

The Procession of Sorrow

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon vividly portrays Christ's sorrowful procession to the cross as the ultimate act of substitutionary suffering for humanity's sins, urging believers to identify with His shame and bear reproach for His sake.

Scripture: John 19:16, Isaiah 53:4-6, Hebrews 13:12, Luke 23:26, 2 Corinthians 12:9, Matthew 27:29

Topics: "Substitutionary Atonement", "Suffering of Christ", "Christian Discipleship"

Description

In 'The Procession of Sorrow,' C.H. Spurgeon powerfully expounds on the solemn journey of Jesus Christ to the cross, emphasizing His substitutionary suffering and the shame He endured for sinners. Spurgeon contrasts the worldly honors given to earthly princes with the scorn and pain borne by the King of kings. This sermon calls believers to identify with Christ's sufferings, expect rejection, and bear His reproach faithfully as they follow Him.

Transcript

“And they took Jesus, and led him away.”—John 19:16.

NEXT SATURDAY ALL EYES will be fixed on a great Prince who shall ride through our streets with his Royal Bride. To-day I invite your attention to another Prince, marching in another fashion through his metropolis. London shall see the glory of the one: Jerusalem beheld the shame of the other. Come hither, ye lovers of Immanuel, and I will show you this great sight—the King of sorrow marching to his throne of grief, the cross. I claim for the procession of my Lord an interest superior to the pageant you are now so anxiously expecting. Will your Prince be sumptuously arrayed? Mine is adorned with garments crimsoned with his own blood. Will your Prince be decorated with honors? Behold, my King is not without his crown—alas, a crown of thorns set with ruby drops of blood! Will your thoroughfares be thronged? So were the streets of Jerusalem; for great multitudes followed him. Will ye raise a clamor of tumultuous shouting? Such a greeting had the Lord of glory, but alas, it was not the shout of welcome, but the yell of “Away with him! away with him.” High in the air ye bid your banners wave about the heir of England's throne, but how shall ye rival the banner of the sacred cross, that day for the first time borne among the sons of men. For the thousands of eyes which shall gaze upon the youthful Prince, I offer the gaze of men and angels. All nations gathered about my Lord, both great and mean men clustered around his person. From the sky the angels viewed him with wonder and amazement; the spirits of the just looked from the windows of heaven upon the scene, yea, the great God and Father watched each movement of his suffering Son. But ye ask me where is the spouse, the king's daughter fair and beautiful? My Lord is not

altogether without his espoused one. The Church, the bride of Christ, was there conformed to the image of her Lord; she was there, I say, in Simon, bearing the cross, and in the women weeping and lamenting. Say not that the comparison is strained, for in a moment I will withdraw it and present the contrast. Grant me only thus much of likeness: we have here a Prince with his bride, bearing his banner, and wearing his royal robes, traversing the streets of his own city, surrounded by a throng who shout aloud, and a multitude who gaze with interest profound. But how vast was the disparity! The most careless eye discerns it. Yonder young Prince is ruddy with the bloom of early youth and health; my Master's visage is more marred than that of any man. See, it has been blackened with bruises, and stained with the shameful spittle of them that derided him. Your heir of royalty is magnificently drawn along the streets in his stately chariot, sitting at his ease: my princely sufferer walks with weary feet, marking the road with crimson drops; not borne, but bearing; not carried, but carrying his cross. Your Prince is surrounded by a multitude of friends; hark how they joyously welcome him! And well they may; the son of such noble parents deserves a nation's love. But my Prince is hated without a cause. Hark how their loud voices demand that he should be hastened to execution! How harshly grate the cruel syllables, "Crucify him! crucify him!" Your noble Prince is preparing for his marriage: mine is hastening to his doom. Oh, shame that men should find so much applause for Princes and none for the King of kings. Yet, dear friends, to some eyes there will be more attraction in the procession of sorrow, of shame, and of blood, than in your display of grandeur and joy. Oh! I pray you, lend your ears to such faint words as I can utter on a subject all too high for me, the march of the world's Maker along the way of his great sorrow; your Redeemer traversing the rugged path of suffering, along which he went with heaving heart and heavy footsteps, that he might pave a royal road of mercy for his enemies.

I. After our Lord Jesus Christ had been formally condemned by Pilate, our text tells us he was led away. I invite your attention to CHRIST AS LED FORTH.

Pilate, as we reminded you, scourged our Savior according to the common custom of Roman courts. The lictors executed their cruel office upon his shoulders with their rods and scourges, until the stripes had reached the full number. Jesus is formally condemned to crucifixion, but before he is led away he is given over to the Praetorian guards that those rough legionaries may insult him. It is said that a German regiment was at that time stationed in Judea, and I should not wonder if they were the lineal ancestors of those German theologians of modern times who have mocked the Savior, tampered with revelation, and cast the vile spittle of their philosophy into the face of truth. The soldiery mocked and insulted him in every way that cruelty and scorn could devise. The platted crown of thorns, the purple robe, the reed with which they smote him, and the spittle with which they disfigured him, all these marked the contempt in which they held the King of the Jews. The reed was no mere rush from the brook, it was of a stouter kind, of which easterns often make walkingstaves, the blows were cruel as well as insulting; and the crown was not of straw but thorn, hence it produced pain as well as pictured scorn. When they had mocked him they pulled off the purple garment he had worn, this rough operation would cause much pain. His wounds unstaunched and raw, fresh bleeding from beneath the lash, would make this scarlet robe adhere to him, and when it was dragged off; his gashes would bleed anew. We do not read that they removed the crown of thorns, and therefore it is most probable, though not absolutely certain, that our Savior wore it along the Via Dolorosa, and also bore it upon his head when he was fastened to the cross. Those pictures which represent our Lord as wearing the crown of thorns upon the tree have therefore at least some scriptural warrant. They put his own clothes upon him, because they were the perquisites of the executioner, as modern hangmen take the garments of those whom they execute, so did the four soldiers claim a right to his raiment. They put on him his own clothes that the multitudes might discern him to be the same man,

the very man who had professed to be the Messiah. We all know that a different dress will often raise a doubt about the identity of an individual; but lo! the people saw him in the street, not arrayed in the purple robe, but wearing his garment without seam, woven from the top throughout, the common smock-frock, in fact, of the countrymen of Palestine, and they said at once, "Yes, 'tis he, the man who healed the sick, and raised the dead; the mighty teacher who was wont to sit upon the mountain-top, or stand in the temple courts and preach with authority, and not as the Scribes." There can be no shadow of doubt but that our Lord was really crucified, and no one substituted for him. How they led him forth we do not know. Romish expositors, who draw upon their prolific fancy for their facts, tell us that he had a rope about his neck with which they roughly dragged him to the tree; this is one of the most probable of their surmises, since it was not unusual for the Romans thus to conduct criminals to the gallows. We care, however, far more for the fact that he went forth carrying his cross upon his shoulders. This was intended at once to proclaim his guilt and intimate his doom. Usually the crier went before with an announcement such as this, "This is Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews, who for making himself a King, and stirring up the people, has been condemned to die." This cross was a ponderous machine; not so heavy, perhaps, as some pictures would represent it, but still no light burden to a man whose shoulders were raw with the lashes of the Roman scourge. He had been all night in agony, he had spent the early morning at the hall of Caiaphas, he had been hurried, as I described to you last Sunday, from Caiaphas to Pilate, from Pilate to Herod, and from Herod back again to Pilate; he had, therefore, but little strength left, and you will not wonder that by-and-bye we find him staggering beneath his load, and that another is called to bear it with him. He goes forth, then, bearing his cross.

What learn we here as we see Christ led forth? Do we not see here the truth of that which was set forth in shadow by the scape-goat? Did not the high-priest bring the scape-goat, and put both his hands upon its head, confessing the sins of the people, that thus those sins might be laid upon the goat? Then the goat was led away by a fit man into the wilderness, and it carried away the sins of the people, so that if they were sought for, they could not be found. Now we see Jesus brought before the priests and rulers, who pronounce him guilty; God himself imputes our sins to him; he was made sin for us; and, as the substitute for our guilt, bearing our sin upon his shoulders—for that cross was a sort of representation in wood of our guilt and doom—we see the great Scape-goat led away by the appointed officers of justice. Bearing upon his back the sin of all his people, the offering goes without the camp. Beloved, can you say he carried your sin? As you look at the cross upon his shoulders does it represent your sin? Oh I raise the question, and be not satisfied unless you can answer it most positively in the affirmative. There is one way by which you can tell whether he carried your sin or not. Hast thou laid thy hand upon his head, confessed thy sin, and trusted in him? Then thy sin lies not on thee; not one single ounce or drachma of it lies on thee; it has all been transferred by blessed imputation to Christ, and he bears it on his shoulder in the form of yonder heavy cross. What joy, what satisfaction this will give if we can sing—

"My soul looks back to see

The burden thou didst bear,

When hastening to the accursed tree,

And knows her guilt was there!"

Do not let the picture vanish till you have satisfied yourselves once for all that Christ was here the substitute for you.

Let us muse upon the fact that Jesus was conducted without the gates of the city. It was the common place of death. That little rising ground, which perhaps was called Golgotha, the place of a skull, from its somewhat resembling the crown of a man's skull, was the common place of execution. It was one of Death's castles; here he stored his gloomiest trophies; he was the grim lord of that stronghold. Our great hero, the destroyer of Death, bearded the lion in his den, slew the monster in his own castle, and dragged the dragon captive from his own den. Methinks Death thought it a splendid triumph when he saw the Master impaled and bleeding in the dominions of destruction; little did he know that the grave was to be rifled, and himself destroyed, by that crucified Son of man.

Was not the Redeemer led thither to aggravate his shame? Calvary was like our Old Bailey; it was the usual place of execution for the district. Christ must die a felon's death, and it must be upon the felon's gallows, in the place where horrid crimes had met their due reward. This added to his shame; but, methinks, in this, too, he draws the nearer to us, "He was numbered with the transgressors, and bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

But further, my brethren; this, I think, is the great lesson from Christ's being slaughtered without the gate of the city—let us go forth, therefore, without the camp, bearing his reproach. You see there the multitude are leading him forth from the temple. He is not allowed to worship with them. The ceremonial of the Jewish religion denies him any participation in its pomps; the priests condemn him never again to tread the hallowed floors, never again to look upon the consecrated altars in the place of his people's worship. He is exiled from their friendship, too. No man dare call him friend now, or whisper a word of comfort to him. Nay more; he is banished from their society, as if he were a leper whose breath would be infectious whose presence would scatter plague. They force him without the walls, and are not satisfied till they have rid themselves of his obnoxious presence. For him they have no tolerance. Barrabas may go free; the thief and the murderer may be spared; but for Christ there is no word, but "Away with such a fellow from the earth! It is not fit that he should live." Jesus is therefore hunted out of the city, beyond the gate, with the will and force of his own nation, but he journeys not against his own will; even as the lamb goeth as willingly to the shambles as to the meadow, so doth Christ cheerfully take up his cross and go without the camp. See, brethren, here is a picture of what we may expect from men if we are faithful to our Master. It is not likely that we shall be able to worship with their worship. They prefer a ceremonial pompous and gaudy; the swell of music, the glitter of costly garments, the parade of learning all these must minister grandeur to the world's religion, and thus shut out the simple followers of the Lamb. The high places of earth's worship and honor are not for us. If we be true to our Master we shall soon lose the friendship of the world. The sinful find our conversation distasteful; in our pursuits the carnal have no interest; things dear to us are dross to worldlings, while things precious to them are contemptible to us. There have been times, and the days may come again, when faithfulness to Christ has entailed exclusion from what is called "society." Even now to a large extent the true Christian is like a Pariah, lower than the lowest caste, in the judgment of some. The world has in former days counted it God's service to kill the saints. We are to reckon upon all this, and should the worst befall us, it is to be no strange thing to us. These are silken days, and religion fights not so stern a battle. I will not say it is because we are unfaithful to our Master that the world is more kind to us, but I half suspect it is, and it is very possible that if we were more thoroughly Christians the world would more heartily detest us, and if we would cleave more closely to Christ we might expect to receive more slander, more abuse, less tolerance, and less favor from men. You young believers, who have lately followed Christ, should father and mother forsake you, remember you were bidden to reckon upon it; should brothers and sisters deride, you must put this down as part of the cost of being a Christian. Godly working-men, should your employers or your fellow-workers frown upon you;

wives, should your husbands threaten to cast you out, remember, without the camp was Jesus' place, and without the camp is yours. Oh! ye Christian men, who dream of trimming your sails to the wind, who seek to win the world's favor, I do beseech you cease from a course so perilous. We are in the world, but we must never be of it; we are not to be secluded like monks in the cloister, but we are to be separated like Jews among Gentiles; men, but not of men; helping, aiding, befriending, teaching, comforting, instructing, but not sinning either to escape a frown or to win a smile. The more manifestly there shall be a great gulf between the Church and the world, the better shall it be for both; the better for the world, for it shall be thereby warned; the better for the Church, for it shall be thereby preserved. Go ye, then, like the Master, expecting to be abused, to wear an ill-name, and to earn reproach; go ye, like him, without the camp.

II. Let us now gaze for awhile upon CHRIST CARRYING HIS CROSS.

I have shown you, believer, your position; let me now show you your service. Christ comes forth from Pilate's hall with the cumbrous wood upon his shoulder, but through weariness he travels slowly, and his enemies urgent for his death, and half afraid, from his emaciated appearance, that he may die before he reaches the place of execution, allow another to carry his burden. The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel, they cannot spare him the agonies of dying on the cross, they will therefore remit the labor of carrying it. They place the cross upon Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country. We do not know what may have been the color of alimony face, but it was most likely black. Simon was an African; he came from Cyrene. Alas poor African, thou hast been compelled to carry the cross even until now. Hail, ye despised children of the sun, ye follow first after the King in the march of woe. We are not sure that Simon was a disciple of Christ; he may have been a friendly spectator; yet one would think the Jews would naturally select a disciple if they could. Coming fresh from the country, not knowing what was going on, he joined with the mob, and they made him carry the cross. Whether a disciple then or not, we have every reason to believe that he became so afterwards; he was the father, we read, of Alexander and Rufus, two persons who appear to have been well known in the early Church; let us hope that salvation came to his house when he was compelled to bear the Savior's cross.

Dear friends, we must remember that, although no one died on the cross with Christ, for atonement must be executed by a solitary Savior, yet another person did carry the cross for Christ; for this world, while redeemed by price by Christ, and by Christ alone, is to be redeemed by divine power manifested in the sufferings and labors of the saints as well as those of Christ. Mark you, the ransom of men was all paid by Christ; that was redemption by price. But power is wanted to dash down those idols, to overcome the hosts of error; where is it to be found? In the Lord of Hosts, who shows his power in the sufferings of Christ and of his Church. The Church must suffer, that the gospel may be spread by her means. This is what the Apostle meant when he said, "I fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the Church." There was nothing behind in the price, but there is something behind in the manifested power, and we must continue to fill up that measure of revealed power, carrying each one of us the cross with Christ, till the last shame shall have been poured upon his cause, and he shall reign for ever and ever. We see in Simon's carrying the cross a picture of what the Church is to do throughout all generations. Mark then, Christian, Jesus does not suffer so as to exclude your suffering. He bears a cross, not that you may escape it, but that you may endure it. Christ does exempt you from sin, but not from sorrow; he does take the curse of the cross, but he does not take the cross of the curse away from you. Remember that, and expect to suffer.

Beloved, let us comfort ourselves with this thought, that in our case, as in Simon's, it is not our cross, but Christ's cross which we carry. When you are molested for your piety; when your religion brings the trial of

cruel mockings upon you; then remember, it is not your cross, it is Christ's cross; and how delightful is it to carry the cross of our Lord Jesus?

You carry the cross after him. You have blessed company; your path is marked with footprints of your Lord. If you will look, there is the mark of his blood-red shoulder upon that heavy cross. 'Tis his cross, and he goes before you as a shepherd goes before his sheep. Take up your cross daily and follow him.

Do not forget, also, that you bear this cross in partnership. It is the opinion of some commentators that Simon only carried one end of the cross, and not the whole of it. That is very possible; Christ may have carried the heavier end, against the transverse beam, and Simon may have borne the lighter end. Certainly it is so with you; you do but carry the light end of the cross; Christ bore the heavier end.

"His way was much rougher and darker than mine;

Did Christ, my Lord, suffer, and shall I repine?"

Rutherford says, "Whenever Christ gives us a cross, he cries, 'Halves, my love.'" Others think that Simon carried the whole of the cross. If he carried all the cross, yet he only carried the wood of it; he did not bear the sin which made it such a load. Christ did but transfer to Simon the outward frame, the mere tree; but the curse of the tree, which was our sin and its punishment, rested on Jesus' shoulders still. Dear friend, if you think that you suffer all that a Christian can suffer; if all God's billows roll over you, yet, remember, there is not one drop of wrath in all your sea of sorrow. Jesus took the wrath; Jesus carried the sin; and now all that you endure is but for his sake, that you may be conformed unto his image, and may aid in gathering his people into his family.

Although Simon carried Christ's cross, he did not volunteer to do it, but they compelled him. I fear me, beloved, I fear me that the most of us if we ever do carry it, carry it by compulsion, at least when it first comes on to our shoulders we do not like it, and would fain run from it, but the world compels us to bear Christ's cross. Cheerfully accept this burden, ye servants of the Lord. I do not think we should seek after needless persecution. That man is a fool and deserves no pity, who purposely excites the disgust of other people. No, no; we must not make a cross of our own. Let there be nothing but your religion to object to, and then if that offends them let them be offended, it is a cross which you must carry joyfully.

Though Simon had to bear the cross for a very little while, it gave him lasting honor. I do not know how far it was from Pilate's house to the Mount of Doom. Romanists pretend to know; in fact they know the very spot where Veronica wiped the blessed face with her handkerchief, and found his likeness impressed upon it; we also know very well where that was not done; in fact they know the very spot where Jesus fainted, and if you go to Jerusalem you can see all these different places if you only carry enough credulity with you; but the fact is the city has been so razed, and burned, and ploughed, that there is little chance of distinguishing any of these positions, with the exception, it may be, of Mount Calvary, which being outside the walls may possibly still remain. The Via Dolorosa, as the Romanists call it, is a long street at the present time, but it may have been but a few yards. Simon had to carry the cross but for a very little time, yet his name is in this Book for ever, and we may envy him his honor. Well, beloved, the cross we have to carry is only for a little while at most. A few times the sun will go up and down the hill; a few more moons will wax and wane, and then we shall receive the glory. "I reckon that these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." We should love the cross, and count it very dear, because it works out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Christians, will you refuse to be cross-bearers for Christ? I am ashamed of some professed

Christians, heartily ashamed of them! Some of them have no objection to worship with a poor congregation till they grow rich, and then, forsooth, they must go with the world's church, to mingle with fashion and gentility. There are some who in company hold their tongues, and never say a good word for Christ. They take matters very gently; they think it unnecessary to be soldiers of the cross. "He that taketh not up his cross and followeth not after me," says Christ, "is not worthy of me." Some of you will not be baptized because you think people will say, "He is a professor; how holy he ought to be." I am glad the world expects much from us, and watches us narrowly. All this is a blessed clog upon us, and a means of keeping us more near the Lord. Oh! you that are ashamed of Christ, how can you read that text, "He that is ashamed of me, and of my words, of him will I be ashamed when I come in the glory of my Father, and all my holy angels with me." Conceal your religion? Cover it with a cloak? God forbid! Our religion is our glory; the Cross of Christ is our honor, and, while not ostentatiously parading it, as the Pharisees do, we ought never to be so cowardly as to conceal it. "Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing." Take up your cross, and go without the camp, following your Lord, even until death.

III. I have now a third picture to present to you—CHRIST AND HIS MOURNERS.

As Christ went through the streets, a great multitude looked on. In the multitude there was a sparse sprinkling of tender-hearted women, probably those who had been healed, or whose children had been blessed by him. Some of these were persons of considerable rank; many of them had ministered to him of their substance; amidst the din and howling of the crowd, and the noise of the soldiery, they raised an exceeding loud and bitter cry, like Rachel weeping for her children, who would not be comforted, because they were not. The voice of sympathy prevailed over the voice of scorn. Jesus paused, and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me; but weep for yourselves and for your children." The sorrow of these good women was a very proper sorrow; Jesus did not by any means forbid it, he only recommended another sorrow as being better; not finding fault with this, but still commending that. Let me show what I think he meant. Last Sunday the remark was made to me—"If the story of the sufferings of Christ had been told of any other man, all the congregation would have been in tears." Some of us, indeed, confess that, if we had read this narrative of suffering in a romance, we should have wept copiously, but the story of Christ's sufferings does not cause the excitement and emotion one would expect. Now, I am not sure that we ought to blame ourselves for this. If we weep for the sufferings of Christ in the same way as we lament the sufferings of another man, our emotions will be only natural, and may work no good. They would be very proper, very proper; God forbid that we should stay them, except with the gentle words of Christ, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me." The most Scriptural way to describe the sufferings of Christ is not by laboring to excite sympathy through highly-coloured descriptions of his blood and wounds. Romanists of all ages have wrought upon the feelings of the people in this manner, and to a degree the attempt is commendable, but if it shall all end in tears of pity, no good is done. I have heard sermons, and studied works by Romish writers upon the passion and agony, which have moved me to copious tears, but I am not clear that all the emotion was profitable. I show unto you a more excellent way.

What, then, dear friends, should be the sorrows excited by a view of Christ's sufferings? They are these—Weep not because the Savior bled, but because your sins made him bleed.

"Twere you my sins, my cruel sins,

His chief tormentors were;

Each of my grimes became a nail,

And unbelief the spear.”

When a brother makes confession of his transgressions, when on his knees before God he humbles himself with many tears, I am sure the Lord thinks far more of the tears of repentance than he would do of the mere drops of human sympathy. “Weep for yourselves,” says Christ, “rather than for me.”

The sufferings of Christ should make us weep over those who have brought that blood upon their heads. We ought not to forget the Jews. Those once highly favored people of God who cursed themselves with, “His blood be upon us and upon our children,” ought to make us mourn when we think of their present degradation. There are no passages in all the public ministry of Jesus so tender as those which have regard to Jerusalem. It is not sorrow over Rome, but Jerusalem. I believe there was a tenderness in Christ’s heart to the Jew of a special character. He loved the Gentile, but still Jerusalem was the city of the Great King. It was, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not!” He saw its streets flowing like bloody rivers; he saw the temple naming up to heaven; he marked the walls loaded with Jewish captives crucified by command of Titus; he saw the city razed to the ground and sown with salt, and he said, “Weep not for me, but for yourselves and for your children, for the day shall come when ye shall say to the rocks, Hide us, and to the mountains, Fall upon us.”

Let me add, that when we look at the sufferings of Christ, we ought to sorrow deeply for the souls of all unregenerate men and women. Remember, dear friends, that what Christ suffered for us, these unregenerate ones must suffer for themselves, except they put their trust in Christ. The woes which broke the Savior’s heart must crush theirs. Either Christ must die for me, or else I must die for myself the second death; if he did not carry the curse for me, then on me must it rest for ever and ever. Think, dear friends, there are some in this congregation who as yet have no interest in Jesu’s blood, some sitting next to you, your nearest friends who, if they were now to close their eyes in death, would open them in hell! Think of that! Weep not for him, but for these. Perhaps they are your children, the objects of your fondest love, with no interest in Christ, without God and without hope in the world! Save your tears for them; Christ asks them not in sympathy for himself. Think of the millions in this dark world! It is calculated that one soul passes from time into eternity every time the clock ticks! So numerous has the family of man now become, that there is a death every second; and when we know how very small a proportion of the human race have even nominally received the cross—and there is none other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved—oh! what a black thought crosses our mind! What a cataract of immortal souls dashes downwards to the pit every hour! Well might the Master say, “Weep not for me, but for yourselves.” You have, then, no true sympathy for Christ if you have not an earnest sympathy with those who would win souls for Christ. You may sit under a sermon, and feel a great deal, but your feeling is worthless unless it leads you to weep for yourselves and for your children. How has it been with you? Have you repented of sin? Have you prayed for your fellow men? If not, may that picture of Christ fainting in the streets lead you to do so this morning.

IV. In the fourth place, one or two words upon CHRIST’S FELLOW-SUFFERERS.

There were two other cross-bearers in the throng; they were malefactors; their crosses were just as heavy as the Lord’s, and yet, at least, one of them had no sympathy with him, and his bearing the cross only led to his death, and not to his salvation. This hint only. I have sometimes met with persons who have suffered

much; they have lost money, they have worked hard all their lives, or they have laid for years upon a bed of sickness, and they therefore suppose that because they have suffered so much in this life, they shall thus escape the punishment of sin hereafter. I tell you, sirs, that yonder malefactor carried his cross and died on it; and you will carry your sorrows, and be damned with them, except you repent. That impenitent thief went from the cross of his great agony—and it was agony indeed to die on a cross—he went to that place, to the flames of hell; and you, too, may go from the bed of sickness, and from the abode of poverty, to perdition, quite as readily as from the home of ease and the house of plenty. No sufferings of ours have anything to do with the atonement of sin. No blood but that which He has spilt, no groans but those which came from His heart, no suffering but that which was endured by Him, can ever make a recompense for sin. Shake off the thought, any of you who suppose that God will have pity on you because you have endured affliction. You must consider Jesus, and not yourself; turn your eye to Christ, the great substitute for sinners, but never dream of trusting in yourselves. You may think that this remark is not needed; but I have met with one or two cases where it was required; and I have often said I would preach a sermon for even one person, and, therefore, I make this remark, even though it should rebuke but one.

V. I close with THE SAVIOR'S WARNING QUESTION—"If they do these things in the green tree, what will they do in the dry?" Among other things methinks he meant this—"If I, the innocent substitute for sinners, suffer thus, what will be done when the sinner himself—the dry tree—whose sins are his own, and not merely imputed to him, shall fall into the hands of an angry God." Oh! ye unregenerate men and women, and there are not a few such here now, remember that when God saw Christ in the sinner's place he did not spare him, and when he finds you without Christ, he will not spare you. You have seen Jesus led away by his enemies; so shall you be dragged away by fiends to the place appointed for you. "Deliver him to the tormentors," was the word of the king in the parable; it shall be fulfilled to you—"Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Jesus was deserted of God; and if he, who was only imputedly a sinner, was deserted, how much more shall you be? "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani,"—what an awful shriek! But what shall be your cry when you shall say, "Good God! good God! why hast thou forsaken me?" and the answer shall come back, "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh." These are awful words, but they are not mine; they are the very words of God in Scripture. Oh! sinner, if God hides his face from Christ, how much less will he spare you! He did not spare his Son the stripes. Did I not describe last Sabbath the knotted scourges which fell upon the Saviours back? What whips of steel for you, what knots of burning wire for you, when conscience shall smite you, when the law shall scourge you with its ten-thonged whip! Oh! who would stand in your place, ye richest, ye merriest, ye most self-righteous sinners—who would stand in your place when God shall say, "Awake O sword against the rebel, against the man that rejected me; smite him, and let him feel the smart for ever!" Christ was spit upon with shame; sinner, what shame will be yours! The whole universe shall hiss you; angels shall be ashamed of you; your own friends, yes, your sainted mother, shall say "Amen" to your condemnation; and those who loved you best shall sit as assessors with Christ to judge you and condemn you! I cannot roll up into one word all the mass of sorrows which met upon the head of Christ who died for us, therefore it is impossible for me to tell you what streams, what oceans of grief must roll over your spirit if you die as you now are. You may die so, you may die now. There are more unlikely things than that you will be dead before next Sunday. Some of you will! It does not often happen that five or six thousand people meet together twice; it never does, I suppose; the scythe of death must cut some of you down before my voice shall warn you again! Oh! souls, I do beseech you, by the agonies of Christ, by his wounds and by his blood, do not bring upon yourselves the curse; do not bear in your own persons the awful wrath to come!

May God deliver you! Trust in the Son of God and you shall never die.

The Lord bless you, for Jesu's own sake. Amen.

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