

The Sickness, Death and Resurrection of Lazarus 1 of 4 (Reading)

by Robert Murray M'Cheyne

Jesus' love and power are revealed in the midst of suffering, and we can trust in his promises even when circumstances seem bleak.

Duration: 48:02

Scripture: Genesis 18:17, Exodus 33:11, Exodus 34:34, Psalm 2:9, Isaiah 49:16, Matthew 8:23-27, John 15:15

Topics: "Faith And Trials", "Following Jesus"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the story of Jesus and his disciples on the Sea of Galilee. He emphasizes the importance of faith and how it is tested in times of trials. The preacher also highlights how God's love is present even when it may seem like he is not answering our prayers. The sermon concludes with a reminder to follow Jesus fearlessly, even in the face of opposition, and to walk in the path of duty with a good conscience.

Transcript

Comfort in Sickness and Death by Robert Murray Machein Introduction Bethany, the Tomb of Lazarus The following description of modern Bethany is extracted from a very interesting volume published by the Board of Publications entitled Narrative of a Mission of Inquiry to the Jews from the Church of Scotland in 1839. The authors of the volume were the Reverend A. A. Bonar and the Reverend R. M. Machein. It seems to form an appropriate introduction to this little volume.

Descending and leaving the Jericho road, we came quite suddenly upon Bethany called by the Arabs Azareth from the name Lazarus. We found this ever-memorable village to be very like what we could have imagined it. It lies almost hidden in a small ravine of Mount Olivet, so much so that from the height it cannot be seen.

It is embossed with fruit trees, especially figs and almonds, olives and pomegranates. The ravine in which it lies is terraced, and terraces are covered either with fruit trees or waving grain. There are not many houses, perhaps about twenty, inhabited, but there are many marks of ancient ruins.

The House of Lazarus was pointed out to us, a substantial building, probably a tower in former days, and selected to bear the name of the House of Lazarus by traditionalists who did not know how else than by

His worldly eminence such a man could draw the special regard of the Lord Jesus. They did not know that Christ loveth freely. The sepulcher, called the Tomb of Lazarus, attracted more of our attention.

We lighted our candles and ascended twenty-six steps cut in the rock to a chamber deep in the rock, having several niches for the dead. Whether this be the very tomb where Lazarus lay four days and in which yielded up its dead at the command of Jesus is impossible to say. The common objection that it is too deep seems entirely groundless, for there is nothing in the narrative to intimate that the tomb was on a level with the ground, but besides, it seems not unlikely that there was another entrance to the tomb further down the slope.

A stronger objection is that the tomb is in the immediate vicinity of the village, or actually in it, but it is possible that the modern village occupies ground a little different from the ancient one. However, this may be. There can be no doubt that this is Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha, nigh unto Jerusalem about fifteen furlongs off.

John 11, verses 1 and 18 How pleasing are all the associations that cluster around it! Perhaps there is no scene in the Holy Land which afforded us more unmingled enjoyment. We even fancied that the curse that everywhere rests so vividly upon the land had fallen more lightly here. In point of situation, nothing could have come up more completely to our previous imagination of the place to which Jesus delighted to retire at evening from the bustle of the city and the vexations of the unbelieving multitudes, sometimes traversing the road by which he had come, and perhaps oftener still coming up the face of the hill by the footpath that passes on the north of Gethsemane.

What a peaceful scene! Amidst these trees or in that grassy field he may often have been seen in deep communion with the Father. And in sight of this verdant spot it was that he took his last farewell of the disciples and went upward to resume the deep, unbroken fellowship of his God and our God, uttering blessings even at the moment when he began to be parted from them. Luke 24, 51 And it was here that the two angels stood by them in white apparel and left us this glorious message, The same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as you have seen him go into heaven.

Acts 1 11 Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary, and Mary in her sister Martha. It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick. Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.

When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby. John 11 verses 1 through 4 Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward. Sickness goes round.

It spares no family, rich or poor. Sometimes the young, sometimes the old, sometimes those in the strength of their days are laid down on the bed of sickness. Remember, those that suffer adversity as being yourselves also in the body.

The reasons why God sends sickness are very various. One, in some it is sent for the conversion of the soul. Sometimes in health, the world does not touch the heart.

The world is all. Its deities, its pleasures, its admiration captivate your mind. God sometimes draws you aside into a sickbed and shows you the sin of your heart, the vanity of worldly pleasures and drives the

soul to seek a sure resting place for eternity in Christ, or happy sickness that draws the soul to Jesus.

Job 32.3 Psalm 107 Two, sometimes it is for the conversion of friends. One, the covenanters went out to battle. They kneeled down on the field and prayed.

And this was one of their prayers, Lord, take the ripe and spare the green. God sometimes does this in families. He cuts down the praying child, the child that was half ridiculed, half wondered at, that the rest may think and turn and pray.

Three, sometimes it is a frown of judgment. When worldly people go long on in the course of sin against the light of the Bible and the warnings of ministers, God sometimes frowns upon them and they wither suddenly. He that being often reproved hardness his neck shall suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy.

Proverbs 29.1 For this cause many are weak and sickly among you and many sleep. 1 Corinthians 11.30 Four, another case is now before us, that of a child of God, sick, that Christ might be glorified in him. One, the cause, the person.

A certain man was sick, named Lazarus. Lazarus was evidently a child of God and yet Lazarus was sick. How he had come by his grace we are not told.

His name is not mentioned before. If we may be allowed to guess it seems probable that Mary was the first in the family who knew the Lord. Luke 10.

Then perhaps Martha left her much serving to come also and sit at Jesus' feet and both prevailed on their brother Lazarus to come also. At all events he was a child of God. He was in a godly family.

All the house were children of God, one in nature and one in grace. Happy family at Bethany going hand in hand to glory. Yet here the hand of sickness entered in.

Lazarus was sick. He was peculiarly loved by Christ. He whom thou lovest.

Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. Our friend Lazarus sleepeth. Like John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, so Jesus had a peculiar love for Lazarus.

I cannot tell you why. He was a sinner like other men. But perhaps when Jesus washed and renewed him, he gave him more of his own likeness than other believers.

One thing is certain. Jesus loved him and yet Lazarus was sick. 1. Learn not to judge others because of affliction.

Job's three friends tried to show him that he must be a hypocrite and a bad man because God afflicted him. They did not know that God afflicts his own dear children. Lazarus was sick and the beggar Lazarus was full of sores and Hezekiah was sick even unto death and yet all were peculiarly dear to Jesus.

2. God's children should not doubt his love when he afflicts. Christ loved Lazarus peculiarly and yet he afflicted him very sore. A surgeon never bends his eye so tenderly upon his patient as when he is putting in the lancet or probing the wound to the very bottom.

And so with Christ he bends his eye most tenderly over his own at the time he is afflicting them. 3. Do not doubt the holy love of Jesus to your soul when he is laying a heavy hand upon you. Jesus did not love Lazarus less when he afflicted him but rather more even as a father correcteth a son in whom he delighteth.

Proverbs 3.12 A goldsmith when he casts gold into the furnace looks after it. 2. The place of Bethany the town of Mary and her sister Martha. Bethany is a sweet retired village about two miles from Jerusalem in a ravine at the back of the Mount of Olives.

It is at this day embosomed in fig trees and almond trees and pomegranates but it had a greater loveliness still in the eyes of Christ. It was the town of Mary and her sister Martha. Probably the worldly people in Jerusalem knew Bethany by its being the town of some rich Pharisee who had his country villa there or some luxurious noble who called the lands after his own name.

But Jesus knew it only as the town of Mary and her sister Martha. Probably they lived in a humble cottage under the shade of a fig tree but that cottage was dear to Christ. Often as he came over the Mount of Olives he drew near.

The light in that cottage window gladdened his heart. Often he sat beneath their fig tree telling them the things of the kingdom of God. His father loved that dwelling for these were justified ones.

And angels knew it well for night and day they ministered there to three heirs of salvation. No wonder he called the place the town of Mary and her sister Martha. This was its name in heaven.

So is it still. When worldly people think of our town they call it the town of some rich merchant, some leading man in public matters, some great politician who makes a dash as a friend of the people. Not the town of our Marthas and Marys.

Perhaps some poor room where an eminent child of God dwells gives this town its name and interest in the presence of Jesus. Dear believers, how great the love of Christ is to you. He knows the town where you live, the house where you dwell, the room where you pray.

Often he stands at the door. Often he puts in his hand at the hole of the door. I have graven thee on the palms of my hands.

Thy walls are continually before me. Like a bridegroom loving the place where his bride dwells, so Christ often says, There they dwell for whom I died. Learn to be like Christ in this.

When a merchant looks at a map of the world, his eye turns to those places where his ships are sailing. When a soldier, he looks to the traces of ancient battlefields and fortified towns. But a believer should be like Jesus.

He should love the spots where believers dwell. 3. The Message 1. They sent unto him. This seems to have been their very first recourse when the sickness came on.

His sisters sent unto Jesus. They did not think a bodily trouble beneath his notice. 2. He had taught them that one thing is needful, and Mary had chosen that good part which could not be taken from her.

Yet they knew well that Jesus did not despise the body. They knew that he had a heart to bleed for every kind of grief, and therefore they sent to tell Jesus, This is what you should do. Call upon me in the day of

trouble.

I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me. Psalm 1, verse 15 Remember, there is no grief too great to carry to him, and none too small. In everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let ye request known unto God.

Cast thy burden on the Lord. Whatever it be, take it to Jesus. Some trust Christ with their soul, but not with their body, with their salvation, but not with their health.

He loves to be sent for in our smallest troubles. 2. The Argument He whom thou lovest is sick. If a worldly person had been sending to Christ, he would have sent a very different argument.

He would have said, He who loves thee is sick. Here is one who has believed on thy name. Here is one that had confessed thee before the world, suffered reproach, and scorned for thy sake.

Massa and Mary knew better how to plead with Jesus. The only argument was in Jesus' breast. He whom thou lovest is sick.

1. He loved him with an electing love. Freely from all eternity, Jesus loved him. 2. With a drawing love.

He drew him from under wrath, from serving sin. 3. With a pardoning love. He drew him to himself and blotted out all his sin.

4. With an upholding love. Who could hold me up but thou? He for whom thou diest, he whom thou hast chosen, washed and kept till now, he whom thou lovest is sick. Learn thus to plead with Christ, dear believers.

Often you do not receive because you do not ask or write. You ask and receive not because you ask amiss, that you may consume it upon your lusts. Often you ask proudly, as if you were somebody, so that if Christ were to grant it, he would only be flattering your lusts.

Learn to lie in the dust and plead only his own free love. Thou hast loved me for no good thing in me, chosen not for good in me, 2. Waking up from wrath to flee, hidden in the Savior's side by the Spirit sanctified. Do not deny thy love.

Have respect unto the work of thine own hands. 3. A holy delicacy in prayer. They lay the object at his feet and leave it there.

They do not say, Come and heal him. Come quickly, Lord. They know his love.

They believe his wisdom. They leave the case in his hands. Lord, he whom thou lovest is sick.

They cast him down at Jesus' feet and he healed them. Matthew 15, 30 They did not plead, but let their misery plead for them. Let your request be made known unto God.

Philippians 4, 6 Learn that urgency in prayer does not so much consist in vehement pleading as in vehement believing. He that believes most the love and power of Jesus will obtain most in prayer. Indeed, the Bible does not forbid you using all arguments and asking for express gifts such as healing for sick friends.

My little daughter lieth at the point of death. I pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her that she may be healed and she shall live. Mark 5, 23 Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof, but speak the word only and my servant shall be healed.

Matthew 8, verse 8 Still, there is a holy delicacy in prayer which some believers know how to use. Like these two sisters, lay the object at his feet saying, Lord, he whom thou lovest is sick. 4. The answer 1. A word of promise.

This sickness is not unto death. 2. This was an immediate answer to prayer. 3. He did not come, he did not heal, but he sent them a word enough to make them happy.

This sickness is not unto death. 4. Away the messenger ran, crossed the Jordan, and before sunset, perhaps, he entered breathless the village of Bethany. 5. With anxious faces the sisters run out to hear what news of Jesus.

Good news! This sickness is not unto death. Sweet promise! The hearts of the sisters are comforted, and no doubt they tell their joy to the dying man. But he gets weaker and weaker, and as they look through their tears at his pale cheek, they begin almost to waver in their faith.

But Jesus said it, and Jesus cannot lie. If it were not so, he would have told us. This sickness is not unto death.

At last, Lazarus breathed his last sigh beside his weeping sisters. His eye is dim, his cheek is cold, he is dead. And yet Jesus said, Not unto death! The friends assemble to carry the body to the rocky sepulcher, and as the sisters turn away from the tomb, their faith dies, their hearts sink into utter gloom.

What could he mean by saying, Not unto death? Learn to trust to Christ's words whatever sight may say. We live in dark times. Every day the clouds are becoming heavier and more lowering.

The enemies of the Sabbath are raging. The enemies of the church are becoming more desperate. The cause of Christ is everywhere threatened.

But we have a sweet word of promise. This sickness is not unto death. Darker times are coming yet.

The clouds will break and deluge our country soon with a flood of infidelity, and many will be like Mary broken-hearted. Has the Lord's word failed? No, never. This sickness is not unto death.

The dry bones of Israel shall live. Prophecy shall sink like a millstone. Widowhood and loss of children shall come to her in one day.

The kings of Tarshish in the Isle shall bow their knees to Jesus. Jesus shall reign till all his enemies are put under his feet, and the whole world shall soon enjoy a real Sabbath. 2. The Explanation But for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.

Some might ask, Why then was Lazarus sick? The answer? For the glory of God. Christ was thereby in an imminent manner made known. 1. His amazing love to his own was seen when he wept at the grave.

2. His power to raise the dead. He was shown to be the resurrection and the life when he cried, Lazarus, come forth. Christ was more glorified far then if Lazarus had not been sick and died.

1. So in all sufferings of God's people, sometimes a child of God says, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? I will teach, preach, do great things for thee. Sometimes the answer is, thou shalt suffer for my sake. 2. It shows the power of Christ's blood when it gives peace in an hour of trouble, when it can make happy in sick, poverty, persecution, and death.

Do not be surprised if you suffer, but glorify God. 3. It brings out graces that cannot be seen in a time of health. It is the treading of the grapes that brings out the sweet juices of the vine.

So it is affliction that draws forth submission, loneliness from the world, and complete rest in God. Use afflictions while you have them. 2. Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister, and Lazarus.

When he had heard, therefore, that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was. Then after that, he saith to his disciples, Let us go to Judea again. His disciples saying to him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee, and goest thou thither again? Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world.

But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him. John 11, verses 5 through 10. Jesus loved Martha and Mary and Lazarus.

1. These are the words of John. He knew what was in the heart of Christ, for the Holy Spirit taught him what to write, and he leaned upon Jesus' bosom, and knew the deepest secrets of Jesus' heart. This, then, is John's testimony.

Jesus loved Martha and Mary and Lazarus. You remember they had sent this message to Jesus. He whom thou lovest is sick.

Some would have said that was a presumptuous message to send. How did you know that Lazarus was really converted, that Jesus really loved him? But here you see John puts his seal upon their testimony. It was really true, and no presumption in it.

Jesus loved Martha and Mary and Lazarus. How is it saints know when Jesus loves them? Answer, Christ has ways of telling his own love peculiar to himself. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him.

How ridiculous is it to think that Christ cannot make known his love to the soul. I shall mention one way. By drawing the soul to himself.

Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love. Therefore, with loving kindness have I drawn thee. Jeremiah 31.3 Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love.

And I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness. Yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, that thou becamest mine. Ezekiel 16.8 No man can come unto me, except the Father draw him.

John 6.44 Now when the Lord Jesus draws near to a dead carnal sinner, and reveals to him a glimpse of his own beauty, of his face fair than the sons of men, of his precious blood, of the room that there is under his wings, and when the soul is drawn away from its old sins, old ways, away from its deadness, darkness, and worldliness, and is persuaded to forsake all, and flow toward the Lord Jesus, then that soul is made to taste the peace of believing, and is made to know that Jesus loves him. Thus Lazarus knew that Jesus Christ loved him. I was a worldly, careless man.

I mocked at my sisters when they were so careful to entertain the Lamb of God. I often was angry with them, but one day he came and showed me such an excellence in the way of salvation by him. He drew me, and now I know that Jesus has loved me.

Do you know that Christ loves you? Have you this love token that he has drawn you to leave all and follow him? To leave your self-righteousness? To leave your sins? To leave your worldly companions for Christ? To let all go that interferes with Christ? Then you have a good token that he has loved you. 2. Jesus loved all the house. It seems highly probable that there was a great difference among the family.

Some of them were much more enlightened than others. Some were much nearer Christ, and some more like Christ than others. Yet Jesus loved them all.

It would seem that Mary was the most heavenly-minded of the family. Probably she was brought first to know and love the Lord Jesus Christ. She sat at the feet of Christ when Martha was cumbered about with much serving.

She was also evidently more humbled under this trying dispensation than her sister was, for it is said she fell down at his feet. She seems also to have been filled with livelier gratitude, for it was she that took a pound of ointment of sphincter, very costly, and anointed the feet of Christ, and wiped his feet with her hair. She did what she could.

She seems to have been a very eminent believer, very full of love, and of a teachable, meek, quiet spirit. And yet Jesus loved them all. Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.

Everyone that is in Christ is beloved by Christ, even weak members. Good news for weak disciples. You are very apt to say I am not a Paul, nor a John, nor a Mary.

I fear Jesus will not care for me. Answer, he loved Martha and Mary and Lazarus. He loves the weakest of those for whom he died.

Just as a mother loves all her children, even those that are weak and sickly, so Christ cares for those who are weak in the faith, who have many doubts and fears, who have heavy burdens and temptations. Be like Christ in this. Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations.

We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and ought to please ourselves. Romans 14 1 and Romans 15 1 There is much of an opposite spirit, I fear, amongst us. I fear that you love our Marys and Pauls and Johns.

You highly esteem those that are evidently pillars, but can you condescend to men of low estate? Learn to stoop low, and to be gentle and kind to the feeble. Do not speak evil of them. Do not make their blemishes the subject of your common talk.

Cover their faults. Assist them by counsel, and pray for them. 2 Christ Delay When he had heard, therefore, that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was.

Here seems a contradiction. Jesus loved them, and yet he abode two days. You would have expected the very reverse.

Jesus loved them, and therefore made no delay, but hastened to Bethany. This is the way with man's love. Human love will not book delay.

When you love anyone tenderly, and hear that he is sick, you run to see him, and to help him. These were two important days in the cottage of Bethany. The messenger had returned, saying, The sickness is not unto death.

They knew that Jesus loved them, and loved their brother tenderly, and therefore they expected him to come every hour. Martha, perhaps, would begin to be uneasy, saying, Why does he tarry? Why is he so long in coming? Can anything have kept him? Do not fret, Mary, would say. You know that he loves Lazarus, and he loves us.

And you know he is true, and he said, The sickness is not unto death. The dying man grew weaker, and at length breathed his last sigh into their affectionate bosoms. Both the sisters were overwhelmed.

He loved us, and yet he tarried two days. So with the woman of Syrophenicia. Such are Christ's dealings with his own, still.

Although he loves, he sometimes on that very account tarries. Do not be surprised, and do not fret. Reasons for delay.

One, because he is God. He sees the end from the beginning. Known unto him are all his works from the foundation of the world.

Although absent in the body, he was present in the sick man's room at Bethany. He saw every change on his pale features, and heard every gentle sigh. Every tear that stirred down the cheek of Mary, he observed, put into his bottle, and wrote in his book.

He saw when Lazarus died, but the future was before him also. He knew what he would do, that the grave would yield up its dead, and that he would soon turn their weeping into songs of rejoicing. Therefore he stayed where he was, just because he was God.

So when Christ delays to help his saints now, you think this is a great mystery. You cannot explain it, but Jesus sees the end from the beginning. Be still, and know that Christ is God.

2. To increase their faith. First of all, he gave them out a promise to hold by. He sent word by their messenger, This sickness is not unto death.

This was an easy and simple word for them to hold by. But, ah, it was sorely tried. When he got worse and worse, they clung to the promise with a trembling heart.

When he died, their faith died too. They knew not what to think. And yet Christ's word was true, and thus their faith was increased ever after.

They were taught to believe the word of Christ, even when all outward circumstances were against them. So Matthew 8, 18 One evening Christ gave commandment on the sea of Galilee to depart to the other side. And as they sailed, he fell asleep.

Here is a simple word of promise to hold by in the storm. But when the storm came down and the waves covered the ship, they cried, Master, save us, we perish. And he said, Where is your faith? By that trial the faith of the disciples was greatly increased ever after.

So it is with all trials of faith. When God gives a promise, he always tries our faith. Just as the roots of a tree take firmer hold when they are contending with the wind, so faith takes a firmer hold when it struggles with adverse appearances.

Three. To make his help shine brighter. Had Christ come at the first and healed their brother, we never would have known the love that showed itself at the grave of Lazarus.

We never would have known the power of the great Redeemer in raising up from the grave. These bright forth shinings of the glory of Christ would have been lost to the church and to the world. Therefore it was good that he stayed away for two days.

Thus the honor of his name was spread far and wide. The Son of God was glorified. This people have I formed for myself.

They shall show forth my praise. This is God's great end in all his dealings with his people that he may be seen. For this reason he destroyed the Egyptians, that the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord.

If Christ seems to carry past the time he promised, wait for him, for he will come and will not carry. He has good reason for it, whether you can see it or not, and never forget that he loves even when he carries. He loved the Seraphim even when he answered her not a word.

3. Christ's determination. After that, saith he to his disciples, let us go into Judea again. 1. The time.

After that. After the two days were over, Christ waits a certain time without helping his own, but no longer. Christ waits a certain time with the wicked before destroying them.

He waited till the cup of the Amorites was full before destroying them. He waited for the fig tree a certain time. If it does not bear fruit, then after that thou shall cut it down.

O wicked man, you have a certain measure to fill. When that is filled, you will sink immediately into hell. When the sand has run out, you will be cast away.

So Christ has his set time for coming to his own. After two days will he revive us. In the third day, he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight.

Hosea 6.2 1. The conversion. Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time. 1 Peter 5.6 When God awakens a soul by the mighty power of his Spirit, he takes his own time and way of bringing the soul to peace.

Often the sinner thinks it very hard that Christ should be so long of coming. Often he begins to despair and to think there is something peculiar in his case. Remember, wait on the Lord.

It is good to wait for Christ. 2. In answering prayer. When we ask for something agreeable to God's will and in the name of Christ, we know that we have the petitions which we desire of him.

But the time he keeps in his own power. God is very sovereign in the time of his answers. When Martha and Mary sent a petition to Christ, he gave them an immediate promise, but the answer was not when they expected.

So Christ frequently gives us the desires of our heart, though not at the peculiar time we desired, but a better time. Do not be weary in putting up prayers, save for the conversion of a friend. They may be answered when you are in the dust.

Hold on to prayer. He will answer in the best time. Be not weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.

3. In his own second glorious coming. Christ has said to the church long ago that in little while, and he that shall come will come and will not tarry. Instead, the time is prolonged.

The bridegroom seems to tarry, but he will come at the due time. He waits for infinitely wise reasons in the moment that he should come, the heavens shall open, and he will appear. 2. The objection.

The objection was that it was dangerous to him and to them, because the Jews had sought to stone him before. Another time, Peter made objection to Christ, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord, this shall not be unto thee. But he turned and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an offense unto me, for thou servest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.

How selfish are even godly men! The disciples did not care for the distress of Martha and Mary. They did not care for the pain of their friend Lazarus. They were afraid of being stoned, and that made them forget the case of the afflicted family.

There is no root deeper in the bosom than selfishness. Watch and pray against it. Even the godly will sometimes oppose you in what is good and right.

Here, when Christ promised that they should go into Judea, again the disciples opposed it. They were astonished at such a proposal. They, as it were, reproved him for it.

Think it not strange, dear brethren, if you are opposed by those who are children of God, especially if it be something in which you are called to suffer. 3. Christ's Answer The path of duty Christ here compares to walking in the daylight. If a man walk in the day, he stumbleth not.

As long as a man has got a good conscience, and the smile and presence of God, he is like one walking in the daylight. He plants his foot firmly and boldly forward. But if a man shrinks from the call of God through fear of man and at the call of worldly prudence, he is like one walking in darkness.

He stumbleth because there is no light. O, that you who are believers would be persuaded to follow Jesus fearlessly wherever he calls you. If you are a believer, you will often be tempted to shrink back.

The path of a Christian is narrow, and often difficult. But what have you to fear? Have you the blood of Christ upon your conscience, and the presence of God with your soul? Are there not twelve hours in the day? Are we not all immortal till our work is done? 3. Page 35 These things said he, and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth, but I go that I may awake him out of his sleep. Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleepeth he shall do well.

Howbeit Jesus spake of his death, but they thought that he had spoken of taking a rest in sleep. Then Jesus said unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sake that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe.

Nevertheless let us go unto him. Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him. John 11, verses 11-16 Christ's love to a dead Lazarus.

1. He calls him friend. An imminent infidel used to say that neither patriotism nor friendship was taught in the Bible. He only proved that he neither knew nor understood the Bible.

How different the sentiment of the Christian poet who says, The noblest friendship ever shown the Savior's history makes known. Ah, it is an amazing truth that Jehovah Jesus came and made friends of such worms as we are. True friendship consists in mutual confidence and mutual sacrifice.

Thus God dealt with Enoch. Enoch walked with God three hundred years. Enoch told all to God and God told all to him.

Blessed friendship between Jehovah and a worm. So God treated Abraham. Three times in the Bible he is called the friend of God.

2 Chronicles 20 verse 7 Isaiah 41 verse 8 and James 2 verse 23. He raised up the righteous men from the east and called him his foot. The God of glory appeared unto Abraham and we find God saying, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do? Genesis 18 verse 17.

So God dealt with Moses. The Lord spoke unto Moses face to face as a man speaketh with his friend. And God saith to him, My presence shall go with thee and I will give thee rest.

Exodus 33 verses 11 and 14. And when Moses went in before the Lord to speak with him, he took the veil off. Exodus 34 verse 34.

Thus did Christ deal with his disciples. Though he was the Holy Lamb of God, yet he says, Henceforth I call you not servants. For the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth.

But I have called you friends. For all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. John 15 verse 15.

He admitted them to the closest fellowship so that one lain on his breast at supper, and another washed his feet with ointment. He told them freely all that he had learned in the bosom of his Father, all that they were able to bear, of the Father's glory, of the Father's love. Thus he dealt with Lazarus, our friend Lazarus.

This Reformation audio track is a production of Stillwater's Revival Books. SWRB makes thousands of classic Reformation resources available, free and for sale, in audio, video and printed formats. Our many free resources, as well as our complete mail-order catalog, containing thousands of classic and contemporary Puritan and Reform books, tapes, and videos at great discounts, is on the web at www.swrb.com.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/11/SID11975.mp3>

Source:

<https://sermonindex.net/speakers/robert-murray-m'cheyne/the-sickness-death-and-resurrection-of-lazarus-1-of-4-reading/>

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