

CONFESSION OF CHRIST

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*“Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men,
 him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.
 But whosoever shall deny me before men,
 him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.”*
Matthew 10:32-33

INCESSANTLY do we preach, and do you hear, that salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ, that whosoever trusteth in Him shall be saved. This is the great and master-duty—the believing, the trusting. It is here that salvation hinges and hangs, “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God,” “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved,” “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”

We conceive that it is never possible to preach that truth too often, that this ought to be in some sense the burden of every sermon, that it is the message, above all others, which every minister of Christ is sent to deliver. There is salvation in Him, and in no other. We are to insist upon it perpetually and constantly, and never are we to forget it, that Jesus came into the world to save sinners, even the very chief, and that, by Him, everyone that believeth is justified from those things from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses.

But, brethren, there are other matters beside faith, and while believing in Christ is the great and the main thing, yet it would be unprofitable for you—it would be unfaithful on our part, if we were to neglect other commands of Christ which come after this foundation faith and have a very close relation to it.

Now, I am persuaded that there are in this professing Christian England hundreds and thousands of persons who have some kind of faith in Christ, and I trust also a sincere one, who, nevertheless, pass over in silence the plain command of Christ about professing Him before men.

And there may be some, even in this congregation gathered here, who, having given Jesus Christ their hearts, have been slow to think of the next thing which He requires, and will, perhaps, feel as though I break their quiet all too roughly when I shall try to press upon them that they go a step further, and having believed with the heart, will remember that the promise is, “He that with his heart believeth, and with his mouth confesseth, shall be saved.” “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” The outward confession is as much commanded as the inward believing, the one the natural fruit and expression of the other.

We shall, therefore, first of all, consider *what is the duty taught here*, and secondly, *why it is a duty*, and then, thirdly, *what are the sanctions of reward and penalty appended to the performance or neglect of this duty*.

I. WHAT IS THE DUTY HERE MENTIONED?

“Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess.” Observe the word. It is not “profess.” It means that, but it means more. It is “confess,” I take it, a difference worthy of observation. To “profess” Christ may be work which anyone would do, especially in soft and silken times, when a

profession may even be remunerative, when it may even add respectability to a man's character and make his path smooth.

But the "confession" has this difference in it—it is a kind of thing that comes out when a sort of accusation is brought. A man professes Christ before his brethren because they will all be pleased with him for it. Another man in the midst of enemies, who will revile and persecute him, pleads guilty to the blessed impeachment of being a Christian, confesses that what they count a crime he counts a virtue, while they have him brought up, as it were, before their judgment seat, the crime alleged is, that this man is a follower of Christ, and therefore to be scoffed at, to be badgered, and otherwise maltreated, the man saith, "I am guilty, if it be guilt, I am thus vile, and rejoice in it, and I hope to be viler in it, I confess Christ, that He is mine, and I am His."

I think that is an obvious difference between profession and confession, there may be other differences, but we shall not be detained with them now. This seems to me to be clear beyond dispute. To "profess" Christ is but an easy thing, to "confess" Him implies that the circumstances make that confession a deed of courage, exposing the confessing soul to peril and penalty. But he gladly accepts the suffering or the shame and confesses that what may seem to be a foolish thing to others, is a wise thing to him. He confesses Christ.

I will also remark that in the Greek it is, "Whosoever confesseth *in* me before men," by which is meant that *he makes a confession of being in with Christ*, he holds Christ's doctrines, desires to imbibe Christ's Spirit, to follow Christ's example. He does in effect say, "There are two sides, sirs, you ask me which I take, I confess that I am in with Christ, for the battle of life, I am His servant, His soldier, I will follow His banner, and come what may of it, I throw down the gauge of battle to all His adversaries. I confess in Christ.

You may confess in the world, you may confess your love for pleasure, for wealth, for sin, but I will make my confession in Christ." That is, without doubt, the meaning of these words. It is not the profession by taking up the name of Christian, it is the confession, under dangerous circumstances, of the whole of Christ's teaching and kingdom, and taking all the consequences thereof.

Now, when ought a man to do this? It is a duty, when and how ought he to do it? I answer that *as soon as ever a soul has believed in Christ, its next duty is to confess in Christ*. It ought never to be delayed, and where it has been, the delay ought to be made up by a speedy obedience. If you ask me what is the first confession a man ought to make, I shall reply that, according to Scripture, it is *by baptism*.

As soon as ever the Philippian jailor had believed, Paul took him the same hour of the night and baptized him—baptized him into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. When Philip met the eunuch, and had explained to him the Scriptures and so disciplined him, the very next thing the eunuch said was, "See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" Everywhere throughout Scripture we read sentences like this, "They that gladly received his word were baptized." And from the days of John, the precursor of Christ, to the conclusion of the history of the apostle, we continually find that to all believers the command was given, "Rise, and be baptized." It is the confession of Christ.

Peter says that baptism is "not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God." It is a conscience enlightened and instructed, saying in outward symbol to God, "I desire to be buried with Christ, and to rise with Christ, hence forth to be a dead man to my old self and my old sin, and being now a new creature, wholly Christ's, to live alone for Him."

Oh! how men have marred this most instructive ordinance! How they first of all put away the very ordinance itself in reducing it to drops of water, which never could set forth as in parable or picture, a burial! How they then took away the proper subjects of it, and substituted unconscious infants for the intelligent believer in Christ, who comes forth and says, "Thus I follow Christ, who in the waters of Jordan went down and commenced His glorious kingdom upon the earth by Himself fulfilling righteousness by His baptism there!"

I charge you, my brother, search the Scriptures. I am preaching to you only what Peter preached on the day of Pentecost. We are no inventors of this doctrine, but the grand old classic of God's inspired New Testament is our warrant, and if men would cast away all mere ecclesiastical habit, and once more bring everything to the test of the Bible, and the Bible alone, methinks they would see that the Scripture baptism is an ordinance for believers, wherein and whereby they confess Christ to be Savior, and Lord, and King, and devote themselves, their powers and influence, as well as possessions, to His service. I ask none of you to accept this merely because it is my teaching, but because it is according to the Old Book, and if so, accept it and obey it as Christ's law.

But the next thing every believer ought to do is this, we read in the epistle to the Corinthians, thus they gave, "They gave themselves first to the Lord, and afterwards to us by the will of God." It is the duty, then, of the believer in Christ to confess His Master by giving himself up to some Christian church. Let him find out under whose ministry he will be best edified, in whose membership he can most sweetly find rest, let him not be ashamed to go to that church and say, "Receive me, I am a brother in Christ." Let him not blush. Let our sisters never blush to acknowledge that they have trusted in the Crucified, that they are His servants, that they desire now and henceforth to dwell with His people, and to be numbered with His disciples.

Some of you, I am sure, are doing very wrong, and losing much benefit to your own souls, by not casting in your lot with the people of God. "When these were met together," we read in the Acts of the apostles, "they went to their own company." Birds of a feather flock together, and if you are a bird of Paradise, seek out others and say, "I cast in my lot with you, where you dwell, I will dwell, where you worship, I will worship, your people shall be my people, and your God shall be my God." Let me but be numbered with them, and I would rather be a doorkeeper in their assemblies than dwell in the tents of wickedness.

There are two forms of confession in Christ, but after them, and yet at the same time also, it behooves every Christian to make *a confession in his family*. I shall not say that you are ostentatiously to stand up and declare yourself a Christian in so many words, but I shall say, that, according to your position, you are to make it sufficiently known that you are a follower of Jesus.

The servant in a family may have a very different way rightly of confessing Christ from that of her master, and for the child the same method might not be suitable which ought to be adopted by the parent. To my mind, the father ought to say, "My children, our household has been ill-ordered aforesaid. There has been no prayer, no gathering as a family round the home altar, but God has looked upon me in mercy, and now, as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. My prayer shall be for you all, that you shall be saved."

And I can imagine as the good man bowed his knee that morning, a change would pass over the whole constitution of His family. They would all ask one another, "What has happened to our father, what is this strange thing?" and it may be that, as it was with the jailor at Philippi, so it would be with the whole house, "Himself believed in God, rejoicing with all his house."

But it shall be made somehow. It must be a distinct declaration made in some form or other by the Christian, that he is no longer what he was, but called out from the rest to be a follower of Jesus, "separated," as Paul puts it, "separated unto the gospel of Christ."

This confession next should *be seen in the whole of a man's affairs*. He is not to ticket his goods, or advertise his conversion in his shop window, but from that moment, if there has been aught of trickery, if there has been aught of foul sailing, if there has been anything in him that was according to the customs of the trade, but not according to the laws of Christ, his immediately ceasing from all that without ostentation or pharisaism is to be his confession of Christ. Others may continue to do the same, and the customs of the trade may permit it, but as for him, he cannot touch the unclean thing.

If he still continues to follow out the same customs and maxims, or if, out of business, he finds his pleasure and amusements in the same places as before, or if, in any way, he remains exactly the same man as he was aforesaid as to sin and wrong, then surely he has denied Christ, and let him be baptized

as he may, and join the church as he will, he is nothing but a pretender and imposter, for the life does not agree with the confession that he is Christ's. "If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creation, old things have passed away, and lo! *all* things have become new."

There is no true confession where there is not a changed spirit and a transformed life, or rather the confession is such as shall suffice to condemn the man out of his own mouth and send him out from God's presence a revealed pretender.

My dear brethren and sisters in Christ, you members of this church, I ask you to put it to your consciences, do you confess Christ in your business? You working men, do you confess my Lord and Master by fleeing those vicious and evil habits that are so common among your class? Are you no longer the lover of the lewd song? Do you no longer laugh over the indecent story, or the one that covers vile language? Have you foresworn the pothouse, and all the company that frequents it?

And you merchants, and you that call yourselves ladies and gentlemen, have you given up those frivolities, those empty vanities, those time murderers, those soul-destroyers, of which the most of your class are so fond? If grace does not make you to differ from your own surroundings, is it really grace at all? Where there is not a thorough separation from the world, there is cause to fear there is no close union to Christ. The best part of our confession to Christ lies in the practically giving up everything which Christ would not sanction, and the following out of whatever Christ would ordain.

Sometimes to follow Christ thus by confessing in Him will involve persecution, and then let me say *it will be a test point with you*. We cannot confess Christ at all unless we are willing to give up every connection, however dear, every relationship, however fond, sooner than let the conscience bow the knee to natural affection. You are to love as you never loved before those that are one with you in the flesh, but still Christ is to be above all on your bosom's throne

Oh! there are some professors who do not stand to this, they have not learnt the meaning of Christ's words, "If any man love father, or mother, or husband, or child, or wife, more than me, he is not worthy of me; and if any man love house or land more than me, he is not worthy of me." You tell me there are no persecutions now. Ah! indeed, perhaps if you followed Christ more fully, you would find out that there were.

There is many a timid woman who has to play the martyr still, and many a trembling young believer who has to find that, if there be no burnings, there are trials of cruel mockings, and blessed are they that bear these things without fear, for the sake of Jesus! But if ye flinch, if ye be afraid of men, ah! then ye count yourself unworthy, and ye shall not inherit the kingdom.

Oh! to go with Christ through all weathers, to bear His cross up the stiff hillside when the snowflakes beat with sting in your face. To stand with the gentle, but heroic woman in the pillory. To wear the fool's cap for Christ, and so have the hootings of half an age about one's brow, were glory, and honor, and immortality. And yet many forego the honor, shrink back into their ignoble cowardice, counting themselves not fit to be the followers of Jesus!

There will occasionally happen—I will only mention this, and then conclude this first part—there will occasionally happen in the course of conversation times when the confessing of Christ will become to the Christian an imperative duty, as when coarse infidelity is being avowed, or the Gospel of Jesus derided.

I do not say that you are always to speak, for sometimes it would be casting pearls before swine, but I will say that, if any unholy cowardice will make you hold your tongue and keep silence when you might have spoken for your Master's name, you have need to confess this sin with bitter tears, and trembling, lest that denial should not be the denial of Peter, for which there is forgiveness after sore repentance, but the denial of Judas, which followed only by remorse, made him the son of perdition.

Oh! stand up for Jesus! To be ashamed to own yourself a Christian, ah! then Christianity may well be ashamed of you. I know that is not the name, it is Presbyterian, Puritan, Methodist, hypocrite, oh! confess the impeachment, whatever it may be! If they choose to make even the term "hypocrite" a synonym for Christian, tell them that by the way which they call hypocrisy, even so do you in all

sincerity worship the Lord God of your fathers. Be bold enough to stand in the front rank for Christ, and never hide yourself behind for fear of feeble man. He is worthy to be confessed, and dare to confess Him, I beseech you. Thus much in explanation of the duty.

Now the second point is to urge the argument for it.

II. WHY IS IT A DUTY?

To be very brief, first, *the genius of the Christian religion requires it*. The genius and spirit of the Christian religion is, first, *light*. Everything is above board with Christianity. We have no mysteries which are only revealed to a special few. We are not like those teachers of philosophy who keep their tenets for the initiated. The religion of Jesus Christ, as far as men are able to comprehend it, is as plain as a pikestaff. We, my brother, have no learned books to which to point you and say, "There is the secret locked up in the dead languages, and there in the process of reading some twenty tomes you may fish out the secret almost as clearly as the secret of alchemy."

No, but here is our secret—Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was made flesh, died for sinners, the just for the unjust, and whosoever believeth in Him shall be saved. If there be any mystery, it is only because there must be something mysterious in that which comes of God and tells of Him. But the Gospel never aims at mystery.

The old Church of Rome has written upon her brazen brow, "Mystery, Babylon, Mother of Harlots!" But the church of Jesus Christ saith in the language of Paul, "We use great plainness of speech." Now, where the very spirit and genius of Christianity is openness, bold display, a keeping back of nothing, it seems to be natural that every believer in it should never keep in concealment in his own breast his conviction, but should publish upon the housetop that which he has received.

Again, the genius of our religion is *life*, as well as light. Life is sure ultimately to be revealed, it cannot be altogether hidden. It is sure to sprout from the seed, though buried deep in the earth. Our religion is not a thing of churches, and Sundays, and Good Fridays, and Easters, and Christmases, and I do not know what besides. It is a thing of everyday life, for the kitchen and the parlor, the office and factory, the court of justice, the Houses of Parliament. It intertwists itself with all the rootlets of our inner nature and comes out in all our actions of outward behavior and conversation.

Hence, to hide it is impossible. "He could not be hid," should be as true of our Christian life as it was of our Lord. If it were a mere ceremony, it might be performed in, and confined to crypt or sepulcher, but since religion is a principle which acts upon the entire life, it ought to be, and must be, confessed.

The genius of our religion is also *fire*. Light, life, fire, by which I mean energy, divine energy. The Christian is, above all, a propagandist. He it is who, having a better truth than the Pharisees ever had, excels them in the missionary spirit. He will compass sea and land to make one proselyte, for the flaming religion of Jesus Christ can never be kept in the bosom of the man who receives it.

Even fire cannot be kept still, for once it falls amongst the stubble the conflagration must spread. The God that answereth by fire is a God who shall reign over this world, and the God of Christianity is that God of fire. Hence, beloved, since you are expected to operate upon others by your life and teaching, you must not dream of concealing your faith, for your religion requires it.

In the next place, *genuine love dictates it*. Ashamed of Jesus, who bought you with His blood, forgave you all your sins, made you a child of God! Oh! by the five wounds, and by the glorious passion, and the bloody sweat, and the travail of His soul, by the hands that bore thy name in heaven, by the heart that beats with love for you, how can you deny Him! Beloved in the heart of Jesus—

*"When you blush be this your shame,
That you no more revere His name."*

But never, never be ashamed of one so dear to you. Love inspires it.

But *gratitude also requires it*. Surely, brethren, those that are converted to God owe no small gratitude to the church of Christ, which was the instrument, in most cases, of their conversion. How can

we prove that gratitude so well as by assisting that church in all its work, that others also may be blessed? When I think of some Christians who say they love Christ, but have never joined the church, I put it to them, “Suppose everybody else did the same—every other Christian has the same rights as yourself—suppose, then, that all Christians should refuse to join in church organization, how would there be any hope for the world?” “Oh!” say you, “all others may do it!” Nay, if you may neglect it, others may. Was it not through some minister of Christ that you first heard the Gospel? Was it not through the Sabbath school or through some printed word that you first came to know Christ? Repay the debt you owe to the church by casting in your lot with your fellow Christians, and seeking to do the same for some other, who, as yet, is unrenewed by grace.

Prudence also, let me say, *suggests it to you*. “Prudence,” you answer, “why, I thought it was prudence to keep out of the church, for fear I should dishonor Christ.” That is imprudence, for it is going on your own way, a road Christ never marked for you. The truest prudence is to do exactly what the Master bids, for then, if anything should come amiss, you are not accountable for it.

“But,” say you, “suppose I should dishonor Christ?” Yes, and suppose you are dishonoring Christ now? I think you had better run that risk than take the absolute certainty that you are dishonoring Him by your disobedience. “Well,” says one, “if I were to avow myself a Christian, I should feel it such a solemn thing.” Therefore, do it, for we want solemn things to keep us back from sin. “I should feel it such a bond to keep me in holiness.” You require such a bond, accept it, and it shall be no more a chain to you, if you be sincere, than wings are a burden to a bird, or sails become a clog to a ship.

*“Take His easy yoke and wear it,
Love will make the burden light;
Grace will teach you how to bear it,
You shall bear it with delight.”*

But, beloved in Christ, for your own good’s sake, be not slow to do what your Master bids.

One other word will suffice. Over and above all other reasonings comes this, *Christ requires it*. Hear ye His words tonight, mine are but feeble, but let His roll in your souls like thunder, “Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven; but whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven.”

Now, mark from the connection, that denial means “whosoever shall not confess.” The two verses are put in apposition and opposition. There is a blessing to the confessor. The curse is to the non-confessor. “Whosoever shall not confess me”—for that is the denying here meant—“before men, him will I deny before my Father who is in heaven.”

Will you willfully disobey the Master you profess to serve? Will you raise quibbles to His face, and questions in His very presence? They are His words. They can bear no other meaning. They are not to be disputed, but to be obeyed. These are not the decrees of the Council of Trent, or you might fling them to the winds. They are not the ordinances of a bench of bishops, or you might tread them under foot. These are not the commands of any minister of any sect, or you might, if you would, reject them.

But they are the royal authoritative words of Jesus Christ Himself. I charge you, by your loyalty to your King—I charge you by your indebtedness to your Redeemer—I charge you by your love to Him whom you call Master and Lord, if hitherto you have not confessed Him, make haste and delay not to keep His commandment, and acknowledge Him, that He may acknowledge you, and never be ashamed of Him again, lest at the last He should be ashamed of you.

I shall urge no other reason. If that last convince not, the spirit of obedience is lacking, and I would not even ask any of you to confess Christ if you did not mean to obey Him. Were it otherwise, I would say, “Stand back! Stand back! If you do not love Him, He has never washed you from your sins, if He is not your Savior, if you have never been born again, if you are not truly His servant in the name of God, do not touch baptism, or His supper, never come to the communion table if you have no right there,

profess not to be a Christian if you are not, and say not, “Our Father who art in heaven,” for your Father is not in heaven, you have no part or lot in this matter, you are in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity, and harsh as the words may sound, these words are true, “Repent, and be converted,” that ye may obtain these blessings.

Fly to Christ, and trust in Him, for until you do you have no right to the ordinances of God’s house, there is no room for you in God’s family, you are not His child, but an alien, a stranger, an outcast. May the Lord, in His mercy, bring you to know it, and then bring you to Jesus, and adopt you into His household, and you will give Him the praise.

Now, the last thing is to be treated with brevity, but great solemnity, because we are to inquire—

III. WHAT ARE THE REWARDS AND PENALTIES ATTACHED TO THIS DUTY?

Here we have two sanctions. “He that confesseth me before men, him will I confess before my Father who is in heaven.” Take this sentence home with you, every one of you. What Christ is to you on earth, that you will be to Christ in heaven. I shall repeat that truth. Whatever Jesus Christ is to you on earth, you will be to Him in the day of judgment. If He be dear and precious to you, you will be precious and dear to Him. If you thought everything of Him, He will think everything of you.

There are in my text, it appears to me, two judgment seats. There is one on which you sit, and there is one before you, which is better. Shall I take the world—the world which contemns two things, it contemns civil vices and holy duties? Shall I take the world, which will call me a bigot, a fanatic, if I go with Christ? Shall I take the world with its pleasures and amusements? Shall I take it with its sins and laxities of morals, with its looseness and general trifling? Shall I take that, or shall I take my Lord and Master, and be thought a fool because I dare not, cannot do as others do? Shall I keep in the narrow path which He has mapped out? Which shall it be?

I believe that salvation is of grace, but there is such a thing as a human will, and God does not violate it. There is a time when every man sits just on that judgment seat, and blessed be He to whom God gives grace to say—

*“Jesus, I, my cross have taken,
All to leave and follow Thee.”*

On that judgment which you now make, sitting on that judgment here, humanly speaking, will depend that other judgment from the other judgment seat of the great white throne. Methinks I see the Master, He has come in the clouds of heaven. Hark, how the silver trumpets ring, the dead are rising, the pillars of heaven are shaking, stars are falling, solemnities, unseen before, attend the dread assize, and the books are opened, and every soul may be judged by this one thing—did he confess Me before men?

Did he call Me his Master in his heart, and give himself up to My cause? Then I confess that he is mine, and though he were poor and despised, rotted in a dungeon, or was burnt at the stake amidst execrations—I confess him, he is Mine. He said that I was his, and now I say in return that he is Mine. He judged that he would take Me, I judged that I have taken him. He confessed Me, I confess him.

But see the other—see the timorous wretch who knew something about Christ, but knew too much about the world—who loved the silver of Demas, or the pleasures of Jezebel—let him come forward.

What is the Master’s sentence about him? It is very short, but very full, “I never knew you.” They did not know Christ on earth, and now He does not know them. He is the only Savior, and that only Savior does not know them. They were the gay party, and there was much ridicule poured upon belief in Christ. The gay young lady thought that she must take her share in this, or she might be suspected of falling in with the despised people of God. She did not know Christ. No! and He will not know her in that day when the beauty will have gone from her cheek, and the grace and charm will have departed from her form.

Yes! that man of business who was talking the other day with his fellows, and the conversation turning upon religion, there was some joke made against the Gospel, or some of its sacred doctrines, and though he knew it was wrong and mean, he thought he must joke too, unless he should be thought to be

one of the class who follow Jesus of Nazareth. He was too respectable to know Christ, and Christ will be too respectable to know him.

Let me say to all the counts and countesses, the dukes and duchesses, the royal highnesses and royal personages of all denominations that are fretting out their little hour, the true dignity will be to know Christ, and the true horror to be unknown of Him. Oh! happy shall that man be whose name was handed down from man to man amidst scorn, and shame, and spitting, because he took Christ's part.

"Stand back, ye angels!" the King will say, "Stand back, ye seraphim and cherubim! Make way for him, he loved Me in the days of My scorn, he suffered for me on earth. I know him. My Father, I confess him before Thee in heaven amidst the glories of My throne. I confess him before Thee, he is Mine."

But the apostate, the turncoat, the careless, the non-confessing, whatever be their dignities, and names, and honors, and glories here—though the world's church may count them good and offer a song for them beneath its domes—if they have not trusted Christ with their own heart, and have not loved Him with their own soul, it shall be all in vain. Though they have been decorated and almost adored, Christ shall turn coldly upon them with "I never knew you!" "But, Lord, we ate and drank in Thy courts!" "I know you not; depart from me." "But, Lord! are we then to be forever banished from Thy presence?" "I never knew you, your loss is eternal, your ruin must be final."

Choose ye, this night, whom ye will serve. By the living God, before whom I stand, I adjure you this night decide for Christ. If God be God, serve Him. If the Devil be God, serve him. One way or the other. If Jesus Christ be worthy of your love, let Him have it, and take up your cross. But if He be not, then trifle with religion still, and go on your way.

But I cannot finish so. Consider, think, and turn unto Him with full purpose of heart. Give yourselves to Him. Unite yourselves with God's people wherever you may find them. Cast in your lot with the lovers of Jesus in whatever Christian denomination you may happen to meet with them. The Lord bless you and them, and own you in the day when He shall appear. May God add His solemn sanction, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

MATTHEW 10:16-23

Verse 16. *Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.*

It is a strange errand that you are sent upon—not as dogs to fight with the wolves. Yet you are to fight with them, but you are to go as lambs in the midst of wolves. Expect, therefore, that they will rend you. Bear much, for even in that you shall conquer. If they kill you, you shall be honored in your death. As I have often said, the fight looks very unequal between sheep and wolves, yet at the present moment there are vastly more sheep in the world than wolves, the sheep having outlived the wolves.

In this country at any rate, the last wolf is gone, and the sheep, with all their weaknesses, continue to multiply. "That is due," you say, "to the shepherd." And to Him shall your safety and your victory be due. He will take care of you. "I send you forth as sheep among wolves." But do not, therefore, provoke the wolves. "Be wise as serpents." Have a holy prudence. "Be as harmless as doves," but not as silly as doves.

17-19. *But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.*

And very remarkable were the answers given by the martyrs to those who persecuted them. In some cases, they were altogether unlettered men, feeble women, unused to the quibbles and the catches which

ungodly wise men use, and yet with a holy ability they answered all their adversaries, and often stopped their mouths. It is wonderful what God can make of the weakest of men when He dwells in them, and speaks through them.

20-21. *For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you. And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death.*

Strange venom of human nature. It never grows so angry against anything as against God's truth. Why is this? False religions will tolerate one another, but they will not tolerate the religion of Christ. Is not this all accounted for by that old dark saying at the gates of Eden, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman—between thy seed and her seed." That enmity is sure to come up as long as the world stands.

22-23. *And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.*

They had not been able to get all through Palestine before the destruction of Jerusalem. Perhaps we shall scarcely have been able to preach the Gospel in every part of the world before our Master's speedy footsteps shall be heard.

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