

CONSOLATION PROPORTIONATE TO SPIRITUAL SUFFERINGS

NO. 13

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MARCH 11, 1855,
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AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

“For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds by Christ.”
2 Corinthians 1:5.

SEEK you rest from your distresses, you children of woe and sorrow? This is the place where you may lighten your burden and lose your cares. Oh, son of affliction and misery, would you forget for a time your pains and griefs? This is the Bethesda, the house of mercy! This is the place where God designs to cheer you and to make your distresses stay their never-ceasing course. This is the spot where His children love to be found, because here they find consolation in the midst of tribulation, joy in their sorrows and comfort in their afflictions. Even worldly men admit that there is something extremely comforting in the sacred Scriptures and in our holy religion! I have even heard it said of some that after they had, by their logic, as they thought, annihilated Christianity and proved it to be untrue, they acknowledged that they had spoilt an excellently comforting delusion and that they could almost sit down and weep to think it was not a reality. Yes, my friends, if it were not true, you might weep. If the Bible were not the truth of God—if we could not meet together around His mercy seat, then you might put your hands upon your loins and walk about as if you were in travail. If you had not something in the world beside your reason, beside the fleeting joys of earth—if you had not something which God had given to you, some hope beyond the sky, some refuge that should be more than terrestrial, some deliverance which should be more than earthly, then you might weep—ah, weep your heart out at your eyes and let your whole bodies waste away in one perpetual tear! You might ask the clouds to rest on your head, the rivers to roll down in streams from both your eyes, for your grief would “have need of all the watery things that nature could produce.” But, blessed be God, we have consolation, we have joy in the Holy Spirit! We find it nowhere else. We have raked the earth through, but we have never discovered a jewel. We have turned this dunghill of a world over and over a thousand times and we have found nothing that is precious. But here, in this Bible, here in the religion of the blessed Jesus, we, the sons of God, have found comfort and joy. We can truly say, “As our afflictions abound, so our consolations also abound by Christ.”

There are four things in my text to which I invite your attention. The first is *the sufferings to be expected*—“The sufferings of Christ abound in us.” Secondly, *the distinction to be noticed*—*they are the sufferings of Christ*. Thirdly, *a proportion to be experienced*—as the sufferings of Christ abound, so our consolations abound. And fourthly, *the person to be honored*. “So our consolation abounds by CHRIST.”

I. Our first division, then, is THE SUFFERINGS TO BE EXPECTED. Our holy apostle says, “The sufferings of Christ abound in us.” Before we buckle on the Christian armor we ought to know what that service is which is expected of us. A recruiting sergeant often slips a shilling into the hand of some ignorant youth and tells him that Her Majesty’s service is a fine thing, that he has nothing to do but walk about in his flaming colors, that he will have no hard service—in fact, that he has nothing to do but to be a soldier and go straight on to glory! But the Christian servant, when he enlists a soldier of the Cross, never deceives him like that. Jesus Christ Himself said, “Count the cost.” He wished to have no disciple who was not prepared to go all the way—“to bear hardness as a good soldier.” I have sometimes heard religion described in such a way that its high coloring has displeased me. It is true, “her ways are ways of pleasantness,” but it is *not true* that a Christian never has sorrow or trouble! It is true that light-eyed

cheerfulness and airy-footed love can go through the world without much depression and tribulation—but it is not true that Christianity will shield a man from trouble; nor ought it to be so represented. In fact, we ought to speak of it in the other way. Soldier of Christ, if you enlist, you will have to do hard battle! There is no bed of down for you, there is no riding to heaven in a chariot. The rough way must be trod, mountains must be climbed, rivers must be forded, dragons must be fought, giants must be slain, difficulties must be overcome and great trials must be borne. It is not a smooth road to heaven, believe me. For those who have gone but a very few steps therein have found it to be a rough one. It is a pleasant one, it is the most delightful in the entire world—but it is not easy in itself. It is only pleasant because of the company, because of the sweet promises on which we lean, because of our beloved who walks with us through all the rough and thorny ferns of this vast wilderness.

Christian, expect trouble—“Count it not strange concerning the fiery trial and as though some strange thing had happened unto you.” For as truly as you are a child of God, your Savior has left you His legacy—“In the world, you shall have tribulation, in Me you shall have peace.” If I had no trouble I would not believe myself one of the family. If I never had a trial, I would not think myself an heir of heaven. Children of God must not, shall not, escape the rod. Earthly parents may spoil their children, but the heavenly Father never shall His. “Whom He loves He chastens,” and scourges every son whom He has chosen. His people must suffer—therefore, expect it Christian. If you are a child of God, believe it—look for it—and when it comes say, “Well, suffering, I foresaw you. You are no stranger, I have looked for you continually.” You cannot tell how much it will lighten your trials if you await them with resignation. In fact, make it a wonder if you get through a day easily! If you remain a week without persecution, think it a remarkable thing. And if you should, perchance, live a month without heaving a sigh from your inmost heart, think it a miracle of miracles! But when the trouble comes, say, “Ah, this is what I looked for. It is marked in the chart to heaven, the rock is put down. I will sail confidently by it—my Master has not deceived me”—

*“Why should I complain of need or distress
Temptation or pain? He told me no less.”*

But why must the Christian expect trouble? Why must he expect the sufferings of Christ to abound in him? Stand here a moment, my brethren, and I will show you four reasons why you must endure trial. First, look upward, then look downward, then look around you and then look within you and you will see four reasons why the sufferings of Christ should abound in you!

Look upward. Do you see your heavenly Father, a pure and holy Being, spotlessly just, perfect? Do you know that you are one day to be like He? Think you that you will easily come to be conformed to His Image? Will you not require much furnace work, much grinding in the mill of trouble, much breaking with the pestle in the mortar of affliction, much being broken under the wheels of agony? Think you it will be an easy thing for your heart to become as pure as God is? Do you think you can so soon get rid of your corruptions and become perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect?

Lift up your eye again. Do you discern those bright spirits clad in white, purer than alabaster, more chaste, more fair than Parian marble? Behold them as they stand in Glory. Ask them from where their victory came. Some of them will tell you—they swam through seas of blood. Behold the sears of honor on their brows. See, some of them lift up their hands and tell you they were once consumed in fire—others were slain by the sword, torn in pieces by wild beasts, were destitute, afflicted, tormented. O you noble army of martyrs, you glorious hosts of the living God! Must you swim through seas of blood and shall I hope to ride to heaven wrapped in furs and ermine? Did you endure suffering and shall I be hampered with the luxuries of this world? Did you fight and then reign and must I reign without a battle? Oh, no! By God’s help I will expect that as you suffered, so must I and as through much tribulation you entered the kingdom of heaven, so shall I.

Next, Christian, turn your eyes downward. Do you know what foes you have beneath your feet? There are hell and its lions against you! You were once a servant of Satan and no king will willingly lose his subjects. Do you think that Satan is pleased with you? Why, you have changed your country! You were once a liege servant of Apollyon, but now you have become a good soldier of Jesus Christ. And do you think the devil is pleased with you? I tell you no. If you had seen Satan the moment you were con-

verted, you would have beheld a wondrous scene. As soon as you gave your heart to Christ, Satan spread his bat-like-wings—down he flew into hell—and summoning all his counselors he said, “Sons of the pit, true heirs of darkness, you who once were clad in light but who fell with me from high dignities—another of my servants has forsaken me. I have lost another of my family. He is gone over to the side of the Lord of Hosts. Oh you, my compeers, you fellow helpers of the powers of darkness, leave no stone unturned to destroy him. I bid you all hurl all your fiercest darts at him. Plague him. Let hell dogs bark at him. Let fiends besiege him. Give him no rest, harass him to the death. Let the fumes of our corrupt and burning lake ever rise in his nostrils. Persecute him, the man is a traitor, give him no peace! Since I cannot have him here to bind him in chains of adamant; since I never can have him here to torment and afflict him, as long as you can, till his dying day, I bid you howl at him! Until he crosses the river, afflict him, grieve him, torment him, for the wretch has turned against me and become a servant of the Lord.” Such may have been the scene in hell that very day when you did love the Lord. And do you think Satan loves you better, now? Ah, no. He will always be at you, for your enemy, “like a roaring lion, goes about seeking whom he may devour.” Expect trouble therefore, Christian, when you look beneath you.

Then, man of God, look around you. Do not be asleep. Open your eyes and look around you. Where are you? Is that man a friend next to you? No! You are in an enemy’s country. This is a wicked world. Half the people, I suppose, profess to be irreligious and those who profess to be pious often are not. “Cursed is he that trusts in man and makes flesh his arm.” “Blessed is he that trusts in the Lord and whose hope the Lord is.” “As for men of low degree, they are vanity.” The voice of the crowd is not worth having. And as for “men of high degree, they are a lie,” which is worse still. The world is not to be trusted, not to be relied upon. The true Christian treads it beneath his feet, with “all that earth calls good or great.” Look around you, my brethren. You will see some good hearts, strong and valiant. You will see some true souls, sincere and honest. You will see some faithful lovers of Christ. But I tell you O child of light, that where you meet one sincere man, you will meet 20 hypocrites. Where you will find one that will lead you to heaven, you will find a score who would push you to hell. You are in a land of enemies, not of friends. Never believe the world is good for much. Many people have burned their fingers by taking hold of it. Many a man has been injured by putting his hand into a nest of the rattlesnake—the world—thinking that the dazzling hues of the sleeping serpent were securities from harm. O Christian! The world is not your friend! If it is, then you are not God’s friend. For he who is the friend of the world is the enemy of God. And he who is despised of men, is often loved of Jehovah. You are in an enemy’s country, man—therefore expect trouble—expect that the man who “eats your bread will lift up his heel against you.” Expect that you shall be estranged from those that love you. Be assured that since you are in the land of the enemy, you shall find the enemy everywhere. When you sleep, think that you sleep on the battlefield. When you walk believe that there is an ambush in every hedge. Oh, take heed, take heed! This is not a good world to shut your eyes in. Look around you, man. And when you are upon the watchtower, reckon surely that trouble comes!

But then, look *within* you; there is a little world in here, which is quite enough to give us trouble. A Roman once said he wished he had a window to his heart, that all people might see what was going on there. I am very glad I have not. If I had, I would shut it up as closely as Apsley House used to be. I would take care to have all the shutters up. Most of us would have great need of shutters if we had such a window! However, for one moment, peep into the window of your heart, to observe what is there. Sin is there—original sin and corruption. And, what is more, self is still within. Ah, if you had no devil to tempt you, you would tempt yourself. If there were no enemies to fight you, you would be your worst foe. If there were no world, still you would be bad enough, for “the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.” Look within you, believer, know that you bear a cancer in your very vitals. Know that you carry within you a bombshell, ready to burst at the slightest spark of temptation. Know that you have inside your heart an evil thing, a coiled-up viper, ready to sting you and bring you into trouble, pain and unutterable misery. Take heed of your heart, Christian! And when you find sorrow, trouble and care, look within and say, “Verily, I may well receive this, considering the evil heart of unbelief which I carry about with me.”

Now do you see, brethren? There is no hope to escape trouble! What shall we do, then? There is no chance for us. We must bear suffering and affliction. Therefore, let us endure it cheerfully. Some of us are the officers in God's regiments and we are the mark of all the riflemen of the enemy. Standing forward, we have to bear all the shots. What a mercy it is that not one of God's officers ever fall in battle! God always keeps them. When the arrows fly fast, the shield of faith catches them all. And when the enemy is most angry, God is most pleased. So, for all we care, the world may go on, the devil may revile, flesh may rise, "for we are more than conquerors through Him that has loved us." Therefore, all honor be unto God, alone. Expect suffering—this is our first point.

II. Now, secondly, there is A DISTINCTION TO BE NOTICED. Our sufferings are said to be the *sufferings of Christ*. Now, suffering in itself is *not* an evidence of Christianity! There are many people who have trials and troubles who are not children of God. I have heard some poor whining people come and say, "I know I am a child of God because I am in debt, because I am in poverty, because I am in trouble." Do you, indeed? I know a great many *rascals* in the same condition. And I don't believe you are a child of God any the more because you happen to be in poor circumstances. There are abundance who are in trouble and distress besides God's children. It is not the peculiar lot of God's family—and if I had no other ground of my hope as a Christian, except my experience of trials—I should have but very poor ground, indeed! But there is a distinction to be noticed. Are these sufferings the sufferings of Christ or are they not? A man is dishonest and is put in jail for it. A man is a coward and men hiss at him for it. A man is insincere and, therefore, persons avoid him. Yet he says he is persecuted! Persecuted? Not at all—it serves him right. He deserves it. But such persons will comfort themselves with the thought that they are "the dear people of God," because other people avoid them when it so happens that they just deserve it. They do not live as they ought to do, therefore the world's punishment is their desert. Take heed, beloved, that your sufferings are the sufferings of Christ—be sure they are not your own sufferings. For if they are, you will get no relief—it is only when they are the sufferings of Jesus that we may take comfort.

"Well," you say, "what is meant by our sufferings being the sufferings of Christ?" You know the word "Christ" in the Bible sometimes means the whole church with Christ, as in 1 Corinthians 12:12 and several other passages which I cannot just now remember. But you will call to mind a Scripture where it says, "I fill up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ, for His body's sake, which is the church." Now, as Christ, the Head, had a certain amount of suffering to endure, so the body must also have a certain weight laid upon it. Our afflictions are the sufferings of Christ mystical, the sufferings of Christ's body, the sufferings of Christ's church, for you know that if a man could be so tall as to have his head in heaven and his feet at the bottom of the sea, it would be the same body and the head would feel the sufferings of the feet. So, though my Head is in heaven and I am on earth, my griefs are Christ's griefs. My trials are Christ's trials, my afflictions, He suffers—

*"I feel in My heart all your sighs and your groans,
For you are most near Me, My flesh and my bones.
In all your distresses, your Head feels the pain,
Yet all are most necessary, not one is in vain."*

The trials of a true Christian are as much the sufferings of Christ as the agonies of Calvary.

Still you say, "We want to discern whether our troubles are the trials of Christ." Well, they are the trials of Christ if you suffer for Christ's sake. If you are called to endure harshness for the sake of the truth, then those are the sufferings of Christ. If you suffer for your own sake, it may be a punishment for your own sins. But if you endure for Christ's sake, then they are the trials of Christ. "But," say some, "is there any persecution nowadays? Do any Christians have to suffer for Christ's sake now?" Suffer, sirs? Yes! I could unfold a tale this morning, if I pleased, of insufferable bigotry, of persecution well near as bad as that in the days of Jesus! Only our foes have not the power and the law on their side. I could tell you of some who, from the simple fact that they choose to come and hear this despised young man, this ranting fellow, are to be looked upon as the offscouring of all things! Many are the persons who come to me who have to lead a miserable and unhappy life simply because from my lips they heard the word of truth! Still, in spite of all that is said, they will hear it now. I have, I am sure, many before me, whose

eyes would drop with tears if I were to tell their history—some who have privately sent me word of how they have to suffer for Christ’s sake because they choose to hear whom they please. Why, is it not time that men should choose to do as they like? If I do not care to do just as other ministers do, have not I a right to preach as I please? If I haven’t, I will—that is all. And have not other parties a right to hear me if they like, without asking the lords and governors of the present day whether the man is really clerical or not? Liberty! Liberty! Let persons do as they please. But liberty—where is it? You say it is in Britain. It is, in a measure, but not thoroughly. However, I rejoice that there are some who say, “Well, my soul is profited—and let men say what they will, I will hold hard and fast to the truth of God and to the place where I hear the Word to my soul’s edification.” So, dear Hearts, go on, go on—and if you suffer for Christ’s sake, they are Christ’s sufferings! If you came here simply because you gained anything by it, then your sufferings would be your own. But since there is nothing to gain but the profit of your own souls, still hold on. And whatever is said, your persecution will but win you a brighter crown in Glory!

Ah, Christian, this ennobles us! My brethren, this makes us proud and happy to think that our trials are the trials of Jesus. Oh, I think it must have been some honor to the old soldier who stood by the Iron Duke in his battles, to be able to say, “We fight under the good old Duke, who has won so many battles—and when he wins, part of the honor will be ours.” Christian, you fight side by side with Jesus! Christ is with you—every blow is a blow aimed at Christ. Every slander is a slander on Christ—the battle is the Lord’s. The triumph is the Lord’s. Therefore, still on to victory! I remember a story of a great commander who, having won many glorious victories, led his troops into a valley and when there, a large body of the enemy entirely surrounded him. He knew a battle was inevitable on the morning. He, therefore, went round to all the tents, to hear in what condition his soldier’s minds were—whether they were dispirited or not. He came to one tent and as he listened, he heard a man say, “There is our general. He is very brave, but he is very unwise this time. He has led us into a place where we are sure to be beaten. There are so many of the enemy’s cavalry, so many infantry.” And then the man counted up all the troops on their own side and made them only so many. The commander, after he had heard the tale, gently drew aside a part of the tent and said, “How many do you count me for? You have counted the infantry and cavalry. But how many do you count me for—me, your mighty captain who has won so many victories.” Now, Christian, I say, how many do you count Christ for? How many do you put Him down for? Have you put Him down for one? He is not one, nor a thousand—He is the “chief among ten thousand.” But He is more than that! Oh, put Him down for a high figure. And when you count up your aids and auxiliaries, put down Christ for All-in-All, for in Him victory is certain—the triumph is secure!

III. Our third point is A PROPORTION TO BE EXPERIENCED. As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so the consolations of Christ abound. Here is a blessed proportion. God always keeps a pair of scales—in this side, He puts His people’s trials, and in that He puts their consolations. When the scale of trial is nearly empty, you will always find the scale of consolation in nearly the same condition. And when the scale of trials is full, you will find the scale of consolation just as heavy. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, even so shall consolation abound by Christ. This is a matter of pure experience. Some of you do not know anything at all about it. You are not Christians, you are not born-again, you are not converted, you are unregenerate and, therefore, you have never realized this wonderful proportion between the sufferings and the consolations of a child of God. Oh, it is mysterious that when the black clouds gather most, the light within us is always the brightest! When the night lowers and the tempest is coming on, the heavenly captain is always closest to His crew. It is a blessed thing, when we are most cast down, then it is that we are most lifted up by the consolations of Christ! Let me show you how.

The first reason is, because *trials make more room for consolation*. There is nothing that makes a man have a big heart like a great trial. I always find that little, miserable people, whose hearts are about the size of a grain of mustard seed, never have had much to try them. I have found that those people who have no sympathy for their fellows—who never weep for the sorrows of others—very seldom have had any woes of their own. Great hearts can only be made by great troubles. The spade of trouble digs the reservoir of comfort deeper and makes more room for consolation. God comes into our heart—He finds it full—He begins to break our comforts and to make it empty—then there is more room for grace! The

humbler a man is, the more comfort he will always have. I recollect walking with a farmer one day—a man who was deeply taught, although he was a plowman and really, farmers would make a great deal better preachers than many college gentlemen—and he said to me, “Depend upon it, my good brother, if you or I ever get one inch above the ground, we shall get just that inch too high.” I believe it is true. For the lower we lie, the nearer to the ground we are—the more our troubles humble us—the more fit we are to receive comfort! And God always gives us comfort when we are most fit for it. That is one reason why consolations increase in the same ratio as our trials.

Then again, *trouble exercises our graces* and the very exercise of our graces tends to make us more comfortable and happy. Where showers fall most, there the grass is greenest. I suppose the fogs and mists of Ireland make it “the Emerald Isle.” And wherever you find great fogs of trouble and mists of sorrow, you always find emerald green hearts—full of the beautiful verdure of the comfort and love of God. O Christian, do not say, “Where are the swallows gone? They are gone—they are dead.” They are not dead, they have skimmed the purple sea and gone to a far-off land. But they will be back again by-and-by! Child of God, say not the flowers are dead. Say not the winter has killed them and they are gone. Ah, no—though winter has coated them with the ermine of its snow, they will put up their heads again and will be alive very soon. Say not, child of God, that the sun is quenched because the cloud has hidden it. Ah, no—he is behind there, brewing summer for you. For when he comes out again, he will have made the clouds fit to drop in April showers—all of them mothers of the sweet May flowers. And oh, above all, when your God hides His face, say not that He has forgotten you! He is but tarrying a little while to make you love Him more. And when He comes, you shall have joy in the Lord and shall rejoice with unspeakable joy! Waiting exercises our grace. Waiting, tries our faith—therefore wait on in hope. For though the promise tarry, it can never come too late!

Another reason why we are often most happy in our troubles is this—*then we have the closest dealings with God*. I speak from heart knowledge and real experience. We never have such close dealings with God as when we are in tribulation. When the barn is full, man can live without God. When the purse is bursting with gold, we somehow can do without so much prayer. But once your gourds are taken away, you need your God. Once cleanse away the idols out of the house; then you must go and honor Jehovah! Some of you do not pray half as much as you ought. If you are the children of God, you will have the whip and when you have that whip, you will run to your Father. It is a fine day and the child walks before its father. But there is a lion in the road—now he comes and takes his father’s hand. He could run half-a-mile before him when all was fine and fair. But once bring the lion, and it is “Father! Father!” as close as he can be; it is even so with the Christian. Let all be well and he forgets God. Jeshurun waxes fat and he begins to kick against God. But take away his hopes, blast his joys, let the infant lie in the coffin, let the crops be blasted, let the herd be cut off from the stall. Let the husband’s broad shoulders be in the grave, let the children be fatherless—then it is that God is a God, indeed! Oh, strip me naked! Take all I have from me! Make me poor, a beggar, penniless, helpless! Dash that cistern in pieces, crush that hope, quench the stars—put out the sun, shroud the moon in darkness and place me all alone in space, without a friend, without a helper—still, “Out of the depths will I cry unto You, O God.” There is no cry so good as that which comes from the bottom of the mountains, no prayer half so hearty as that which comes up from the depths of the soul through deep trials and afflictions. Hence they bring us to God and we are happier. For that is the way to be happy—to live near to God. So that while troubles abound, they drive us to God and then consolations abound.

Some people call troubles weights. Verily they are so. A ship that has large sails and a fair wind, needs ballast. Troubles are the ballast of a believer. The eyes are the pumps which fetch out the bilgewater of his soul and keep him from sinking. But if trials are weights, I will tell you of a happy secret. There is such a thing as making a weight lift you. If I have a weight chained to me, it keeps me down. But give me pulleys and certain appliances and I can make it lift me up. Yes, there is such a thing as making troubles raise me towards heaven! A gentleman once asked a friend concerning a beautiful horse of his, feeding about in the pasture with a clog on its foot, “Why do you clog such a noble animal?” “Sir,” he said, “I would a great deal sooner clog him than lose him—he is given to leap hedges.” That is why God clogs His people. He would rather clog them than lose them, for if He did not clog them, they

would leap the hedges and be gone. They need a tether to prevent their straying and their God binds them with afflictions to keep them near to Him—to preserve them—and have them in His Presence. Blessed fact—as our troubles abound, our consolations also abound!

IV. Now we close up with our last point. And may the Holy Spirit once more strengthen me to speak a word or two to you. **THERE IS A PERSON TO BE HONORED.** It is a fact that Christians can rejoice in deep distress. It is a truth—put them in prison and they will still sing. Like many birds, they sing best in their cages. It is true that when waves roll over them, their soul never sinks. It is true they have a buoyancy about them which keeps their heads always above the water and helps them to sing in the dark, dark night, “God is with me still.” But to whom shall we give the honor? To whom shall the glory be given? Oh, to Jesus, to Jesus! For the text says it is all by Jesus. It is not because I am a Christian that I get joy in my trouble—not necessarily so. It is not always the fact that troubles bring their consolations. But it is *Christ* who comes to me. I am sick in my chamber. Christ comes up stairs, He sits by my bedside and He talks sweet words to me. I am dying. The chilly cold waters of Jordan have touched my feet. I feel my blood stagnate and freeze. I must die. Christ puts His arms around me and says, “Fear not, beloved. To die is to be blessed, the waters of death have their fountainhead in heaven, they are not bitter, they are sweet as nectar, for they flow from the throne of God.” I wade in the stream, the billows gather around me. I feel that my heart and my flesh fail. But there is the same Voice in my ears, “Fear not. I am with you! Be not dismayed. I am your God.” Now, I come to the borders of the infinite unknown—that country “from whose river no traveler returns.” I stand almost afraid to enter the realm of shades. But a sweet voice says, “I will be with you wherever you go. If you should make your bed in Hades, I will be with you.” And I still go on, content to die, for Jesus cheers me. He is my consolation and my hope! Ah, you who know not that matchless name, Jesus—you have lost the sweetest note which ever can give melody! Ah, you who have never been entranced by the precious sonnet contained in that one word, Jesus—you who know not that Jesus means, I-ES-U, (“I ease you”), you have lost the joy and comfort of your lives and you must live miserable and unhappy. But the Christian can rejoice, since Christ will never forsake him, never leave him, but will be with him always!

A word or two to characters—first, I have a word with you who are *expecting troubles* and are very sad because you are looking forward to them. Take the advice of the common people and “never cross a bridge till you get to it.” Follow my advice—never bring your troubles nearer than they are, for they will be sure to come down upon you soon enough. I know that many persons fret themselves about their trials before they come. What on earth is the good of it? If you will show me any benefit in it, I will say go on, but to me it seems quite enough for the father to lay the rod on the child without the child chastising itself. Why should you do so? You, who are afraid of trouble, why should you be so? The trial may never overtake you. And if it does come, strength will come with it. Therefore, up with you, Man! Why are you sitting down groaning because of forebodings?—

*“Religion never was designed
To make our pleasures less.”*

Up! Up! Why will you sit down and be frozen to death? When trouble comes, *then* fight it with manful heart and strong. Plunge into the stream, accoutered as you are and swim it through, but oh, do not fear it *before* it comes!

Then, Christian *in trouble*, I have a word to say to you. So my brethren, you are in trouble—you have come into the waves of affliction, have you? No strange thing, is it? You have been there many times before. “Ah,” but you say, “This is the worst I ever had. I have come up here this morning with a millstone round my neck. I have a mine of lead in my heart—I am miserable, I am unhappy, I am exceedingly cast down.” Well, but, as your troubles abound, so shall your consolation! Brethren, have you hung your harp upon the willows? I am glad you have not broken the harp altogether. Better to hang it on the willows than to break it. Be sure not to break it. Instead of being distressed about your trouble, *rejoice* in it. You will then honor God. You will glorify Christ. You will bring sinners to Jesus, if you will sing in the depths of trouble—for then they will say, “There must be something in religion, after all, otherwise the man would not be so happy.”

Then one word with you who are almost driven to despair; I would stretch my hands out if I could this morning—for I believe a preacher ought to be a Briareus with a thousand hands to fetch out his hearers, one by one, and speak to them. There is a man here quite despairing—almost every hope gone. Brethren, shall I tell you what to do? You have fallen off the main deck, you are in the sea, the floods surround you, you seem to have no hope, you grab at straws. What shall you do now? Why, lie upon the sea of trouble and *float* upon it! Be still and know that God is God and you will never perish. All your kicking and struggling will sink you deeper. But lie still—for behold the life boat comes. Christ is coming to your help. Soon He will deliver you and fetch you out of all your perplexities!

Lastly, some of you have no interest in this sermon at all. I never try to deceive my hearers by making them believe that all I say belongs to all who hear me. There are different characters in God's Word—it is yours to search your own hearts this day—and see whether you are God's people, or not. As the Lord lives before whom I stand, there are two classes here. I do not acknowledge the distinction of aristocratic and democratic. In my sight and in God's sight, every man is alike! We are made of one flesh and blood. We do not have china gentlemen and earthenware poor people. We are all made of the same mold of fashion. There is one distinction and only one. You are all either the children of God, or children of the devil! You are all either born-again, or dead in trespasses and sins! It is yours to let the question ring in your ears—"Where am I? Is yon black tyrant, with his fiery sword, my king? Or do I acknowledge Jehovah-Jesus as my strength, my shield, my Savior?" I shall not force you to answer it, I shall not say anything to you about it. Only answer it yourselves, let your hearts speak, let your souls speak. All I can do is to propose the question. God apply it to your souls! I beseech Him to send it home and make the arrow stick fast!—

*"Is Jesus mine? I am now prepared
To meet with what I thought most hard.
Yes, let the winds of trouble blow
And comforts melt away like snow,
No blasted trees, nor failing crops
Can hinder my eternal hopes.
Though creatures change, the Lord's the same,
Then let me triumph in His name."*

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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