

A SERMON FOR A WINTER'S EVENING NO. 3181

A SERMON
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*“And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold:
and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself.”
John 18:18*

WE note from this incident that *it was a cold night in which our Redeemer agonized in the garden of Gethsemane* [See sermon #2767, Jesus in Gethsemane]. A cold night, and yet He sweat! A cold night, and yet there fell from Him, not the sweat of a man who earns the staff of life, but the sweat of One who was earning life itself. “His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” No natural heat of the sun, or of a sultry evening, caused this, but the heat within His soul distilled those sacred drops. His heart’s throbs were so mighty that it seemed to empty itself, and His life-floods rushed with such awful force that the veins, like overfilled rivers, burst their banks, and covered His blessed person with gory drops.

On such a wintry night as this, while you wrap your garments about you, I would ask you to remember the olive garden, and the lone Sufferer, all unsheltered, entering into the dread anguish by which He won our souls from death and hell. The sharp frost may be a useful monitor to us if it makes us think of Him, and remember that dark, that doleful night, when all the powers of evil met, and even unto blood, He strove with them for our sakes.

Now we will take you away from the garden to the high priest’s hall where the incident occurred which is regarded in the text, and we will make as good a use as we can of it. I suppose it was a large dark hall in which the soldiers, and the priests, and the rabble were gathered together. There may have been a few lamps lighting up the further end, where Christ was with His judge and His accusers, but the greater part of the hall would have no other light than the glare of the fire which had been kindled—a charcoal fire, around which the band of men who had seized Christ, and the servants of the high priest gathered to keep themselves warm. We are going to make five observations upon that, and upon the fact that Peter was among those who warmed themselves at that fire.

I. The first observation is this. **THIS IS A TYPICAL INCIDENT AS TO THE MOST OF MEN.**

Jesus Christ was being tried. Some were very busy about it, being full of malice and burning with rage, but a great many more were indifferent, and in the presence of a rejected and maltreated Savior were carelessly warming their hands. It was not a matter that interested them, they did not care whether He escaped or was condemned, it was very cold, and so they warmed their hands.

Now, in a land like this, where Jesus Christ is preached, it is a sad circumstance that there are individuals who oppose Him and His Gospel. There is the infidel who denies the Gospel altogether, there is the superstitious man, who sets up another way of salvation, and there is the persecutor, who rages at Christ and His people.

Yet these active enemies are comparatively few, the great bulk of those who hear the Gospel are not open opponents, but like Gallio, care for none of these things. They know that there is a Christ, and they have some idea of His salvation, but it does not interest them, or awaken any sympathy in their minds. “What shall we eat, and what shall we drink?”—these are the great questions of their catechism, but as to who this glorious Sufferer is, and why He died, and what are the blessings which He bought with His precious blood, none of these things move them, and they forget, neglect, or despise the great salvation and the Savior too. They are full of the business of warming their hands!

The death of Jesus may be important to other people, it may concern ministers, and clergymen, and professors, but it is nothing at all to them, they have other matters to attend to, and their own comfort is their main concern. Around that charcoal brazier the servants of the high priest warmed their hands, and so, in their temporal comforts, or in murmuring at the lack of them, the most of men spend their lives. To them it is nothing that Jesus should die, a rise in their wages, a fall in provisions, or a change in the money market is far more important to them.

If you think of it, this is a very terrible thing. Christ comes into the world to save men, yet men do not think it worth their while to turn their gaze upon Him. He takes their nature, but His incarnation does not interest them, He dies that men may not perish, and men care not one whit for His great love. One hies away to his farm, and another to his merchandise, one has bought a yoke of oxen, and goes to prove them, and another has married a wife, and therefore he cannot come. They are eager for the bread which perishes, but they make light of the meat which endures the life everlasting life, they think much of this world, but nothing of the world to come. Jesus is over yonder at His trial, and they are warming their hands.

I pray you think this over a few minutes, any of you who have been indifferent to the great realities of redemption and see what it is and who it is that you thus treat with discourtesy. It is the Son of God, the Redeemer of men, whom you neglect. Can you imitate those who rattled the dice-box at the foot of the cross, in utter hardness of heart, though Christ's blood was falling upon them as they cast lots for His clothes? Can you trifle in the presence of a dying Savior? *Can you*, did I say? Alas! some have done so for thirty, forty, fifty and even sixty years, and unless the almighty grace of God prevents, they will continue to trifle still—to sport, and play, and seek their own welfare in the presence of the bleeding Son of God, within earshot of His dying groans.

See, He dies, and they place His body in the sepulcher, but on the third day, according to His promise, He rises again from the dead. That risen Savior is surrounded by the glory of promises unspeakably precious, for He has risen for the justification of His people, and as the firstfruits of them that slept—the great pledge that all those who sleep in Him shall rise as He has risen. An august mystery—a mystery which brought angels out of heaven, the one to sit at the head and the other at the foot, where His body had lain, and yet men eat, drink, sleep, and wake as if no risen Jesus had been here.

In the presence of the risen Christ many only warm their hands, for it is cold. The animal has mastered the mental, the body, which is the baser part of man, and cleaves to the dust, has subdued the soul, and so the man allows himself to trifle in the presence of Jesus risen from the dead.

Nor is this all, for He that rose from the dead ascended after forty days. A cloud received Him out of the sight of His disciples, and He rose into glory, and now He sits at the right hand of the Father, reigning there head over all principalities and powers, King of kings and Lord of lords. Men do not generally trifle in the presence of a king, if they have petitions to present, they put on an air of reverence. In the presence of the Royal Intercessor who pleads for us day and night, one would think there would be some interest excited, but no, the multitude warm their hands, and think nothing of Him.

In His presence, they forget His redeeming love, neglect His great salvation, and remain without God and without Christ. This is terrible! As I see the worldling, merely caring for his personal comfort while Christ is in the glory, I marvel, first, at the insolence of the sinner, and secondly, at the infinite patience of the Savior.

The Lord Jesus is to come a second time to judge the earth in righteousness, when He shall appear, no man knows, but come He will, and before Him every one of us must stand. If we be alive and remain, we shall join in that great throng, and if we fall asleep before His coming, we shall rise from the dead, at the sound of the trumpet which proclaims His advent, and shall all be judged of the Most High. The hour of His appearing is not revealed, in order that we may always stand on tiptoe, expecting it to be today, or tomorrow, for He has said, "Behold, I come quickly."

Oh, how can you still be money-grubbing, pleasure-seeking, enjoying yourselves, living only for this world, living to get a competence, living to be what is called, "respectable," and to feed yourselves like

the beasts of the field? Have you no thoughts for the Judge, and the day of His coming? Shall our immortal spirits spend all their energies on these trifling temporary things in prospect of that great tremendous day, when Christ with clouds shall come? Surely the solemnities of judgment should constrain us to think of something nobler than earth and time.

There was no harm in their warming their hands, neither is there any harm in our attending to the things of this life, indeed, they ought to be seen to, and seen to with care, but there is something higher, something nobler and loftier for us to do than to serve ourselves, and as it was horrible that we should be so callous in the presence of the suffering Jesus, so is the widespread indifference of sinners a terrible thing.

I would to God that the unthinking portion of those who hear the Gospel might be startled out of their groveling care for the things of this life, and each one of them be led to ask, "What have I to do with this Jesus of Nazareth? Is His blood sprinkled upon me? Has He cleansed me from my sin? May I hope for salvation through Him?" Oh, consider you these things, and give an answer to your consciences, and God do so with you as you shall think of Christ your Lord.

II. Secondly, we remark that FOR A DISCIPLE TO MAKE HIS OWN COMFORT THE CHIEF THING IN THE PRESENCE OF HIS SUFFERING MASTER IS MOST INCONSISTENT.

One does not wonder at the high priest's servants making a fire of coals, for it was cold, and one is not surprised at *their* standing to warm their hands, for they knew but little, comparatively, of Christ. They had never tasted of His love, they had never seen His miracles, they had not been asked to watch with Him in the garden of Gethsemane, they had never heard Him say, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee," he marvel is that *Peter* should stand there among them warming his hands.

Why did he do so? Not because he was indifferent to his Master. Let us do him justice, it is plain that he was in a dreadful state of mind that night. He was so attached to his Master that he followed Him up to the door of the hall, and stopped there till John came out, and admitted him. He went up to the fire because he thought he must act as others did, so as to escape suspicion, and as they warmed their hands, he did the same, so as to appear as one of them.

It so happened, however, that the light of the fire shone upon his face, and lit up his countenance, so that one said, "Thou art one of his disciples." Then, to get away from observation, we find Peter passing into another part of the hall, where, I suppose, it was darker. The people were talking, and Peter must needs talk, for it was his weakness to do so, and moreover, he might have been suspected again had he been silent. Then another remarked, "Thou also art of Galilee, for thy speech betrayeth thee." He was discovered again, and so made for the door, but was known there also.

He was all in a tremble. He did love his Master, weak as his faith was, and therefore he could not leave Him, and yet he was afraid to confess Him. He was worried and troubled, tossed to and fro between a desire to rush forward and do some rash thing for his Lord and a fear for his own life. He went to the fire because nobody would think that a follower of Jesus could warm his hands while his Master was being spitefully entreated.

You see the gist of my observation, that for a disciple of Christ to make his own ease and comfort the main thing is most palpably inconsistent with the Christian character. Ah, dear brethren, our Lord had not where to lay His head, though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, can it be consistent for the Christian to make the getting of money the main business of life? Is such a disciple like his Master? The Master gives up everything, shall the disciple labor to aggrandize himself?

Some warm their hands, not at the fire of wealth so much as at the fire of honor. They want approbation, respect, esteem, and they will do anything to gain it. Conscience is violated, and principle is forgotten, to gain the approbation of their fellow men. Whatever happens, they must be respected and admired. Is this as it should be? Are they really disciples of the Nazarene? Is that their Master, despised and rejected, spit upon and jeered? Is He their Lord who made Himself of no reputation? If so, how can

they court the smiles of men and sacrifice the truth to popularity? What can be more inconsistent—the disciple warming his hands and the Master enduring the contradiction of sinners against Himself?

Dear brethren, every time our cheek crimson with shame because of the taunts of the wicked, and we lower our colors because of the jeers of the godless, we are guilty at heart of the meanness of seeking to fare better than our Lord. Every time we check a testimony because it would involve us in censure, every time we stay from a labor because we covet ease, every time we are impatient at the suffering which the cross involves, every time we “make provision for the flesh, to obey the lusts thereof,” every time we seek ease where He toiled, honor where He was put to shame, and luxury where He endured an ignominious death, we are like Peter amongst the ribald throng, warming our hands at the fire while our Lord is buffeted and shamefully entreated. May the Holy Spirit keep us from this!

III. We now come to our third observation. **IT IS MUCH BETTER TO BE COLD THAN TO WARM OURSELVES WHERE WE ARE EXPOSED TO TEMPTATION.**

Peter, if he had known it, was better off outside the door than in the hall. I suppose he had forgotten the Master's warnings, for if he had thought of them, he would have said to himself, “Peter, you had better go home. Did not Jesus, in fact, tell you to go home when He said to those who came to seize Him, ‘If ye seek me, let these go their way’?” It would seem to have been the path of humble obedience to have gone his way, and not to have pressed into the hall.

Though no doubt the motives which led both Peter and John into the high priest's house were commendable, Peter's position among the soldiers and hangers-on around the fire was extremely full of peril, and offered no corresponding advantages. Did he not know that “evil communications corrupt good manners”? Did he not know that the men who had taken his Lord prisoner were not fit associates for him? Should he not have felt that though he might have his hands warmed, he would be likely to get his heart blackened by mixing with such company?

Brethren, I like to warm my hands, but if I cannot warm them without burning them, I would rather keep them cold. Many things are in a measure desirable, but if you cannot obtain them without exposing yourself to the smut of sin, you had better leave them alone. I have known professors far too anxious to mix with what is called “good society.” Now, for the most part, good society, as things are nowadays, is very bad society for a Christian. The best society in the world for me, I know, is to associate with my brethren in Christ. Title, rank, and wealth are a poor compensation for the lack of true religion.

Yet some professors covet the honors of the ungodly world, and they say, “It is not so much for ourselves, we are advanced in years, but we want to bring the girls out, and our young men, you know—our sons—must have some society.” Yes, and for the sake of this dangerous luxury our churches are deprived of successors to godly fathers. Instead of seeing the younger members of Christian households drafted into our ranks, we have continually to begin again with new converts from the outer world. Full often, professors whom God prospers in this world so train their children that they forsake the spiritual worship of God and turn their backs on principles for which their forefathers dared to bleed and die.

I charge you, brethren, remember that, if you cannot be admitted into “society” without concealing your principles, you are far better off without society. Has not our Lord called us to go without the camp? Are we not warned against being conformed to this world? Deny yourselves the warm place around society's charcoal fire, for its sulfurous vapor will do you more harm than the cold.

Some whom I have known have ventured very far upon very dangerous ground to win the affection of a chosen object. There is no wiser precept in Holy Scripture than that which commands Christians to marry “only in the Lord.” It never can conduce to take comfort of any Christian man or woman to be unequally yoked together with an unbeliever, you had far better remain in the cold of your bachelor or spinster life than warm your hands at the fire of unhallowed marriage.

Not a few are tempted by the cleverness of certain literature to defile their minds with skeptical and even blasphemous writings. Such and such a “Quarterly” or “Fortnightly,” is so very clever that you are regarded as a Philistine and an ignoramus if you do not read it! Yet if you do read it, you are never the better, but very much the worse for your pains, why then yield to its more than doubtful influence?

Do you pray the better for such reading? Have you more faith in God after perusing such works? No, but doubts which would not otherwise have occurred to you are sown in your mind, difficulties which only exist in ungodly brains are conjured up, and the time which ought to have been spent in devotion, and in growing in grace, and in bringing others to Jesus, you waste in battling for the very life of your faith, which you have needlessly exposed to assault.

I do not believe it to be essential to roll in a ditch every day for the sake of proving the efficacy of the clothes brush, neither is it worthwhile to seek out infidel doubts in order to try our logical powers upon them. Some tell us that we must keep abreast of the times, but if the times run the wrong way, I see no reason why we should run with them. Rather let us leave the times and dwell in the eternities. If I can be cheered and refreshed by good literature, and be the better and wiser for it, I am thankful, but if I must, in warming my hands, defile them with unbelief, I will sooner let them become blue with cold.

Perhaps, dear friends, our liability to be injured by that which renders us comfortable is one reason why God does not subject some of His best people to the trials of prosperity. Have you not sometimes wished that you were rich? I daresay you have, but perhaps you never will be. You did prosper once, but it came to an end. Once or twice the prize of wealth seemed within your reach, others seized it, and you are still working hard and earning a bare crust. We do not know what you might have been if you had been allowed to succeed. In warming your hands you might have burned them.

Many Christians have been impoverished by their wealth and brought to inward wretchedness by outward prosperity. You have flourished best in the soil in which the Lord has kept you, anywhere else you might have run to seed. Some years since, when the first larch tree was introduced into England, the person who had brought home the specimen put it into his hothouse to grow. It did not flourish, and no wonder, for it delights in a colder atmosphere, the gardener therefore pulled up the spindly thing by the roots, and threw it upon the dunghill, and there, to everybody's surprise, it grew wonderfully! It was created to flourish under trying circumstances, and perhaps you are of the same order. Learn you the lesson and be content to be where you are.

IV. A fourth observation is this—IF A CHRISTIAN ACTS INCONSISTENTLY, HE IS PRETTY SURE TO BE FOUND OUT.

Here was Peter warming his hands, and he thought that nobody would know him, but his face, as we said before, was illuminated by the light of the fire and one said, "Surely thou art one of His disciples." The fire did not merely warm, but it threw light on him, and showed him up, and so, when it comes to pass that a Christian gets into association with the ungodly, and figures with them, his sin will find him out.

I have noticed, in a very wide sphere of observation, that bad men may do wrong for years, and not be discovered, and that hypocrites may contrive to carry on their hypocrisy half a lifetime without being unmasked, but a true man, a real child of God, if he shall only do a tenth as much wrong as others, will be certain to be detected. Peter tried to look uncommonly comfortable and calm while at the fire, but he could not do it, he discovered himself by the twitches of his face, and the very look of him, and when he spoke, as we have already said, the tones of his voice betrayed him. A Philistine helmet will not sit well upon an Israelite, he wears it awkwardly, and is known though in disguise.

Ah, Christian man, you had better keep to your own company, it is of no use for you to try to travel *incognito* through this world, for it will detect you. Never go where you will be ashamed to be seen, for you will be seen. A city set on a hill cannot be hid, a lighted candle must be seen. A speckled bird will be noticed where no note is taken of others. Worldlings have lynx eyes with which to spy out erring professors, and they are sure to publish your faults, for they are sweet morsels to them. "Report it! Report it!" say they. In vain will you try to pass yourself off as a stranger to Christ, your speech will betray you, and the finger of scorn will be justly pointed at you for your inconsistency, therefore, keep to your own company, and walk not in the way of the wicked.

V. The fifth point is this—and you all know it to be true—IT IS A GREAT DEAL EASIER TO WARM YOUR HANDS THAN YOUR HEARTS.

A few coals in a brazier suffice to warm Peter's hands, but even the infinite love of Jesus did not just then warm his heart. O sirs, what was the scene at the end of the hall? Was not that enough to set all hearts aglow? It was a bush that burned with fire and was not consumed. It was the Son of God smitten on the mouth, and vilely slandered, and yet bearing it all for love of us.

O sirs, there was a furnace at the other end of the hall—a furnace of love divine! If Peter had but looked at his Master's face, marred with agony, and seen upon it the mark of His terrible night-sweat, surely, had his heart been right, it would have burned within him. One marvels that, with such a sight before him—if Peter had been Peter—if he had only been true to that true heart of his, he would have braved the malice of the throng, placed himself side by side with his Lord and said, "Do to me whatever you do to Him. If you smite Him, smite me. Take me, and let me suffer with Him." If he might not have done that, one would not have wondered if Peter had sat there and wept till he broke his heart to see his Master treated so. But alas! the sight of his Lord, accused and betrayed, did not warm Peter's heart.

My brethren, we sometimes wish that we had actually seen our Lord, but seeing Christ after the flesh was of small service to Peter. It was when the Holy Spirit used the glance of Jesus as a special means of grace that Peter's heart was thawed, and his eyes dropped with tears of repentance.

O Lord and Master, though a bodily sight of You would not warm us, if You should walk up these aisles, and should show Your pierced hands in this pulpit, yet if Your blessed Spirit will come upon us tonight we shall see You by faith, and the sight will make our hearts burn within us, winter though it be. Come, sacred Spirit, shed abroad the love of Jesus in our souls, and so shall our love be kindled, and burn vehemently. Grant it therefore, we pray You, for Your love's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

JOHN 18:1-27

Verse 1. *When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into which he entered, and his disciples.*

From our Lord's example, we should learn, when trouble is near, to meet it with composure. Our Savior did not sit still, but as the hour approached for His betrayal and death, "He went forth with his disciples." The passing over the black brook Cedron, through which flowed the filth of the temple, was very significant. King David had crossed that brook long before when he had been driven from his home by Absalom's rebellion, and now the greater David went "over the Brook Cedron, where was a garden." He especially wanted solitude just then, for one of the best preparations for suffering is to get alone with God. Learn this lesson also from your Lord's example, and as He put Gethsemane before Calvary, if you can put an hour of prayerful contemplation before your expected suffering, it will be a great help to you.

2. *And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples.*

That dark and gloomy olive garden was no pleasure garden that night. It had often been a place of retirement and of prayer for the Master. What happy memories His disciples must have had of being with Him there for a season of prayer! It was a very choice privilege for them to be with Him when He preached, but it must have been, if possible, a still greater privilege to be with Him when He prayed.

It is not recorded that His disciples ever said to Him, "Lord, teach us how to preach," but at least one of them was so struck with His prayers that he said, "Lord, teach us to pray." We may well ask Him to do that for us now. Perhaps some of you would like to be taught how you can become great, it is much more important for you to be taught to become prayerful.

3. *Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons.*

It does not matter much about the band of men and officers with lanterns and torches and weapons, but the dreadful part of the narrative is that they were led by one who had been a disciple of Christ, one

who had been numbered with the apostles. Is Christ still betrayed by His professed friends? Yes, it is so, but may you and I never be guilty of that terrible crime! Yet why should we not unless the grace of God should prevent it? We are of the same flesh and blood as Judas, and although we might not be tempted by a sum of money, we may be tempted by a sinful pleasure or by a sinful shame. Lest we should be led astray, let us pray that we may not enter into temptation, and especially ask that we may be preserved from betraying our Lord as Judas did.

4. *Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said to them, Whom seek ye?*

Because of His divinity, He knew all that would come upon Him, but what a wondrous manhood His was that, although He knew all that would befall Him, He went forth calm and composed, resigned to His Father's will, and said to those who had come to seize Him, "Whom seek ye?" I think He is saying to some of us, "whom seek ye?" We have not come here to slay Him, we have not come here to fight against Him, and lead Him away to crucify Him, yet I hope that we can truly say that we have come seeking Jesus. If this be really your heart's desire, it shall surely be fulfilled to you.

5. *They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he.*

Or rather, "I am," pronouncing the words with a divine dignity which had a startling effect upon them.

5-6. *And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them. As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground.*

It seems as if our Lord intended to let them realize something of His divine power and glory, for the utterance of that august expression, *I am*, which is His Father's name, staggered them, and they fell to the ground. Do you not wonder that they did not rise up, and go away and leave Him after they had fallen at His feet and asked His forgiveness? They did not so act, for the power of fear when it is not accompanied by love is very small. There was enough power in it to make them fall down to the ground, but there was not power enough in it to make them fall at Christ's feet confessing their sin.

7-8. *Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way:* [See sermons #2616, Christ's Care of His Disciples, #2368, The Living Care of the Dying Christ].

It is very cheering to us to think of our Lord meeting all the enemies of His people, gathering up all their weapons into His own heart that His people might go free. You and I, if we had been in such a case, would have been flurried and worried, and our fears would have made us selfish. We should have forgotten our poor friends who were with us, but Jesus thought not of Himself, He thought of His poor trembling disciples, and therefore He said, "If therefore ye seek me, let these go their way."

9. *That the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none.*

He had only said that just a little while before, but this verse shows us that the New Testament is as sure to be fulfilled as the Old Testament. It was a new saying, not then written, yet it had all the life and power of God in it, so it must live, and must be fulfilled.

10. *Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus.*

Here is every prospect of a fight. Simon Peter has begun it, and the armed men will be eager to continue it. We always have our Simon Peters about—men of emotion, men of impulse, men of impetuosity. They are not a bad sort of Christians, and I do not know what we should do without them. Our cold, frozen thinkers would not do much without our warm-hearted Peters to help to thaw them.

Still, Peter was only one of the twelve apostles, and though they call him the head of the church, he made a very poor head of the church just then. He drew a sword, and began to use that carnal weapon by cutting off the right ear of Malchus. It was a great mercy that the Lord was there to heal the ear, and to forbid the use of the sword in His defense.

11. *Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it the cup?*

Here is another helpful lesson for any of you who have a trial before you. Do not seek to set the trial aside, use no wrong means to escape from affliction, drink your ordained cup. Though Peter's sword is handy, put it up into its sheath, and do not use it. Bear and forbear, on and on and on to the end of the chapter. Drink the cup that your Father gives you. However bitter it is, it is sweetened by the fact that He gives it to you. Shall not a true son of God drink the cup that his Father presents to him? There can be no harm in it, and it must work you some real good, so put up your sword, and lift the cup to your lips, and drink it to the dregs.

12. *Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him,—*

When you are bound with sickness, or bound with weakness, or bound in any other way, do not complain. Your Master was bound, and I think we ought to be willing to be anything that Christ was. What was good enough for Him is good enough for us. "They took Jesus, and bound him,"—

13-14. *And led him away to Annas first; for he was father in law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year. Now Caiaphas was he, which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.*

Christ could not die without the question of expediency turning up. I never knew any great sin in the world, nor any great heresy, nor any great combination of men to maintain it without the question of expediency coming under consideration. Expediency is the great Christ-killer. Many nowadays say to us, "Do not preach against error, it is not expedient to do so. Do not break away from evil associations, it is not expedient." How many there are of even good men who do certain things, not because they are right, but because they are expedient!

But, believers in Jesus, in the name of your Lord I implore you to hate expediency, since it put Him to death. It was a wicked expediency that would murder Christ in order to save a nation, but it did not really do so, after all, for the guilt of slaying Christ brought upon the nation the growing crime of deicide.

15. *And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple: that disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest.*

This other disciple was, no doubt, John, who thus veiled himself as he did on other occasions.

16. *But Peter stood at the door without.*

It would have been better for him if he had stayed there, he would probably have been more out of the way of temptation than he was inside the palace of the high priest.

16. *Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter.*

John doubtless acted thus out of kindness to Peter, but he was the means of bringing his friend into a place where he was not strong enough to keep his feet. You and I may act like that, perhaps, in perfect innocence, and even with commendable kindness, yet we may be unintentionally doing our friends a great wrong.

I notice that John seems to have been the first of the apostles to associate with Peter after that terrible fall of his, and in his record of Peter's denial of his Lord, he does not mention his cursing and swearing as Matthew and Mark do. He appears to have felt great tenderness towards Peter, perhaps all the more so because he had been the innocent means of getting him into the place of temptation.

17. *Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also one of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not.*

Ah, Peter! Ah, myself! If anyone is trusting in himself, he may soon utter a falsehood concerning his Lord, as Peter did. Keep us, O God, by Your grace, or else it will be so with us. It was nothing but a poor maidservant that cowed this brave Peter, the man whose sword was drawn just now in his Master's defense is not able truthfully to answer the maid's question, "Art not thou also one of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not."

18. *And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold: and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself.*

While his Lord and Master was being maltreated and abused over yonder at the end of the hall, Peter was warming himself at the servant's fire. Ah! he was getting cold spiritually while warming himself physically, and it sometimes happens that when men are warming their bodies, they are at the same time cooling their hearts. I have known a man warm himself at a very big fire through coming into possession of a large amount of property, but he has also grown very cold spiritually, for these coals of fire do not warm the heart.

19-21. *The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine. Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said.*

Our Lord's teaching was never deceptive, He did not say one thing and mean another. He could truly appeal to His hearers concerning His teaching. It is a great thing for a preacher to be able to feel that his hearers know what he has said to them. We cannot always say that, for some of them forget, and some of them do not understand what we say. Some of them do not give sufficient attention to know what it is that is said, but Christ's preaching was so clear and plain that He could truly say, "Ask them which heard me, what I have said to them: behold, they know what I said."

22-23. *And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so? Jesus answered him,—*

Not as Paul did, "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall." The Master is superior to the disciple at all points. Jesus said—

23. *If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?*

Let us pray that whenever we are despitely treated, we may keep our temper, and be as composed as our Lord was, and if we must make an answer to our accusers, let it be as discreet and as justifiable as this answer of our Lord was.

24-25. *Now Annas had him sent bound unto Caiaphas the high priest. And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself.*

John thus resumes the narrative concerning Peter from the seventeenth verse, "Simon Peter stood and warmed himself."

25. *They said therefore unto him.*

Two or three or more of them speaking at a time said to him—

25-27. *Art not thou also one of his disciples? He denied it, and said, I am not. One of the servants of the high priest, being the kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him? Peter then denied again:*

Ah, me! they who lie once will be all too apt to lie again, those who deny Christ once will be apt to go to still greater lengths in their denial of him. May they be stopped as Peter was!

27. *And immediately the cock crew.*

May the cock crow for some who have been asleep up till now, and warn them that the night is far spent, and that it is time for them to awake out of sleep, and wash their eyes with tears, and repent of having denied their Lord!

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.