

THE MAN OF SORROWS

NO. 1099

A SERMON

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 2, 1873

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

“A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.”

Isaiah 53:3

POSSIBLY a murmur will pass round the congregation, “This is a dreary subject and a mournful theme.” But O beloved, it is not so, for great as were the woes of our Redeemer, they are all over now and are to be looked back upon with sacred triumph. However severe the struggle, the victory has been won. The laboring vessel was severely tossed by the waves, but she has now entered into the desired haven.

Our Savior is no longer in Gethsemane agonizing or upon the cross expiring. The crown of thorns has been replaced by many crowns of sovereignty. The nails and the spear have given way to the sceptre. Nor is this all, for though the suffering is ended, the blessed results never end.

We may remember the travail, for the Man Child is born into the world. The sowing in tears is followed by a reaping in joy. The bruising of the heel of the woman's seed is well-recompensed by the breaking of the serpent's head. It is pleasant to hear of battles fought when a decisive victory has ended war and established peace.

So that the double reflection that all the work of suffering is finished by the Redeemer, and that, henceforth, He beholds the success of all His labors, we shall rejoice even while we enter into fellowship with His sufferings.

Let it never be forgotten that the subject of the sorrows of the Savior has proved to be more efficacious for comfort to mourners than any other theme in the compass of revelation or out of it. Even the glories of Christ afford no such consolation to afflicted spirits as the sufferings of Christ. Christ is in all attitudes the consolation of Israel, but He is most so as the man of sorrows.

Troubled spirits turn not so much to Bethlehem as to Calvary. They prefer Gethsemane to Nazareth. The afflicted do not so much look for comfort to Christ as He will come a second time in splendor of state, as to Christ as He came the first time, a weary man and full of woes. The passion-flower yields us the best perfume, the tree of the cross bleeds the most healing balm. Like in this case cures like, for there is no remedy for sorrow beneath the sun like the sorrows of Immanuel.

As Aaron's rod swallowed up all the other rods, so the griefs of Jesus make our griefs disappear. Thus you see that in the black soil of our subject, light is sown for the righteous, light which springs up for those who sit in darkness and in the region of the shadow of death. Let us go, then, without reluctance to the house of mourning and commune with “The Chief Mourner,” who above all others could say, “I am the man that hath seen affliction.”

We will not stray from our text this morning, but keep to it so closely as even to dwell upon each one of its words. The words shall give us our divisions—“A man.” “A man of sorrows.” “Acquainted with grief.”

I. “A MAN.”

There is no novelty to anyone here present in the doctrine of the real and actual manhood of the Lord Jesus Christ, but although there be nothing novel in it, there is everything important in it, therefore, let us hear it again. This is one of those Gospel church-bells which must be rung every Sabbath day. This is one of those provisions of the Lord's household, which, like bread and salt, should be put upon the table at every spiritual meal.

This is the manna which must fall every day round about the camp. We can never meditate too much upon Christ's blessed person as God and as man. Let us reflect that He who is here called a man was certainly "very God of very God." "A man," and "a man of sorrows," and yet at the same time, "God over all, blessed for ever."

He who was "despised and rejected of men" was beloved and adored by angels, and He, from whom men hid their faces in contempt, was worshipped by cherubim and seraphim. This is the great mystery of godliness. God was "manifest in the flesh." He who was God, and was in the beginning with God, was made flesh and dwelt among us.

The Highest stooped to become the lowest, the Greatest took His place among the least. Strange, and needing all our faith to grasp it, yet it is true that He who sat upon the well of Sychar and said, "Give me to drink," was none other than He who digged the channels of the ocean and poured into them the floods.

Son of Mary, You are also Son of JEHOVAH! Man of the substance of Your mother, You are also essential Deity. We worship You this day in spirit and in truth!

Remembering that Jesus Christ is God, it now behooves us to recollect that His manhood was none the less real and substantial. It differed from our own humanity in the absence of sin, but it differed in no other respect. It is idle to speculate upon a heavenly manhood, as some have done, who have, by their very attempt at accuracy, been borne down by whirlpools of error.

It is enough for us to know that the Lord was born of a woman, wrapped in swaddling bands, laid in a manger, and needed to be nursed by His mother as any other little child. He grew in stature like any other human being, and as a man we know that He ate and drank, that He hungered and thirsted, rejoiced and sorrowed.

His body could be touched and handled, wounded, and made to bleed. He was no phantasm, but a man of flesh and blood, even as ourselves—a man needing sleep, requiring food, and subject to pain. And a man who, in the end, yielded up His life to death. There may have been some distinction between His body and ours, for inasmuch as it was never defiled by sin, it was not capable of corruption

Otherwise in body and in soul, the Lord Jesus was perfect man after the order of our manhood, "made in the likeness of sinful flesh," and we must think of Him under that aspect. Our temptation is to regard the Lord's humanity as something quite different from our own. We are apt to spiritualize it away, and not to think of Him as really bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh.

All this is akin to grievous error. We may fancy that we are honoring Christ by such conceptions, but Christ is never honored by that which is not true. He was a man, a real man, a man of our race, the Son of Man. Indeed, a representative man, the second Adam, "As the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same." "He made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men."

Now this condescending participation in our nature brings the Lord Jesus very near to us in relationship. Inasmuch as He was man, though also God, He was, according to Hebrew law, our *goel*—our kinsman, next of kin. Now it was according to the law that if an inheritance had been lost, it was the right of the next of kin to redeem it.

Our Lord Jesus exercised His legal right, and seeing us sold into bondage, and our inheritance taken from us, He came forward to redeem both us and all our lost estate. A blessed thing it was for us that we had such a kinsman.

When Ruth went to glean in the fields of Boaz, it was the most gracious circumstance in her life that Boaz turned out to be her next of kin. And we who have gleaned in the fields of mercy praise the Lord that His only begotten Son is the next of kin to us. He is our Brother, born for adversity. It would not have been consistent with divine justice for any other substitution to have been accepted for us, except that of a man.

Man sinned and man must make reparation for the injury done to the divine honor. The breach of the law was caused by man and by man must it be repaired. Man had transgressed, man must be punished. It

was not in the power of an angel to have said, “I will suffer for man”—for angelic sufferings would have made no amends for human sins. But the man, the matchless man, being the representative man, and of right by kinship allowed to redeem, stepped in, suffered what was due, made amends to injured justice, and thereby set us free! Glory be unto His blessed name!

And now, beloved, since the Lord thus saw in Christ’s manhood a suitableness to become our Redeemer, I trust that many here who have been under bondage to Satan will see in that same human nature an attraction leading them to approach Him. Sinner, you have not to come to an absolute God, you are not bidden to draw nigh to the consuming fire.

You might well tremble to approach Him whom you have so grievously offended. But there is a man ordained to mediate between you and God, and if you would come to God, you must come through Him—the man Christ Jesus. God out of Christ is terrible out of His holy places. He will by no means spare the guilty—but look at yonder Son of man!

*“His hand no thunder bears,
No terror clothes His brow;
No bolts to drive your guilty souls
To fiercer flames below.”*

He is a man with hands full of blessing, eyes wet with tears of pity, lips overflowing with love, and a heart melting with tenderness. See you not the gash in His side?—through that wound there is a highway to His heart and he who needs His compassion may soon excite it.

O sinners! the way to the Savior’s heart is open and penitent seekers shall never be denied. Why should the most despairing be afraid to approach the Savior? He has deigned to assume the character of the Lamb of God—I never knew even a little child that was afraid of a lamb. The most timorous will approach a lamb, and Jesus used this argument when He said to every laboring and heavy-laden one, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.”

I know you feel yourselves sad and trembling, but need you tremble in *His* presence? If you are weak, your weakness will touch His sympathy, and your mournful inability will be an argument with His abounding mercy. If I were sick and might have my choice where I would lie, with a view to healing, I would say, “Place me where the best and kindest physician upon earth can see me. Put me where a man with great skill and equal tenderness will have me always beneath his eye. I shall not long groan there in vain—if he can heal me he will.”

Sinner, place yourself by an act of faith this morning beneath the cross of Jesus. Look up to Him and say, “Blessed Physician, You whose wounds for me can heal me, whose death for me can make me live, look down upon me! You are man, You know what man suffers. You are man, will You let a man sink down to hell who cries to You for help? You are a man, and You can save, and will You let a poor unworthy one who longs for Your mercy be driven into hopeless misery, while he cries to You to let Your merits save him?”

Oh, you guilty ones, have faith that you can reach the heart of Jesus. Sinner, fly to Jesus without fear. He waits to save, it is His office to receive sinners and reconcile them to God. Be thankful that you have not to go to God at the first, and as you are, but you are invited to come to Jesus Christ, and through Him to the Father. May the Holy Spirit lead you to devout meditation upon the humility of our Lord, and so may you find the door of life, the portal of peace, the gate of heaven!

Then let me add, before I leave this point, that every child of God ought also to be comforted by the fact that our Redeemer is one of our own race, seeing that He was made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest. And He was tempted in all points, like as we are, that He might be able to succor them that are tempted.

The sympathy of Jesus is the next most precious thing to His sacrifice. I stood by the bedside of a Christian Brother the other day, and he remarked, “I feel thankful to God that our Lord took our

sicknesses.” “Of course,” said he, “the grand thing was that He took our sins, but next to that, I, as a sufferer, feel grateful that He also took our sicknesses.”

Personally, I also bear witness that it has been to me, in seasons of great pain, superlatively comfortable to know that in every pang which racks His people, the Lord Jesus has a fellow-feeling. We are not alone, for one like unto the Son of man walks the furnace with us. The clouds which float over our sky have aforetime darkened the heavens for Him also—

*“He knows what strong temptations mean,
For He has felt the same.”*

How completely it takes the bitterness out of grief to know that it once was suffered by Him. The Macedonian soldiers, it is said, made long forced marches which seemed to be beyond the power of mortal endurance, but the reason for their untiring energy lay in Alexander’s presence. He was accustomed to walk with them and bear the like fatigue.

If the king himself had been carried like a Persian monarch in a palanquin, in the midst of easy, luxurious state, the soldiers would soon have grown tired. But when they looked upon the king of men himself, hungering when they hungered, thirsting when they thirsted, often putting aside the cup of water offered to him, and passing it to a fellow soldier who looked more faint than himself, they could not dream of repining. Why, every Macedonian felt that he could endure any fatigue if Alexander could

This day, assuredly, we can bear poverty, slander, contempt, or bodily pain, or death itself—because Jesus Christ our Lord has borne it. By His humiliation it shall become pleasure to be abased for His sake. By the spittle that distilled adown His cheeks, it shall become a fair thing to be made a mockery for Him. By the buffeting and the blindfolding, it shall become an honor to be disgraced, and by the cross it shall become life itself, to surrender life for the sake of such a cause and so precious a Master

May the man of sorrows now appear to us and enable us to bear our sorrows cheerfully. If there be consolation anywhere, surely it is to be found in the delightful presence of the Crucified, “A man shall be a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest.”

II. We must pass on to dwell for a while upon the next words, “A MAN OF SORROWS.”

The expression is intended to be very emphatic. It is not “a sorrowful man,” but “a man of sorrows,” as if He was made up of sorrows and they were constituent elements of His being. Some are men of pleasure, others men of wealth, but He was “a man of sorrows.” He and sorrow might have changed names. He who saw Him, saw sorrow, and he who would see sorrow, must look on Him. “Behold, and see,” says He, “if there was ever sorrow like unto my sorrow which was done unto me.”

Our Lord is called the man of sorrows for *peculiarity*, for this was His peculiar token and special mark. We might well call Him, “a man of holiness,” for there was no fault in Him. Or “a man of labors,” for He did His Father’s business earnestly. Or “a man of eloquence,” for never man spake like this man. We might right fittingly call Him in the language of our hymn, “The man of love,” for never was there greater love than glowed in His heart.

Still conspicuous as all these, and many other excellencies were, yet had we gazed upon Christ and been asked afterwards what was the most striking peculiarity in Him, we should have said His sorrows. The various parts of His character were so singularly harmonious that no one quality predominated so as to become a leading feature. In His moral portrait, the eye is perfect, but so is the mouth. The cheeks are as beds of spices, but the lips are as lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh.

In Peter, you see enthusiasm exaggerated at times into presumption, and in John, love for his Lord would call fire from heaven on his foes. Deficiencies and exaggerations exist everywhere but in Jesus. He is the perfect man, a whole man, and the Holy One of Israel. But there was a peculiarity, and it lay in the fact that “His visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men,” through the excessive griefs which continually passed over His spirit.

Tears were His insignia and the cross His escutcheon. He was the warrior in black armor, and not as now, the rider upon the white horse. He was the Lord of grief, the Prince of pain, the Emperor of anguish, a “man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.”

*“Oh! King of grief! (A title strange, yet true,
To Thee of all kings only due),
Oh! King of wounds! how shall I grieve for Thee,
Who in all grief preventest me?”*

Is not the title of “man of sorrows” given to our Lord by way of *eminence*? He was not only sorrowful, but pre-eminent among the sorrowful. All men have a burden to bear, but His was heaviest of all. Who is there of our race that is quite free from sorrows? Search you the whole earth through, and everywhere the thorn and thistle will be found, and these have wounded every one of woman born.

High in the lofty places of the earth there is sorrow, for the royal widow weeps her lord. Down in the cottage where we fancy that nothing but content can reign, a thousand bitter tears are shed over dire penury and cruel oppression. In the sunniest climes the serpent creeps among the flowers, in the most fertile regions poisons flourish as well as wholesome herbs.

Everywhere “men must work and women must weep.” There is sorrow on the sea and sadness on the land. But in this common lot, the “firstborn among many brethren” has more than a double portion, His cup is more bitter, His baptism more deep than the rest of the family. Common sufferers must give place, for none can match with Him in woe.

Ordinary mourners may be content to tear their garments, but He Himself is rent in His affliction. They sip at sorrow’s bowl, but He drains it dry. He who was the most obedient Son smarted most under the rod when He was stricken of God and afflicted. No other of the smitten ones have sweat great drops of blood, or in the same bitterness of anguish, cried, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

The reasons for this superior sorrow may be found in the fact that with His sorrow there was no admixture of sin. Sin deserves sorrow, but it also blunts the edge of grief by rendering the soul untender and unsympathetic. We do not start at sin as Jesus did, we do not tremble at the sinner’s doom as Jesus would.

His was a perfect nature, which, because it knew no sin, was not in its element amid sorrow, but was like a land bird driven out to sea by the gale. To the robber, the jail is his home, and the prison fare is the meat to which he is accustomed, but to an innocent man a prison is misery, and everything about it is strange and foreign.

Our Lord’s pure nature was peculiarly sensitive of any contact with sin. We, alas, by the Fall, have lost much of that feeling. In proportion as we are sanctified, sin becomes the source of wretchedness to us. Jesus, being perfect, every sin pained Him much more than it would any of us.

I have no doubt there are many persons in the world who could live merrily in the haunts of vice—could hear blasphemy without horror, view lust without disgust, and look on robbery or murder without abhorrence. But to many of us, an hour’s familiarity with such abominations would be the severest punishment.

A sentence in which the name of Jesus is blasphemed is torture to us of the most exquisite kind. The very mention of the shameful deeds of vice seizes us with horror. To live with the wicked would be a sufficient hell to the righteous. David’s prayer is full of agony wherein he cries, “Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men.”

But the perfect Jesus, what a grief the sight of sin must have caused Him! Our hands grow rough with toiling and our hearts with sinning—but our Lord was, as it were, like a man whose flesh was all one quivering wound. He was delicately sensitive of every touch of sin.

We go through thorn brakes and briars of sin, because we are clothed with indifference. But imagine a naked man, compelled to traverse a forest of briars—and such was the Savior, as to His moral

sensitiveness. He could see sin where we cannot see it and feel its heinousness as we cannot feel it. There was therefore more to grieve Him, and He was more capable of being grieved.

Side by side with His painful sensitiveness of the evil of sin was His gracious tenderness towards the sorrows of others. If we could know and enter into all the griefs of this congregation, it is probable that we should be of all men most miserable. There are heart-breaks in this house this morning, which, could they find a tongue, would fill our heart with agony.

We hear of poverty here, we see disease there, we observe bereavement, and we mark distress, we note the fact that men are passing into the grave, and (ah, far more bitter grief,) descending into hell. But somehow or other, either these become such common things that they do not stir us or else we gradually harden to them.

The Savior was always moved to sympathy with another's griefs, for His love was ever at flood-tide. All men's sorrows were His sorrows. His heart was so large that it was inevitable that He should become "a man of sorrows."

We recollect that besides this, our Savior had a peculiar relationship to sin. He was not merely afflicted with the sight of it, and saddened by perceiving its effects on others, but sin was actually laid upon Him, and He was numbered with the transgressors. And therefore He was called to bear the terrible blows of divine justice and suffered unknown, immeasurable agonies.

His Godhead strengthened Him to suffer, else mere manhood had failed. The wrath, whose power no man knows, spent itself on Him, "It pleased the Father to bruise him, he hath put him to grief." Behold the man, and mark how vain it would be to seek His equal sorrow.

The title of "man of sorrows" was also given to our Lord to indicate the *constancy* of His afflictions. He changed His place of abode, but He always lodged with sorrow. Sorrow wove His swaddling bands and sorrow spun His winding sheet. Born in a stable, sorrow received Him, and only on the cross at His last breath did sorrow part with Him.

His disciples might forsake Him, but His sorrow would not leave Him. He was often alone without a man, but never alone without a grief. From the hour of His baptism in Jordan, to the time of His baptism in the pains of death, He always wore the sable robe and was "a man of sorrows."

He was also "a man of sorrows," for the *variety* of His woes. He was a man not of sorrow only, but of "sorrows." All the sufferings of the body and of the soul were known to Him. The sorrows of the man who actively struggles to obey, the sorrows of the man who sits still and passively endures. The sorrows of the lofty He knew, for He was the King of Israel. The sorrows of the poor He knew, for He "had not where to lay His head."

Sorrows relative and sorrows personal, sorrows mental and sorrows spiritual. Sorrows of all kinds and degrees assailed Him. Affliction emptied his quiver upon Him, making His heart the target for all conceivable woes. Let us think a minute or two of some of those sufferings.

Our Lord was a man of sorrows as to His poverty. Oh, you who are in want, your want is not so abject as His—He had not where to lay His head, but you have at least some humble roof to shelter you. No one denies you a cup of water, but He sat upon the well at Samaria, and said, "I thirst." We read more than once that He hungered.

His toil was so great that He was constantly weary, and we read of one occasion where they took Him, "even as he was," into the ship—too faint was He to reach the boat Himself, but they carried Him as He was and laid Him down near the helm to sleep. But He had not much time for slumber, for they woke Him, saying, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?"

A hard life was His, with nothing of earthly comfort to make that life endurable. Remember, you who lament around the open grave, or weep in memory of graves newly filled—our Savior knew the heart-rendings of bereavement. Jesus wept as He stood at the tomb of Lazarus.

Perhaps the bitterest of His sorrows were those which were connected with His gracious work. He came as the Messiah sent of God on an embassy of love and men rejected His claims. When He went to His own city where He had been brought up and announced Himself, they would have cast Him

headlong from the brow of the hill. It is a hard thing to come on an errand of unselfish love and then to meet with such ingratitude as that.

Nor did they stay at cold rejection, they then proceeded to derision and to ridicule. There was no name of contempt which they did not pour upon Him. Nay, it was not merely contempt, but they proceeded to lies, slander, and blasphemy. He was a drunken man, they said—hear this, you angels, and be astonished! Yes, a wine-bibber did they call the blessed Prince of Life!

They said He was in league with Beelzebub, and had a devil, and was mad—whereas He had come to destroy the works of the devil!! They charged Him with every crime which their malice could suggest. There was not a word He spoke, but they would wrest it. Not a doctrine but what they would misrepresent it. He could not speak but what they would find in His words some occasion against Him.

And all the while He was doing nothing but seeking their advantage in all ways. When He was earnest against their vices, it was out of pity for their souls. If He condemned their sins, it was because their sins would destroy them. But His zeal against sin was always tempered with His love for the souls of men. Was there ever man so full of good-will to others who received such disgraceful treatment from those He longed to serve?

As He proceeded in His life, His sorrows multiplied. He preached, and when men's hearts were hard, and they would not believe what He said, "He was grieved for the hardness of their hearts." He went about doing good, and for His good works they took up stones again to stone Him. Alas, they stoned His heart when they could not injure His body.

He pleaded with them, and plaintively declared His love, and received instead thereof a hatred remorseless and fiendish. Slighted love has griefs of peculiar poignancy—many have died of hearts broken by ingratitude. Such love as the love of Jesus could not, for the sake of those it loved, bear to be slighted. It pined within itself because men did not know their own mercies and rejected their own salvation.

His sorrow was not that men injured Him, but that they destroyed themselves. This it was that pulled up the sluices of His soul and made His eyes overflow with tears, "O Jerusalem! Jerusalem! how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." The lament is not for His own humiliation, but for their suicidal rejection of His grace. These were among the sorrows that He bore.

But surely He found some solace with the few companions whom He had gathered around Him. He did, but for all that He must have found as much sorrow as solace in their company. They were dull scholars, they learned slowly. What they did learn they forgot, what they remembered they did not practice, and what they practiced at one time, they belied at another.

They were miserable comforters for the man of sorrows. His was a lonely life, I mean that even when He was with His followers, He was alone. He said to them once, "Could ye not watch with me one hour," but indeed He might have said the same to them all the hours of their lives, for even if they sympathized with Him to the utmost of their capacity, they could not enter into such griefs as His.

A father in a house with many little children about him cannot tell his babes his griefs, if he did they would not comprehend him. What do they know of his anxious business transactions or his crushing losses? Poor little things, their father does not wish they should be able to sympathize with him. He looks down upon them, and rejoices that their toys will comfort them, and that their little prattle will not be broken in upon by his great griefs.

The Savior, from the very dignity of His nature, must suffer alone. The mountainside with Christ upon it seems to me to be a suggestive symbol of His earthly life. His great soul lived in vast solitudes, sublime and terrible, and there amid a midnight of trouble, His spirit communed with the Father, no one being able to accompany Him into the dark glens and gloomy ravines of His unique experience.

Of all His life's warfare, He might have said in some senses, "Of the people there was none with me." And at the last it became literally true, for they all forsook Him—one denied Him and another betrayed Him, so that He trod the winepress alone.

In the last crowning sorrows of His life, there came upon Him the penal inflictions from God—the chastisement of our peace which was upon Him. He was arrested in the garden of Gethsemane by God’s officers before the officers of the Jews had come near to Him. There on the ground He knelt and wrestled till the bloody sweat poured from every pore, and His soul was “exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.”

You have read the story of your Master’s woes, and know how He was hurried from bar to bar, and treated with mingled scorn and cruelty before each judgment seat. When they had taken Him to Herod and to Pilate, and almost murdered Him with scourging, they brought Him forth and said, *Ecce homo*—“Behold the man.”

Their malice was not satisfied, they must go further yet, and nail Him to His cross, and mock Him while fever parched His mouth and made Him feel as if His body were dissolved to dust. He cries out, “I thirst,” and is mocked with vinegar. You know the rest, but I would have you best remember that the sharpest scourging and severest griefs were all within—while the hand of God bruised Him, and the iron rod of justice broke Him, as it were, upon the wheel.

He was fitly named a “man of sorrows!” I feel as if I have no utterance, as if my tongue were tied, while trying to speak upon this subject. I cannot find goodly words worthy of my theme, yet I know that embellishments of language would degrade rather than adorn the agonies of my Lord.

There let the cross stand sublime in its simplicity! It needs no decoration. If I had wreaths of choicest flowers to hang about it, I would gladly place them there, and if instead of garlands of flowers, each flower could be a gem of priceless worth, I would consider that the cross deserved the whole. But as I have none of these, I rejoice that the cross alone, in its naked simplicity, needs nothing from mortal speech.

Turn to your bleeding Savior, O my hearers. Continue gazing upon Him, and find in the “man of sorrows” your Lord and your God.

III. And now the last word is, He was “ACQUAINTED WITH GRIEF.”

With grief He had an *intimate* acquaintance. He did not know merely what it was in others, but it came home to Himself. We have read of grief, we have sympathized with grief, we have sometimes felt grief—but the Lord felt it more intensely than other men in His innermost soul.

He, beyond us all, was conversant with this black letter lore. He knew the secret of the heart which refuses to be comforted. He had sat at grief’s table, eaten of grief’s black bread, and dipped His morsel in her vinegar. By the waters of Marah He dwelt and knew right well the bitter well. He and grief were bosom friends.

It was a *continuous* acquaintance. He did not call at grief’s house sometimes to take a tonic by the way, neither did He sip now and then of the wormwood and the gall, but the quassia cup was always in His hand, and ashes were always mingled with His bread. Not only forty days in the wilderness did Jesus fast—the world was ever a wilderness to Him, and His life was one long Lent.

I do not say that He was not, after all, a happy man, for down, deep in His soul, benevolence always supplied a living spring of joy to Him. There was a joy into which we are one day to enter—the “joy of our Lord”—the “joy set before Him” for which “He endured the cross, despising the shame.” But that does not at all take away from the fact that His acquaintance with grief was continuous and intimate beyond that of any man who ever lived.

It was indeed a *growing* acquaintance with grief, for each step took Him deeper down into the grim shades of sorrow. As there is a progress in the teaching of Christ, and in the life of Christ, so is there also in the griefs of Christ. The tempest lowered darker, and darker, and darker. His sun rose in a cloud, but it set in congregated horrors of heaped-up night, till, in a moment, the clouds were suddenly rent in sunder, and as a loud voice proclaimed, “It is finished,” a glorious morning dawned where all expected an eternal night.

Remember, once more, that this acquaintance of Christ with grief was a *voluntary* acquaintance for our sakes. He need never have known grief at all, and at any moment He might have said to grief,

farewell. He could have returned in an instant to the royalties of heaven, and to the bliss of the upper world, or even tarrying here He might have lived sublimely indifferent to the woes of mankind. But He would not—He remained to the end, out of His love to us—grief's acquaintance.

Now, then, what shall I say in conclusion, but just this—let us admire the superlative love of Jesus. O love, love, what have You done? What have You not done! You are omnipotent in suffering. Few of us can bear pain, perhaps, fewer still of us can bear misrepresentation, slander, and ingratitude. These are horrible hornets which sting as with fire. Men have been driven to madness by cruel scandals which have distilled from venomous tongues.

Christ, throughout life, bore these and other sufferings. Let us love Him, as we think of how much He must have loved us. Will you try, this afternoon, before you come to the communion table, to get your souls saturated with the love of Christ? Lay them a-soak in His love all the afternoon, till like a sponge, you drink into your own selves the love of Jesus.

And then come up tonight, as it were, to let that love flow out to Him again, while you sit at His table and partake of the emblems of His death and of His love. Admire the power of His love, and then pray that you may have a love somewhat akin to it in power.

We sometimes wonder why the church of God grows so slowly, but I do not wonder when I recollect what scant consecration to Christ there is in the church of God. Jesus was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," but many of His disciples who profess to be altogether His are living for themselves.

There are rich men who call themselves saints, and are thought to be so, whose treasures are hoarded for themselves and families. There are men of ability who believe that they are bought with Christ's blood, yet their ability is all spent on other things and none upon their Lord.

And let us come nearer home—here are we, what are we doing? Teaching in the school, are you—are you doing it with all your heart for Jesus? Preaching in the street—yes, but do you throw your soul into it for Him? Mayhap, you have to confess you are doing nothing—do not let this day conclude till you have begun to do something for your Lord.

We are always talking about the church doing this and that—what is the church? I believe there is a great deal too much said, both of bad and good, about that abstraction. The fact is, we are individuals. The church is only the aggregation of individuals, and if any good is to be done it must be performed by individuals. And if all individuals are idle, there is no church work done. There may be the semblance of it, but there is no real work done.

Brother, sister, what are you doing for Jesus? I charge you by the nail-prints of His hands, unless you are a liar unto Him, labor for Him! I charge you by His wounded feet—run to His help! I charge you by the scar on His side—give Him your heart! I charge you by that sacred head, once pierced with thorns—yield Him your thoughts!

I charge you by the shoulders which bore the scourges—bend your whole strength to His service! I charge you by Himself, give Him yourself. I charge you by that left hand which has been under your head, and that right hand which has embraced you, by the roes and by the hinds of the field, by the beds of spices and the banquets of love, render yourself, your heart, your soul, your strength to Him!

Live in His service and die in His service. Lay not down your harness, but work on as long as you shall live. While you live let this be your motto, "All for Jesus, all for Jesus. All for the man of sorrows, all for the man of sorrows!"

O you that love Him and fight for Him, you are summoned to the front. Hasten to the conflict, I pray you, and charge home for the "man of sorrows." Make this your battle cry today! Slink not back like cowards! Hie not to your homes as lovers of ease! but press to the front for the "man of sorrows," like good men and true.

By the cross which bore Him, and by the heavy cross He bore, by His death agony, and by the agony of His life, I cry, "Forward, for the man of sorrows!" Write this word, "For the man of sorrows," on your

own bodies, wherein you bear the marks of the Lord Jesus. Brand, if not in your flesh, yet in your souls, for henceforth you are servants of the man of sorrows!

Write this on your wealth, bind this inscription on all your possessions—“This belongs to the man of sorrows.” Give your children to the “man of sorrows,” as men of old consecrated their sons to patriotism and to battle with their country’s foes.

Give up each hour to the “man of sorrows.” Learn even to eat and drink and sleep for the “man of sorrows,” doing all in His name. Live for Him, and be ready to die for Him, and the Lord accept you for the “man of sorrows” sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ISAIAH 53

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.