that my time is so far advanced, for I must set before you the fifth and most painful scene. No sooner have these evil men of the Sanhedrin pronounced Him guilty of death, than the servants, the guards and those that kept the High Priests' hall, eager to please their masters, and all touched with the same brute-like spirit which was in them, straightway began to abuse the Infinite Majesty of our Lord. Consider THE ABUSE. Let me read the words—"Some began to spit on Him." "Began to spit on Him!" Thus was contempt expressed more effectively than by words. Be astonished, O heavens, and be horribly afraid! His face is the Light of the universe! His Person is the Glory of Heaven—and they "began to spit on Him!"

'Alas, my God, that man should be so base! Some went further and they, "covered His face." It is an Eastern custom to cover the face of the condemned, as if they were not fit to see the light, nor fit to behold their fellow men. I know not whether, for this reason, or in pure mockery, they covered His face so that they could not see it, and He could not see them. How could they thus put out the sun and shut up bliss? Then when all was dark to Him, we read that they began to say, "Prophecy, Who is he that struck You?" Then another did the same and many were the cruel cuffs they laid about His blessed face. The mediaeval writers delighted to talk about the teeth that were broken, the bruises on the checks, the blood which flowed, the flesh that was bruised and blackened—but we dare not thus imagine.

Scripture has cast a veil and there let it abide. Yet it must have been an awful sight to see the Lord of Glory with His face stained by their accursed spit and bruised with their cruel fists. Here insult and cruelty were combined—ridicule of His prophetic claims and dishonor to His Divine Person. Nothing was thought bad enough. They invented all they could of shame and scorn—and He stood patient—though a single flash of His eyes would have consumed them in a moment! Brothers, Sisters, this is what *our sin* deserved! A shameful thing are you, O Sin! You deserve to be spit upon! This is what sin is constantly doing to Christ! Whenever you and I sin, we do, as it were, spit in His face. We also hide His eyes by trying to forget that He sees us and we also hit Him whenever we transgress and grieve His Spirit.

Talk not of cruel Jews. Let us think of *ourselves* and let us be humbled by the thought! This is what the ungodly world is always doing to our blessed Master. They also would hide His eyes which are the Light of the world. They also despise His Gospel and spit upon it as an utterly worn out and worthless thing. They also do despite to the members of His body through His poor afflicted saints who have to bear slander and abuse for His dear sake. And yet over all this I seem to see a light most blessed. Christ *must* be spit upon, for He has taken our sin. Christ *must* be tortured, for He is standing in our place. Who is to be the executioner of all this grief? Who shall take upon himself the office of putting

Christ to shame? Our redemption was being worked out this way—who shall be the judge to perform this miserable work?

Fling in the clusters richer than the grapes of Eshcol! Fling them in, but who shall tread them out and laboriously extract the wine, the generous wine which cheers God and man? The feet shall be the willing feet of Christ's own adversaries—they shall extort from Him that which shall redeem us and destroy all evil! I rejoice to see Satan outwitted and his malice made to be the means of his own overthrow! He thinks to destroy Christ and by that deed he destroys himself! He pulls down evil upon his own head and falls into the pit which he has dug. Thus shall all evil always work for the good of the Lord's people! Yes, their greatest good shall often come out of that which threatened their ruin and worked in them the utmost anguish. Three days must the Christ suffer and die and lie in the grave. But after that He must bruise the serpent's head and lead captivity captive! And that by the means of the very suffering and shame which He is now enduring! In the same manner shall it happen to His mystical body and Satan shall be bruised under *our* feet shortly.

I leave this subject, hoping that you will pursue it in your meditations, Here are three observations. First, how ready should we be to bear slander and ridicule for Jesus' sake. Do not get into a huff and think it a bad thing that people should mock you. Who are you, dear Brothers and Sisters? Who are you? What can you be if compared with Christ? If they spat upon Him, why should they not spit upon you? If they buffeted Him, why should they not buffet you? Shall your Master have all the rough of it? Shall He have all the bitter and you all the sweet? A pretty soldier, you, to demand better fare than your Captain!

How earnestly, next, ought we to honor our dear Lord. If men were so eager to put Him to shame, let us be 10 times more earnest to bring Him glory! Is there anything we can do, today, by which He may be honored? Let us set about it! Can we make any sacrifice? Can we perform any difficult task which would glorify Him? Let us not deliberate, but at once do it with all our might! Let us be inventive in modes of glorifying Him, even as His adversaries were ingenious in the methods of His shame.

Lastly, how surely and how sweetly may all who believe in Him come and rest their souls in His hands. Surely know that He who suffered this, since He was verily the Son of the Blessed, must have ability to save us! Such griefs must be a full atonement for our transgressions! Glory be to God, that spit on His face means a clear, bright face for me! Those false accusations on His Character mean no condemnation for me! That putting Him to death proves the certainty of our text last Sunday morning, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believes on Me has everlasting life."

Let us sweetly rest in Jesus and if ever our faith is agitated, let us get away to the hall of Caiaphas and see the Just standing for the unjust, the Faultless One bearing condemnation for sinners! Let us, in the High Priest's hall, judge and condemn every sin and every doubt—and come forth glorying that the Christ has conquered for us—and that we now wait with delight for His appearing! God bless you, Brothers and Sisters, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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