

Offended Because of Christ

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon emphasizes that true blessedness comes to those who are not offended by Christ's humble appearance, divine claims, free grace, and holy demands, but instead embrace Him fully.

Scripture: Matthew 11:6, John 14:17, John 3:16, Hebrews 9:22, Romans 3:25, John 1:14, Romans 9:15, Matthew 7:13-14

Topics: "Grace and Salvation", "Faith and Holiness"

Description

In this powerful sermon, C.H. Spurgeon explores the reasons why people are offended by Christ and how true blessedness comes from embracing Him fully despite challenges. He addresses objections to Christ's humility, divinity, free grace, and call to holiness, urging believers to stand firm in faith. Spurgeon's message encourages steadfastness and trust in the Savior who alone can save.

Transcript

"And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me." Matthew 11:6.

THE connection of the passage assists us in feeling its force. John had sent his disciples to ask the Master whether He was, indeed, the Messiah. The Savior, after giving abundant proof that He was the Sent One who had long been promised, then adds, "And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me." Had John begun to suspect a stumbling block in reference to the Nazarene? Did he question if so lowly a Person could, indeed, be the promised Christ? Had he expected Messiah to be a glorious prince with an earthly kingdom? Was he staggered to find himself in prison under Herod's power? Was John, himself in doubt and did the Savior, therefore, say, "Blessed is he who is not made to stumble concerning anything about Me"?

There have been many suggestions as to why John sent his disciples and, perhaps, we shall never know why. And we need not wish to know, seeing it did not please God to leave it on record. Some have said he sent the messengers for his own sake, for he was then under a fainting fit of unbelief. I hardly think so and yet, it is possible, for John was an Elijahlike man—a man of stern iron mold—and such men are apt to have occasional sinking of a terrible sort. With most of the children of God, their weakness is most seen where their strength lies. Elijah failed in courage though he was one of the most courageous of men! After he had slain the priests of Baal, he was afraid of a woman—afraid of Jezebel—and fled to hide himself. He said, "Let me die! I am no better than my fathers."

It seems to be a law of Nature that the strongest men should have the worst fits of weakness. Martin Luther's life is remarkable as illustrating this. He fainted as few men ever fainted—his despair, on some occasions, was almost equal to his confidence at other times! So it is possible that John, being of that class of men, after having boldly confronted Herod and declaring, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife," may have fainted in spirit when he found himself shut up in prison with no known and manifest token of Messiah's kingdom coming. Prison may have been a severe trial to the Baptist—we are all affected by the atmosphere in which we dwell.

Today has been a very heavy day to many a spirit because the atmosphere has been loaded with damp and smoke. I believe that there is more than a little truth in the rhyme—

"Hea viest the heart is In a heavy air, Every wind that rises Blows away despair."

Now John the Baptist, after living in the wilderness in the open air by the riverside, must have felt a strange difference when he was shut up in the close, oppressive dungeon of Herod—and the body may have helped to act upon the soul. And so the mind, after its extraordinary tension in the great service to which John was called, may have been dragged down by the half-stifled body till faith began to tremble. And so it may be that John, for his own satisfaction, found it necessary to ask, "Are You He that should come, or do we look for another?" If so, the Savior well said, "Blessed is he that is not offended because of Me," for, after all, notwithstanding his severe trial and deep depression, John was not really offended because of Christ. He was not actually scandalized because of the Lord whose forerunner he had been, but he held on to his testimony and sealed it with his death. Blessed is his memory as that of one who was not offended because of Christ!

Others, however, think that John sent these disciples not at all for his own sake, but for theirs. That strikes me as being the more probable. He wished to transfer them from himself to his Lord and he, therefore, bade them go and enquire for themselves. He felt that the answer which Jesus would be sure to give would be the best means of convincing them that they ought to follow the servant no longer, but cast in their lot with his Master. Our Lord, after showing that

He was, indeed, the Messiah, by working miracles in their presence and preaching the Gospel, then said to them, "And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me. You see Me here despised and rejected of men, notwithstanding that I work miracles. You see that I am called Beelzebub and treated with the utmost scorn. You shall be blessed if, believing Me to be the Christ of God, you follow Me without being staggered at anything you see, or annoyed at anything you are called to bear for My sake."

Whatever may have been John's motive, the text will, I trust, serve us for a useful purpose. May we be among the number of those who are blessed because we are not offended because of Christ. And let us now look at various characters that we may know to which class we belong. First, there are some who are so offended because of Christ that they never accept Him as their Savior at all. Secondly, there is another class of persons who, after professing to accept Him and apparently casting in their lot with Him, are, after all, scandalized. They find stumbling blocks and go back and forsake the way which they professed to tread. But then, thirdly, there are others who, by the Grace of God, take Christ as He is with all their hearts and are not offended because of Him. These are they that are blessed in very deed and shall enter into eternal blessedness in Heaven!

I. First, then, I shall try to speak and God help me to speak effectually, TO SOME WHO ARE SO OFFENDED BECAUSE OF CHRIST THAT THEY NEVER TRUST HIM AT ALL, OR ACCEPT HIM AS

THEIR SAVIOR. Let us tell the reasons why some men do not receive Christ and are offended because of Him. O that the Spirit of God may drive these unreasonable reasons from their souls and lead them to Jesus! Some in His own day were offended with Him because of the humbleness of His appearance. They said, "He is the son of a carpenter. His father and His mother we know and His brothers, are they not all with us? When Messiah comes, we know not from where He is, but as for this Man, we know from where He is."

He came among them as a mere peasant. He wore the ordinary raiment of the people. A garment without seam, woven from the top throughout, served His purpose. No soft raiment and gorgeous apparel decorated and distinguished Him. He did not affect any dignity. He came with no chariot and horses and pomp of a prince. He was meek and lowly. Even in the grandest day of His triumph, He rode upon a colt, the foal of an ass and, therefore, they said, "Is this the Son of David? Is this the King, the glorious One of whom Prophets spoke in ages long gone by?" And so they were scandalized and offended because of Him because there was a lack of that earthly glory and splendor for which they had looked.

Men feel the same today. There are some who would be Christians, but then Christianity must be a very respectable thing—and if the Truth of God is to be found among poor people, well, then, the Truth of God may be for them, but they will not go with them to hear a plain preacher and mix with common people! If the Truth of God walks the streets in silver slippers, then they do not mind acknowledging it and walking with it—but if it toils in rags through the back streets and by miry pathways—then they say, "I pray you have me excused." The religion of Jesus Christ never was, nor ever can be, the religion of this present evil world. He has chosen a people out of the world who believe it, but the world itself has always hated it. Did not our Lord tell us (John 14:17), concerning the Spirit of Truth, that the world cannot receive Him because it sees Him not, neither knows Him? Whenever you find a religion which unites itself with pomp, show and worldly power, if there is any truth in it at all, it has, at any rate, deteriorated from the standard of its purity and is not according to the mind of Christ.

But there are some who are so fond of everything that is fashionable—everything that is great and famous—that, if the Lord Jesus Christ is despised and rejected of men, they despise and reject Him, too. Ah, but I hope that I address some to whom the Lord has given a nobler spirit! I hope some men and women are here, tonight, who will never reject the Truth because it is unfashionable, or refuse to follow Christ because He is despised. No, but the noble spirit says, "Is it right? Then I will espouse it. Is it true? Then I will believe it in the name of God. Though it may mean poverty and shame, yet that is the side on which I will enlist." There is a nobler chivalry than all the chivalry of war—it is the chivalry of the heart that dares be nailed to the Cross with Christ sooner than turn aside to seek flowery pathways and follow the trail of the serpent. Many reject Christ because of the humbleness of His exterior. Who is on the Lord's side and will dare declare it before a scoffing world?

Again, there are others who reject Him because of the fewness of His followers. They like to go where many go and they say, "Well, but there are so few that go that way, I do not wish to be singular." Yet every honest heart must admit

that truth could never yet be decided by votes, for, as a rule, it has been in the minority. If we are to count heads we must go to the Pope, or the Sultan, or the Brahmin. For my part I think that a minority of one with Christ is stronger than a majority of fifty millions against Him, for Christ, the Son of God, in His own Person, sums up a total greater than all the multitudes that ever can be against Him! There are some who quite forget that our Lord has said, "Broad is the way that leads to destruction and many there are which

go in that way." And again, "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leads unto life, and few there are that find it."

The way that leads to eternal life, though it is the King's highway, is often as little frequented as a country lane. If you must be on the side of the majority, then you will certainly be on the side of deadly error unless there should come some happier times when the Lord has more greatly increased the number of His people than at the present! May you be spared to see such days, but those days have not come as yet—and if you will not go with the Lord until the multitudes are with Him—you will perish in your sin! Do not, I pray, stumble at Him because of this. Some are offended with Christ for quite another reason, namely, because of the grandeur of His claims. He claims to be God over all, blessed forever. He counted it not robbery to be equal with God, though He made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a Servant.

Now some spirits quibble greatly at this. They did so in His own day. They took up stones to stone Him because He made Himself equal with God. Proud, carnally wise minds cannot endure the doctrine that the Redeemer is co-equal and co-eternal with the Father, very God of very God! To my mind it is a reason why I accept Him! If He were not God, how could He save me? The weight of my sins would stagger all the angels and cherubim and seraphim if they should try to lift it! I must have a God to save me, or saved I can never be! And to me it is the greatest consolation possible that He who was the son of Mary is also the Son of God—that though human, even as we are human, sin excepted—He was altogether Divine. Oh do not—do not be offended with Him because of this, but rather rejoice in Immanuel, God With Us—and trust your soul into His hands!

A certain number of unconverted men are grievously offended with our Lord because of His Atonement. This which to us is the very center of all His excellence—that He saves us by standing in our place and bearing the wrath of God on our behalf—this is dreadfully kicked at by some. And I have heard these fastidious people finding fault with ministers for talking too much of the blood. They cannot endure the term, "the precious blood of Christ." We shall never listen to their fastidiousness, not for a single moment! And if we knew such to be present, we would go out of our way, on purpose, to shock them because we think that no respect should be shown to such a wicked taste! If the doctrine of the Atonement is kicked at, the answer of Christ's minister should be to preach the Atonement again and again and again in the plainest possible terms—and declare with even greater vigor and frequency the glorious substitutionary Sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ in the place of His people!

This is the very heart of the Gospel and should be preached in your hearing at least every Lord's Day! Leave that out? You have left out the life of the Gospel, for "the blood is the life thereof." Without shedding of blood there is no remission and, therefore, as remission is the great privilege of the Gospel, we have no salvation to declare and we have no remission to preach unless the blood—

"From His riven side which flowed" is continually set forth before you Oh, why should men quibble at that which is their salvation? If they ever are redeemed, it must be, "not with corruptible things as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ." If they ever are cleansed from all sin, it must be because of that Divine declaration, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." May we never stumble at Christ because of His Cross, for that were to reject our only hope! That were to quarrel with our life! That were to insist upon shutting the gates of mercy upon our own souls! That were to become enemies to our best Friend and to ourselves! God save us from such an infatuation as that!

We have found a good many, also, who are offended because of Christ for a different reason altogether, namely, because of the graciousness of the Gospel. It has too much free Grace in it for them. They would like a mingle-mangle of Grace and works. You will constantly hear it said that the doctrine of Justification by Faith is very dangerous and ought to be preached with great caution. Occasionally our secular papers, which, as you know, understand a great deal about religion, will instruct us as to what we should preach. The moral virtues ought to be our main theme and Justification by Faith should be so qualified as to be virtually denied. It is very wrong, they say, to sing that hymn—

"Nothing, either great or small, Nothing, Sinner, no! Jesus did it, did it all, Long, long ago."

And to tell the sinner that until he believes in Jesus Christ—

"Doing is a deadly thing: Doing ends in death,"

is regarded as a crime so manifest that it needs only to be mentioned and every reader of the paper will be dreadfully shocked! And yet the editor of the paper, or the writer, probably calls himself a Protestant, and Justification by Faith is the one doctrine upon which all Protestantism turns! Very likely the writer of the stinging article calls himself a churchman and yet even the doctrine of the Church of England about that matter is as plain as words could possibly make it.

Yes, and then they suppose us to be some modern sect of revivalists that have newly sprung up, although we are preaching that which is and always was the Gospel—the doctrine by which you may test whether a Church stands or falls—salvation, not by the works of the Law—but according to the Grace of God! Crowds of people cannot endure Grace! And as to the term, "free Grace," they say that it is a tautological expression! It may be so, but it is a very expressive term and because they do not like it, I always intend to use it! It will do them good to be made to know that we mean it and, therefore, use doubly strong language. It shall not only be, "gratis," which is free, but, "free gratis!" And we will, one of these days, put something else on to make it plainer still, if possible, and say, "free, gratis, for nothing!"

Salvation through eternal love, salvation through mercy alone—salvation, not of merit, salvation, not of the will of man, nor of blood, nor of the flesh—but salvation by the eternal purpose of Divine Sovereignty! Salvation by the will of God, who has said, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion"—this we will, by the Grace of God, always preach! Grace free as the air, spontaneous, undeserved, but given of God because He delights in mercy! Yes, they kick against this but, if they knew themselves, they would know that nothing else will ever suit the sinner but this!

He who has broken the Divine Law is never in a right state of heart till he feels salvation by himself to be hopeless! When he is shut up in the condemned cell and hears the sentence read against him condemning him to die and knows that nothing he can do, can, by any possible means, reverse that sentence—and then sees Jesus interposing in all the freeness of His love and saying, "Now you have nothing to pay. I frankly forgive you all"—then, I say, he realizes that Free Grace is the glory of the Gospel! Do not be offended with it, I pray you, or you will be offended with your own life!

Then, on the other hand, there is another class of persons who are offended with our blessed Lord and Master because of the holiness of His precepts. Alas that there should be traitors in the camp who can get on very well with Grace and Free Grace, but then, alas, they turn it into licentiousness and take liberty to sin because of the freeness of Divine Mercy. If you begin to declare that, "Without holiness no man shall

see the Lord." If you preach, as Jesus did, that he who forgives not his brother abides in death. If you tell them that the omission of these outward virtues will prove that the inward life is absent. If you declare that the axe is laid to the root of the trees and every tree that brings not forth good fruit is cut down and cast into the fire. If you go on to insist upon it that there must be the outward marks and evidences of saintship or else the pretense of experience is a mere lie—then, by-and-by, they are offended and exhibit a bitter spirit!

Oh that none of us may act so. The highest holiness is the delight of the true Believer. If he could be absolutely perfect, he would rejoice above measure! It will be his Heaven to be perfect—and the one thing he strives after here below is to get the mastery over all sin—not that he hopes to be saved by that, but because he is saved and, being saved, out of love to Jesus Christ he desires to adorn the doctrine of God His Savior in all things! May we never be offended by the purity and perfection of our Lord and His teaching! I might continue this long list of things by which men have been offended with Christ—some because the Gospel is so mysterious, they say, and others because it is so very simple that it is not deep enough for such great intellects as theirs. Men, if they want to be offended because of Christ, will be sure to find something or other to quarrel with. They stumble at this stumbling stone, "Whereunto also," says the Lord very solemnly, "they were appointed." They put this stumbling block in their own way and God appoints that they shall fall. They fall upon it now and are broken—and one of these days that stone will fall on them and grind them to powder!

My dear Hearers, I cannot stay longer on this subject, but if there are any of you that are offended because of Christ, I pray the Lord will make you feel your extreme folly and wickedness. Offended with the Redeemer? What madness! May you go and confess this insult to your Savior and accept Him at this very moment as your All in All!

II. Now I want to speak to professing Christians. THERE ARE SOME WHO JOIN THE CHURCH OF JESUS

CHRIST WHO, AFTER A TIME, ARE OFFENDED. Now, why is it that some who profess to know Him are offended because of Christ? Well, with some it is because the novelty wears off. Very earnest services were held and they were greatly affected. They thought that they repented and believed, so they joined the Church. Now the good men who held the services are gone and everything seems rather flat after such excitement. And so they have gone back again. They jumped into religion like a man into a bath—and they have jumped out again, put on their clothes—and gone back to the world and to what they were before!

Persons of this sort are very plentiful just now. If they were ever born again they were born with a fever upon them. And if you do not keep up the heat and let them live in an oven, they will die. We know that such hothouse plants will never pay for the fuel used in forcing them—we are grieved that it is so, but we have seen it so often that we do not wonder at it so much as we used to do! Hot weather breeds flies and warm showers bring out reptiles. There are not a few who professed to become Christians and who thought that they were always going to be happy. The evidence that they gave of being Christians was "that they felt so happy." I do not know that mere happiness is any evidence of being a Christian at all, for many are living far from God and yet account themselves very happy—while some of those who live near to God are groaning because they cannot get nearer still!

Yet a joyful feeling is regarded by many as conclusive evidence of salvation! And they add to this the notion that as soon as ever they believed in Jesus Christ the conflict was all over and there remained

nothing more to be done in the way of resisting sin and denying the lusts of the flesh. They dreamed that they had only to start on pilgrimage and get to the Celestial City in a very short period of time—they thought they only had to draw the sword from the scabbard and all Canaan was conquered in an hour! Very soon they find that it is not so. Their old corruptions are alive. The flesh begins to pull a different way from that which they profess to have chosen. The devil tempts them and they are so disappointed by their new discovery that they become offended with Christ altogether! A sudden victory would suit them—but to carry a cross before winning a crown is not to their mind.

Others of them have met an opposition they did not expect from their adversaries, while from their friends they have not met with all the respect that they think they ought to have. Their friends and acquaintances have laughed at them! Their workmates in the shop have jeered at them! They did not count on this—they never counted the cost—and so they are offended because of Christ. Is it not a strange thing that we who begin our religion at the Cross, if we begin aright, should ever be astonished that the Cross keeps close to us, or should be surprised that the world treats us with disdain? But so it is. Persecution arises and many are offended.

It is not that the world burns them to death or puts them in prison. No, no—they only make a joke or two—or they give them the cold shoulder and shut them out of society. But the poor creatures are so thin-skinned that they cannot endure even these light afflictions and so they are offended and miss the blessing. When they joined the Christian Church everybody was so glad to see them at first, as we always are when there is a new-born child. But many more new converts have come since then—and the former ones feel that they are not pampered so much as they were—and so they become annoyed and under one pretense or another slink away. Because Christ's people do not carry them about as wonders and cry, "Hosanna," over them all their days, they are ready to go back to the world and complain that they have been disappointed with religion and with Christians!

Oh, but this is evil! This is a wrong spirit which must by no means be displayed! Yet I fear it is to be seen in many places. This is an offense which ought never to arise. We have known some who have become offended because of Christ, or were in great danger of it because they began to find that religion entailed more self-denial than they had reckoned upon. The precepts of our blessed Master come very close home to their consciences and gall them somewhat. He told them that the yoke was easy and that the burden was light—and so it is to the meek and lowly in heart—but they are not changed in heart and, therefore, they find the burden heavy and the yoke galling. I do not wonder that it is so, for that which is the delight of the renewed heart is bondage to the unregenerate spirit, and self-denials, which really are no

denials at all to the man who is born again, are an iron bondage to those who still remain in their unregenerate state—they get offended and they go away from the Master whom they professed to serve.

I have known some good souls almost offended at the Master through the hard speeches of those who ought to have encouraged them. I was speaking not long ago with a young lady who had, for some, time been devoting herself very earnestly to the cause of Christ. I do not know one who had done more than she had done in her own sphere, but she was in great distress because the person with whom she had worked for many months had spoken very bitterly of her. Though she had been his best helper, he seemed to regard her as his worst enemy! And as she told me what he had said, I was very sorry, but the worst part about it was the temptation which the devil put in her way. The Evil One whispered, "Never take a prominent place again! Give up your work. You are said to be eager to help—now be quiet and do nothing."

Now, it will happen to all of us, more or less, that if we try to be zealous in the Master's cause we shall be misunderstood. Wet blanket factories are pretty numerous and some benevolent Brother is sure to bring one of these articles for our use. He thinks that it will do us good, but it is mischievous to our spirits. Blessed is he who cannot be offended in that way. It may encourage you to know that, generally, those whom God largely blesses have to go through a great fight at first, from their own brothers and sisters. Look at David. He was to bring home giant Goliath's head, but those elder brothers of his all said, "Because of the pride and the naughtiness of your heart, you are come to see the battle."

They recommended him to stay at home with his sheep, even as they told us to keep clear of a pulpit—but God did not mean that he should remain hidden. If the Lord means to bless you, some of His very dear people will be for putting you back among the sheep—but do not be scandalized at Christ on that account! Stand firm as you have done. Press forward! Be not disgusted or discouraged, but, on the contrary, remember that opposition is very often the sign of coming success. Press forward, for, "Blessed is he that is not offended because of Me." Moreover, many young Christians are greatly staggered by the ill conduct of professors. I think that there is no worse trial to a babe in Christ than to see elderly Christians walking inconsistently and living in a lukewarm state—and even speaking as if they were antagonistic to all earnest attempts to spread the kingdom of Christ. If you are one of God's children you will not die at their hands any more than Joseph at the hands of his brothers! If the Lord has, indeed, quickened you with spiritual life, you will press on and work for the Master and not be ashamed.

It has frequently occurred to me to deplore that some professors fall back through trials of Providence. We occasionally miss members of the Church because they were pretty well-to-do when they joined with us, but things have gone badly with them and they feel as if they could not show themselves. They will even say that they have not any clothes fit to worship in. I have often told you that any clothes are fit to worship in as long as you have paid for them! Clothing, be it fine or threadbare, is nothing to me! As far as I am concerned, I really do not know what people wear. It never strikes my eye—I am too busy looking at your faces, when I can see you—to even notice what you may happen to wear. Come, oh come, to the House of God, my suffering Brothers and Sisters! Never let the devil prevail upon you to stay away!

If your shoe leaks. If there is a hole in the elbow of your coat. So what? The Lord does not look at that, nor do we! You come along. We shall be glad to see you, the most of us, and if there are some who will not be glad, they are nobodies—do not take any notice of them! But never stay away from the House of God because of your shabbiness. What can it matter? When you begin to get low in circumstances do not be proud and say, "I can't dress as I once did, or make such a dash as I did and so I shall not go." Why, you are still the same person—a man is a man notwithstanding the little or the much which he possesses—and when earthly comforts are going, you ought to seek heavenly comforts all the more! And the poorer you get in substance, the richer you ought to seek to be in Divine Grace! "The poor have the Gospel preached unto them."

But I know that this is a temptation. I have heard it said that in Jamaica in the Negro churches, when wages are low, attendance at the means of Grace begins to decline. I know that it is so, but so it ought not to be. Do not be offended with Christ! If He chooses to let you be poor, be satisfied to be poor! Yes, if you get to be as low as Job who sat on a dunghill, scraping himself with a piece of an old pot, yet learn to say with the heroic Patriarch, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." If He is not ashamed of me, I will not be ashamed of Him, or ashamed to follow, even in rags, the

standard of Him who hung upon the cross and triumphed there for me! "They parted His garments among them, and for His vesture did they cast lots." I cannot be worse clad than He! Be not ashamed of Him, then.

III. The last head is that THERE ARE SOME WHO ARE NOT OFFENDED BECAUSE OF CHRIST AND THEY

ARE DECLARED TO BE BLESSED. They are so because if God had not blessed them they would not be found clinging to their Lord, but would have gone back like others. Apart from anything else, it is a blessed thing to have Grace enough given you to hold fast to Christ under all circumstances. If you were not one of those whom He has chosen from before the foundations of the world. If you were not one of those whom Christ specially redeemed with His blood. If you were not one of those in whom the Holy Spirit has placed a new heart and a right spirit you would go back. But if you hold out to the end, you have in that the evidence that the Lord has loved you with an everlasting love!

Oh, you that are on and off with Jesus, what a poor hope yours must be! You that can run with the hare and hold with the hounds. You that try to serve God and Mammon—you have no marks of being God's children! But those of you who put your foot down for Christ and cannot be moved—you who have said unto your souls, "By His Grace I will not depart from following the Lord"—you have, in that very fact, the evidence of being blessed! And then you shall find a blessedness growing out of your fidelity. I believe that persecuted ones have more blessedness than any other saints. There were never such sweet revelations of the love of Christ in Scotland as when the Covenanters met in the mosses and on the hillside.

No sermons ever seemed to be so sweet as those which were preached when Claverhouse's dragoons were out and the minister read his text by the lightning's flash! The saints never sang so sweetly as when they let loose those wild bird notes among the heather. The flock of slaughter—the people of God that were hunted down by the foe—these were they who saw the Lord! I guarantee you that in Lambeth Palace there were happier hearts in the Lollards' dungeon than there were in the Archbishop's Hall! Down there where men have lain to rot, as did Bunyan in Bedford Jail, there have been more dreams of Heaven and more visions of celestial things than in the courts of princes! The Lord Jesus loves to reveal Himself to those of His saints who dare take the bleak side of the hill with Him. If you are willing to follow Him when the wind blows in your teeth and the snow flakes come thickly till you are almost blinded, and if you can say—

"Through floods and flames, if Jesus lead, I'll follow where He goes,"

you shall have such unveilings of His love to your soul as shall make you forget the sneers of men and the sufferings of the flesh! God shall make you triumphant in all places!

You know this already by experience, do you not? You that are His people must know that whenever you have had to suffer for Christ it has been a blessed thing for you. Whenever anybody jeered at you and you have felt it for the time, yet, if you have been able to bear it well, it has brought many a sweet reflection afterwards. Somebody pushed good Mr. Kilpin into the gutter and slapped him at the same time and said, "Take that, John Bunyan!" Whereupon the good man took off his hat and said, "I would take 50 times as much as that to have the honor to be called John Bunyan." Learn to look upon insults for Christ in the same light and when they call you by an ill name reply, "I could bear a thousand times as much as that for the pleasure of being associated with Christ in the world's derision."

But what blessedness awaits you if you are not offended because of Jesus! You are blessed while you are waiting for Him, but your best reward is to come! In that hereafter, when the morning breaks on the everlasting shore, how will they be ashamed and disgusted with themselves who sought their own honor and esteem and denied their Lord and Master! Where will Demas be then, who chose the present world and forsook his Lord? Where will that son of perdition be who chose the 30 pieces of silver and sold the Prince of Life? What shame will seize upon the coward, the fearful, the unbelieving, the people who checked conscience and stifled conviction because a fool's laugh was too much for them! Then they will have to bear the Savior's scorn and the everlasting contempt of all holy beings.

But the men who stood meekly forward to confess their Lord—who were willing to be set in the pillory of scorn for Christ, ready to be spit upon for Him, ready to be called ill names for His sake, ready to lose their character, their substance, their liberty and their lives for Him—oh how calmly will they await the Great Assize when loyalty shall receive honor from the great King! How bright will be their faces when He that sits on the Throne will say, "They confessed Me before men, and now will I confess them before My Father which is in Heaven. These are Mine, My Father," He will say, "they are Mine. They clung unto Me and now I acknowledge them as My jewels."

These are they that followed the Lamb where ever He went. They read the Word and what they found there they believed! They saw their Lord's will in the Scriptures and they labored to do it. They were faithful to conscience and to conviction—and the Spirit dwelt in them and guided their lives. They shall be the Redeemer's crown and the beloved of His Father. They were the poor of this world—they were considered to be mere idiots by some—and were thought to have gone mad by others. But they are the Lord's own elect! Jesus will say, "They were with Me in My tribulation. They were with Me in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation and now they are Mine, and they shall be with Me on My Throne. Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundations of the world."

Oh, you are happy, you people of God who lose good situations because you cannot do dishonest things! You who cannot break the Sabbath and therefore shut the shop and lose a large part of your incomes! You who, for Christ's sake, dare to be singular and are not ashamed to be called "puritanical" and to be pointed out as hypocrites! You who bravely refuse to indulge in the intoxicating cup and utterly turn aside from evil companions! You who will not be found in the haunts of vice which men call pleasure! You, who, though you may think a thing to be lawful will, nevertheless, deny yourselves because it is not expedient and will avoid the appearance of evil! You who try to put your feet down in the footprints of Christ and follow Him in all things—you are and shall be truly blessed!! With all your faults and imperfections which you mourn over, your Lord is not ashamed of you and He will confess you at the last!

Oh, may you all be true adherents of Jesus! I set up a standard tonight and will try to act as recruiting officer. Who will be enlisted into the army of Christ tonight? Is any young man ready to say, "I will"? Yes, but count the cost! Are you prepared to be ridiculed? Are you prepared to suffer? Are you willing to put up with the hatred of your own family sooner than forsake God and His Christ and the Truth? We will not have you if you won't! Christ will not acknowledge you if you won't! It must be a thorough coming to Him. "Come you out from among them and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing. And I will receive you and will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters."

Who is on the Lord's side?—Who? Let your hearts answer, for there shall come a day when that same word shall thunder over all the earth, "Who is on the Lord's side? Who?" Many then will rue the day in which they were ashamed to confess a persecuted Christ! May we be on His side tonight—first trusting Him, relying upon Him, alone, for salvation—and then surrendering ourselves to Him to be His forever. Amen.

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