

THE NAZARENE AND THE SECT OF THE NAZARENES

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A SERMON
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“And He came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.”
Matthew 2:23.

WE find the Jews speaking of Paul, and they say, “We have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes”—Acts 24:5. Thus it appears that our Lord and Master is called a Nazarene and His disciples are styled “the sect of the Nazarenes,” while Christian doctrine was called, by the Jews, the heresy of the Nazarenes. Our Savior, though actually born at Bethlehem, was commonly known as Jesus of Nazareth, because Nazareth was the place where He was brought up. There He remained with His reputed father in the carpenter’s shop until the time of His showing unto the people.

This Nazareth was a place very much despised. It was a small country town, and the people were rough and rustic. They were some three days distance from Jerusalem, where I suppose the Jews thought that everything that was learned and polite could be found, as we are apt to think of our own city, or of Oxford, Cambridge, and other seats of learning. The people of Nazareth were the boors of Galilee, the clowns of the country. More than that, you will generally find in every nation—I was about to say in every county of our own country—some town made the butt of ridicule. I do not know that “silly Suffolk,” is any sillier than any other part of the world, but I do know that I, myself, happen to have been born in the next parish to the town of Coggeshall, in Essex, concerning which all sorts of jokes are made—so that when any stupid thing is done they call it “a Coggeshall job.”

I merely mention this because it is an illustration of what used to be said concerning Nazareth. It was a primitive place. It was situated in Galilee, which was thought to be quite boorish enough, and Nazareth was the most rustic of all. The name signifies, in rough words, “sprouts,” and the Jews, who were great at puns upon names, threw it as a jest at the people who came from that town. We Anglicize it in a more refined way by the word, “branch,” for, “Netzar,” or, “Nazareth,” signifies a branch. You will begin to understand why the Savior is said to be called by the prophet, a Netzar, or a Nazarene, and you will guess that Matthew refers to the passage in Isaiah, in the 11th chapter at the first verse, where it is said that a rod shall come out of the stem of Jesse, and “a Netzar, a Nazarene, a *Branch* shall grow out of his roots.”

There is another passage in Jeremiah where we read of the man, the Branch—the Netzar—the Nazarene. And again in Isaiah, “And His name shall be called a Branch,” or Nazarene. Those are the passages, I think, to which Matthew referred when he said, “That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Netzar, a Branch, a Nazarene.” The Hebrews made a great deal out of names—a great deal more than you and I generally do with names of places in England—and they had reason for so doing, for there was generally a meaning in the names of places. Perhaps Nazareth was called, “Branch” because trees flourished there and not much else. Or because they thought that the people were rather verdant and they, therefore, called them, “sprouts” and, “greens,” making the same use of language as the vulgar do at this day when they wish to express contempt.

That may have been the origin of the term, “Nazareth.” Certain it is that the place was the subject of the jests of the Jews of our Lord’s time, for even Nathanael, in whom was no guile—one who spoke in a simple-hearted, honest way, and had no prejudices, but wished well to everybody, said—“Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?” As if he felt that prophets and saints were by no means likely to spring from a town so low down in the scale of progress and education. How could He of whom Moses

spoke be found way down there among the country folk of Nazareth? As Nazarene was a term of contempt in the olden times, so it has continued to be. The apostate emperor, Julian, was known always to call our Lord, the Galilean. And when he died, in his agony of death, he cried, “O Galilean, You have vanquished me!” He was obliged to confess our Lord’s supremacy, though he still showed his contempt by calling Him the Galilean.

The Jews, to this day, when they feel wrath against our Christ, are known to call Him the Nazarene. Nazarene is not at all the same word as Nazarite. It is a different word in the Hebrew, and you must not confuse the two. Never suppose that when you say, “He shall be called a Nazarene,” that it signifies that He was called a *Nazarite*. Nazarite, among the Jews would have been a title of *honor*, but Nazarene is simply a name of contempt. A late traveler tells us that he had a Muslim guide through Palestine and whenever they came to a village that was very dirty, poor and inhabited by professed Christians, he always said, “These are not Muslims, they are Netza,” or, “Nazarenes,” throwing all the spite he possibly could into the word, as if he could not have uttered a more contemptuous term.

To this day, then, our Lord has the name of the Nazarene affixed to Him by those who reject Him. And to this day Christians are called, among Muslims, Nazarenes. Our Lord Jesus Christ was never ashamed of this name. In fact, He called Himself, “Jesus of Nazareth,” after He had risen from the dead. He told Paul, when He smote him to the earth, “I am Jesus of Nazareth whom you persecute.” His disciples were not ashamed to call Him by that name, for as they walked to Emmaus and He joined them, and asked them what they were speaking of, they said they were talking of Jesus of Nazareth. This is a name at which devils tremble, for they besought Him, even Jesus of Nazareth, that they should not be sent into the deep when He cast them out! It was the name which, in contempt, was nailed above His head upon the cross—“Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.” Oh, but it is a glorious name, as I shall have to show before I have done! But still, this is the meaning of it—the meaning of Matthew when he says that the prophets declared that He should be called a Nazarene. He meant that the prophets have described the Messiah as one that would be despised and rejected of men! They spoke of Him as a great Prince and Conqueror when *they* described His second coming, but they set forth His first coming when they spoke of Him as a root out of a dry ground without form or comeliness, who, when He should be seen, would have no beauty that men should desire Him. The prophets said that He would be called by a despicable title and it was so, for His countrymen called Him a Nazarene.

I want you to notice our divine Redeemer’s condescension, before I plunge further into this matter. It was a marvel that Jesus should live on this world at all! He who inhabits all things, whom space is not wide enough to contain, dwells on this poor, dusky planet! If He must dwell in this world, why is He born in Judea? For though I am grieved it should be so, yet the Jews are a people greatly despised—shame on Christians when they ever join in such despising! But still, if Jesus must be a man in this world, why is He not born in Rome, in the capital of the nations? Why must it be in a little miserable country like Judea? And if He shall be born in Judea, why must He live in Galilee—that Boeotia of Israel—that most despicable part of Judea? If He must live in Galilee, why not at Capernaum? Why does He choose Nazareth? Why must He go to the lowest of the low—that most despised place of a despised country? And if He must come to Nazareth—follow Him a step lower—why must He be a *carpenter’s* son? Why, if He lives there, can He not be the son of the minister of the synagogue, or some respectable scribe? No—He must be reputed to be a poor man’s son. And then if He must be a carpenter’s son, why can He not so constrain men’s hearts that they shall receive Him? For the deepest depth of all is that even as a carpenter’s son His fellow citizens will not endure Him—they take Him to the brow of the hill to cast Him down headlong from the cliff whereon the city stood! Was there ever such condescension as that of the Savior? If, in the lowest depth, there is a lower depth, He plunges into it for our sakes!

He emptied Himself. Our old version says, “He made Himself of no reputation,” but the new one is, in this case much better—“He *emptied* Himself.” Nothing was left Him of honor or respect. He gave up all. “Though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor”—poor to the last degree, poor in reputation! He was born a man, a Jew, a Galilean, a Nazarene. You have gone down as far as language can descend and I invite you, now, to think of the way in which Jesus, the Nazarene, is still despised.

That shall be our first head. When we have thought upon that, we will say a little upon His disciples—the sect of the Nazarenes must expect to be despised till brighter days shall dawn. When we have

talked about that we shall have to say, in conclusion, that there is nothing despicable either in the Master or in the servants, though they are called Nazarenes by a contemptuous world.

I. First, then, OUR MASTER, THE NAZARENE, WAS DESPISED AND IS DESPISED EVEN TO THIS DAY. He was despised, first, because in His person, His parentage, His state, His apparel, His language, His habits there was nothing of grandeur, nothing of parade, nothing but what was simple, gentle, lowly. He did ride, once, but it was on a colt, the foal of an ass. It was said, “Behold your King comes,” but His coming was meek and lowly. He might have been a king—He was very near being taken by force to be pushed up into a throne—but He withdrew Himself, for He did not strive, nor cry, nor cause His voice to be heard in the streets. He was no popularity-hunter, or flatterer of the great.

He was no man of confusion and strife, who sought to push Himself forward and tread down others. Those that opposed Him were weak like bruised reeds, but He would not break them though He could have done it. They offended Him with their weak arguments, for they were like smoking flax to Him, but He would not quench them. He left them for another day when He shall bring forth judgment unto victory. I suppose, if we had seen the Savior, we should not have thought Him “altogether lovely,” for His heavenly beauty was not of the kind that strikes the natural eye. Hence the impossibility of any painter ever being able to paint Him, for though He must have been superlatively lovely, it must have been a beauty with which nobody would be charmed unless their eyes were opened to perceive the beauty of *holiness*. His was the loveliness of *virtue*, the charm of *purity* and not that sensuous beauty which excites desire and kindles the passions of mankind. He was loveliness itself, but only to those who know what loveliness is. About His dress there was nothing remarkable. He wore the ordinary smock-frock of the country, a garment without seam, woven from the top throughout—a very serviceable, useful piece of workday apparel—but possessing nothing in it of official dignity, or princely richness to distinguish Him from an ordinary person. As for the place where He lived, it was no bishop’s palace, nor even an ordinary manse, for He had not where to lay His head.

He sought no dignity and no honor. As for His companionships, they were of the lowest, for it is said of Him, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.” “Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him.” The outcasts of society delighted in His discourses, and they gathered round Him to receive blessings at His hand. He lifted them up from the dunghill, renewed them and set them among princes. He was the last person in the world to be hampered by pride. There was nothing of the kind about Him! He was the personification of love. He condescended, but He did not seem to condescend, for graciousness was natural to Him. He did it so really that one almost forgot the condescension in the altogether naturalness of the way in which He sympathized with all grief and helped all who came for succor. And, therefore, the proud despised Him. Those who looked for dress and garb, as so many do in our day—those who looked for a show of learning, quotations from great writers, continual perplexities to human minds—could not see much in Jesus. Those who needed a display of power, a leader bold and brave to drive out the Romans and play Judas Maccabaeus for the people, turned away and said, “He is nothing but an ordinary Nazarene.” His followers, too, were another cause of the contempt poured upon Him, for His chosen friends were, to those who knew them, nothing but common fishermen. Indeed, that is all they were! Unlearned and ignorant men they are said to have been, though they baffled the pretended wisdom of the age in which they lived. How could He have selected such followers? There were scribes and there were Pharisees—there were Rabbis and Rabboni—He might *surely* have called some of those to follow Him!

But, you see, the Savior was not a preacher that at all attracted the elite of society. Those highly cultured minds, as a rule, went to hear Rabbi Simeon, the Pharisee, who expounded points of no earthly importance. But Jesus was one of whom it is written, “The common people heard Him gladly”; and so the wise ones ran Him down as “a Nazarene.” “Look,” they said, “look and see who they are that He has chosen to be His chief helpers! See how the lower orders flock around Him. They are no judges—what notions have they of profound learning and research? They like a man who is ignorant, for He is like they are. They have no taste, they have no education, and so they gather to one of themselves.” “Ah!” said one of these wiseacres, “I am ashamed of Him—quite ashamed. Indeed, I shall speak to Him, for He ought not to be so lost to all sense of propriety.” And so he goes to the Master and says, “Do You hear the boys crying, ‘Hosanna!’ in the temple? Do You hear what these say?” He thought that the Lord

would be ashamed of having such admirers as mere street boys. But the Savior answered, “Have you never read”—as if He were going to question this great man’s reading—“Have you never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings He has perfected praise”? He was not ashamed, even, of chits of children that strewed the pathway for Him, nor ashamed of the sick and sinful people that gathered around Him, nor ashamed of the poor fishermen that were the lieutenants of His salvation army! But rather did He rejoice therein and say, “Father, I thank You that You have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.”

But the higher classes, the refined and the cultivated, said, “Tush! He is nothing but a Nazarene!” Well, then, when they came to listen to His doctrine, they were not a bit more pleased, nor did they hold Him any higher in esteem. What do you think He taught them? Among other things it is reported that He said, “Except a man is born-again he cannot see the kingdom of God”—and, would you believe it, He said this not to one of the lower order at all, but to a learned gentleman who was a ruler in Israel? Why, it has come to a pretty pass, this, to tell educated people, refined, aesthetic people, that they must be born-again or else they cannot see the kingdom of God—to insist upon *regeneration* as a thing as necessary to a philosopher as to a prostitute—as necessary to a senator as to a jailbird! As necessary to the purest as to the most defiled; oh no, we cannot bear such leveling doctrine! It is shocking! So they turned their backs on Him and called Him a Nazarene! When a man tells you unpalatable truth, it is very easy and natural to call him bad names. If you cannot answer him anyway else, you can always answer him by reviling him. And, then, what do you think He said besides that? On one occasion He had the audacity to say—and I am sure the Pharisees thought it was audacity, indeed—“Except you eat My flesh, and drink My blood, there is no life in you.” What could the man mean—that they, even they, the sons of Abraham who were born free—the priests who had partaken of the sacrifices, must actually *eat* Him? Did they think that they would accept His teaching as food for their souls? I wonder if they went as far as that in understanding Him? But if they did, they liked it no better.

They were indignant that He should say that the only food for their souls must be Himself—that unless He became their life and the nourishment of that life—unless He became part and parcel of their very *being*, they could not be saved! Even those who did think a little of Him, said that after this they must give Him up. They could not stand that, and so they walked no more with Him. But He went even further. Why, He actually dared to tell the scribes and Pharisees who had fasted so many times in the week, and never ate bread without washing their hands, and tithed the mint and the cummin, that there was *nothing* in all this! He said—“You blind guides, you hypocrites, you strain at a gnat, and you swallow a camel!” He went on to tell them that all their outside religion was a lie and a falsehood unless the inner part of the soul was cleansed. He said that it was not that which a man ate or drank, but that which came out of the man that really defiled him. People said, “Did you ever hear such talk as that? Why, He is putting us all down, we that are the best people around! If *we* are not good; we that are the leaders of society, the pink of perfection; who *can* be? We swallow a widow’s house *sometimes*, but we always do that behind the door. It is true that we are not as clean inside as we should be, but then we always make clean the outside of the cup and platter. Nobody can say but what we do, and He has been talking against us—and at the same time He is inviting the fallen to Himself and saying—‘Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.’ Well, well,” they said, “we cannot bear it! He is nothing but a Nazarene!” And so they turned their backs upon Him.

Dear friends, today Jesus Christ is as much despised as ever by those ungodly and vainglorious men who understand what His gospel is! How frequently you will find, in the public newspapers, and in the magazines of those who think themselves the cultivated class, remarks against the doctrine of justification by faith. You and I are simpletons enough to believe that we are justified by faith in Christ Jesus, because God has told us so, and we sing—

***“Nothing in my hands I bring
Simply to the cross I cling”***

and they tell us that this is inconsistent with public morality! That the masses ought to be told that unless they behave themselves they cannot possibly go to heaven, and so on—which thing they have been told times without number—and they have grown worse, the more they have been told it! When we talk about free grace which pardons the vilest through faith in Christ, men are changed and made moral and

holy! But our unbelieving critics choose to ignore all that and go and talk against what is the very essence of the gospel of Christ, as though it were a poor, miserable thing, only fit for a set of fanatics to preach! “Only believe and you shall be saved?” they ask, “That is their absurd doctrine!” In other words, they repeat the old abuse and call us Nazarenes.

But if you want to see the ungodly world foam at its mouth—oh, if you want to see rage get at its worst—and wish to see pretended learned men upon their mettle, preach the doctrine of atonement by blood! Tell them that remission of sin is by substitution—that Christ stood in the sinner’s place and took the sinner’s sin—and that without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. See how they writhe and rage! They cannot bear this horrible doctrine of atonement by sacrifice and yet, most learned sirs, it is upon that horrible atonement that our hope depends! It is upon that horrible doctrine that we hang our destiny for time and for eternity! And we are not ashamed to bring it out with all plainness of speech, for the precious blood of Christ, God’s dear Son, and that *alone*, cleans us from all sin! “Ah, well,” they say, “that is just the old story which your Puritan fathers used to tell. That is the old Methodist doctrine. That is your Presbyterianism, and as James the First said, ‘Presbyterianism is no religion for a gentleman.’” These learned men admire the broad-church school where everything is taken to be true except the truth of God! Still, Jesus is to the mass of mankind the despised Nazarene! I will not dwell longer upon it, however, because you that know the Lord need not be told that He is, to this day, despised and rejected of men. Call yourself a Christian, and forget what Christianity is—and you will have easy times of it. Instead of preaching the simple gospel of Christ, get fine music and fix up fine shows. Turn the place of worship into a conservatory, or a theater, and there will be no persecution for you! Of course not, that is not Jesus Christ!

But preach Jesus Christ and see if all the dogs will not howl at you directly! You shall have ill names and wicked stories, and all sorts of jests poured upon you! Go through the world as a respectable professor of religion, and never let fall a single distinctive truth of God from your lips; never perform one single distinctive action of Christianity—but just do as others do and live as others do—and I will guarantee you, you shall be in a whole skin from the first of January to the end of December!

But be a *Christian*, and *live* your Christianity, and *speak* it out—and see how long it will be before they of your own house are at war with you! If we are true to the Master, we shall find that we have not enlisted in a service which is all fine feathers and music—stern fighting is to be done! There is war to be borne, and hardness to be endured by every good soldier of the cross, for Jesus is still called the Nazarene!

II. But now, secondly, our other text informs us that CHRIST’S FOLLOWERS HAVE BEEN KNOWN AS THE SECT OF THE NAZARENES—that is to say, they must expect to bear a measure of the indignities poured upon their Leader. Dear young friends, I need to press some matters home upon you who have lately joined the church, and also upon you who love the Lord but have never yet confessed it. If you follow Christ fully, you will be sure to be called by some ill name or other. For, first, they will say how singular you are. “My inheritance,” God says, “is unto Me as a speckled bird. The birds round about her are against her.” If you become a true Christian, you will soon be a marked man. They will say, “How odd he is!” “How singular she is!” They will think that we try to make ourselves remarkable, when, in fact, we are only conscientious, and are endeavoring to obey what we think to be the Word of God. Oftentimes that is the form of contempt—practical Christians are set down as intentionally eccentric, and willfully odd. Mothers have brought that charge against daughters who have been faithful to Christ because they would not go into gaiety, or indulge in vain apparel. And many a working man has said it to his fellow man by way of accusation, “You must be different from everybody else.” This difference, which God has made a necessity, men treat as a mere whim of our own! If we do not come out from among them and be separate, we cannot expect to be housed beneath the wings of the eternal! But if we do, we may reckon upon being regarded by those around us as strange, unfriendly creatures.

Then, again, they will say to the genuine Christian, “Why, you are so old-fashioned! Look at you! You believe the same old things that they used to believe in Oliver Cromwell’s day—those old Puritan doctrines! Do you not know that the world has made a great progress since those times, and we have entered upon the 19th Century—a wonderful century—there never was century like it! There was only one

Solomon, centuries ago, but we are *all* Solomons now! The very least of us! While the greater ones far excel a *thousand* Solomons rolled into one! The 19th Century! And here you are, you still stick to an old book that was written half of it ages ago, and the other half is at least 1,800 years old! Will you never move with the times; will you get as far as Moses, Jesus, and John and stick there?"

Yes, exactly there! We go not an inch beyond Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever! We try to hold fast the faith that was once delivered to the saints. In ordinances we hold to the olden baptism and the ancient supper! In doctrine we abide by the truths of God which Paul taught among the Gentiles, for we feel that we cannot improve upon them! We would wish to exhibit the same spirit as Jesus Christ our Lord, for we know we shall never improve upon *His* perfections! Therefore they say, "You are so old-fashioned!" And we answer that for this we give no apology. When that form of criticism does not take effect, they laugh at our faith. They say, "You simple-minded people have great capacity for believing! Look at us, we are far too sensible to believe anything. We do not feel sure about *anything*! What we think we know today we are not certain of; we are so receptive that we may learn the reverse tomorrow! We get our faith out of our own moral consciousness, and dare even the Scriptures to plead at the bar of our inward conceptions! We do not need to have things *revealed* to us, and to have a Bible and bind ourselves down to a Book of Revelation. We are our own teachers, judges, and infallible guides—and the very idea of absolutely certain truth is abhorred by us! As to this Spirit of God that you trust in, it is sheer enthusiasm! There is nothing in it, and we wonder that you should be so credulous! Instead of that, you ought to be rational and believe in Huxley and Tyndall. Do not be credulous and believe in God, but be rational and believe in Bradlaugh, Voltaire, and Tom Paine!"

This is another sting for the Nazarenes, but happily it has small power to vex us, since our reverence for the authorities of modern wisdom is not sufficient to make us fear their scoffs. Time was when Christianity was opposed by men of *real* ability, masters in learning—but in the present age its antagonists are men of much smaller caliber whose lack of argument is scantily concealed by the outrageous absurdities which they invent! Instead of attempting to overwhelm us by the weight of their learning, they endeavor to surprise us with unexpected hypotheses which we are more inclined to ridicule than to refute! And then, with mock sobriety, they assert that our bewilderment is defeat! The spears of the phalanx of reason are seen no more, but the shafts of folly stand thick upon our shields. In this, also, we shall conquer through the blood of the Lamb! Meanwhile we leave sneers of contempt to those who are such masters of them. It is for Nazarenes to receive, but not to return arrogance.

Another arrow of contempt is the assertion that Christian people have not their liberty. "Look at you; you dare not go to the theater! You dare not drink! Why," says one man, "I like a jolly drink sometimes, and if I were a Christian, I could not enjoy that great privilege." No, friend, you certainly would lose that booze of yours. As far as we are concerned, we have no ambition in that direction. Some of us know a little of what the amusements of the ungodly are, and we are astonished that you should be able to find content in them, for they do not suit our taste at all! We never envy hogs their wash. Let them have their trough well-filled as often as they please! We have no taste in that direction; but you need not say that we have no liberty because we do not feed out of the swine trough, for such liberty we never desired! We have liberty to serve God and do good, and this is the freedom which we covet. We have liberty to do as we like, for we like to do what God would have us do—and we pray that our likes may, every day, be more and more conformed to the liking of God. There is not much, after all, in the taunt, "You God-fearing people are cowardly! You dare not enjoy yourselves." We live daily so as to give this taunt the lie, for we are a happy people, a free people—even we who are of the sect of the Nazarenes!

Again, some turn round upon true Christians for their not being very choice in their company. If we associated only with the rich and great, whose society, as far as I know of it, is about the poorest thing out, we should then be acting properly. Keep to "society," and society will smile upon you. But if you attend meetings where you call a coal miner your brother in Christ, where the washerwoman is your sister, where so long as people love Christ you count them the best of company, then you are low and vulgar, a Philistine, or a Nazarene! If you are willing to be a true brother to a black man or to one who is an outcast in condition—who was actually seen with a broom, sweeping a crossing—then, of course, you cannot expect to be recognized by anybody who is anybody! Listen to the world's ridicule of true Christian churches where there is real brotherly love and true fraternity! They cannot endure it!

Well, they may do without it, then, but this shall be my glory—that God has made of one blood all nations of men that dwell upon the face of the earth, and that where there is a touch of grace in any man—his dress and his rank are nothing to me! Real believers in Jesus are truly our brothers and sisters in Christ, however poor or however illiterate they may be. This is the very genius of Christianity! To the *poor*, the gospel is preached! As soon as men enter into the Church of Christ, all outward distinctions are forgotten, and they are one in the gracious family of God their Father! This, however, is the subject of contempt even among those who profess and call themselves Christians! Many of your finer ladies and gentlemen would not acknowledge Jesus, Himself, if He were now upon earth! And as for His disciples, I am sure *they* would get the cold shoulder on all sides! I, for one, never expect to see saints fashionable, nor holiness popular—let us be content to be low and vulgar in men’s esteem for the Lord’s sake!

And then, if God’s servants will preach the truth of God outright, or if not being preachers they will hold it and dare to *live* it, I guarantee you they will soon meet with some contemptuous title or other. Pare down the gospel; cut away its angles; draw out the lion’s teeth, and then, at once, you shall be friends with the world! But hold the doctrines of grace; bring forth the atonement; speak out plainly; have your convictions and state them—and soon the hounds will be after you full cry! Say that the Bible and the Bible, alone, is the religion of true Christians, and that we are not bound by prayer-books, synods, conferences, or anything of the kind—but only by the Word of God, and you shall see what you shall see, for here and there and everywhere all sorts of people will be against you! Live a godly, gracious life and you will not escape persecution! You may be happily circumstanced so as to live among earnest Christians, and so escape persecution—but take the average Christian man in this city, and he will have a hard time of it if he is faithful! He will be pointed at by some opprobrious name or other, something like Paul was when they said he was a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.

III. Now, listen to me as I close. THERE IS, AFTER ALL, NOTHING DESPICABLE IN EITHER CHRIST OR HIS PEOPLE. I feel half ashamed to say such a thing, or that it should ever be necessary to be said that there is nothing to despise in Jesus! What is there to be ashamed of in Him? He is the Son of the Highest! He is “God over all, blessed forever” and if He stooped—and stoop He did—and became lower than the lowest by His sufferings or death, even the death of the cross, He did it out of such glorious disinterestedness of kindness to fallen men that He is thereby revealed as the most grand of all characters! His is the most sublime of all lives! Angels have never ceased to wonder and adore! Even the enemies of Christ have often been struck dumb as they have seen the splendor of the love that moved Him to stoop so low.

And what if He has revealed a plain gospel? Would you have the illiterate left out in the cold? What if He preached the gospel to sinners? Who needed the gospel *but* sinners? What if He did not flatter the pride of those who thought themselves good? Is it not true that “the whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick”? For my part, I bless my Master that He has given us a commonplace gospel. It is sublime beyond sublimity! But it is plain so that a little child may understand it. A man with slender wit may find his way to heaven guided by the light of the Holy Spirit, and this is one of the grandest proofs of the profound wisdom of God! Glory be to Jesus Christ that He did not come here to tantalize the multitude by a gospel only suitable to the elite; that He did not come here to proclaim doctrines that could only be learned in the universities, and could never be understood except by such men as Isaac Newton or Robert Boyle! I bless the name of Jesus that He came to give a gospel to the poor and needy, to the simple and the childlike! And while I do it, I feel that I hear Him saying again, “I thank You, O Father, Lord of heaven and of earth, that You have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes.”

The practical point is this—there is nothing to be ashamed of in being a Christian! I am afraid that there are some Christians that we need to be ashamed of, and that we, ourselves, do many unworthy things. Christians ought to be reflections of Christ, but I fear they often cast reflections *upon* Christ. Oh you that despise Christ, when you find out our faults and speak against us for them, you treat us justly and we cannot complain! But why lay our crimes at our Savior’s door? If you find us false to our profession; if we are not like our Master; if we are not true to Him, you may well ridicule us and we cannot answer you. We must be beaten as with whips of scorpions when we are untrue to our Leader—but why blame Him? The fact is that the ungodly revile those who are true to the Lord Jesus. Well, when they do,

there is nothing in that to be ashamed of. What if I believe the truth of God? Shall I be ashamed of it? What if I fear God? Shall I be ashamed of it? Let those be ashamed who do *not* fear Him. What if I believe in prayer? What if I receive *answers* to prayer? Shall I blush about that? Let those blush scarlet who never pray, or have no God to hear their prayers! Shall I be ashamed because I try to do what is right, and have a conscience before God—and cannot enjoy loose pleasures—or listen to lascivious song? Shall I be ashamed of chastity and truth?

Why, then, let angels be ashamed of purity! Let the stars be ashamed of light! Let the sun be ashamed of day! There is nothing to be ashamed of in things honorable and of good repute. Why is it that some of you—you who are, I trust, Christians—never come out and acknowledge your religion? What will your Master say to you in the day of His appearing? What honor can you expect to share with Him if you will not share His shame? If any man wants to spit on Christ, let him do *me* the honor to spit on me! If any man will rail on Christ, let him do me the pleasure to rail on me, for if I may stand between him and my Master, I shall be promoted by the deed! Napoleon's Mamaluke flung himself in the way of the bullet to save the emperor's life. Shall not Christ be served after that fashion? Shall we not be willing to be Nazarenes for the Nazarene? Shall we not glory to be despised and rejected of men for His sake, if by any means we may bring honor to Him? I trust it shall be so, and yet some of you have not even been baptized into His name, though you know that it is His command! You have never joined with His people in church fellowship, and yet wish to share their joys! You let them fight the battle alone! You think, I suppose, to slink into heaven by the back door, and not to be found among the soldiers of Christ till the crowns are distributed? Ah, sirs, you miss a great honor in not standing shoulder to shoulder with the rank and file of Christ's chosen!

Angels would leave heaven, if they could, to come and fight for Christ! They would be glad to leave their rest to bear the hardness which a follower of Christ must endure for His dear Captain's sake. Jesus is coming! He is on His way! He may come tonight! He may come before another Sabbath's bells shall ring—and oh, if I have never confessed Him, if I have been ashamed of Him—how shall I face Him? Hear this, you cowards! What will you say when He appears? Be wise and confess Him tonight! Come you out from among the ungodly! Be you separate! Confess your Lord and Master! “He that with His heart believes, and with His mouth makes confession of Him, shall be saved.” “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. He that believes not shall be damned.” God save us from being ashamed of the Nazarene! Amen.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON. Mentone, November 24, 1881. DEAR FRIENDS, since the issue of last week's sermon I have been attacked according to the fashion of former years, but through the goodness of God, in answer to the prayers of many, I hope to escape a protracted illness. A gentle voice by these light afflictions whispers to us gratitude, and reminds us that, “we are but dust.” Even in this winterless land the leaves must wither, and in every condition trial and sickness may come. Our joy is that over against the peril we can place a security—we may be sorrowful, but we must be safe. All things may work together for grief, but all things must work together for good! Let the Father's will be the children's delight! Hoping soon to return to my beloved work and daily ministry, I am, yours heartily, *C. H. Spurgeon.*

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