

SUFFERING AND REIGNING WITH JESUS

NO. 547

A SERMON
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*“If we suffer, we shall also reign with him:
 if we deny him, he also will deny us.”
 2 Timothy 2:12*

MY venerable friend, who has hitherto sent me a text for the New Year, still ministers to his parish the Word of life, and has not forgotten to furnish the passage for our meditation today. Having preached from one of a very similar character a short time ago, I have felt somewhat embarrassed in preparation, but I will take courage and say with the apostle, “To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe.”

If I should bring forth old things on this occasion, be you not unmindful that even the wise householder does this at times. For oft-recurring sickness the same wine may be prescribed by the most skillful physician without blame. No one scolds the contractor for mending rough roads again and again with stones from the same quarry. The wind which has borne us once into the haven is not despised for blowing often from the same quarter, for it may do us good service yet again, and therefore I am assured that you will endure my repetitions of the same truths, since they may assist you to suffer with patience the same trials.

You will observe that our text is a part of one of Paul’s *faithful sayings*. If I remember rightly, Paul has four of these. The first occurs in 1 Timothy 1:8, that famous, that chief of all faithful sayings, “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.” A golden saying, whose value Paul himself had most marvelously proved. What shall I say of this verse, but that like the lamp of a lighthouse, it has darted its ray of comfort through leagues of darkness, and guided millions of tempest-tossed spirits to the port of peace.

The next faithful saying is in the same epistle, at the fourth chapter and the ninth verse. “Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance.” This too, the apostle knew to be true, since he had learned in whatsoever state he was in to be content.

Our text is a portion of the third faithful saying, and the last of the four you will find in Titus 3:8, “This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.”

We may trace a connection between these faithful sayings. The first one which speaks of Jesus Christ coming into the world to save sinners, lays the foundation of our eternal salvation in the free grace of God, as shown to us in the mission of the great Redeemer. The next affirms the double blessedness which we obtain through this salvation—the blessings of the upper and nether springs—of time and of eternity. The third faithful saying shows one of the duties to which the chosen people are called. We are ordained to suffer for Christ with the promise that, “If we suffer, we shall also reign with him.” The last faithful saying sets forth the active form of Christian service, bidding us diligently to maintain good works.

Thus, you have the root of salvation in free grace, you have next, the privileges of that salvation in the life which now is, and in that which is to come. And you have also the two great branches of suffering with Christ and service of Christ loaded with the fruits of the Spirit of all divine grace.

Treasure up, dear friends, those faithful sayings, “Lay up these words in your heart; bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes.” Let these choice sayings be printed in letters of gold, and set up as tablets upon the doorposts of our house and upon our gates. Let them be the guides of our life, our comfort, and our instruction. The apostle of the Gentiles proved them to be faithful, they are faithful still, not one word shall fall to the ground, they are worthy of all acceptance, let us accept them now, and prove their faithfulness, each man for himself.

This morning’s meditation is to be derived from a part of that faithful saying which deals with suffering. We will read the verse preceding our text. “It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him.” All the elect were virtually dead with Christ when He died upon the tree—they were on the cross, crucified with Him. In Him, as their representative, they rose from the tomb, and live in newness of life, because He lives, they shall live also.

In due time the chosen are slain by the Spirit of God, and so made dead with Christ to sin, to self-righteousness, to the world, the flesh, and the powers of darkness. Then it is that they live with Jesus, His life becomes their life, and as He was, so are they also in this world. The Spirit of God breathes the quickening grace into those who were once dead in sin, and thus they live in union with Christ Jesus.

When believers die, though they may be sawn in sunder, or burnt at the stake, yet, since they sleep in Jesus, they are preserved from the destruction of death by Him, and are made partakers of His immortality. May the Lord make us rooted and grounded in the mysterious but most consolatory, doctrine of union with Christ Jesus.

We must at once advance to our text—“If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us.” The words naturally divide themselves into two parts, *suffering with Jesus, and its reward—denying Jesus, and its penalty.*

I. SUFFERING WITH JESUS, AND ITS REWARD.

To suffer is the common lot of all men. It is not possible for us to escape from it. We come into this world through the gate of suffering, and over death’s door hangs the same escutcheon. We must suffer if we live, no matter in what style we spend our existence. The wicked man may cast off all respect for virtue, and riot in excess of vice to the utmost degree, yet, let him not expect to avoid the well-directed shafts of sorrow. Nay, rather let him look for a tenfold share of pain of body and remorse of soul. “Many sorrows shall be to the wicked.”

Even if a man could so completely degrade himself as to lose his intellectual powers, and become a brute, yet even then he could not escape from suffering. For we know that the brute creation is the victim of pain, as much as more lordly man, only, as Dr. Chalmers well remarks, the brutes have the additional misery that they have no mind endowed with reason and cheered by hope to fortify them under their bodily affliction. Seest thou not, O man, that however thou mayst degrade thyself, thou art still under the yoke of suffering, the loftiest bow beneath it, and the meanest avoid it.

Every acre of humanity must be furrowed with this plough. There may be a sea without a wave, but never a man without sorrow. He who was God as well as man, had His full measure pressed down and running over. Let us be assured that if the sinless one was not spared the rod, the sinful will not go free. “Man that is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble.” “Man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward.” If, then, a man has sorrow, it does not necessarily follow that he shall be rewarded for it, since it is the common lot brought upon all by sin.

You may smart under the lashes of sorrow in this life, but this shall not deliver you from the wrath to come. Remember, you may live in poverty and drag along a wearisome existence of ill-requited toil, you may be stretched upon a bed of sickness and be made to experience an agony in every single member of your body, and your mind too may be depressed with fears, or plunged in the depths of despair. And yet, by all this you may gain nothing of any value to your immortal spirit, for “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” And no amount of affliction upon earth can alter that unchanging rule, so as to admit an unregenerate man into heaven.

To suffer is not peculiar to the Christian, neither does suffering necessarily bring with it any recompense of reward. The text implies most clearly that we must suffer *with Christ* in order to reign with Him. The structure of the preceding verse plainly requires such a reading. The words, “with him,” may be as accurately supplied at the close of the one clause as the other. The suffering which brings the reigning with Jesus, must be a suffering with Jesus.

There is a very current error among those poor people who are ignorant of true religion, that all poor and afflicted people will be rewarded for it in the next state. I have heard working men refer to the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, with a cruel sort of satisfaction at the pains of Dives, because they have imagined that, in the same manner all rich people would be cast into the flames of hell without a drop of water to cool their tongue, while all poor persons like Lazarus, would be triumphantly carried into Abraham’s bosom. A more fearful mistake could not be made.

It was not the suffering of Lazarus which entitled him to a place in Abraham’s bosom. He might have been licked by all the dogs on earth and then have been dragged off by the dogs of hell. Many a man goes to hell from a dunghill. A drunkard’s hovel is very wretched, is he to be rewarded for bringing himself to rags? Very much of the beggary we see abroad is the result of vice, extravagance, or folly—are these things so meritorious as to be passports to glory? Let no man deceive himself so grossly.

On the other hand, the rich man was not cast into hell because he was rich and fared sumptuously. Had he been rich in faith, holy in life, and renewed in heart, his purple and fine linen would have done him no hurt. Lazarus was carried above by the angels because his heart was in heaven, and the rich man lifted up his eyes in hell because he had never lifted them up towards God and heavenly things.

It is a work of grace in the heart and character which shall decide the future, not poverty or wealth. Let intelligent persons combat this notion whenever they meet with it. Suffering here does not imply happiness hereafter. It is only a certain order of suffering to which a reward is promised, the suffering which comes to us from fellowship with the Lord Jesus, and conformity to His image.

A few words here, by way of aiding you in making the distinction. *We must not imagine that we are suffering for Christ, and with Christ, if we are not in Christ.* If a man is not a branch of the living vine, you may prune and cut until the sap flows and the branch bleeds, but he will never bring forth heavenly fruit. Prune the bramble as long as ever you like, use the knife until the edge is worn away, the brier will be as sharp and fruitless as ever. You cannot by any process of pruning translate it into one of the vines of Eshcol.

If a man remain in a state of nature, he is a member of the earthly Adam, he will not therefore escape suffering, but ensure it. He must not, however, dream that *because* he suffers he is suffering with Christ, he is plagued with the old Adam. He is receiving with all the other heirs of wrath the sure heritage of sin. Let him consider these sufferings of his to be only the first drops of the awful shower which will fall upon him forever, the first tingling cuts of that terrible whip which will lacerate his soul forever.

If a man be in Christ, he may then claim fellowship with the second Man, who is the Lord from heaven, and he may expect to bear the image of the heavenly in the glory to be revealed. O my hearers, are you in Christ by a living faith? Are you trusting to Jesus only? If not, whatever you may have to mourn over on earth, you have no hope of reigning with Jesus in heaven.

Supposing a man to be in Christ, yet it does not even then follow that all his sufferings are sufferings with Christ, for *it is essential that he be called by God to suffer.* If a good man were, out of mistaken views of mortification and self-denial, to mutilate his body or to flog his flesh as many a sincere enthusiast has done, I might admire the man’s fortitude, but I would not allow for an instant that he was suffering with Christ.

Who called men to such austerities? Certainly not the God of love. If, therefore, they torture themselves at the command of their own fancies, fancy must reward them, for God will not. If I am rash and imprudent, and run into positions for which neither providence nor grace has fitted me, I ought to question whether I am not rather sinning than communing with Christ.

Peter drew his sword, and cut off the ear of Malchus. If somebody had cut *his* ear off, what would you say? He took the sword, and he feels the sword. He was never commanded to cut off the ear of Malchus, and it was his Master's gentleness which saved him from the soldiers' rage.

If we let passion take the place of judgment, and let self-will reign instead of Scriptural authority, we shall fight the Lord's battles with the devil's weapons, and if we cut our own fingers we must not be surprised. On several occasions, excited Protestants have rushed into Romish cathedrals, have knocked down the priest and dashed the wafer upon the ground, trod upon it, and in other ways exhibited their hatred of idolatry.

Now, when the law has interposed to punish such outrages, the offenders are hardly to be considered as suffering with Christ. This I give as one instance of a class of actions to which overheated brains sometimes lead men under the supposition that they will join the noble army of martyrs.

The martyrs were all chosen to their honorable estate, and I may say of martyrdom as of priesthood, "No man taketh that honour upon himself but he that is called thereunto as was Aaron." Let us mind we all make a distinction between things which differ, and do not pull a house down on our heads, and then pray the Lord to console us under the trying providence.

Again, *in troubles which come upon us as the result of sin, we must not think we are suffering with Christ.* When Miriam spoke evil of Moses, and the leprosy polluted her, she was not suffering for God. When Uzziah thrust himself into the temple and became a leper all his days, he could not say that he was afflicted for righteousness' sake. If you speculate and lose your property, do not say that you are losing all for Christ's sake. When you unite with bubble companies and are duped, do not whine about suffering for Christ—call it the fruit of your own folly.

If you will put your hand into the fire and it gets burned, why it is the nature of fire to burn you or anybody else. But be not so silly as to boast as though you were a martyr. If you do wrong and suffer for it, what thanks have? Go behind the door and weep for your sin, but come not forth in public to claim a reward.

Many a hypocrite when he has had his deserts, and has been called by his proper name, has cried out, "Ah, I am persecuted." It is not an infallible sign of excellence to be in bad repute among men. Who feels any esteem for a cold-blooded murderer? Does not every man reprobate the offender? Is he, therefore, a Christian because he is spoken against and his name cast out as evil? Assuredly not. He is a heartless villain and nothing more.

Brethren, truthfulness and honesty should stop us from using expressions which involve a false claim. We must not talk as if we suffered nobly for Jesus when we are only troubled as the result of sin. O, to be kept from transgression! then it matters not how rough the road of obedience may be, our journey shall be pleasant because Jesus walks with us.

Be it observed, moreover, that suffering such as God accepts and rewards for Christ's sake, *must have God's glory as its end.* If I suffer that I may earn a name or win applause among men, if I venture into trial merely that I may be respected for it, I shall get my reward, but it will be the reward of the Pharisee, and not the crown of the sincere servant of the Lord Jesus.

I must mind, too, that love to Christ, and love to His elect, is always the mainspring of all my patience, remembering the apostle's words, "Though I give my body to be burned and have not charity, it profits me nothing." If I suffer in bravado, filled with proud defiance of my fellow men, if I love the dignity of singularity, and out of dogged obstinacy hold to an opinion, not because it is right—and I love God too well to deny His truth—but because I choose to think as I like, then I suffer not with Jesus. If there is no love to God in my soul, if I do not endure all things for the elect's sake, I may bear many a cuff and buffeting, but I miss the fellowship of the Spirit and have no recompense.

I must not forget also that *I must manifest the Spirit of Christ, or I do not suffer with Him.* I have heard of a certain minister, who, having had a great disagreement with many members in his church, preached from this text, "And Aaron held his peace." The sermon was intended to portray himself as an astonishing instance of meekness. But as his previous words and actions had been quite sufficiently

violent, a witty hearer observed that the only likeness he could see between Aaron and the preacher was this, “Aaron held his peace, and the preacher did not.”

It is easy enough to discover some parallel between our cases and those of departed saints, but not so easy to establish the parallel by holy patience and Christlike forgiveness. If I have, in the way of virtue, brought down upon myself shame and rebuke; if I am hot to defend myself and punish the slanderer; if I am irritated, unforgiving, and proud, I have lost a noble opportunity of fellowship with Jesus. I must have Christ’s Spirit in me, or I do not suffer acceptably.

If like a sheep before her shearers I can be dumb; if I can bear insult and love the man who inflicts it; if I can pray with Christ “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do;” if I submit all my case to Him who judgeth righteously, and count it even my joy to suffer reproach for the cause of Christ—then, and only then, have I truly suffered with Christ.

These remarks may seem very cutting, and may take away much false but highly prized comfort from some of you. It is not my intention to take away any true comfort from the humblest believer who really suffers with my Lord, but God grant we may have honesty enough not to pluck flowers out of other men’s gardens or wear other men’s honors. Truth only will be desired by true men.

I shall now very briefly show what are the forms of real suffering for Jesus in these days. We have not now to rot in prisons, to wander about in sheepskins and goatskins, to be stoned or to be sawn in sunder, though we ought to be ready to bear all this if God wills it. The days of Nebuchadnezzar’s furnace are past, but the fire is still upon earth.

Some suffer in their estates. I believe that to many Christians it is rather a gain than a loss, so far as pecuniary matters go, to be believers in Christ. But I meet with many cases—cases which I know to be genuine, where persons have had to suffer severely for conscience sake. There are those present who were once in very comfortable circumstances, but they lived in a neighborhood where the majority of the business was done on Sunday. When grace shut up their shop, trade left them, and I know some of them are working very hard for their bread, though once they earned abundance without any great toil. They do it cheerfully for Christ’s sake, but the struggle is a hard one.

I know other persons who were employed as servants in lucrative positions involving sin, but upon their becoming Christians, they were obliged to resign their former post and are not at the present moment in anything like such apparent prosperity as they were. I could point to several cases of persons who have really suffered to a very high degree in pecuniary matters for the cross of Christ.

Brethren, you may possess your souls in patience, and expect as a reward of grace that you shall reign with Jesus your Beloved. Those feather-bed soldiers, who are brokenhearted if fools laugh at them, should blush when they think of those who endure real hardship as good soldiers of Jesus Christ.

Who can waste his pity over the small griefs of faint hearts, when cold, hunger, and poverty are cheerfully endured by the true and brave? Cases of persecution are by no means rare. In many a country village, squires and priests rule with a high hand, and smite the godly villagers with a rod of iron. “No blankets, no coals, no almshouse for you if you venture into the meeting house. You cannot live in my cottage if you have a prayer meeting in it. I will have no religious people on my farm.”

We who live in more enlightened society, little know the terrorism exercised in some of the rural districts over poor men and women who endeavor conscientiously to carry out their convictions and walk with Christ. True Christians of all denominations love each other and hate persecution, but nominal Christians and ungodly men would make our land as hot as in the days of Mary, if they dared. To all saints who are oppressed, this sweet sentence is directed—“If we suffer, we shall also reign with him.”

More usually, however, the suffering takes the form of *personal contempt*. It is not pleasant to be pointed at in the streets, and have opprobrious names shouted after you by vulgar tongues. Nor is it a small trial to be saluted in the workshop by opprobrious epithets, or to be looked upon as an idiot or a madman. And yet this is the lot of many of the people of God every day of the week.

Many of those who are of the humbler classes have to endure constant and open reproach, and those who are richer have to put up with the cold shoulder, and neglect, and sneers, as soon as they become

true disciples of Jesus Christ. There is more sting in this than some dream, and we have known strong men who could have borne the lash, brought down by jeers and sarcasms, even just as the wasp may more thoroughly irritate and vex the lion than if the noblest beast of prey should attack him.

Believers have also to suffer slander and falsehood. It is not expedient for me, doubtless, to glory, but I know a man who scarcely ever speaks a word which is not misrepresented, and hardly performs an action which is not misconstrued. The press at certain seasons, like a pack of hounds, will get upon his track and worry him with the basest and most undeserved abuse. Publicly and privately he is accustomed to be sneered at. The world whispers, "Ah! he pretends to be zealous for God, but he makes a fine thing of it!" Mark you, when the world shall learn what he does make of it, maybe it will have to eat its words.

But I forbear, such is the portion of every servant of God who has to bear public testimony for the truth. Every motive but the right one will be imputed to him. His good will be evil spoken of, his zeal will be called imprudence—his courage, impertinence—his modesty, cowardice—his earnestness, rashness

It is impossible for the true believer in Christ, who is called to any eminent service, to do anything right. He had better at once learn to say with Luther, "The world hates me, and there is no love lost between us, for as much as it hates me, so heartily do I hate it." He meant not the men in the world, for never was there a more loving heart than Luther's, but he meant the fame, the opinion, the honor of the world he trod beneath his feet. If in your measure you bear undeserved rebuke for Christ's sake, comfort yourselves with these words, "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us."

Then again, if in your service for Christ you are enabled so to sacrifice yourself that you bring upon yourself *inconvenience and pain, labor and loss*, then I think you are suffering with Christ. The missionary who tempts the stormy deep—the herald of the cross who penetrates into unknown regions among savage men—the colporteur toiling up the mountainside—the teacher going wearily to the class—the village preacher walking many toilsome miles—the minister starving on a miserable pittance—the evangelist content to break down in health—all these and their like, suffer with Christ.

We are all too much occupied with taking care of ourselves. We shun the difficulties of excessive labor. And frequently behind the entrenchments of *taking care of our constitution*, we do not half as much as we ought. A minister of God is bound to spurn the suggestions of ignoble ease, it is his calling to labor. And if he destroys his constitution, I for one, thank God that He permits us the high privilege of so making ourselves living sacrifices.

If earnest ministers should bring themselves to the grave, not by imprudence, for that we would not advocate, but by honest labor such as their ministry and their consciences require of them, they will be better *in* their graves than *out of* their graves, if they come there for the cause of Christ.

What? Are we never to suffer? Are we to be carpet-knights? Are God's people to be put away in wadding, perfumed with lavender, and boxed up in quiet softness? Nay, verily, unless they would lose the reward of true saints!

Let us not forget that *contention with inbred lusts*, denials of proud self, resistance of sin, and agony against Satan, are all forms of suffering with Christ. We may, in the holy war within us, earn as bright a crown as in the wider battle-field beyond us. O for grace to be ever dressed in full armor, fighting with principalities and powers, and spiritual wickedness of every sort.

There is one more class of suffering which I shall mention, and that is, *when friends forsake, or become foes*. Father and mother forsake sometimes. The husband persecutes the wife. We have known even the children turn against the parents. "A man's foes are they of his own household." This is one of the devil's best instruments for making believers suffer, and those who have to drain this cup for the Lord's sake shall reign with Him.

Brethren, if you are thus called to suffer for Christ, will you quarrel with me if I say, in adding all up, what a very little it is compared with reigning with Jesus! "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

When I contrast our sufferings of today with those of the reign of Mary, or the persecutions of the Albigenes on the mountains, or the sufferings of Christians in pagan Rome, why ours are scarcely a pin's prick—and yet, what is the reward? We shall reign with Christ. There is no comparison between the service and the reward. Therefore it is all of grace. We do but little, and suffer but little—and even that little grace gives us—and yet the Lord grants us “A far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”

We are not merely to sit with Christ, but we are *to reign* with Christ. All that the pomp imperial of His kingship means, all that the treasure of His wide dominions can yield, all that the majesty of His everlasting power can bestow—all this is to belong to you, given to you of His rich, free grace, as the sweet reward of having suffered for a little time with Him.

Who would draw back, then? Who among you will flinch? Young man, have you thought of flying from the cross? Young woman, has Satan whispered to you to shun the thorny pathway? Will you give up the crown? Will you miss the throne? O beloved, it is so blessed to be in the furnace with Christ, and such an honor to stand in the pillory with Him, that if there were no reward, we might count ourselves happy. But when the reward is so rich, so super-abundant, so eternal, so infinitely more than we had any right to expect, will we not take up the cross with songs, and go on our way rejoicing in the Lord our God?

II. DENYING CHRIST, AND ITS PENALTY.

“If we deny him, he also will deny us.” Dreadful “if,” and yet an “if” which is applicable to every one of us. If the apostles, when they sat at the Lord's supper, said, “Lord, is it I?” surely we may say as we sit here, “Lord, shall I ever deny Thee?” You who say most loudly, “Though all men shall deny thee, yet will not I”—you are the most likely to do it.

In what way can we deny Christ? Some deny Him openly as scoffers do, whose tongue walks through the earth, and defies heaven. Others do this willfully and wickedly in a doctrinal way, as the Arians and Socinians do, who deny His deity. Those who deny His atonement, who rail against the inspiration of His Word, these all come under the condemnation of those who deny Christ. There is a way of denying Christ without even speaking a word, and this is the more common.

In the day of blasphemy and rebuke, many hide their heads. They are in company where they ought to speak up for Christ, but they put their hands upon their mouths. They come not forward to profess their faith in Jesus, they have a sort of faith, but it is one which yields no obedience. Jesus bids each believer to be baptized. They neglect His ordinance. Neglecting that, they also despise the weightier matters of the law.

They will go up to the house of God because it is fashionable to go there, but if it were a matter of persecution, they would forsake the assembling of themselves together. In the day of battle, they are never on the Lord's side. If there be a parade, and the banners are flying, and the trumpets are sounding, if there are decorations and medals to be given away, there they are. But if the shots are flying, if trenches have to be carried, and forts to be stormed, where are they? They have gone back to their dens, and there will they hide themselves till fair weather shall return.

Mind, mind, mind, for I am giving a description, I am afraid, of some here. Mind, I say, you silent ones, lest you stand speechless at the bar of judgment. Some, after having been long silent and so practically denying Christ, go farther and apostatize altogether from the faith they once had. No man who has a genuine faith in Christ will lose it, for the faith which God gives will live forever.

Hypocrites and formalists have a name to live while yet they are dead, and after a while they return like the dog to its vomit, and the sow which was washed to her wallowing in the mire. Certain professors who do not run this length, yet practically deny Christ by their lives, though they make a profession of faith in Him.

Are there not here some who have been baptized and who come to the Lord's table, but what is their character? Follow them home. I would to God they never had made a profession, because in their own houses they deny what in the house of God they have avowed.

If I see a man drunk, if I know that a professor indulges in lasciviousness, if I know a man to be harsh and overbearing, and tyrannical to his servants, if I know another who cheat in his traffic, and another who adulterates his goods, and if I know that such men profess allegiance to Jesus, which am I to believe, their words or their deeds?

I will believe that which speaks loudest. And as actions always speak louder than words, I will believe their actions—I believe that they are deceivers whom Jesus will deny at the last. Should we not find many present this morning, belonging to one or other of these grades? Does not this description suit at least some of you? If it should do so, do not be angry with me, but stand still and hear the Word of the Lord.

Know, O man that you will not perish even if you have denied Christ, if now you fly to Him for refuge. Peter denied, but yet Peter is in heaven. A transient forsaking of Jesus under temptation will not bring on everlasting ruin, if faith shall step in, and the grace of God shall intervene, but persevere in it, continue still in a denial of the Savior, and my terrible text will come upon you, “He also will deny you.”

In musing over the very dreadful sentence which closes my text, “He also will deny us,” I was led to think of various ways in which Jesus will deny us. He does this sometimes on earth. You have read, I suppose, of the death of Francis Spira. If you have ever read it, you never can forget it to your dying day.

Francis Spira knew the truth, he was a Reformer of no mean standing, but when brought to death, out of fear, he recanted. In a short time, he fell into despair and suffered hell upon earth. His shrieks and exclamations were so horrible, that their record is almost too terrible for print. His doom was a warning to the age in which he lived.

Another instance is narrated by my predecessor, Benjamin Keach, of one who, during Puritanic times, was very earnest for Puritanism, but afterwards, when times of persecution arose, forsook his profession. The scenes at his deathbed were thrilling and terrible. He declared that though he sought God, heaven was shut against him. Gates of brass seemed to be in his way, he was given up to overwhelming despair. At intervals he cursed, at other intervals he prayed, and so perished without hope.

If we deny Christ, we may be delivered to such a fate. If we have stood highest and foremost in God’s church, and yet have not been brought to Christ, if we should become apostates, a high soar will bring a deep fall. High pretensions bring down sure destruction when they come to nought. Even upon earth, Christ will deny such.

There are remarkable instances of persons who sought to save their lives and lost them. One Richard Denton, who had been a very zealous Lollard, and was the means of the conversion of an eminent saint, when he came to the stake, was so afraid of the fire that he renounced everything he held, and went into the Church of Rome. A short time after his own house took fire, and going into it to save some of his money, he perished miserably, being utterly consumed by that fire which he had denied Christ in order to escape.

If I must be lost, let it be anyhow rather than as an apostate. If there be any distinction among the damned, those have it who are wandering stars, trees plucked up by the roots, twice dead, for whom Jude tells us, is “reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.” *Reserved!* as if nobody else were qualified to occupy that place but themselves. They are to inhabit the darkest, hottest place, because they forsook the Lord. Let us, my dear friends, then rather lose everything than lose Christ. Let us sooner suffer anything than lose our ease of conscience and our peace of mind.

When Marcus Arethusus was commanded by Julian the apostate, to subscribe towards the rebuilding of a heathen temple which his people had pulled down upon their conversion to Christianity, he refused to obey, and though he was an aged man, he was stripped naked, and then pierced all over with lancets and knives. The old man still was firm. If he would give but one halfpenny towards the building of the temple, he could be free—if he would cast in but one grain of incense into the censer devoted to the

false gods, he might escape. He would not countenance idolatry in any degree. He was smeared with honey, and while his innumerable wounds were yet bleeding, the bees and wasps came upon him and stung him to death. He could die, but he could not deny his Lord. Arethusus entered into the joy of his Lord, for he nobly suffered with Him.

In the olden time when the Gospel was preached in Persia, one Hamedatha, a courtier of the king, having embraced the faith, was stripped of all his offices, driven from the palace, and compelled to feed camels. This he did with great content. The king, passing by one day, saw his former favorite at his ignoble work, cleaning out the camel's stables. Taking pity upon him he took him into his palace, clothed him with sumptuous apparel, restored him to all his former honors, and made him sit at the royal table.

In the midst of the dainty feast, he asked Hamedatha to renounce his faith. The courtier, rising from the table, took off his garments with haste, left all the dainties behind him and said, "Didst thou think that for such silly things as these I would deny my Lord and Master?" and away he went to the stable to his ignoble work. How honorable is all this!

But how shall I execrate the meanness of the apostate, his detestable cowardice to forsake the bleeding Savior of Calvary to return to the beggarly elements of the world which he once despised, and to bow his neck again to the yoke of bondage? Will you do this, O followers of the Crucified? You will not, you cannot, I know you cannot, if the spirit of the martyrs dwells in you, and it must dwell in you if you be the children of God.

What must be the doom of those who deny Christ, when they reach *another world*? Perhaps they will appear with a sort of hope in their minds, and they will come before the judge, with "Lord, Lord, open to us." "Who are you?" saith He. "Lord, we once took the Lord's supper—Lord, we were members of the church, but there came very hard times. My mother bade me give up religion. Father was angry. Trade went bad. I was so mocked at, I could not stand it. Lord, I fell among evil acquaintances and they tempted me—I could not resist. I was Your servant—I did love You—I always had love towards You in my heart, but I could not help it—I denied You, and went to the world again."

What will Jesus say? "I know ye not, whence ye are." "But Lord, I need You to be my advocate." "I know you not!" "But Lord, I cannot get into heaven unless You should open the gate—open it for me." "I do not know you, I do not know you." "But Lord, my name was in the church book." "I know you not—I deny you." "But will You not hear my cries?" "You did not hear Mine—you did deny Me, and I deny you." "Lord, give me the lowest place in heaven, if I may but enter and escape from wrath to come." "No, you would not brook the lowest place on earth, and you shall not enjoy the lowest place here. You had your choice, and you chose evil. Keep to your choice. You were filthy, be you filthy still. You were unholy, be you unholy still."

O, sirs, if you would not see the angry face of Jesus! O, sirs, if you would not behold the lightning flashing from His eye, and hear the thunder of His mouth in the day when He judges the fearful, and the unbelieving, and the hypocrite. If you would not have your portion in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, cry this day mightily unto God, "Lord, hold me fast, keep me, keep me. Help me to suffer with You, that I may reign with You. But do not, do not let me deny You, lest You also should deny me."

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.