

THE GENTLENESS OF JESUS

NO. 1147

A SERMON
 DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 14, 1873
 BY C. H. SPURGEON
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*“He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets.
 A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench,
 till he send forth judgment unto victory. And in his name shall the Gentiles trust.”
 Matthew 12:19-21*

EVERY single fragment of Scripture is precious. Short texts culled here and there, as subjects of meditation, are useful. At the same time, the practice of discoursing upon disconnected extracts may be carried too far, and sometimes the meaning of a passage may be entirely lost by not regarding its connection.

The Bible ought to be treated in the reading of it as any other book is treated, only with much more of reverential regard. Suppose that Milton's "Paradise Lost" were used as a textbook—and that its general mode of usage were to take separate lines disconnected from the rest of the great poem, and consider them as positive statements and suitable topics of meditation. It would be a dangerous experiment, the great poet might well stir in his grave at the proposal.

There are grand lines in that matchless epic which would bear the process, and glow like diamonds upon a regal brow, but nobody would form any worthy idea of the glory of the "Paradise Lost" by having it presented in portions, lines, and selected passages. Such a mode of study reminds me of the Grecian student, who, when he had a house to sell, carried a brick about the streets to show what kind of a house it was.

The Bible ought not to be torn limb from limb, and its joints hung up like meat in the shambles. Beyond all other books it will bear dissection, for it is vital in every sentence and word. Since it is a mosaic of priceless gems, you will be enriched even if you extract a jewel here and there—but to behold its divine beauty you must contemplate the mosaic as a whole.

No idea of the magnificent design of the entire Scriptures can enter the human mind by reading it in detached portions, especially if those separated passages are interpreted without reference to the run of the writer's thoughts. Let Scripture be read according to the rules of common sense, and that will necessitate our reading through a book and following its train of thought.

Thus shall we be likely to arrive at the mind of the Holy Spirit. I say this because I may have to disturb your idea of the meaning of a passage of Scripture this morning for a short time. But you need not be alarmed, for after I have disturbed, I shall, most probably, confirm it. I shall pull down to build up again.

The main force of our sermon will be spent over the well-known words, "A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory." We have all our own opinion of the meaning of this verse. We rejoice that the Lord Jesus will deal tenderly with the weak in grace, and the gentle in heart, and we are thankful that the text appears to us to express that consoling truth.

Now we admit that the verse does teach us that. Does it teach us that directly and mainly? I think not. Read the connection and judge for yourselves. The Pharisees endeavored to discover faults in the Lord Jesus, but they could find nothing against Him except in reference to His disregard of their notions of the Sabbath.

They blamed the disciples for plucking ears of corn on the Sabbath, and the Lord Himself for performing a miracle of healing upon that day. Our Lord met them boldly, and so utterly routed them that one almost pities them, while rejoicing over their ignominious defeat. They were beaten outright, and covered with shame. Our Lord overwhelmed them with five arguments, any one of which completely swept the ground from under their feet.

As for instance, that question, “What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the Sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? How much then is a man better than a sheep?”

Our Lord’s victory was complete and tended very much to weaken their authority. But He did not push His advantage, so as to overturn the sway of these religious teachers—they were before Him as lamps so nearly blown out that nothing but a smoldering smoke remained. He did not proceed to quench them. In argument He had proved their folly, and had crumpled them up till they were like so many bruised bulrushes—but there He paused.

He did not pursue the conflict further, but retired to Galilee, into the lone places and rural districts of the country, and preached there the Gospel. Lest a popular controversy and public tumult should arise, every time He wrought a miracle He bade the healed one conceal the fact in order that it might be fulfilled, “A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory.”

And here let me ask, Do not the last words of this passage imply that the smoking flax will be quenched, and the bruised reeds will be broken, when He shall “send forth judgment unto victory”?

How will this be true if the passage refers to feeble saints? The first meaning looks in quite another direction and points to the Lord’s enemies. Now is the season of His patience, but a day of His wrath is on the way. He refrained from overthrowing His antagonists in the days of His flesh, but in the time of His second coming He will break His foes in pieces with a rod of iron. He will dash them in pieces like potters’ vessels.

Now His voice is not heard in the streets, but soon that voice shall be heard by all living, and shall resound through the abodes of the dead. Now He strives not for the mastery, but then shall He go forth conquering and to conquer. Today is the time of forbearance, gentleness, and meekness, and with humble reverence let us meditate thereon.

The subject of this morning will be *the gentleness and longsuffering of the Lord Jesus*. Secondly, *the outcome of it*, “In his name shall the Gentiles trust,” because they find Him so meek and tender. And lastly, *the termination of it*, for though He be at this present time so merciful that He does not break the bruised reed, yet there is a limit set to it—“till he send forth judgment unto victory.”

I. THE SAVIOR’S FORBEARANCE.

The passage wonderfully sets forth the Redeemer’s gentleness, and we shall contemplate it first *in His own life on earth*. What a quiet, unobtrusive life was that of Him whom they called, “the carpenter’s son”! True, it was wonderfully energetic. There is a sense in which it must not only be admitted, but gloried in that our Lord did both strive and cry, for spiritually He fought against sin even unto agony and blood. And with thrilling eloquence and plenteous tears He did cry out against evil and warn men to escape.

He lifted up His voice like a trumpet, and cried and spared not, so that His persuasive voice was heard in the street, and throughout all the land His Gospel was made known. But the passage teaches us that while others were contentious for power, clamorous for gain, and eager for notoriety, Jesus was not so.

He raised no party, He fomented no strife, He sought no honor, He courted no popularity. He left the arena of this world’s contests to others—His was another field of conflict. Born, as He was amidst the acclamations of the angels, revered by strangers from a distant land, foretold by seers and prophets, one marvels that He did not even in early youth shine forth as a “bright particular star.” But for thirty years He retires to the workshop of Joseph and is there patiently occupied with “His father’s business.”

We catch a glimpse of Him in the Temple, but as in a moment, He vanishes again into obscurity. Had we been in His place, young men of mettle and of warm blood, would we have waited thirty years and more? What hand could have held us back from the battle? Like the war horse, we should have champed the bit and pawed the ground, eager for conflict.

Jesus was meekly quiet, neither striving, nor crying, nor causing His voice to be heard in the streets. When the time is come for Him to appear in public, He goes quietly to the banks of the Jordan. John is baptizing a multitude in the river—He does not press forward and claim the Baptist's immediate attention, but He waits till all the people have been baptized—and then He tells John that He desires to be baptized by him.

The deed is done, and the Holy Ghost descends upon Him in the river. But He does not come up out of the Jordan at once to plunge into the midst of conflict, and preach a sermon with the fiery zeal of Peter on the day of Pentecost. Neither does He at once go up to Jerusalem, and proclaim Himself the Anointed of the Lord.

Instead thereof, He is led of the Spirit into the wilderness. His zeal was intense, but He had His spirit well in hand, and not a grain of self-seeking ever defiled His ardor. The zeal of God's house had eaten Him up, yet He went quietly to the wilderness, and afterwards to Cana and Capernaum, and the remoter spots by the sea.

He did not need excitement from the outside world to maintain the fires of His zeal—there was an inexhaustible fount of fire within—hence He was ardent but not noisy, intense but not clamorous. His first labors were very private—His kingdom came not with observation. He did not seek to entrap men into discipleship by arts which are commonly employed.

His first disciples were urged to follow Him by John, who said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." And then the disciples asked Him, "Master, where dwellest thou?" He gathered them one or two at a time. He did not raise an excitement and lead hundreds captive to enthusiasm. Instead of stirring the metropolitan city at once with His ministry, He went away to Nazareth and Cana, little paltry towns away among a rustic population.

He went about healing the sick folk and teaching, calling John, and James, and Peter, and Andrew, and Matthew, but making no very great headway, as we say—spending a whole day talking with a woman at a well—perfectly satisfied to be doing what violent spirits would call commonplace mission work.

When He comes up to the feast at Jerusalem to preach, He stands there and declares the Word, but when He is opposed He disappears, and is back again in His retirement in Galilee, still pursuing His lowly work of love. Our Lord came among us in meek and lowly guise—and so He continued among us. You shall not find Christ pushing His way among the politicians, crying, "I claim leadership among the sons of men."

He never marches at the head of an admiring mob to assert His supremacy by their aid, and alarm His foes by terror of their numbers. But He gently glides through the world, seen by His light rather than heard by His sound. He was content to shun fame and avoid applause. He frequently forbade the grateful patients whom He had healed to mention His name or publish the cure. His modesty and love of quiet shrank from notoriety. It was abundantly true of Him, He did not strive nor cry, neither did any man hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed He did not break, and a smoking flax He did not quench.

The meaning of what I have said is this—Jesus never became a party leader. He was no place-hunter or demagogue. There arose many in His day who claimed to be great ones, and drew much people after them by the pretence that they were the promised deliverers. And by and by their clamors created strife, for the troops of the Romans were after them, and tumult and bloodshed were the lamentable sequel.

Never did our Lord bid His servants fight, for His kingdom was of another order. When, for once in His life, He rode in state as a king through the streets of Jerusalem, the shouting was only that of children, who said, "Hosanna" in the temple, and of a willing, peaceful company of disciples, whose only weapons were palm branches and boughs of the trees.

No war horse did He ride, He chose the lowly ass. As compared with those who clamored for place and power, He was like a dumb man all His days, though able to have awed or charmed the multitude to do His bidding. He loved the lone mountain's side better than the throng of the crowd. He could not help being popular—such a speaker as He was must needs attract His thousands, for, “Never man spake like this man.”

And such a miracle-worker as He was, how could it be but that the people would follow to witness His wonders and eat of His loaves and fishes? And such a generous spirit—so noble and so free-hearted—it was little marvel that the people would have made Him a king, but He tore Himself away. They sought Him and found Him not.

He came to endure, not to enjoy—to be despised, and not to be crowned. How often did He escape the congratulating crowds! He took ship and passed over to the other side. Rough waters were more to His mind than hot-brained mobs of transient admirers, who could be bought by bread and fish. His design was not to be the idol of the populace, but to break their idols and lead their hearts back to God. Hence He did not strive nor cry, nor run in the world's race, nor battle in her wars.

As He shunned popularity, so He made no use of the carnal force which lay ready to His hand. No doubt the priests and scribes were sometimes afraid to oppose Him, for fear of the people—but they had no need to fear that He would shelter behind the populace.

He asked neither the rich nor the strong nor the many to protect Him, but felt quite secure till His hour was come. He spake openly before them, unguarded by His friends, and with neither weapon nor armor of defense. He never appealed to human passions, or egged on the people against the tyrants of the hour. No sentence of His can be construed into a desire to meet force by force. One of His followers, who loved Him much, said, “Let us call fire from heaven upon these Samaritans.” But Jesus said, “Ye know not what spirit ye are of.”

In the garden of Gethsemane He might have summoned legions of angels to the rescue, but He agonized alone. Not a single seraph came from the throne to drive away the son of perdition, or the bloodthirsty priests. No destroying angel smote the men who spat in His face, no devouring flame burned up those who scourged Him.

The force of His life was the omnipotence of gentle goodness. He did not lay the weight of His little finger upon the minds of men to compel them to involuntary subjection. His conquests were such as led men in willing captivity.

Only think of what He might have done. Only think of what you and I would have done if we had been in His position, having such a work to do and such opponents. Have you never felt, when you have seen the sin of this world, as if you wanted to put it down and stamp it out by force? Your indignation has been stirred within you and you have said, “I cannot bear it.”

When I stood in Rome and saw the idolatries of that city, and its swarms of priests, I could not help exclaiming, “How is it that the eternal thunderbolts lie still? Had I one hour of the Lord's power I would sweep away the whole of this filth with the besom of destruction.”

But Christ, with these same thunderbolts in His hands, never used them at all. He had no curses for His foes, no blows for His enemies. The only time He did use the semblance of violence was when He took the scourge of small cords, and chased the buyers and sellers out of His Father's house, a deed in which the awe inspired by His presence appears to have been the principal instrument employed.

Such was His gentleness that when He might have shaken the earth and rocked the thrones of tyrants—and made every idol god totter from its bloodstained throne—He put forth no such physical power—but still stood with melting heart, and tearful eyes, inviting sinners to come to Him. Using no lash but His love, no battleaxe and weapon of war but His grace.

Has it never struck you that it was strange He should have stopped in Palestine, a little, miserable strip of country, almost too insignificant to be noticed on the map? Why did He confine Himself to Israel? Why sojourn in the remotest parts of the land?

Why did He not at once go down to Greece, and there at Athens meet the philosophers, and convince them of His superiority? They must ere long have owned that there was majesty about His teaching, and have acknowledged Him as the wisest of men.

Why not march to Rome and face proud Caesar—and if He must die—die in some conspicuous place, where all the world would ring with it? Ah, no, He courted no notoriety. We are always saying, “Let us push and get to the front,” but when the world’s march is in the wrong way, the true leader is behind. Jesus made no desperate attempts to reach leadership. He relied upon the power of His Spirit and the force of love.

The power of the truth would, He knew, penetrate in quietness the prepared heart. He knew that the Gospel, like fire, could burn its way without noise of drum or sound of trumpet, and He was satisfied to pick out His few fishermen, and His other disciples, in whom His grace would be placed like a sacred deposit—and let the work go on like the silent growing of the corn in the ground, which springs up, man knows not how.

I leave the question of His whole life, for I do not think it is needful to say more to make you see how exactly the prophet has pictured Him here.

Now, secondly, the same has been true with regard to *the spread of the Gospel*. The passage does not refer merely to Christ personally, but to Christ’s entire work. And it is still true of Him, “He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets.”

No violence has been employed in the spread of the Gospel. No carnal weapon has been lifted to promote Messiah’s reign. He does not strive, nor cry. When Mohamed would spread his religion, he bade his disciples arm themselves, and then go and cry aloud in every street, and offer to men the alternative to become believers in the prophet, or to die. Mohamed’s was a mighty voice, which spake with the edge of the scimitar. He delighted to quench the smoking flax, and break the bruised reed—but the religion of Jesus has advanced upon quite a different plan.

Other forces, more mighty, but not so visible, have been employed to promote the sway of Jesus. Never has He invoked the secular arm—He has left that to Antichrist and the seed thereof. No demand has been made by Him upon human governments to patronize or enforce Christianity. On the contrary, wherever governments have patronized Christianity at all, they have either killed it, or else the infinite mercy of God alone has preserved it from extinction.

Jesus would not have the unbeliever fined, or imprisoned, or cut off from the rights of citizenship. He would not allow any one of His disciples to lift a finger to harm the vilest blasphemer, or touch one hair of an atheist’s head. He would have men won to Himself by no sword, but that of the Spirit—and bound to Him by no bands but those of love.

Never, never, in the church of God has a true conversion been wrought by the use of carnal means—the Lord will not so approve of the power of the flesh. You do not find the Lord calling in the pomp and prestige of worldly men to promote His kingdom, or see Him arguing with philosophers that they might sanction His teaching.

I know that Christian ministers do this, and I am sorry they do. I see them taking their places in the Hall of Science to debate with the men of boastful wisdom. They claim to have achieved great mental victories there, and I will not question their claim, but spiritual triumphs I fear they will never win in this way.

They have answered one set of arguments, and another set has been invented the next day. The task is endless. To answer the allegations of infidelity is as fruitless as to reason with the waves of the sea, so far as soul-saving is concerned. This is not the way of quickening, converting, and sanctifying the souls of men.

Not as a book of science will you triumph, O Bible, though your every Word is wisdom’s self. Not as a great philosopher will You conquer, O Man of Nazareth, though You are indeed the possessor of all knowledge. But as the Savior of men and the Son of God shall Your kingdom come!

The power which Christ uses for the spread of His kingdom is exercised in conversion, and is as different as possible from compulsion or clamor. Conversion is the mysterious work of the Spirit upon the soul. That great change could not be produced by the fear of imprisonment, the authority of law, the charms of bribery, the clamor of excitement, or the glitter of eloquence.

Men have pretended to conversion, because they hoped that a religious profession would benefit their trade, or raise their social position, but from such conversions may God deliver us. Men have been startled into thoughtfulness by the excitement which arises out of Christian zeal—but any real spiritual benefit they may have received has come to them from another source—for the Lord is not in the wind, or the tempest, but in the still small voice. That which is wrought by noise will subside when quiet reigns—as the bubble dies with the wave which bore it.

Hearts are won to Jesus by the silent conviction which irresistibly subdues the conscience to a sense of guilt, and by the love which is displayed in the Redeemer's becoming the great substitutionary sacrifice for us, that our sins might be removed. In this way conversions are wrought, not by displays of human zeal, wisdom, or force. "Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the LORD."

Nor, beloved, has Christ caused His Gospel to spread by any manifestation of the terrors of His deity. Oh, if today this guilty land of ours were bruised beneath the feet of a destroying angel, or we ourselves were made to sit in darkness that might be felt, or found our chambers filled with frogs and loathsome insects, and our fields devastated by devouring locusts—then we dream that our countrymen would be struck down in terror at the power of Jesus—but such is not His mode of warfare.

Plagues are more suited for the armory of the law than for the hospital of the Gospel. He might, if He pleased, send down upon the worshippers of false gods such terrible judgments that they would cry to the rocks to hide them, and to the hills to cover them. While they are bowing before their demon gods, He might cause the earth to open and swallow them up. Or He could smite every priest at this hour with the leprosy, and richly would they deserve the doom. At this hour, every deceiver of the people might suddenly be rent in pieces, and appointed his portion with the tormentors—and divine justice would exonerate the deed.

But the Son of Man does not so determine. With wonderful patience He sits still, and bears the insults of succeeding generations. Were He not Almighty, He could not so restrain Himself. He suffers men still to chant hymns to gods of wood and stone. He suffers priests still to insult Him, by pretending to manufacture the flesh and blood of His humanity.

He suffers this blinded nation to follow its wicked priests and to forsake Himself, the only Priest. And all this He does while His saints are crying daily, "O Lord, how long?" and the souls under the altar are day and night petitioning for justice. He pauses in pity, waiting to be gracious—not willing that any should perish—loth to destroy.

This smoking flax of heathendom, abominable as it is in His nostrils, He will not yet quench. And those broken reeds of ritualistic confidence on which men rely, He will not as yet break, for He is magnifying His patience and longsuffering. By and by He will "send forth judgment unto victory" and men shall see that the patient Lamb is also the mighty Lion of the Tribe of Judah. And He who was omnipotent to bear offenses will also be omnipotent to recompense His foes—and to ease Him of His adversaries.

We will now note another illustration of the same truth. We have observed His life and the spread of the Gospel. Now note that the same truth appears in *the experience of every unconverted man*. I may be addressing one who has denied the existence of God. Wonder, O man, that you still live, since you deny the existence of your Maker. You are to Him no better than smoking flax or a bruised reed, but despite your insolence, He neither quenches nor crushes you.

You enjoy the bounties of providence, you are permitted to inhale the air which afterwards you send forth in blasphemy! Is it not a marvel that you are not destroyed? Perhaps you have become openly profane as well as a secret doubter. You have insulted God to His face, and dared Him to destroy your body and your soul. Why did He not, at once, accept your profane challenge?

Why? Because He is too great to be in haste to quench such a smoking flax as you are—too kind to deal hastily with you. Justice will close her accounts with you by and by, but for the present the Lord lets such a bruised reed as you are alone. Crush you! Ay, that He could. One word from Him, one look from His eye, and you would lie a corpse—and your putrid carcass would need to be hidden away in the dust. He spares you, not in indifference, but in wonderful patience He will not quench nor crush you.

The Socinian says that Christ is not the Son of God, and so robs Him of His greatest glory. But Jesus does not smite him. Hard and cruel things are said against the Lord and His great sacrifice, but He hurls no flames of fire upon the synagogues of the heretics. He suffers men to live in ease and comfort, even to old age, though every day they have insulted His majesty and rebelled against His throne.

Nothing provokes Jesus more than injuries done to His people. There was a time when He saw Saul persecuting His church, and He chided him from heaven. His eyes flashed fire upon the apostle and he fell to the ground—but even then mercy had moved the Savior, and not fury. “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks,” was a reproof such as only the gentle Jesus could have given.

But, oh, how is it that He endures to see His people despised, rejected, slandered? How could the Lord Jesus sit still while the Papists were murdering the Vaudois in the valleys of the Alps? How could He be still on St. Bartholomew’s Eve while the alarm was sounding, and His own dear sheep were being slaughtered? How could He be quiet when Smithfield was black with the ashes of His saints?

In His forbearance we find the answer. His longsuffering is intended for the salvation of men, but it is amazing. I put it to any here present who have been provoking Christ for years—could you have borne with your fellow creatures as Christ has borne with you? You especially who hear the Gospel from day to day, and yet put off obedience to its commands, and indulge in private sins, and give a loose to evil lusts, in defiance of your conscience and the rebukes of the Spirit of God—I ask you, do you not wonder how Jesus bears with you?

Why, I know men who, if but half a word be spoken to provoke them, will fall to blows. And I know very few who would quietly bear six or seven provocations—but yet here is the Lord Jesus Christ able to destroy you, His adversary—and yet, for the space of thirty, forty, or fifty, perhaps sixty or seventy years, still does His patience wait. Oh, the mercy of the Lord! the mercy of the Lord!! He will not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax!

One more remark should be made here. Our present view of the text proves beyond all question *His compassion to those who are weak and feeble, but are of a right spirit*. We generally understand the passage to mean that wherever there is a spark of grace, Christ will not quench it, and wherever there is any brokenness of heart, Christ will not destroy it.

Now, observe, that instead of denying that this is the meaning of the passage, while I do assert that it is not the first meaning, I have helped you to see how forcibly this truth may be inferred from the text. For if Christ would not quench those Pharisees and Sadducees, who were so obnoxious, if He does not put down cruel kings and great potentates, and if He bears with infidels and skeptics, and with persecutors and profane persons—how much more will He deal gently with those who are truly seeking Him, but whose spiritual life is feeble—so that they are comparable to bruised reeds and smoking flax.

Instead of setting aside, we have rather confirmed and brought into clearer light the meaning which is usually given to the text. O poor heart, are you seeking Jesus! Is it a poor, trembling search as yet? Are you afraid that He will reject you? Have you begun to pray, but does that prayer seem too feeble to enter the gates of heaven?

Be of good courage. He who has patience with His proudest foe will not be hard and censorious to a trembling penitent. It cannot be that He who is too tender to destroy the howling beast which snarls at Him, should be so severe as to slay the lamb which pines at His feet. Weak and trembling one, be of good courage.

As for you who are converted to Him, and can say that all your hope is placed in Him, it may be you are depressed, because you do not grow in grace as you would wish to do. And there are times when

your anxiety to be right leads you to make rigid self-examination—and then you are grieved because there does not appear to be more grace in you than fire in a dying candlewick, nor more true life in you than there is of strength in a bruised reed.

Well, never mind. Jesus has a special care for the weak, and is tender to the utmost degree towards such as need to be gently handled. Has He not said, “He carrieth the lambs in his bosom, and doth gently lead those that are with young”? Only let your faith be sincere, and if it be but as a grain of mustard seed it shall bring you into the kingdom.

Though you can but look with a bleared eye at the cross, and scarcely see it by reason of the tears of your sorrow, yet, if you do but trust in the great sacrifice, you are saved. For Jesus is no rough taskmaster towards seeking souls, no stern judge, or heartless driver of the weak. He is very pitiful and full of compassion.

And you, backslider, where are you? Your light, once so brilliant, has waned into a mere spark, and your only sign of possessing the heavenly fire is the smoke of your desire. You are saying, “Would God I had the life of grace in my soul! I cannot be happy in the world, and yet I fear I have no share in the world to come.”

Backslider, you have been broken and rendered useless by sin—you have fallen from your steadfastness—you are not fit to be a pillar in the house of your God, but only to be thrown on the dunghill like a broken bulrush. Yet Jesus, when men reject you, will receive you. And when your conscience reprobates you, His love will not discard you. Be of good cheer. He who affords His direst foes a thousand opportunities to repent will not in His fierce anger cast out those who crave mercy at His hands.

II. THE OUTCOME OF THE GENTLENESS OF CHRIST.

“In his name shall the Gentiles trust.” What does this mean? Why, power, violence, harshness, severity, are never trusted. You cannot win men’s hearts by such means. The Parisians wrote upon the wall of the Imperial Palace, “Infantry, cavalry, artillery”—these were the basis of the imperial power. But an empire founded upon such things melted away like snow in summer. If there had been loyal affection between the ruler and the ruled, a thousand German invasions could not have dissolved the tie.

When the old Napoleon was on the rock of St. Helena, he said gloomily to one of his attendants, “My empire has passed away, because it rested upon force, but the empire of Jesus lasts still, and will last forever, because it is based upon love.”

What has Jesus done for His subjects but loved them better than anyone else could have done, suffered for them beyond all, and conferred greater blessings upon them than all the universe besides could have bestowed? By such things has He captured their hearts. You may tempt away Christ’s followers from Him when you can find them a better master, or a more loving friend—but not till then.

You shall win us to a new leader when you can show us a better. But you cannot even imagine one who could compare for an instant with the chief among ten thousand, the altogether lovely. We who are sinners of the Gentiles trust Him, and trust Him implicitly, because He is so divinely gentle, so omnipotently tender.

Savior, no tyrant are You! You do not trample on the poor and needy, or oppress the weak and trembling! You are mercy itself, love embodied, grace incarnate—therefore do the people flock to You, and in Your name do the Gentiles trust.

The power of Jesus over men lies in the fact that He has taught them to trust Him. The firm faith of His followers consolidates His kingdom. When His Word comes home to us in its own soft and gentle manner, and He manifests Himself to us as He does not unto the world, and when He permits us to put our finger into the print of the nails, and our hand into His side, and when He says, “Thou art mine and I am thine,” oh, then we feel burning in our soul like coals of juniper—that grand enthusiasm which is the terror of the adversaries of Christ—and the power of the church.

More potent than the edge of the sword is the intense love of saints. As the might of the north wind when it chases away the mist, such is the divine force of love for Jesus when it fills the heart—it chases

away all lethargy and sin. When we truly trust our Lord we feel that we can do anything for Him. Impossibilities have ceased and miracles have returned.

When we trust Christ, self-sacrifice becomes a joy, and holy daring is but a natural impulse. By trust in Christ the weakest have been made strong, feeble women have routed their persecutors, and humble men have confronted the proudest despots without fear. O Lord Jesus, the Gentiles trust You, because You are meek and lowly—and their trustful love is the strength of Your growing dominion.

III. The last thing is this—THE TERMINATION OF THIS GENTLENESS.

Our jaded spirits think the end long in coming. Read an account of the Popish Confessional, or stand, as I have done, by the confessional box and read printed before your eyes the subjects which are to be matters of question between the priests and the young girls who confess to him, and if you do not feel as if you could invoke a curse upon each shaven head, you are something more or less than man. It makes one's blood boil to think that such wretches should be in a position to insult and corrupt the modesty of maidenhood.

Why does not the Lord's anger flash forth against them and consume them as stubble? So would our hasty justice deal out righteousness, but the Lord is slow to anger, and gives His patience room. Yet if men will not alter, if they will not be won by love, if even the wounds of Christ cannot wean them from their lusts, if reason is lost upon them, and they make beasts of themselves, there must come an end of it. A God all mercy and no justice would in the long run be a dreadful calamity, just as a judge who never punished crime would be the worst possible magistrate for any nation.

Ah, yes, the very instincts of our nature make us feel that sin must be punished in due time. The best emotions of the most saintly spirit coincide with the belief in future retribution. There must come a time when the foes of God shall not rule, and error shall not dominate over men. It must be so. Jesus, the friend of man, will "send forth judgment unto victory." He will do this in a certain sense at the death of every ungodly man and woman.

With what surprise will they open their eyes in the next state and see the Christ, whom they despised, sitting upon His throne. With what unutterable dismay have some been seized, even before they have been quite dead. While the curtain was just rising, and was not fully drawn up, they have howled with horror. And, ah, their dreadful doom!

Those who denied that Jesus was God shall see Him as divine. Those who persecuted His people shall see His people glorified at His side. Those who opposed the truth He taught shall feel how sure that truth is and shall learn how dreadful a thing it is to neglect the great salvation and fall into the hands of the living God.

But this is not all. There is a day appointed, an hour of which no man knows, when the Lord Jesus shall descend from heaven with a shout. Yes, He who was nailed to the cross, who died and rose, and ascended, leaving the last print of His feet upon Olivet—He shall descend to earth again. He shall come, not to suffer, but to judge. And with Him, as co-assessors, shall come His own beloved followers.

Then shall the dead rise from their graves, and sea and land yield up the trophies of the grave. Then shall stern justice take the place of gentleness and pity—for as He Himself repeats the words, "I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; sick and in prison, and ye visited me not"—His word shall roll like thunder and smite like lightning, "Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire in hell, prepared for the devil and his angels."

You rejected mercy, and mercy will plead with you no more. You challenged power, and power shall break you like potters' vessels. You despised love, and love grown angry now despises you. You rejected truth, and now truth shall bind you in chains of fire forever. You would have none of God, and God will have none of you. You would not have the Savior, and He shall say, "I never knew you: depart from me ye workers of iniquity."

He will not today break the bruised reed, or quench the smoking flax—but He will by and by—when He "sends forth judgment unto victory," sweep out of His kingdom every offensive thing. God grant that

we may not be obnoxious to His anger when He shall be among the sons of men as a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—MATTHEW 12:1-30

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—72 (Song ii.), 910, 266

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.