

Secret Disciples Encouraged

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon encourages those who secretly follow Christ to recognize the evidences of their discipleship and to boldly embrace the reproach that comes with truly following Jesus.

Scripture: John 18:25, Luke 9:23, 2 Timothy 2:12, Hebrews 12:2, Matthew 10:16, Mark 14:47, Acts 9:11, Romans 8:28

Topics: "Discipleship", "Faith and Assurance", "Christian Conduct"

Description

In 'Secret Disciples Encouraged,' C.H. Spurgeon addresses those who quietly follow Christ but struggle with assurance and public confession. He explores the signs that reveal true discipleship, challenges believers to embrace the inevitable reproach of following Jesus, and offers hope for those wrestling with doubts. Spurgeon's heartfelt exhortation calls listeners to examine their faith and boldly live out their commitment to Christ.

Transcript

"Are not you also one of His disciples?" John 18:25.

BLESSED be His name, there are some of us who count it our highest joy to answer this question, "Yes." Whatever may be entailed by the confession, we shall be glad to endure! We could not do otherwise than say, "He acknowledged us of old and He is still not ashamed to call us brethren and, therefore, we are not ashamed of Him, but we delight to call Him Master and Lord." In an interview I had about a fortnight ago, with a dear and venerable friend who is just upon the borders of the grave, he said to me, "There is a verse in the Hymn-Book which I know you do not like, Sir, and which I do not like, though both of us have sometimes been obliged to sing it—

"Tis a point I long to know,

Oft it causes anxious thought

Do I love the Lord, or no?

Am I His, or am I not?"

"But I have no doubt about it," he went on to say, "any more than I have about my own existence! Let others doubt if they like. I know I love the Lord. I am sure I do. If there is anything in all this world that is beyond a question to me, it is that I do love Him with all my heart, soul and strength." That ought to be the

condition of every Christian! There ought to be no question here. We should, each one, be able to reply at once, when asked, "Are not you also one of His disciples?" "I am! I count it my honor, my joy that He permits me to sit at His feet and to be instructed by Him, and to go forth into the world bearing His reproach." But, at the same time, dear Friends, there are some in the world who could not go that length, of whom, nevertheless, we have the hopeful belief that they are His disciples.

I thought of speaking a little to such persons. This, perhaps, will be unfortunate for most of you, for I shall not be addressing many, perhaps, here present. Still, if there are but a few such, we must look after the one at the risk even of leaving the ninety-nine. So I address myself to those whom we assuredly suspect to be followers of Jesus, concerning whose faith we need to have a little better evidence and whose life we would see a little more consistent with their being truly His followers.

I. First, then, I would ask, **WHY ARE YOU SUSPECTED OF BEING A DISCIPLE OF CHRIST?** Please observe the reasons why Simon Peter was suspected, for the same reasons may be applicable to you.

He was suspected by some of being a disciple of Christ because he had been seen with the disciples. One of the servants of the high priest said to Peter, "Did not I see you in the garden with Him?" Now, there are some of you who are always seen in the House of God—not only at stated services which are attended by the general public, but you are seen at the Prayer Meetings, you are seen at times when the interest is more spiritual—and when only the spiritual, it would be supposed, would be attracted and find anything that would interest them—there are you found. It is not only in the House of God that you are seen with Christ's people, but out-of-doors, too. You do not enjoy frivolous society. You are not at home in the haunts of vanity. Your companions are the godly. You delight in their conversation and the more spiritual the conversation becomes, the more you enjoy it!

Now, I do not know that you are a follower of Christ, but I have a strong suspicion that you may be and I would like to put these questions to you, if I might. "Are not you, also, one of His disciples? Did not I see you in the garden with Him? Why do you keep such company and love such society, if you are not one of them? Is not the old proverb true, 'Birds of a feather flock together'? How is it that you love the footsteps of the flock and the way of the shepherd's tents, if

you are not one of the sheep? I dare not say that you are, for I cannot read your heart, but I will venture again to put the question, 'Are not you also one of His disciples?'"

They suspected him, again, because of his conversation. Peter did not want to be known and, therefore, I do not suppose that he voluntarily said anything that would betray him. I daresay, if he conversed at all at the fire, he kept clear of all topics and subjects that would reveal him, or lead to the question being put as to whether he was a disciple or not, but, somehow or other, whatever he talked about, there was a sort of brogue, a twang in his speech, a something which showed that, at any rate, he was a Galilean—and they began to suspect that he might also be a companion of Jesus of Nazareth. It was his talk that betrayed him!

Now I do not know, dear Friend, whether you are a disciple of Christ, and I do not propose to press you to tell me, but excuse my asking the question. Your language and accent have about them a seasoning and a flavor of Christianity. You earnestly put aside from your speech everything unclean and you delight to speak words that honor Christ. If at any time in conversation there is a word said that seems to reflect upon the Lord Jesus, you are grieved at it and you would not repeat any sentiment or sentence that would dishonor Him. You are cautious and careful, too, about truth in your speech. You also desire to speak for

the good of others. Especially during the last few months you have been very particular, and your prayer has been, "Open You my lips." You have been afraid of speaking those idle words for which God will bring men into judgment. Now, I do not know that you are Christ's disciple, but I suspect it, for a man is judged by his speech. We generally know what is in the well by what comes up in the bucket, and the metal of a bell can be pretty well judged by the stroke of the clapper. And I think we can form some estimate of who you must be when we perceive in your conversation the tone of a Christian, when we hear that you speak as one does whose heart has been renewed by Divine Grace. I shall, therefore, put the question to you, expecting an affirmative answer, "Are not you also one of His disciples?"

Further than this, Peter was recognized, I suspect, as having acted for his Lord, for the person who said, "Did not I see you in the garden with Him?" was a relative of him whose ear Peter had cut off. As for you, it is not long since you were angry when someone had blasphemed or spoken unkind words against one of God's servants, or against God's Gospel. I am not sure that you did well to be angry, but at any rate, it was a holy zeal that made you angry. Why, you were quite red in the face as you defended the Truth of God! I say again, I am not sure that you did well to be angry, but at any rate, while you were cutting off that fellow's ear with that sharp sword of yours, and dealing such hard blows for Christ—if I had been there to see you, I would have thought that you were one of His disciples—even though I would have known that your Master would not have wished you to use that sword, or to be so violent as you were. Yet your very zeal for Him though, perhaps, it was indiscreet, and perhaps not altogether what He could approve, showed that you really had some love to Him, some concern for His cause, some zeal for His Glory. Is it not so? Surely you are also one of His disciples! These things led them to suspect Peter, and these things lead us to suspect you.

One other thing, I doubt not there was about Peter, as he stood warming himself by the fire—he was especially interested in the fate of Jesus. Alas for him, he had so far forgotten himself that he tried, perhaps, to avoid showing that he took any particular interest in the trial. But I will guarantee you that those who could read faces could read something in Peter's face as it was lit up by the glare of the coals! When he heard them smite his Master with the palms of their hands upon His cheek, did you not see that tear roll down his face? He pretended he was brushing away a drop of sweat from his brow, but anyone who was watching him, especially one with the quick eyes of the maid that spoke, could see that it was a dewdrop of another sort that was falling from his eye!

Now, you have not said that you are a disciple of Christ, but have we not sometimes caught you unawares and read it in your face? The other Sunday, when we spoke of the Redeemer's sufferings, your soul was melted. When we talked of His glories, we could see how you exulted in the theme. And when the Gospel was freely preached to the chief of sinners, your eyes looked as if you understood it—and as if you loved it. Though, perhaps, even now, you would hardly venture to say, "I am saved," yet you experience a joy and delight in hearing the Truth of God which you would not have known if you had not been one of Christ's disciples—and a holy trembling and heart-searching under the Word of God that you would not have experienced unless you had been first of all quickened by the Spirit of His Grace. Yes, the countenance will often betray what is going on within—and those dear ones who are saved—I have no doubt they have observed about you a great many things and have compelled them cheerfully to say, "We believe So-and-So is a Christian. We can-

not doubt it. There is a something about his whole manner and conversation, his manner of speech, his mode of thought and style of action that betrays him as being a disciple of Christ."

Now, Beloved Friend, I cannot follow you home and judge as to your secret life, but I will put this question to you in various ways, in which, of course, I must leave Simon Peter out of the question. You have lately put your trust in Christ Jesus, alone. That is to say, if you have not done so, or if you are not sure you have done so, at any rate you have not any other trust and all the trust you have is set on Him. You see that there is an end of all perfection in the flesh and you are looking for the perfection which He gave to His people when He finished His atoning Sacrifice and sat down at the right hand of God. Though you cannot see much light, yet you know that there is no light except in Him and you have cast away forever that false light in which you once rejoiced. Well, I am glad, and I am inclined to put to you the question, "Are not you also one of His disciples?"

You have lately begun to pray and that not as a matter of form. You have left off that form you once repeated and now you pray from your very heart. Sometimes you cannot pray as you would—in fact, you never do make your petition quite such as you desire. Still, you pray as well as you can, with groans and tears and longings that you may be taught how to pray better. Well, I never yet heard of a praying soul that was not one of Christ's disciples! It was a token that Saul of Tarsus was a convert to Christ when it was said, "Behold, he prays." So I will put to you the question, since you utter the living prayer of a truly earnest soul, "Are not you also—despite your doubts, questions, and humble lamentations—are not you one of His disciples?"

Moreover, you now have an interest in the Word of God. The Bible was very dull to you once. A three-volume novel pleased you much better. But now anything that will tell you of your Lord and of His love, and will instruct you in His Truth—anything of that sort you care for—you have a hungering after it. Well, I have not yet known dead people become hungry and I do not know that I ever yet heard of a carrion crow that desired to feed on the food of the dove! I think there must be some change in you, or you would not love the clean winnowed grain which delights God's children. I am not sure about it, but still, I shall venture to put the question and believe that I know what answer you will give, "Are not you also one of His disciples?"

Besides, you know that there is a change in your life. As a child, you are now striving to honor your parents. As a tradesman, you have now left off many practices that you once allowed yourself to adopt. As a common man speaking to others, you are now more charitable in your words than you used to be. There are things that were once amusements to you which yielded you pleasure, but which have now become vanity of vanities to you. Now you know that when you rise in the morning, the thing you are most afraid of is that you should do wrong during the day—and if you are troubled at night, it is because you have done a wrong. And the matter that pains you about it most is not the loss of custom, but the loss of a peaceful conscience. Now, I think if you are all this, surely you are also one of Christ's disciples!

I have suggested many hopeful things that would lead me to think that you are His disciple, but if you are not, then assuredly you are His enemy! What do you think of that? If I should make a list of this congregation and should write down all the disciples of Christ, (supposing I were able to do that), and if my pen were just about to be withdrawn from the paper, could you bear that I should say, "I am about to close this roll. I have written down all the disciples of Christ here. I have finished the list, and your name is not there"? I am sure you would say, "Oh, stay your hand a while, Sir! I was afraid I was not one of His, but now it comes to the push, I dare not withhold my name!" And I am certain that if I were then to take another roll and to begin to write down the names of all those who did not believe in Jesus, you would say, "Oh, no, do not do that! Stop a moment. Do not let my name be written down there! I could not stand that, for I think I am not quite His enemy. At any rate, I long to be His disciple."

I sometimes wish you would push yourself into this corner. If it came to the point, Beloved—if it really came to the point—some of you who have said, "I am afraid I do not love Him," because you do not love Him as you ought. Some of you who have said, "I am afraid I do not trust Him," because you have some doubts and some fears, I have no doubt that if it came to the point, notwithstanding all things, God would lead you to trust Him and to rejoice in Him! Remember that story of one of the martyrs who had been condemned to die for Christ, and who, about a week before he died, was full of fear and trembling? He was afraid of the fire and much cast down by the prospect of being burned. There was a fellow prisoner with him who scolded him for it and told him that he ought to trust in God, that he ought not to be dismayed, and ought not to be cast down. When the day came for them to burn together, the poor, weak, trembling man stood on the firewood and he said, before the fire was kindled, "Oh, He has come! He has come! He has come and He has filled my soul with His Presence!" He died triumphantly, while the other man, who had scolded him for his lack of faith, recanted at the last moment and became a traitor to the Truth of God. The Lord will help you if you are but right toward Him. Still, I pray that you may be delivered from every question about whether you are His disciple or not.

II. Now, having thus uttered my suspicions about some of you, I shall, in the second place, demand from those of you who seem to be Christ's disciples, **WHY DO YOU NOT ACT AS IF YOU WERE A DISCIPLE?** "Are not you also one of His disciples?"

Why, then, are you not sharing His reproach? Peter is standing there warming his hands, looking to his personal comfort. His Master is over yonder being despised and rejected, maltreated and smitten. If you are one of His disciples, Peter, is this the place for you—among the ribald crowd around the fire? Is not your proper place at your Lord's side, to be laughed at as He is, falsely accused as He is, and buffeted as He is? I may be speaking to some who love Christ, or are to be suspected of it, but they have never borne His reproach. You are not numbered with any Christian Church because well, it is not a very respectable thing in the circle in which you move! You have not professed those Truths of God which you have believed because it would render you extremely unpopular if you did! You have not said in your household, "I am a Christian," because it is clear to you that your husband might not like it, or that your father might not have patience with it. You have slunk into the workshop and you have hidden your colors and you have been comfortable with ungodly men—and when they have uttered hard things about Christ, though you have not liked what they said, you have not expressed your disapproval—and so your silence gave consent to them.

"Are not you also one of His disciples," and do you refuse to share the reproach of Christ? Have you forgotten Moses, who, though he might have been like a king in Egypt, yet took his place with the poor despised, enslaved Israelites, "esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt"? Can you not take your place with Christ's poor people? Are you ashamed of them because they are not titled and rich, or because their literary standing is not very high? Are you ashamed of them because other people misrepresent and slander them? Has the offense of the Cross ceased? Do you expect that true Christianity will ever be fashionable? Do you believe for a moment, in your heart, that Christ spoke a lie when He said to His disciples, "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves"? If there is a religion concerning which all men speak well, woe be unto it, for it cannot be the religion of Christ! Do you not know that the way to Heaven is upstream? The current runs downward to the Gulf of Destruction! Are you not willing to take the Cross and go against popular opinion—and against everything else that is necessary for Christ's sake?

The day comes when they who have been ashamed of His Cross will find themselves losing His crown. "No Cross, no crown." This is what Christ, Himself, says "Whoever shall be ashamed of Me and of My Words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed when He shall come in His own Glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels." If you dare not follow Him because you fear shame—shame shall be your perpetual inheritance! Remember that verse, "But the fearful, and unbelieving...shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone: which is the second death." Oh, that we may never be among those cowards, for those are the persons He means, not the fearing ones, but the fearful ones who dare not be reproached for Him! Is there listening to these words one who loves his Lord and knows the Truth, and knows where God's Church is, but has been afraid to join His people—ashamed to confess the Truth and to follow Christ? I come to you with this word and I would gladly look you in the face and say, "Are not you also one of His disciples?" Yet you go in and out with the ungodly and you warm your hands at their fire! And you are mirthful with their jollity and you are pleased with their ungodliness. "Come out from among them, and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing." Confess Christ before men that He may confess you before His Father and the angels in Heaven!

Again, if you are among Christ's disciples, why are you not witnessing for Him? It was not only that Peter was not sharing His shame, but that when Christ was on trial, it was due to Him that every person who could have spoken a good word for Him should do it—but everyone was silent. When Christ said, "I spoke openly," Peter might have said, "Yes, I have heard all He said and I have never heard Him utter sedition or blasphemy! Nothing of the kind has ever come from my Master's lips. If anything has been spoken in secret, I have been there. I have been with John and James in the most select circle of all His disciples and thus, too, I can bear witness that He is innocent." But, no, Peter is silent and instead of witnessing he denies his Master!

It is the duty of every Christian to be witnessing for Christ. Jesus is still on trial every day. He stands before the world, as it were, at this very hour, and the question is—Is He the Son of God or not? Witnesses are being examined every day for Him and against Him. "What do you think of Christ?" is a question which is stirring all this city and all lands, more or less! And now shall He who claims to be the Savior of men and the Head of the Church—shall He, while so many speak against Him, lack the evidence of anyone who knows Him, who has been with Him and loves Him? There are some of us who find it sweet to witness for Him that He is the very Christ of God—and we do not take any honor to ourselves for so doing—for flesh and blood have not revealed it to us!

But is anyone keeping back his testimony? "Why," asks one "what would my testimony be worth?" You do not know what it would be worth. "Nobody would notice me. I am only a humble woman in my family." What? Have you no desire that your family should know the Truth of God? Have you one little child on your knee, and have you never put your arms about that little one's neck and prayed that she might belong to Jesus, or that the boy might be the Savior's? Have you never told those darlings of yours what Christ has done for you? You could not do it, do you say? Not talk to your own child of what is written in your own heart concerning your own Lord? Ah, if you cannot, cry to God against such a disability and be not satisfied till you have conquered your unholy shame, for unholy it is! If you are also one of His disciples, bear your witness to Him, even if it is but one who can hear it! If that one is all the congregation that God sends you, you have done your part. I am not accountable for the people that hear me, but only for the witness that I bear! And you shall not be accountable for the largeness or smallness of your sphere, but for the faithfulness of your testimony for Christ. Tell all with whom you come in contact that He is your Savior, a precious Savior, a true Promiser, a Promise-Keeper, a faithful Friend, a Helper in life and in death! And I

say again you know not what may be the value of your testimony, for if it is borne but to a child, that child may grow up to bear testimony to tens of thousands! You know not what may come of a spark of fire. Do but let it drop and you may set half a continent on a blaze! "Are not you also one of His disciples?" If you are, then bear your witness as well as take up your cross!

Now, diverging a little from what some of you will think most practical, let me ask, "Are not you also one of His disciples?" Then why are you not enjoying the privileges which belong to His disciples? You have not been baptized! Yet He who said, "Believe," also said, "Be baptized." It is written of some, "These are they which follow the Lamb wherever He goes." I ask you, did not the Lamb go down into the Jordan? Was He not baptized? Have you followed Him wherever He goes? If You have not done so, in being disobedient to His will you have lost a great privilege! There is His Supper, too. 'Tis but an outward form, as the other ordinance is. Both are but emblems, but still the Lord has been pleased to say, "This do in remembrance of Me," and He often gives to His people very sweet manifestations of Himself in the breaking of bread. You are one of His disciples, or at least I suspect you are—but You have never been to the Lord's Table!

"There are others that can observe those things," you say. Stop! Suppose it is right for any one Christian to neglect the ordinances of God's House? Clearly there can be no exceptional privileges—it would, therefore, be right for all Christians to neglect these two ordinances! You are not a member of any Christian Church, but you think you are right in standing alone. If you are, so would all be! And clearly, the visible Church would become extinct—but it could never have been the Lord's intention that it should be so! He has not ordained that His people should live as individuals alone. He calls Himself a Shepherd, because sheep are gregarious. They gather together and they make a flock in a fold, and He would have His people so. If He had called them by the name of some other creature, it might be supposed that they would go to Heaven separately and alone—but He calls them His flock and that signifies fellowship—union.

If you are right, then we should all be right in doing as you do. And where and how could the means of Grace be maintained? Would not almost the very preaching of the Gospel become extinct? For the Church of God "is the pillar and ground of the Truth," by which is meant, I suppose, that, as in the Roman forum there were certain pillars upon which the decrees of the Senate were put up, so the Church is a pillar upon which God hangs up the Gospel—and its proclamation of the Gospel to the sons of men is the pillar and ground upon which God exhibits the Gospel to all onlookers. And truly it must be so. It is the Church's business to evangelize the world and to maintain Christ's ordinances. But where would the Church be to do this if all Christians were to be allowed to remain separate from the Church? Your business is to find some company of Believers, unite yourself with them and enjoy the privileges which Christ has given, such as His two ordinances of Baptism, and the Lord's Supper—and all the other blessings which belong to the Church as constituted in His name. "Are not you also one of His disciples?" His disciples meet to remember Him and some of you turn your backs! They gather around His Table and feed upon the bread and wine which are emblems of Him, but you go away and seem to say, "We do not need these emblems. Christ has instituted an ordinance which we do not require, we can do without it. We are so spiritual that we do not need it." O Sirs, say not so! If you are one of His disciples, do as He bids you!

But now a more cheering thought with which to close. "Are not you also one of His disciples?" Then why are you not resting in His love, in His Grace and in His power? You came in here tonight with a burden upon your spirit which is crushing you into the very dust. You are low and depressed and miserable, and people in the house where you live know it—and yet they know that you are a professed Christian! "Are not you also one of His disciples?" and did not He say, "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not,

neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them...Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these...Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? Or, What shall we drink?" You also are one of His disciples and yet you are vexing yourself with cares and troubles just like a heathen and a publican! Oh, but you have lost a friend, a child, a husband, or a father—and you are crushed into the very dust! You now have no hope and you are angry with your God—and yet Christ said, "Not as I will, but as You will." "Are not you also one of His disciples?" Is this like your Master? He drank the gall cup and you put it away and fight against your God!

"But I am afraid of a trial that is coming upon me," you say. Yet Paul said, "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." Your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things! And you, one of His disciples, are fearing for the future? O Friend, O Friend, does this become you? Is this right? I have come, just now, from the bedside of a dearly-beloved friend to whom I have already referred. Strange as it is, he has been unconscious two days to everybody else, but the moment he hears my voice, he opens his eyes and says, "Oh, how happy I am to see your face once again, my dear pastor!" And then he begins to pour out a blessed torrent of adoration and praise to his God! Barely alive and yet he says he is the happiest man alive and Christ is more precious to him than ever! He is gently sinking away rejoicing. He says he is as happy as ever he was in his life and, he thinks, more happy, though the death-gurgle is in his throat and he can scarcely breathe.

And you are afraid to die, are you? You are a disciple of that blessed Lord who is helping our dear Brother to die, but you think He will not help you, too? Why, thousands of His people have closed their eyes on earth, only to open them in Heaven! Thousands have died triumphantly! Thousands have passed through the River of Death calmly rejoicing in Jesus! And you also are one of the disciples of the same Master, the same Master who can—

"Make a dying bed Feel soft as downy pillows are"— the same Master who has said, "Fear you not, for I am with you: be not dismayed, for I am your God." Yet you cannot trust Him who has been so faithful to others—yes, and let me also say, who has been so faithful to you up till now! Oh, if you are, indeed, His disciple, go and put that aching head of yours right on the bosom of your Lord, for within that bosom palpitates a heart that never changes and that never fails one of His disciples! Go and rest there. You may rest, for it is well—it will be well with you for the present, for the future, for time, for eternity! If you are one of His disciples, take His yoke upon you and learn of Him! Like He, be meek and lowly of heart, and you shall find rest unto your soul. Remember that it is not your place to question what God does, nor to arraign Him at your bar. Your duty is not to say, "My will be done," but to remember that "it is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master, and the servant as his

Lord."

I trust the questions I have put to you, my Hearers, will not be lost upon you. It may strike you that it is not necessary to answer at once whether you are Christ's disciple or not, but it will be very necessary to answer that question soon. I have lately been struck beyond measure with the fact of our mortality and the suddenness with which many of our friends depart out of this world. I heard, only this last week, "Brother So-and-So walked into my shop on Thursday. On the Sunday I heard that he was dead." "Sister So-and-So was at the Communion service, and within 48 hours she died." This is the world of the dying! You seem to be passing before me in a procession and I, too, am part of the procession, myself! Oh, make

sure work for eternity! Run no risk concerning your souls—not even this night's risk, for this night, at midnight, without a knock at your door there may come the messenger saying, "Prepare to meet your God." And

then—and then, it will matter if you are Christ's disciple, or not! It will not matter, then, whether you have been rich or not, educated or not—but it will matter for all eternity whether you are His or not, for remember the division—"These shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal." God grant that you then may be with the company of the disciples of Jesus for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: JOHN 18:12-27.

Verses 12, 13. Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus and bound Him, and led Him away to Annas first; for he was father-in-law to Caiaphas, who was the high priest that same year. [See Sermons #2820, Volume 49—

CHRIST BEFORE ANNAS and #2822, Volume 49—CHRIST IN BONDS.] Annas had

been high priest before, and he seems to have been still regarded as high priest and to have been a leading spirit among the adversaries of Christ. The old sinner would not go to bed that night until he had seen the Man whom he hated brought bound before him. Sometimes hatred becomes a more powerful passion than even love, and here, while the disciples of Jesus all fled in terror, Annas, the Savior's bitter foe, was wide awake and awaiting His arrival with those who had taken Him captive.

14. Now Caiaphas was he who gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people. Therein uttering a prophecy which he did not fully understand, speaking like another Balaam through whom God spoke His Truth, as once He did through the ass that Balaam rode! Sometimes God makes the basest men the unconscious utterers of His Truth which they do not, themselves, comprehend.

15. And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple. Here is John's usual modesty—he will not mention his own name, but simply speaks of "another disciple."

15, 16. That disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest. But Peter stood at the door outside. John boldly followed Jesus and so was safe. Peter stood at a distance from his Lord and so was in danger.

16-18. Then went out that other disciple who was known unto the high priest and spoke unto those whom kept the door and brought in Peter. Then said the damsel that kept the door, unto Peter, Are not you also one of this Man's disciples? He said, I am not. And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals, for it was cold: and they warmed themselves; and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself Peter was in bad company. While he was warming his body, his soul was growing cold to his Master. Men cannot go into bad company without getting some hurt. It is said by a quaint old writer that if men go to Ethiopia, they may not become Ethiopians, but by the scorching of the sun they will grow blacker than they were before. It is always better to keep out of harm's way if we can. He that would not fall into a ditch should take care not to walk near the edge of it. So, if Peter wanted to stand fast, he should not have gone where he would be sure to be tempted.

19. The high priest then asked Jesus of His disciples, and of His Doctrine. This was a sort of preliminary examination before the Sanhedrin should try Him officially.

20-22. Jesus answered him, I spoke openly to the world; I taught in the synagogue and in the Temple, where the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why do you ask Me? Ask them who heard Me what I have said to them: behold they know what I said. And when He had thus spoken one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand saying, Answer You the high priest so? Here we get an exposition of one of Christ's own sayings. You know that He said, "Whoever shall smite you on your right cheek, turn to him the other, also." Of course Christ would carry out His own precept, so we see that He did not mean that His disciples were literally to turn the other cheek to those who struck them, but that they were to bear such treatment patiently, and not to give a railing answer. See how Jesus Himself turned the other cheek.

23. Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why do you strike Me? Nothing could have been more calm or more dignified and, at the same time, more full of the spirit of forgiveness.

24-27. Now Annas had Him sent bound to Caiaphas the high priest. And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, Are not you also one of His disciples? He denied it, and said, I am not. One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, said, Did not I see you in the garden with Him? [See Sermon

#2106, Volume 35—"IN THE GARDEN WITH HIM".] Peter then denied

again: and immediately the cock cre . We know that the Lord turned and looked upon Peter. He did not speak a word, perhaps lest Peter should fall into the hands of those who were round about him—but His look was sufficient to kindle in Peter the fires of repentance—and he went out to weep bitterly over his shameful denial of his Lord.

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