

The Mark of Deliverance

by Edward Payson

To be suitably affected with the sins of our fellow creatures, we must be naturally disposed to be affected by their sins, mourn for their sins rather than the punishments they bring, and be willing to exert ourselves to reform them.

Scripture: Proverbs 24:11, Ezekiel 9:4, Matthew 25:40, 1 Corinthians 10:11, 2 Corinthians 7:10, James 4:17, 1 Peter 4:17, 1 John 3:17, Revelation 7:3, Revelation 14:1

Topics: "Repentance", "Divine Deliverance"

Description

Edward Payson preaches about the importance of being suitably affected by the sins of our fellow creatures, drawing from Ezekiel's vision of God setting a mark of deliverance on those who mourn for abominations. He emphasizes the need to mourn for sin more than its consequences, to actively work towards reformation by example, exertion, and prayer, and to be deeply affected by personal sins. Payson highlights that God sets a mark of deliverance on those who are genuinely affected by sin, showcasing justice, holiness, and faithfulness. He encourages the congregation to examine their hearts and actions to see if they bear the mark of deliverance.

Transcript

And the Lord said unto him, go through the midst of the city, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and cry for all the abominations, that be done in the midst thereof. And to the others he said in my hearing, go ye after him through the city, and smite; let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity; slay utterly old and young; but come not near any man upon whom is the mark.--EZEKIEL ix. 4, 5, 6.

IN the preceding chapter we have an account of a discovery, made by Jehovah to the prophet Ezekiel, of the many idolatrous, impious and iniquitous practices, which secretly prevailed among the Jews. Being brought in vision to Jerusalem, the prophet was successively conducted to different places in the city, and introduced into the most secret recesses of its inhabitants, that he might see the hidden wickedness, of which they were guilty, and be convinced, by his own observation, that they were ripe for ruin. After giving him this view of the sins of his people, God proceeded to threaten them with the most tremendous judgments, and appealed to the prophet, whether these judgments were not richly deserved. Hast thou seen all this, says he, O son of man? Is it a light thing that the house of Judah commit the abominations that are committed here? for they say the Lord seeth not; the Lord hath forsaken the earth; therefore will I also deal in fury: mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity, and though they cry with a loud voice, I will not hear. The fulfillment of these threatenings was immediately witnessed by the prophet in vision, but

in their execution mercy was mingled with justice. He cried in mine ears, says the prophet, Cause them that have charge over the city to draw near. And behold six men came from the way of the higher gate, every man with a slaughter weapon in his hand; and one man among them was clothed with linen, with a writer's inkhorn by his side. And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and cry for all the abominations, that are done in the midst thereof. And to the others he said, Go ye after him through the city and smite. Let not your eye spare, neither have pity. Slay utterly young and old, but come not near any man, upon whom is the mark.

My hearers, St. Paul informs us, that all the calamities, which were experienced by the Jews, happened unto them for ensamples to others, and that they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. It therefore becomes us to study their history with the greatest attention, and to compare their character and conduct with our own; that we may derive from it that instruction, which it is intended to afford; and especially that we may learn what we have reason to expect at the hands of God. In this point of view, perhaps no part of their history is more interesting or instructive, than that of which a representation is given in our text. We there see that when God commissioned the messengers of vengeance, who had charge over Jerusalem, to exterminate its guilty inhabitants, he took care to set a mark of deliverance upon all who sighed and cried for the abominations that were perpetrated among them; and since God's rules of government and methods of proceeding with mankind are in all ages essentially the same, we may, from this particular instance, fairly deduce the following general proposition;--When God visits the world, or any part of it, with his desolating judgments, he usually sets a mark of deliverance on such as are suitably affected with the sins of their fellow creatures. To illustrate and establish this proposition, is my present design; and with this view I shall endeavor to show what is implied in being suitably affected with the sins of our fellow creatures; and that on such as are thus affected, God will set a mark of deliverance, when others are destroyed by his righteous judgments.

I. What is implied in being suitably affected with the sins of our fellow creatures?

That we are naturally disposed to be little or not at all affected with the sins of others, unless they tend, either directly or indirectly, to injure ourselves, it is almost needless to remark. If our fellow creatures infringe none of our real or supposed rights, and abstain from such gross vices as evidently disturb the peace of society, we usually feel little concern respecting their sins against God: but can see them following the broad road to destruction with great coolness and indifference, and without making any exertion, or feeling much desire to turn their feet into a safer path.

Our nearest neighbor may be an atheist, a deist, a profane swearer, a Sabbath breaker, a neglecter of God and religion, an intemperate man, or any other character equally remote from that of a Christian, without exciting in our breasts any concern for the dishonor which he casts upon God, any uneasiness respecting his awfully dangerous situation, or any anxiety to convince him of the error of his ways. Nay more, we are naturally but too much disposed to contemplate the sins of our fellow creatures with pleasure, either because the contrast between their vices and our own virtues gratifies our pride, or because their wicked practices seem to justify ours, and encourage us to hope for impunity in sin.

In short, the language of our feelings and of our actions naturally is, what have I to do with my neighbor's conduct or belief? or what is it to me how he lives? Let him, if he pleases, disobey and dishonor God, and ruin his own soul, provided he will not injure me. It is no concern of mine: he must look to himself; am I my brother's keeper? Nor is it at all surprising that this should be our language, for we naturally think as little of our own souls, or of our own sins, as of those of our neighbors; and it can scarcely be expected, that he

who takes no care to save himself, should feel much concern for the salvation of others.

This being the case, it is evident that a very great and radical change must take place in our views and feelings, before we can be suitably affected with the sins of our fellow creatures, if the conduct of the persons mentioned in our text is the standard of what is suitable. They are represented as sighing, and even crying, on account of the abominations which were practiced by their fellow citizens; expressions, which plainly intimate that they were not only affected, but very deeply affected with a consideration of the vices which prevailed around them.

Though they lived in an evil day, a day of peculiar calamity and distress, when the judgments of God were falling heavily upon their nation; yet they not only found time to mourn for the prevailing sins of the age, but they appear to have felt more poignant grief for those sins, than for the desolating judgments which they occasioned. They sighed and cried, not so much because their rulers were incorrigibly wicked and infatuated, their country laid waste, their capital destroyed, and many of their fellow citizens carried into captivity, as because of the abominations which were committed by the remnant that had escaped.

An imitation of their example in this respect, is the first proof we shall mention of being rightly affected with the sins of others; for we may be affected, and even deeply affected, with the sins of our fellow creatures, as well as with our own, without being rightly affected. We may mourn for them merely on account of the punishments which they bring upon ourselves, or upon the community of which we are members. But if we fear sin more than the punishment of sin; if we mourn rather for the iniquities, than for the calamities which we witness; if we are more grieved to see God dishonored, his Son neglected, and immortal souls ruined, than we are to see our commerce interrupted, our fellow citizens divided, and our country invaded, it is one proof that we resemble the characters mentioned in our text. In the sight of God however, no feelings or affections are genuine, but such as produce corresponding practical effects. He will not consider our grief for the prevalence of any evil as sincere, unless it excites habitual and earnest endeavors for its suppression. We therefore observe,

2. That being suitably affected with the sins of our fellow creatures implies the diligent exertion, by every means in our power, to reform them. It is, perhaps, in this respect, that we are most liable to fail. There are many, who will readily allow that vice and infidelity prevail among us, in a most alarming manner; that the Sabbath is most shamefully dishonored; that God's name is impiously profaned in our streets; that multitudes of our fellow creatures are evidently in the way to eternal ruin; and that in consequence of our national sins, we have every reason to expect national judgments still heavier than those which we have already experienced. That it should be so, they will also confess is a very melancholy thing, and for a moment they will, perhaps, appear to be deeply affected by it; but still they use no means and make no exertions to counteract, or repress the evils, which they profess to lament. But as it is not sufficient to confess and lament our own sins, without renouncing them, so neither is it sufficient to mourn for the sins of others, without attempting their reformation. This attempt must be made,

First, by our example. That men are imitative beings; that the force of example is almost inconceivably great, and that there is, perhaps, no man so poor or insignificant, as not to have some friend or dependant who may be influenced by his example, are truths so obvious, that it is scarcely necessary to mention them. This being the case, every person is most sacredly bound, in times of prevailing degeneracy, to act an open, firm, and decided part in favor of virtue and religion; and resolutely endeavor, by his example to discountenance vice and impiety in every shape. In an especial manner should he avoid the very appearance of those evils, which are most prevalent around him, and practice with double care and

diligence those virtues, which are most generally neglected and despised. In vain will he pretend to mourn over the sins of the times, who by his example encourages, or at least, does not discountenance them.

In the second place, if we would prove the justice of our claim to the character described in our text, we must attempt to suppress vice and impiety by our exertions. We must endeavor ourselves, and exert all our influence to induce others to banish from among us intemperance, profanity, violations of the Sabbath, neglect of religious institutions, and other prevailing sins of the age and country in which we live. Thanks to the kind providence of him, by whom kings reign and princes decree justice, we enjoy peculiar advantages for attempting this arduous, but glorious work with success.

In our highly favored land, the interests of virtue and religion are fenced around by wholesome laws; and in consequence of the nature of our government, the care of seeing that these laws are faithfully executed, is in a greater or less degree committed to almost every individual among us. But it becomes us to remember that where much is given, much will be required. It has been justly remarked, that when God confers on us the power to do good or repress evil, he lays us under an obligation to exert that power.

Agreeably the apostle informs us, that to him who knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin. Hence it follows, that we are accountable for all the good which we might but have not done; and for all the evil which we might but have not prevented. By conniving at the sins of others therefore, we make them our own. If the name of God be profaned, if his holy day be dishonored, if a fellow creature by intemperance render his family wretched, spread a snare in the path of his children, destroy his health, and finally plunge himself into eternal ruin, when we by proper exertions might have prevented it, a righteous God will not hold us guiltless, nor will rivers of tears, shed in secret over these sins, wash out the guilt thus contracted.

If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; if thou sayest, behold we knew it not, doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth he not know it? and shall he not render to every man according to his works? If then we would avoid his displeasure; if we wish him to set upon us a mark of deliverance, we must exert all the power and influence with which we are entrusted, to repress the outbreaks of irreligion and vice.

Those who will, if permitted, trample alike on divine and human laws, and thus show that they neither fear God nor regard man, must be taught by their apprehensions, if they can be taught by no other means, to hide their vicious propensities in their own breasts; or at least, not to suffer them to stalk abroad with unblushing front in open day. And I am aware, that to attempt this, is a most disagreeable and ungrateful task, a task which very few are willing to perform. Many will mourn over the prevalence of sin in their closets, who dare not, or at least will not exert themselves to oppose it in public.

When God asks, Who will stand up for me against the evil doers? who will rise up for me against the workers of iniquity? to many are to be found, even among his professed friends, who instead of immediately answering to the call, and boldly appearing like the children of Levi on the Lord's side, pusillanimously shrink back from the honorable service, pretending that others may more properly engage in it than themselves. In fact, though we are willing to enjoy the consolations and rewards of religion, we are all too much afraid of its difficulties and duties; too unwilling to deny ourselves and take up the cross.

We are sufficiently willing, that God should take care of our honor, interest, happiness; but when any thing is to be done or suffered for him, we are too prone to begin with one consent to make excuse. We are exceedingly jealous of our own rights and privileges, and ever ready to execute those laws, which secure

our persons, our property and reputation. But we discover little jealousy for the honor of the Lord of Hosts; and too often suffer those laws, which are made to secure his name and his day from profanation, to be violated with impunity.

But however natural or general such conduct may be, it is altogether inexcusable nor can we be guilty of it without forfeiting all claims to the character mentioned in our text. In vain shall we pretend to love God; in vain shall we profess to be concerned for the happiness of man, in vain shall we express sorrow for the prevalence of vice and irreligion, if we will not expose ourselves to some inconveniences, submit to some sacrifices, and make some vigorous exertions to preserve God's name from profanation, his institutions from dishonor, and the souls of our fellow creatures from everlasting perdition.

God will set no mark of deliverance upon us in the day of vengeance, unless we prove the sincerity of our attachment to his cause, of our hatred of sin, and of our grief for its prevalence by appearing openly and decidedly against it. On the contrary, he will, nay he has already set on such pusillanimous friends a mark of reprobation. Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, in this evil and adulterous generation, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

In the third place, to our exertions we must add our prayers. Exertion without prayer, and prayer without exertion, are alike presumptuous, and can be considered as only tempting God-- and if we neglect either, we have no claim to be numbered among the characters described in our text. My hearers, permit me to request your particular attention to this remark. There is but too much reason to fear, that a regard to order, or some similar principle induces many to exert themselves for the suppression of vice, who prove by their total neglect of prayer for divine influence, that they are strangers to the first principles of the oracles of God.

Lastly. Those who are suitably affected with the sins of their fellow creatures, will certainly be much more deeply affected with their own. While they smart under the rod of national calamities, they will cordially acknowledge the justice of God, and feel that their own sins have assisted in forming the mighty mass of national guilt. While they contemplate him whom their sins have pierced, they will mourn and be in bitterness, as one that mourneth for an only son. While they feel constrained to repress the vices of others with a decided and vigorous hand, they will feel, that if they are not themselves guilty of the same vices, it is wholly owing to sovereign, unmerited grace: and the cordial conviction of this truth, will temper their firmness with meekness and tenderness, and lead them to pity the offender, while they abhor the offence. If this temper be wanting, all other proofs that we are suitably affected with the prevalence of vice, will avail nothing. It is this, which distinguishes the real mourner from the proud, censorious, self-righteous hypocrite, who condemns others that he may exalt himself who censures the mote in his brother's eye, but knows nothing of the beam in his own; whose language to God is, I thank thee, that I am not like other men; and to his fellow creatures, stand by thyself come not near me, for I am holier than thou. Such are, of all persons, most hateful to God, and the most unlike the characters mentioned in our text. In fact, it will ever be found, that he who is most affected by the sins of others, will mourn most sincerely and feelingly for his own; and that he who is most solicitous for his own salvation, will exhibit the greatest concern for the salvation of the souls of his fellow creatures.

Thus have we endeavored to show what is implied in being suitably affected with the vices that prevail among us. Should any one feel disposed to question the truth of the observations, which have been made, it would be easy to confirm them, did time permit, by appealing to the history of Noah, of Lot, of Moses, of

David, of Hezekiah, of Ezra, of Nehemiah, of the prophets, of the apostles, nay, of our blessed Lord himself; nor would it be difficult to prove, that there is scarcely a good man mentioned in the scriptures, who was not thus affected with the sins of the age, and country in which he lived. But it is necessary that we hasten to show, as was proposed,

II. That on such as are thus affected, God will set a mark of deliverance when those around them are destroyed by his desolating judgments. The truth of this proposition may be inferred,

1. From the justice of God. It will be recollected that national judgments are always the consequence of national sins. But in the guilt of these sins the characters we are describing do not share. On the contrary, they mourn for them, hate them, and oppose them by every means in their power. If their endeavors to promote national reformation are unsuccessful, the guilt does not lie at their door. Justice therefore, forbids that they should share in the punishment, which this guilt brings down. As they have separated themselves from others by their conduct, it requires that a mark of separation and deliverance should be set upon them by the hand of a righteous God. Hence the plea of Abraham with regard to Sodom, a plea of which God tacitly allowed the force. Far be it from thee to destroy the righteous with the wicked; and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? It is true, that the characters of whom we are speaking, have like others, violated the law of God, and are by nature children of wrath, and exposed to its awful curse. But however guilty they may be as individuals in the sight of a heart-searching God, they are blameless, considered merely as members of a community, and it is in this light only that they are here considered. Justice itself therefore, requires that they should be spared, and there is no doubt that God often suspends the punishment merited by guilty nations, lest the righteous should be involved in their destruction. Witness the preservation of guilty Zoar for the sake of Lot, and the declaration of the destroying angel, I cannot do anything till thou be come thither.

The truth of the proposition we are considering, may be inferred,

2. From God's holiness. As a holy God he cannot but love holiness; he cannot but love his own image; he cannot but love those who love him. But the characters of whom we are speaking, evince by their conduct, that they do love God. They bear his image. His name is written in their foreheads. Like the righteous God they love righteousness and hate and oppose iniquity. It is their love to God and their holy jealousy for the honor of his great name, which causes them to mourn when he is disobeyed and dishonored. His cause, his interest, his honor, they consider as their own. A holy God therefore, will, nay, he must display his approbation of holiness by placing upon them a mark of distinction. While he loves holiness, while he loves himself, he cannot but love them, and cause all things to work together for their good.

The truth of this assertion we infer,

3. From his faithfulness. God has said, Them that honor me I will honor. But none honor him more highly than those who appear openly and resolutely on his side, in opposition to sin. His truth, his faithfulness then requires, that he should honor them by placing upon them some mark of distinction. Besides, those who are affected with the sins of mankind in the manner described above, exhibit the most infallible proof, that they are the genuine disciples of Christ, and the real children of God. Like their heavenly Father and their divine Redeemer, they are grieved with the sins of rebellious man. They have complied with the command which says, Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate; and I will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters. But if they are children, then heirs; heirs of God, of all the

exceeding great and precious promises, which are given us in Christ Jesus; promises, which the eternal purpose and solemn oath of God bind him to fulfil. He has provided for them chambers of protection. His name is a strong tower, into which they flee, and are safe and to this place of refuge he invites them. Come, my people, enter into thy chambers, and hide thyself for a little moment, till the indignation be overpast.

Thus it appears that the justice, the holiness, and the faithfulness of God, unitedly bind him to set a mark of deliverance on those who are suitably affected with the sins of their fellow creatures. But these are the perfections, which as sinners, we have the greatest reason to fear. If then they secure our safety, how safe must we be.

Lastly. That God actually does set a mark of deliverance on such characters, is evident from various facts recorded in scripture. See, for instance, Noah, that preacher of righteousness, saved in the midst of a drowning world. See Lot, whose righteous soul was grieved and vexed with the wickedness of the Sodomites, snatched as a brand from the burning storm, which overthrew the cities of the plain. See Elijah, who was jealous for the honor of the Lord of Hosts, fed by ravens, when all his countrymen were suffering the miseries of drought and famine.

See Jeremiah, Baruch, and Ebedmelech, escaping unhurt from the perils of fire and sword, when Jerusalem was taken by storm; and the disciples of our Lord, many years after, saved by his warnings from the Roman sword, while their countrymen were destroyed. And though the age of miracles has passed away, yet had we an inspired history of the world from the days of the apostles, we should doubtless find recorded many equally striking proofs of God's care of his people; for it is still true, to adopt the language of St.

Peter, that the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly and to reserve the unjust to the day of judgment to be punished. Will it be objected to this statement, that facts equally strong may be adduced on the other side; facts, which prove that God does not always thus deliver his people? We allow it. We allow that the real friends of God often drink deeply of the cup of affliction, which is put into the hands of sinful nations? But why is it so? It is because they first partake of their sins.

It is because they do not bear a public testimony for God, and oppose as they ought the progress of vice and infidelity. They suffer themselves to be entangled by that fear of man, which bringeth a snare, and to be guided by the heaven-distrusting counsels and temporizing policy of that earthly, sensual wisdom, which is too often miscalled prudence. They conduct in such a manner as to leave it doubtful whether they are the real children of God; and therefore, he treats them in such a manner, as often causes them and others to doubt whether he is their Father.

Were they always suitably affected with the sins which prevail around them, they would much less frequently share in the calamities which those sins occasion. But it will perhaps be said, that many of the most bold and faithful servants of God and opposers of vice, have suffered even unto blood striving against sin. We grant it, but still it is true, that the mark of God was upon them. It appeared in those divine consolations, which raised them far above suffering, and the fear of death, and enabled them to rejoice and glory in tribulation.

Did not Stephen exhibit this mark, when his murderers saw his face, as it had been the face of an angel? Did not Paul and Silas display it, when at midnight their joy broke forth, in the hearing of their fellow prisoners, in rapturous ascriptions, and songs of praise? Did not some of the martyrs display it, when they

exclaimed in the flames, We feel no more pain, than if reposing on a bed of roses? If we now seldom see this mark of God set upon his children, it is only because the fires of persecution are extinguished, and because such Christians as Stephen, and Paul, and the martyrs, are no longer to be found in the church.

But however God may sometimes see fit to expose such as truly mourn for the prevalence of sin, to sufferings in this world, he will most certainly set a mark of deliverance upon them in the world to come. The Son of God, clothed in the linen garments of his priestly office, has sprinkled them with his blood, which, like the blood of the Passover, is a signal for the destroying angel to pass them by. He has set upon them a mark, not with pen and ink, but by the Spirit of the living God, by whom they are sealed to the day of eternal redemption. Thus they bear the mark of the Lamb, and have their Father's name written in their foreheads, while their great Intercessor bears their names engraven in his book of life, and upon the palms of his hands; and neither life, nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, shall erase them.

IMPROVEMENT. My hearers, the subject we have been considering, at all times interesting, is rendered peculiarly so to us by the circumstances in which we are placed. We live in a day, when the judgments of God are abroad in the earth, and the desolating flood, after laying waste many nations and kingdoms in its progress, has at length reached our shores, and where it will stop God only knows. We have however, but too much reason to expect the worst. The same sins which have ruined other nations, and which, wherever they exist, provoke the vengeance of offended heaven, evidently prevail among us in an alarming degree, and give us just occasion to fear, that since we resemble the old world in its vices, we shall share in its plagues.

And even if God in mercy should avert merited ruin, it is certain that we must all appear at the judgment seat of Christ, to receive the things done in the body. It is therefore, infinitely important for us, both in a temporal and in a religious view, to ascertain whether we are in the number of those, upon whom God has set a mark of deliverance, that his destroying angel may not touch them. From our subject we may learn this. If we are in the number of those who sigh and cry for all the abominations that are committed among us, God has certainly set upon us a mark of deliverance and salvation; but if not, if we contemplate them with indifference, or while we profess to lament, make no exertions to repress them; we have reason to expect nothing but a mark of reprobation.

Permit me then, my hearers, to ask, how are you affected with the sins which prevail amongst us? That there are many such sins, sins sufficient to excite and justify our most pungent grief you need not be told. You cannot but be aware, that throughout our country, vice and impiety are awfully prevalent; that God's name is most daringly profaned; that his day is by multitudes dishonored and neglected; that his friends and institutions are ridiculed and despised; that the whirlpool of intemperance is engulfing its thousands and tens of thousands, and that the soul is almost universally neglected and undone.

The cry of our sins, like that of Sodom and Nineveh, has long since ascended up before God. My hearers, how are you affected with these things? Are you more disposed to weep for our national sins, than for the miseries which we feel, and the dangers which we fear? Are you endeavoring, by your example, your exertions, and your prayers, to repress the progress of vice and impiety within your sphere of action; and do you appear openly on the Lord's side, as the bold, unwavering, determined friends of religion and morality?

These are questions of infinite importance, but they are questions which conscience alone can answer. To every man's conscience then, we appeal, and ask, should God, preparatory to our destruction as a people, send a messenger into this house, to set a mark on all who are suitably affected with the prevailing sins of the age, on whose foreheads would the delivering mark appear? Would it, I address the question to every hearer, would it appear on thine? We are happy to have it in our power to remark, that a partial answer to these questions is afforded by the occasion which has called us together.

The existence of the society which I now address, affords, at least presumptive evidence, that there are some present, who do not contemplate with indifference, the progress of vice and impiety; and its members exhibit, at least one of the characteristic features of the persons described in our text. We would hope that the other features necessary to complete the character, are not wanting; and that while they are unitedly endeavoring to check the progress of vice by their exertions, they are individually aiming to advance the same object by their example and their prayers.

My brethren, if this hope be well founded, our subject affords you encouragement, ample as your most enlarged desires. It assures you, that he, who humbles himself to behold what is done in heaven, notices and approves the sorrow, with which you contemplate sin, either in yourselves or others, and the exertions which you are making to repress its progress. The mark of the eternal God is upon you. The destroying angel is forbidden to touch you; whatever may befall our country or the world, you are safe as omnipotence can render you.

The new heaven and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, is your destined habitation, where those sins, which you now hate and oppose, shall no longer molest you, and where you shall reap the glorious rewards, which the Captain of our salvation has prepared for them that overcome. Nor is this all. The cause in which you are engaged is as honorable and its success as certain, as the rewards of victory are glorious. It is the cause of truth, of religion, of God; the cause in which all holy beings are engaged; the cause in which the Son of God laid down his life.

It will be finally victorious. Will it be descending too low, if I add, it is also the cause of our common country. It is on the exertions of the friends of morality and religion alone, that its deliverance from present calamities and its future welfare depend. It is in the field of conflict between virtue and vice, between religion and impiety, that our enemies are to be repelled; that peace is to be conquered for us. One victory gained here, will do more for us than many on the ocean or the land; and the most encouraging circumstance attending our present situation, is, that a faithful few are to be found in different parts of our land, who are willing to fight the battles of the Lord, and come up to his help against the mighty.

Go on then, my brethren, and prosper; secure of the good wishes and co-operation of all the real friends of God, and of man, and of our country; nay more, secure of the blessing and assistance of him, who has promised, that when the enemy comes in as a flood, his Spirit shall lift up a standard against him. We will only add the address of the prophet to Asa and his people, while engaged in the work of national reformation with its happy effect. The Lord is with you, while ye be with him. Be strong therefore, and let not your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded. When Asa heard these words, he took courage, and put away all abominations out of the land. May God grant that you feel encouraged in a similar manner to repress, with a prudent and vigorous hand, every abomination which shall attempt to raise its baleful head among you.

And are there any present, who cannot cordially unite in this prayer; any, who contemplate the formation and the exertions of this society with an unfriendly eye; any, who instead of feeling disposed to sigh and cry on account of the prevalence of vice and irreligion, are disposed to consider it as a proof of weakness or superstition to be thus affected? If any such there are, permit me to ask, ought not the creatures, the subjects, the children of God to mourn, when their Creator, their Sovereign, their Father, is dishonored? Ought not the friends of our Redeemer to feel grieved, when he is neglected and crucified afresh? Ought not all, who love their country, to lament, when they see the same sins prevailing among us, which have already drawn down the vengeance of heaven on so many once flourishing kingdoms!

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/edward-payson/the-mark-of-deliverance/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net