

SINGING SAINTS NO. 2489

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 1, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 3, 1886.

*“Sing to the LORD, O you saints of His, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness.”
Psalm 30:4.*

DAVID had been seriously ill, and the Lord had graciously restored him to health. He says, “O Lord my God, I cried to You, and You have healed me. O Lord, You have brought up my soul from the grave: You have kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit.” As soon as he has recovered his health and strength, the holy instincts of the man lead him to praise the Lord. The first thing to do, when the throat is clear after an illness, is to sing praises to God! The first thing to do, when the eyes are brightened again, is to look up to the Lord with thankfulness and gratitude. Some people need to be told this, but the psalmist did not—it came to him as a matter of course. Now that he was restored, he would take his place among the heavenly choristers, and sing to Jehovah. He was not satisfied to sing alone, what child of God is? Among the birds in the springtime, when the first one wakes in the morning, and begins to sing, does he not call up his fellows? Is not his song an invitation to all the feathered songsters of the grove to join with him, and pour out their united harmony? In like manner, it is characteristic of a praiseful heart that it naturally desires society in praise. We do not like to praise God alone—we *can* do it, and we *will* do it if we must—but our heart often cries aloud to our brothers and sisters in Christ, “Praise to the Lord.” Our very, “Hallelujah,” is intended to stir up others to this holy exercise, for it means, “Praise you the Lord.”

My one desire, just now, is that those of us who have received special mercy from God should praise His name, and then that all the rest, if there are any who have not received such remarkable mercies as others of us have, should also feel exhorted to join in the sacred song of thankfulness to our God!

This is a duty which is pleasant—there is nothing more delightful than to sing praises to the Lord. It is also a duty that is profitable—it will be as blessed to yourself as it will be pleasing to God. Singing has a curative effect upon many of the maladies of the soul. I am sure that it lightens the burdens of life, and I was about to say that it shortens the weary way of duty if we can but sing as we travel along it. This holy employment is pleasant and profitable, and it is preparatory for another world, and a higher state! I like to sing with Dr. Watts—

*“I would begin the music here,
And so my soul should rise:
Oh for some heavenly notes to bear
My passions to the skies!”*

We are on the way to glory, so let us sing as we journey there, and as the lark, ascending up to heaven's gate sings as she soars, her wings keeping time with her music, and mounting in her song as she rises through the air, so let it be with us—every day a Psalm, every night a day's march nearer home, a little nearer to heaven's music, and a little better imitation of it! Let us sing, now, in our hearts if not with our lips, and when the time comes, let us join our lips with our hearts, and sing to the Lord! That is our text, “Sing to the Lord, O you saints of His, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness.”

It strikes me that our text is very suitable for a communion Sabbath evening. We are about to gather at this table whereon are spread the memorials of our Savior's death. And there are three things about the text which make me think it a very proper one for such an occasion. They are, first, *the peculiar fitness of the exhortation to our present engagement*—“Sing to the Lord.” Secondly, *the special suitability of the subject for our meditation*—“The remembrance of His holiness.” Then, thirdly, *the admirable suitability of the company invited to join in the song* for they are the same people who are invited to sit down at the table—“Sing to the Lord, O you *saints* of His, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.”

I. So, first, let us consider THE PECULIAR FITNESS OF THE EXHORTATION TO OUR PRESENT ENGAGEMENT—"Sing to the Lord."

You are to come to the table where you remember your Savior's death, where you are to feed upon the memorials of His passion. Come there with a heart prepared for song. "Oh," says one, "I thought I had better come with tears." Yes, come with tears—they will be very sweet to Christ if you let them fall upon His feet to wash them with your penitential streams. "Oh, sir," says another, "I thought that surely I must come with deep solemnity." So you must. Woe be to you if you come in any other way, but do you know of any divorce between solemnity and joy? I do not. Levity is akin to sorrow, and soon curdles into it—the laugh is but superficial—and just below the surface lies the sigh. But he who is calmly, quietly, soberly thoughtful, is the man in whom there may be deeps of joy which can never be fathomed. There is a little shallow joy that goes prattling over the pebbles of the brook, and is soon gone. I invite you not to that sort of mirth, but to that deep solemn joy which godly men feel, and which can be fittingly expressed in holy song. "Sing to the Lord." That is no frivolous music! "Sing to the Lord." That is no ballad or ditty—it is a *Psalm*—deep, solemn, profound. And the joy of it is great. "Sing to the Lord, O you saints of His."

"Still," you say to me, "we do not quite see the suitability of singing at this communion table." Well, then, if you do not, I think you soon will, for I remind you that at this table, we celebrate *a work accomplished*. Solomon said, "Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof." The joy is not in the sowing, but in the reaping! Our Lord bids us put bread and wine upon the table to show that His work is finished by His death. There is the bread, and there is the wine—they are distinct and separate. They indicate the flesh and the blood, but the blood separate from the flesh—a sure mark that death has taken place. It is Christ's death that we celebrate by this communion, and that death has written across it these words, "It is finished!" He had finished the work the Father had given Him to do, and therefore He gave up the ghost. I rejoice that Christ's death is an accomplished fact! We have sung, in plaintive tones, with an almost bleeding heart, the sad story of the cross, and nails, and spear, and crown of thorns. And it has been a sweet relief to us when the poet has led us to sing—

*"No more the bloody spear,
The cross and nails no more,
For hell itself shakes at His name
And all the heavens adore."*

It is an infinite satisfaction to us that—

*"The head that once was crowned with thorns,
Is crowned with glory now."*

All the shame and sorrow are done with. All that is over, and we come to this table to eat this bread, and to drink of this cup in memory of a glorious work, an unrivalled work, a work which cost the Savior His life, but a work that is complete, and perfect, and accepted of God! Talk of the labors of Hercules? What are those compared with the toil of the Christ of God? Talk of the conquests of Caesar? What are those beside the victories of Christ who has led captivity captive, and received gifts for men? Beloved, I think that no music can be too loud, too pleasant, too joyous, as we gather about this table, and say, one to another, "We are celebrating the full accomplishment of that which Jesus undertook to do when He was born at Bethlehem, when He lived at Nazareth, when He sweat great drops of blood in Gethsemane, and died on the cross at Calvary." Therefore, "Sing to the Lord, O you saints of His!"

I think I see another reason, also, why we should come to this table with holy song, and that is not only because of a work accomplished, but because of *a result realized*, at least in a measure. Look, sirs. Instead of flesh, I see bread. Instead of blood, I see wine. I know that the bread and the wine are symbols of the flesh and the blood, but I also know that they are something more—they are not only symbols of the things, themselves—but also of that which comes out of those things. This is what I mean. This day, because Christ has died, a table is spread for the starving souls of men. God keeps open house. Like a great king, He sets His table in the street, sends out His servants, and bids them invite the hungry, the poor, the needy, the thirsty, to come and eat, and drink, and be satisfied. And, inasmuch as maddened and besotted by their sin, they will not come, He adds this command, "*Compel* them to come in, that My house may be filled." And, brothers and sisters, when you and I gather around this table, if we have, indeed, come to Christ *spiritually*, He sees in us a part of the reward of His sufferings! The festival has been going on these 1800 years. Relays of guests have been continually feasting at the table of the great King who says, "My flesh is meat, indeed, and My blood is drink, indeed," and His guests are still coming, myriads of them, who would all have died if they had not lived by feeding upon Christ!

They would have all been lost if they had not been saved by the precious blood of Jesus! They are still coming, and our prophetic eyes see, in the companies that are gathering together this Sabbath all over the world, the vanguard of a mightier host that no man can number, out of every nation, kindred, tribe, people, and tongue! Therefore, “Sing to the Lord, O you saints of His.” The very setting up of the communion table, and the gathering of men and women to it that they may spiritually feast upon their dying Lord is a reason for thankfulness!

There is, in the third place, this reason why some of us should sing to the Lord, for here is a *blessing enjoyed*. Not only are many coming in various parts of the world, and feeding spiritually upon the flesh and blood of the Crucified, but it is a special joy that you and I are also here. I am glad, dear brothers and sisters that you are here. It is a great joy to me that my brother in the flesh should be here, and it is a great delight that many of you with whom I have lived so long in happy fellowship should be here. But I could not afford *not* to be here myself! If I had to go away at the close of the service, and leave you to commune with the Lord—and I had no part nor lot in the matter—I would have to miss an exceedingly great joy! You who love the Lord, will you look back to the days when you did not know Him, but when you longed to know Him? There was a time when you sighed and cried for Him, and if anybody had said to you, “You will sit with the great company at the communion in the Tabernacle on such a night, and the Lord Jesus will be very precious to you, and your heart will be brimming over with delight,” you would have said, “I am afraid that is too good to be true! I cannot expect it ever to be *my* case.” There was a time with me when, if I might but have been the least dog under Christ’s table, and have picked up the crumbs, and the stale crusts, and the bones that others despised, I would have licked His feet for very joy! Yet now, lo, here I sit among His children and am one of them! And I have the pleasure of passing to you, my brothers and sisters, the sweet dainties which He put on the table—and if you do not sing, I must! If none of you will sing, I shall have to sing alone! I cannot help it. But I believe that each one of you feels the same wonder, delight, and gratitude to think that you, also, are here.

There is yet another matter to sing about in coming to this table, for this communion reminds us of a *hope revived*. What said the apostle Paul concerning this ordinance? “As often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you do show the Lord’s death till He comes.” This is one of the tokens which our Lord has given us that He *will come again!* In effect, He says, “Eat that bread, drink of that cup, and I will be coming nearer and nearer every time that you thus assemble around My table.” Well now, if you did not sing last time, you ought to sing at the thought that Jesus is coming again! He has not gone away forever. According to the Scriptures, He has not gone for long. Every hour brings Him nearer, and it cannot, now, be very long before He will be back again. Remember what the two men in white apparel said to the disciples, “This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come”—literally and personally—“in like manner as you have seen Him go into heaven.” As surely as Jesus lives, His feet will stand in the latter day upon Mount Olivet, and He will come to gloriously reign among His ancients! This second coming of our Lord, not as a sin-offering, not in shame and humiliation, but in all the glory of His Father, and of His holy angels, makes us strike together with a joyous clash the high-sounding cymbals! We already anticipate the final triumph of the Lord Jesus Christ when all His enemies shall bow before Him. It will be, it *shall* be, and this supper is the memorial that it *certainly* shall be! Therefore, “Sing to the Lord, O you saints of His!”

I think I have given good proof that this exhortation well befits our present engagement.

II. Now, secondly, dear friends, notice THE SPECIAL SUITABILITY OF THE SUBJECT FOR OUR MEDITATION—“Give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness.”

It needs a holy man to give thanks at the remembrance of a holy God. Sinners hate holiness because they dread holiness, but the saints love holiness because they have no cause to dread it, and because, on the other hand, it has become a fountain of comfort and joy to them!

I want you, at this table, to think, first, of *divine holiness vindicated*. God loved us, brothers and sisters, and He wished to save us, but even to save us He would not be unjust. His great heart was full of love, but even to indulge that heart of love He would not suffer His righteous law to be dishonored, nor His moral government to be impaired. Men sometimes talk of God’s punishing sin as if it were a freak with Him. It is a necessity! It is imprinted upon the very existence of moral beings that holiness must bring happiness, and unholiness must bring sorrow—and God will not reverse what He has so properly ordained to be the everlasting order of things! God must be just, and He could not, therefore, wink at human guilt, and pass it by. What, then, must be done? He, Himself, in the person of His dear Son—for never forget that God the Father gave His only-begotten, and well-beloved Son—He, Himself, in the person of His dear Son, came into this world, assumed our nature, and in that nature became the Representative of His people. And as

their Representative He took upon Himself their sins. And being found with their sins imputed to Him, God dealt with our sin as laid upon Him! He found it there, and He smote it there—and because of our sin Jesus bled, and Jesus died! And now, when we come into a state of peace with God, it is not over the ruins of a broken law; it is not over the shattered tablets which Moses broke at the foot of the mountain! We come to the holy God in a holy way! Sinners are forgiven in a righteous way, the unjust are reckoned as just in a just fashion! There is not, in the salvation of a sinner, any keeping back or veiling of the justice of God. He is just, yet He is the Justifier of him that believes in Jesus. I love this glorious truth of God—it seems to me to be the charm of mercy in Christ that it is righteous mercy. This is the quintessence of delight that, when the saint gets to heaven, he will be as rightly there as the sinner in hell will be rightly *there*. There will be as much of the divine holiness seen in the salvation of the dying thief as in the damnation of that other thief who perished in his sin! So let us, as we come to the Lord's table, "give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness." We are going to commune with a God who, so that He might commune with us, and indulge His love to His chosen, would not break His own law, or do that which, on the strictest judgment, could be regarded as unjust! I rejoice in that unquestionable fact—and my heart is glad as I remind you of it!

And, next, let us give thanks at the remembrance of *Christ's holiness declared*. It is a happy occupation to look upon the perfect character of our dear Redeemer. If there could have been found a fault or flaw in Him, He would not have been a suitable Substitute for us. If He had committed a single sin, He could not have taken our sins upon Himself, nor could He have put them away. Think, then, as you sit at this table, what a pure Christ He was! What a perfect man as well as perfect God, what a spotless character He possessed! And then, inasmuch as this was absolutely necessary to the completeness of the atonement which you celebrate at this table, "give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness." I think I see Him coming in before us in His snow-white garments, girt with the golden girdle, with a face that for purity and brightness looks like the sun when it shines in its strength. And I fall down, and admire, and adore, not only His mercy and His meekness, and His charity, but the perfect holiness of my Redeemer and Lord! As you come to the table, beloved, give thanks at the remembrance of the holiness of Him who sits at the head of the feast—the Lord Jesus, Himself, who passes you the cup and says to you, "Drink you all of it." And who breaks the bread and says, "Take, eat. This is My body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of Me." "Give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness."

I think, also, that it will be quite congruous with our present engagement if we think of *God's holiness as the guarantee of our salvation*. This may seem a striking thing to say, but it is assuredly true. Blessed be the righteous God! It is, after all, upon the righteousness of God that we rest our hope! If God can lie, then not one promise of His is to be trusted. If God can do an unrighteous thing, then His covenant may be flung to the winds! But God is not unrighteous to forget the work of His dear Son, and, "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love." He who has pledged His word to you, saying, "They shall be Mine, says the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels," will keep that pledge, and you shall be there! He who has said, "They shall not be ashamed that wait for Me," will keep His promise, and you shall never be ashamed! You, poor sinners, when you first come to Christ, look to God's mercy, and trust to it—and you do quite rightly. But after you have been a little while with Christ, and begin to know the Father through knowing the Son, you come to "give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness." You see that, at the back of His mercy, as the very foundation and pillar of His grace, there stands His righteousness! Beloved, as we come to the communion table, we give thanks at the remembrance of a hope that is grounded upon the righteousness of God! And we therefore sing praises to His holy name.

Once more. I think that, at this table, we may give thanks that *the holiness of God is our mark*, the object for us to aim at, yes, and that to which we shall one day attain. "Be you holy, for I am holy." "Be you perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." I sometimes ask our young friends, when they come to join the church, whether they are perfect. And they open their eyes, and look at me, and say, "Oh, no; far from it!" Then, when I ask, "Would you like to be perfect?" their eyes sparkle with delight, as much as to say, "Why, that is the heaven we are looking for, to be absolutely free from sin! We would not mind sorrow, sickness, pain, persecution, or anything of that sort, so long as we could but get rid of sin."

"If sin is pardoned, I'm secure. And if sin is conquered, I am perfectly happy." This will be the case with all believers one of these days, but not here. Of all the people whom I have ever met with—who have told me that they were perfect—I can say that I was morally certain they were not! They had only to talk for about five minutes, and they proved their own imperfection. But, beloved, we *shall* be perfect one day. "He which has begun a good work in you will perform it

until the day of Jesus Christ.” He has you now like an unfinished vessel on the potter’s wheel—you are in the clay state, and the great Potter is putting His finger on you, and molding you. You are not half-fashioned yet, but He will never throw you away! He does not begin to make a vessel to honor, and then cease His work, but He perfects that which He begins. And, one of these days you and I shall stand together as a part of the perfected work of God of which even He shall say, “It is very good.” Therefore, when we come to this table, though we come sighing over our own imperfections, let us come singing because of the holiness of God—that holiness which we shall yet share! —

***“O glorious hour! O blest abode!
I shall be near and like my God.”***

The children shall yet bear the image of their Father, the brethren shall yet be conformed to the glories of the First-Born! Therefore, “Sing to the Lord, O you saints of His, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness.”

III. Lastly, the text is very appropriate for the communion because of THE SUITABILITY OF THE PEOPLE of whom it speaks, for they are the same people who ought to come to this table—“Sing to the Lord, O you *saints* of His.”

First, then, those who come to this table should be “*saints*.” “Ah,” says one, “that is what I called a person this afternoon—‘one of your saints.’” I suppose you thought it was an ugly name, did you not? Well, you are perfectly welcome to call me by that name if you like, only I wish that you would prove the title to be true. “There,” said one to a Christian man, as he shoved him into the gutter, “take that, John Bunyan!” What did the other man say? Why, he picked up his hat, and said, “You may fling me into the gutter again if you call me by that name! I am perfectly satisfied to take the compliment.” You call a man a, “saint,” and then think you have done him an ill turn? Why do you not call him a nobleman? Why do you not call him a peer of the realm? For many of your noblemen, your peers of the realm are poor stuff compared with the “saints!” I would sooner be a saint than be an emperor, or all the emperors rolled into one! A “saint”—why, it is a glorious title! “Oh,” says one, “I mean Cromwell’s saints.” Do you? Well, they were not a bad sort of saints, after all, whether you try them by the strength of their arms in the day of battle, or by the strength of their lungs when they sang, “Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered,” and shouted in Jehovah’s name in the midst of the battle! Or when they went back to their tents and knelt in prayer, and communed with the Most High. But *I* do not mean Cromwell’s saints, and I am not going to talk more about them! I say that this is what *every* Christian ought to be—a “saint.” It means a holy person, one who aims at being holy, one who is set apart for the service and glory of God. These are the people who are to give thanks at the remembrance of God’s holiness because God has made them holy, too! They are partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption which is in the world through lust, and so they are saints. And they are the people who ought to come to the table of the Lord.

But notice that they are not only saints, they are “saints *of His*.” That is to say, they are *God’s saints*—not Rome’s saints, but God’s saints! They might be Cromwell’s saints, but, better than that, they are God’s saints! “O you saints *of His*.” That is to say, they are saints of His making, for they were great sinners till He made saints of them! And they are saints of His keeping, for they would soon be sinners, again, if He did not keep them! They are saints enlisted in His service, sworn to serve under His banner, to be faithful to Him to death. They are “saints *of His*,” that is, they are saints whom He purchased with His precious blood, and whom He means to have as His forever because He has bought them with so great a price! They are saints who shall be with Him in that day when He shall appear with all His holy ones. Then, “Sing to the Lord, O you saints of His.” If God has made you holy. If you belong to Christ, and so *are* holy, let your heart sing! Fling away your doubts, cast away your fears, and forget your sorrows! “Sing to the Lord, O you saints of His.”

Further, these people who are spoken of in the text, the kind of people who ought to come to the communion table, are *God’s thankful saints*. They “give thanks at this remembrance of His holiness.” The man who has no thanks to give ought not to be at the table of the Lord, for it is called the Eucharist, which signifies the giving of thanks. It is intended to be a giving of thanks from beginning to end. Jesus took the bread, and gave thanks. After the same manner, also, He took the cup, and gave thanks. So, “Sing to the Lord, O you saints of His, and give thanks.” If we would come aright to the table of the Lord, we must be thankful saints.

Then, lastly, they who come to the Lord’s table should be *singing saints*. “May not mourning saints come?” Oh, yes! Come and welcome, but learn to sing! “May not weak and feeble saints come?” Oh, yes! But let them not remain weak and feeble. “May not groaning saints come?” Yes, they may come if they like, but groaning is out of place when you have your head on

Christ's bosom, and have His flesh and His blood to feed upon! It should stop all your groans and moans when you once begin to feast on Him. I wish that more of God's people would take to singing. I have known some few who were truly singing saints. I remember an old gentleman in my very young days. The first thing he did, when he rose in the morning, was to sing a hymn while he was washing and dressing. When he came downstairs, the family knew by his singing that he was about. When he went into the street, he used to hum some little bit of a ditty, and the people laughed, and said that old Father So-and-So was always singing. You could never put the good old man out, for as soon as he finished one hymn, he began another, and if anybody stopped him, so that he could not sing, he only waited till he could begin again, and all the while he kept going over it silently in his heart.

We have not enough singing saints! The other Sunday morning I noticed that there was a life-boat crew over at the farther end of the Tabernacle, and one brother began saying, "Amen!" as soon as ever I commenced to pray. Somebody stopped him, and I cannot say that I felt very sorry for my own sake, and the congregation, generally, but after the service was over he and his mates said that they enjoyed the preaching, but what a dead lot of people we were! He was a red-hot Methodist, accustomed to cry out, "Glory!" and, "Hallelujah!" He said he could not make us people out. One of our friends said to me, "If I had not said, 'Hallelujah!' the other Sunday morning, I must have burst altogether." I like people to get into that condition, and if, sometimes, they should break the silence and cry, "Glory!" why, it is better than that they should burst, at any rate! It is a great mercy that they feel their hearts so full that they are ready to burst. People express their praise and delight spontaneously concerning far less things than the joys of God, and the privileges of His people; therefore, "Sing to the Lord, O you saints of His, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness." Now you must finish my sermon for me by standing up and singing—

***"All hail the power of Jesus' name!
Let angels prostrate fall.
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all."***

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

LUKE 22:39-65.

In anticipation of the communion service that is to follow this service, [The Scripture exposition always took place *before the sermon was preached.*—EOD] let us read once more the story of our Lord's agony and arrest, as recorded in the 22nd chapter of the gospel according to Luke. Probably we are all familiar with the narrative of the event which happened on that dreadful night. May the Holy Spirit teach us what He meant!

Verse 39. *And Jesus came out and went, as He was known, to the Mount of Olives; and His disciples also followed Him.*

The garden of Gethsemane had often been the place of our Lord's private prayer, and it was, therefore, well selected as the scene of His fierce struggle with the foe. Where we get strength from God in private, it may often happen that we shall have to endure our greatest conflicts. Singularly enough, it is said that the Jews had a custom of taking the red heifer to the Mount of Olives before it was sacrificed, as if they set forth in that very act, the leading of Christ Jesus into Gethsemane, and the bringing Him back again with His raiment all red with His own blood. We might alter the prophet's words a little and ask, "Who is this that comes from Olivet, with dyed garments from Gethsemane?" and the Divine Sufferer, Himself, might answer, "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save."

40. *And when He was at the place, He said to them, Pray that you enter not into temptation.*

He knew what sore temptation meant, and He was about to feel it at its utmost. And He therefore exhorted His disciples to pray even as He had formerly taught them in the model prayer, "Lead us not into temptation."

41-43. *And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, saying, Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me: nevertheless not My will, but Yours be done. And there appeared an angel to Him from heaven, strengthening Him.*

This is so plain a proof of Christ's condescension as a man that it has overwhelmed some persons. They can hardly understand how it could be true. Therefore, I believe this 43rd verse is omitted in some versions of the Scriptures, and there have been several learned men who, while they could not disprove the existence of the verse in the most ancient manuscripts, have yet labored hard to cut it out, since they thought it too great a stoop for Christ to take. But, my dear friends, in this condescension of our Lord we learn how truly He was bone of our bone, and flesh

of our flesh. Doubtless, we receive much strengthening from angels—“Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” And why should not Christ, who was in all things made like His brethren, also be strengthened by an angel?

44. And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly: and His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

The Greek has the idea of the stretching of the sinews—Christ prayed to the very stretching of His nerves and sinews. As when men wrestle for their lives, so did Christ in prayer strain every power of mind and body that He might prevail. Luke alone describes this dread scene of Christ’s agonizing even to blood, but there is no doubt whatever, from this passage, that our Lord Jesus did actually sweat blood—not something *like* blood, but blood itself—and that in great drops and in such quantities that it did not only adhere to His flesh and stain His garments, but there was such an abundance of it that in great drops it fell down to the ground.

45, 46. And when He rose up from prayer, and was come to His disciples, He found them sleeping for sorrow, and said to them, Why do you sleep? Rise and pray, lest you enter into temptation.

Our Lord was Himself so smarting under the pain of fierce temptation that He would have His disciples pray even to an agony that they might not be led into it. And oh, if you and I have to pray that we be not led into temptation, how much more should we be instant in supplication when we are in the furnace of temptation! Then, indeed, if we restrain prayer before God, we shall be in an evil case.

47. And while He yet spoke, behold a multitude, and He that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near to Jesus to kiss Him.

It is a remarkable fact that we do not read in Scripture that any other of our Lord’s apostles—not even John—ever kissed the Savior! It seems as if the most impudent familiarity was very near akin to dastardly treachery. The eleven would have thought it a high honor to be allowed even to kiss Christ’s *feet*, but Judas, having lost respect for his Master, it was no very great descent for him, first to sell his Lord, and then to betray Him with a kiss. Mark you, brothers and sisters, our Lord Jesus Christ is generally betrayed thus. How, for instance, do men usually begin their books when they mean to undermine the inspiration of Scripture? Why, with a declaration that they wish to promote the truth of Christ! There is the Judas-kiss, and the betrayal comes quickly afterwards. How is it that Christ’s name is often most grossly slandered among men? Why, by those who make a loud profession of love to Him, and then sin foully as the chief of transgressors!

48. But Jesus said to Him, Judas, do you betray the Son of man with a kiss?

Christ might put that question to many of His nominal followers in the present day—“Do you betray the Son of man with a kiss?”

49. When they which were about Him saw what would follow, they said to Him, Lord, shall we strike with the sword?

There is always that tendency, even among Christian people, to get their hands on a sword, but a good man’s hand is never more out of place than there! When he has his hands clasped in prayer, or placed upon the promises of God, then it is well. But a Christian with his hand upon his sword is something like an angel putting forth his hand to iniquity.

50-53. And one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear. And Jesus answered and said, Suffer you thus far. And He touched his ear and healed him. Then Jesus said to the chief priests, and captains of the temple, and the elders, which were come to Him, Have you come out as against a thief, with swords and staves? When I was daily with you in the temple, you stretched forth no hands against Me: but this is your hour and the power of darkness.

“This is the time when I am given up, on the one hand to the temptations of Satan—the power of darkness—and, on the other hand, to you. ‘This is your hour.’” And, as beasts that prowl in the darkness are generally the most ravenous and fierce, so were these chief priests, and captains, and elders most determined in seeking the blood of Christ! Paul afterwards wrote that none of the princes of this world knew the hidden wisdom of God, “for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.” It was the darkness of their minds that led them thus to hunt the only Savior of sinners to His death. Satan himself would scarcely have had a hand in crucifying Christ had he understood that by that very crucifixion, Christ would break the old serpent’s head forever!

54. Then they took Him, and led Him, and brought Him to the high priest’s house. And Peter followed afar off.

For which he is not to be altogether blamed. I do not find that any other disciple followed Christ so near as Peter did. John was, probably, even farther off at first. Yet, dear friends, you

and I may rest assured that if we follow Christ afar off, it will not be long before we deny Him! Those disciples who are ashamed of their Master, who never come out and openly confess their faith in Him, have the seeds of treachery already sown within them. O brothers and sisters, be bold and cleave close to Christ, for this is the way to walk securely!

55. And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them.

“Evil communications corrupt good manners.” Get up, Peter, and run away! What business have you sitting there? Better be in the cold, far off from evil company, than in the warm in the midst of sinners!

56, 57. But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with Him. And he denied Him, saying, Woman, I know Him not!

See how the most courageous are often cast down by the very slightest means? The tongue of a poor feeble woman is too much for this valiant Peter who said that he *never* would deny his Master, even though he should die with Him!

58-60. And after a little while another saw him, and said, You are also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not. And about the space of one hour after, another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with Him: for he is a Galilean. And Peter said, Man, I know not what you say.

Matthew and Mark tell us that to prove this statement, and to make it quite clear that he was not a follower of Christ, he began to curse and to swear, as if the best evidence that he was not a Christian would be afforded by his cursing and swearing.

60, 61. And immediately, while he yet spoke, the cock crew. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter.

How that look must have pierced Peter through and through!

61-64. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, Before the cock crows, you shall deny Me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly. And the men that held Jesus mocked Him, and smote Him. And when they had blindfolded Him, they struck Him on the face, and asked Him, saying, Prophesy, who is it that struck You?

Upon this passage a good man well observes that one of these days Christ will answer this taunt. With His unerring finger, the Judge of all shall point them out, and say to each one, “You are the man.” There are many of you, perhaps, who are committing sin in private, and you think it is not known. You are almost ready to ask the question of Him whom you look upon as a blindfolded God, “Who is it that struck You?” Ah, but He sees you all the while! He reads the secret thoughts of your hearts, and the day will come when He will let you know that *nothing* has escaped His all-seeing eyes!

65. And many other things blasphemously spoke they against Him.

The Lord bless to us all the reading of this sad, sad story! Amen.

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