

“FOR CHRIST’S SAKE”
NO. 614

A SERMON
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“For Christ’s sake.”
Ephesians 4:32

THIS is the great argument of awakened sinners when they seek mercy at God’s hands. Once they could boast of their own righteousness. They could rest upon their feelings, their resolutions, their goodness of heart, or their prayers. But now that God the Holy Spirit has shown them what they are, and revealed to them the desperate evil of their hearts, they dare not offer any other plea than this—“For Christ’s sake.”

They look, and there is no man to succor. They cast their eye around, and there is no helper, and their heart knows neither peace nor hope till they behold the person and sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and then straightway their mouth is opened with arguments, and they can plead with God with prevailing reasons, saying, “For Christ’s sake, for Christ’s sake, have mercy upon me.”

Indeed, beloved, this is the only argument which can prevail with God in prayer, whether the prayer comes from saint or sinner. It is true that God did not originally love us for Christ’s sake, for His electing love was sovereign and absolute—the Father loved us not because the Savior died—but the Savior died because the Father loved us from before the foundation of the world.

Nevertheless the only channel of communication between a loving Father and His elect people is the meritorious and glorious person of Christ. The Father gives us no privilege except through His Only-Begotten, nor are we looked upon as accepted or acceptable, except as we stand in and through our Lord Jesus, accepted in the Beloved, perfect in Christ Jesus.

I must use no other argument when I plead with God but the name of His dear Son, for this is the sum of all heavenly logic. Whatever covenant mercy I may wish for, this is the key which will unlock the storehouses of heaven, but none other name will prevail with God to scatter His mercies among undeserving sinners.

He who knows how to plant his foot on the solid foothold of “for Christ’s sake,” needs not fear, like Jacob to wrestle with the angel of God. But if we forget this in our prayers, we have lost the muscle and sinew from the arm of prayer—we have snapped the spinal column by which the manhood of prayer is sustained erect—we have pulled down about our own ears the whole temple of supplication as Samson did the house of the Philistines.

“For Christ’s sake,” this is the one unbuttressed pillar upon which all prayer must lean—take this away and it comes down with a crash. Let this stand and prayer stands like heaven—reaching minaret holding communion with the skies.

In two ways, as the Holy Spirit may enable us, we will read the words before us. *It is God’s argument for mercy*—“For Christ’s sake.” *It is our reason for service*—“For Christ’s sake.”

I. GOD’S ARGUMENT FOR MERCY. He forgives us “for Christ’s sake.”

Here let us first look at *the force of this motive*. And then, secondly, let us notice *some qualifications in it*, which may, through God’s blessing, be the means of comforting seeking sinners who desire to find rest in and through Jesus Christ.

1. Let us consider *the force of this motive* by which God is moved to forgive sinners, “For Christ’s sake.” You know that if we do a thing for the sake of a person, several considerations may work together

to make our motive powerful, that we may be willing, not only to do some things, but many things—nay, all things, for the sake of the individual admired or beloved.

The first thing which will move us to do anything for another’s sake is *his person*, with its various additions of position and character. The excellence of a man’s person has often moved others to high enthusiasm, to the spending of their lives—ay, to the endurance of cruel deaths for his sake.

In the day of battle, if the advancing column wavered for a single moment, Napoleon’s presence made every man a hero. When Alexander led the van there was not a man in all the Macedonian ranks who would have hesitated to lose his life in following him. For David’s sake the three mighties broke through the host, at imminent peril of their lives, to bring him water from the well of Bethlehem.

Some men have a charm about them which enralls the souls of other men who are fascinated by them, and count it their highest delight to do them honor. There have been, in different ages, leaders, both warlike and religious, who have so entirely possessed the hearts of their followers that no sacrifice was counted too great, no labor too severe.

There is much to move the heart in the excellence of a person. How shall I, in a fitting manner, lead you to contemplate the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, seeing that His charms as far exceed all human attractions as the sun outshines the stars! Yet this much I will be bold to say, that He is so glorious that even the God of heaven may well consent to do ten thousand things for His sake.

Brethren, we believe our Lord Jesus Christ to be very God of very God, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father, essential Deity. Jesus is no distinct God, separate from the Father, but in a mysterious manner, He is one with the Father, so that the old Jewish watchword still stands true. “Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God is one LORD.”

And yet Jesus is JEHOVAH-Tsidkenu, the Lord Our Righteousness. Besides this, He, for us men, and for our salvation, took upon Himself the form and nature of man—became incarnate, as the virgin’s son, and as such, lived a life of perfection, never sinning, always full of love and holy service, both to God and man.

There He stands—by the eye of faith you may see Him—“God over all, blessed for ever,” and yet man, of the substance of His mother, He stands to plead before the eternal throne. Almighty God, all-perfect man. He wears upon His head a crown, for He is a Prince of the house of David, and His dominion is an everlasting dominion.

Upon His bosom glitters the bejeweled breastplate, for He is a Priest forever, after the order of Melchisedek, and over His shoulders hangs the mantle of prophecy, for He is a Prophet, and more than a Prophet. Now, as He stands there, adored of angels, worshipped by cherubim and seraphim, having the keys of heaven, and earth, and hell, at His girdle—Master of winds and waves, Lord of providence, The Wonderful, The Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace, The King of kings, The Lord of lords—I wonder not that such a person should prevail with the Father, and that God, for His sake, should bestow innumerable blessings upon the unworthy for whom He pleads.

He is the chief among ten thousand and the altogether lovely! His head is as much fine gold. His lips like lilies dropping sweet smelling myrrh. His countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars. His mouth is most sweet, yea, He is altogether lovely.

*“The whole creation can afford
“But some faint shadows of my Lord;
Nature, to make His beauties known,
Must mingle colours not her own.*

*“Nor earth, nor seas, nor sun, nor stars,
Nor heaven, His full resemblance bears;
His beauties we can never trace,
Till we behold Him face to face.”*

In the surpassing majesty of His person lies a part of the force of the plea.

A far greater power lies in near and dear *relationship*. The mother, whose son had been many years at sea, pined for him with all a mother’s fondness. She was a widow, and her heart had but this one object left. One day there came to the cottage door a ragged sailor. He was limping on a crutch and seeking alms. He had been asking at several houses for a widow of such and such a name. He had now found her.

She was glad to see a sailor, for never since her son had gone to sea had she turned one away from her door, for her son’s sake. The present visitor told her that he had served in the same ship with her beloved boy—that they had been wrecked together, and cast upon a barren shore—that her son had died in his arms, and that he had charged him with his dying breath to take his Bible to his mother. She would know by that sign that it was her son—and to charge her to receive his comrade affectionately and kindly for her son’s sake.

You may well conceive how the best of the house was set before the stranger. He was but a common sailor. There was nothing in him to recommend him. His weather-beaten cheeks told of service, but it was not service rendered to her—he had no claim *on her*, and yet there was bed and board, and the widow’s hearth for him. Why? Because she seemed to see in his eyes the picture of her son—and that Book, the sure token of good faith, opened her heart and her house to the stranger. Relationship will frequently do far more than the mere excellence of the person.

Bethink you, brethren, Jesus Christ is the only-begotten Son of God. Our God had but one begotten Son and that Son the darling of His bosom. Oh, how the Father loved Him. It is not possible for us to measure divine love, for we have no measuring line. Human love at best is only finite even when it reaches its very highest. When we plunge into the depths of human love, there is yet a bottom, but divine Love has neither shore nor bound.

Little can we tell what *unity of essence* means. The divine persons are one in essence—one God. We cannot therefore conceive what affection must spring from this closest of all known unities. Oh, how JEHOVAH loves Him! And yet that dear Son of His, for our sakes left the starry throne of heaven, became a man, suffered, bled, and died. And when we come to mercy’s bar, bringing with us Christ’s own promise, the Eternal Father sees Jesus in our eyes—bids us welcome to mercy’s table, and to mercy’s house, for the sake of Him who is His only-begotten Son.

Still I have only advanced to the border of my subject. The force of the words, “For Christ’s sake,” must be found deeper still, namely in *the worthiness of the person and of his acts*. Many peerages have been created in this realm which descend from generation to generation, with large estates, the gift of a generous nation, and why?

Because this nation has received some signal benefits from one man, and has been content to ennoble his heirs forever for his sake. I do not think there was any error committed when Marlborough or Wellington were lifted to the peerage—having saved their country in war, it was right that they should be honored in peace. And when, for the sake of the parents, perpetual estates were entailed upon their descendants, and honors in perpetuity conferred upon their sons, it was only acting according to the laws of gratitude.

Let us bethink ourselves of what Jesus Christ has done, and let us understand how strong must be that plea—“For Jesus’ sake.” The law of God was violated. Jesus Christ came into the world and kept it—kept it so that out of the whole Ten Commands there is not one whose clamorous tongue can lay anything to His charge.

Here was a divine dilemma—God must be just, yet He willed to save His people. How could these two things meet? Where was the man who could break down the mountain which separated justice and mercy, so that they could kiss each other. God must punish sin, and yet He will be gracious to whom He will be gracious. How shall these two things agree?

Forth came the priests, with their various sacrifices, but the slaughter of bullocks, and heifers, and rams, and he-goats could not make God just. What comparison could there be between rivers of blood of

fed beasts and the sin of man? But Jesus came—the great Solution of the divine enigma—Jesus came. Eternal God, but yet perfect man, and He bowed His head to the ignominious death of the cross. His hands were pierced, His feet were nailed, His soul was sorrowful, even unto death.

*“Jesus, our Lord and God,
Bore sin’s tremendous load,
Praise ye His name;
Tell what His arm hath done,
What spoils from death He won;
Sing His great name alone;
Worthy the Lamb!”*

God was just—He punished human guilt in the person of man’s representative, Jesus of Nazareth. God is gracious—He accepts every believing sinner for the sake of Jesus Christ. Think, then, of what Christ has done, and you will see the force of the argument. He has honored the law of God which man had dishonored, and has opened a way for God’s mercy, which man’s sin had fast closed up.

Oh, God, Your Son has brought back what He took not away—He has taken the prey from the mighty, and the lawful captive He has delivered. Like another David, He has snatched the sheep from the jaw of the lion, and delivered the lamb from the paw of the bear.

Like another Samson, He has slain Your enemies, and taken the gates of their strongholds upon His shoulders, and carried them to the top of the hill. Every wound which He endured upon the cross, every stroke which He felt in Pilate’s hall, every drop of blood which He sweat in Gethsemane, strengthens the plea, “for Christ’s sake.”

Still, still I think I have not yet arrived at the force of the words. If *any stipulation has been made*, then the words “for his sake” become more forcible, because they are backed by engagements, promises, covenants. In Christ’s case, solemn promises have been exchanged. There was a distinct engagement made between the Judge of men and the Redeemer of our souls, and the Prophet Isaiah has published the engagement, “He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.”

Yet again, “I will divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong.” And still further, “He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied. By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.”

There was a distinct transaction then of ancient date between the Father and the Son, in which the Son stipulated that He would bear the sin of His people. He was to be the scapegoat for His people Israel. And then it was solemnly engaged on the part of the Divine Judge of all the earth, that He would give Him the souls of the redeemed to be His portion forever.

Now, brethren, there is a strength in the plea, “for Christ’s sake.” Oh God, with reverence would we speak of You, but how could You be just if You did not save those for whom Jesus shed His precious blood? Brethren, we speak as unto honest men—would you, being men, first of all accept a surety and a substitute, and then expect the debtor to pay the debt himself?

Look at human governments—if a man were drafted into the army, and should find a substitute, does the law afterwards seize the man himself? And shall God be less just than man? Shall the Supreme King of heaven be less just than the kings of earth? If Christ has paid my debt, God’s justice cannot demand of me. It cannot expect the same debt to be twice paid. Justice cannot demand payment—

*“First at my bleeding Surety’s hands,
And then again at mine.”*

If Christ served in that dread warfare for me as my Substitute, how can it be that after this I should myself be driven to the edge of the sword. Impossible! Beloved, see that scapegoat yonder. Israel’s sins

have been confessed upon it. The high priest has laid his hand on the victim’s head, it is led away by the hand of a fit man. He sets it free, watches it—it is out of sight. He climbs a rock, looks far away to the east, the west, the north, the south—he cannot see it. He waits awhile, looks with anxious eye—it is gone! And he comes back and tells the people of Israel that the sin has been typically carried away upon the scapegoat’s head.

Now, Christ is the fulfillment of the scapegoat. Our sins were laid on Him. He is gone—gone where? “Ye shall seek me but ye shall not find me,” says He. Gone into the desolate regions of the dead. The scapegoat, Christ, has carried away into His own tomb, the sins of all His people forever. Now, was that a farce or was it a reality?

Did Christ take away sin, or not? If He did, then how can men be punished for sins which Jesus took away, for the sins for which Christ was punished? If He did not suffer for sin, then where is the deliverance for any soul of Adam born? Oh you who receive general redemption, you know not what you receive. You who talk of a universal atonement which does not make an atonement for all sin, know not what you affirm.

But we who speak of a special atonement made for every soul that ever has believed or ever shall believe—we speak of something sure, certain, worthy of the soul’s resting itself upon—since it does save every soul for whom it was offered up.

There remains only one other thought upon this point. It tends very much to strengthen the plea, “for Christ’s sake,” if it be well-known that *it is the desire of the person that the boon should be granted*, and if, especially, that desire has been and is earnestly expressed. Oh how glad we ought to be to think that Christ, when we plead His name, never tells us that we are going too far and taking liberties!

No, beloved, if I anxiously ask for mercy, Christ has asked for mercy for me long ago. There is never a blessing for which a believer pleads but Christ pleads for it too, for “He ever liveth to make intercession for us.” Our supplications become *His* supplications, and our desires when indited of the Spirit are *His* desires.

In heaven He points to His wounds, the mementoes of His grief, and He cries—“Father, for My sake grant this favor to these poor undeserving ones. Give them blessing as You would give Me blessing. Be kind and gracious to them, as You would be kind and tender towards Me.” This makes the plea omnipotent. It is not possible but that it should mightily prevail with God.

2. Pausing a minute let us enumerate *some few other qualifications of this plea by way of comfort to trembling seekers*. This motive, we may observe, is with God *a standing motive*. It cannot change. Suppose, poor sinner, that God offered to forgive for your own sake. Then if at one time you were penitent and broken-hearted, there would be hope for you. But at another time you might be bemoaning the hardness of your heart and powerlessness to repent, and then there would be no motive why God should bless you.

But you see, Christ is always as much worthy at one time as another, and therefore God has the same reason for blessing you—a poor wandering soul today—as He can have had twenty years ago. And if you have grown grey in sin—if you have become like a sere piece of wood ready for the fire, yet this motive does not wear out, it has the dew of its youth upon it.

God for Christ’s sake forgives little children, and for the same reason He can forgive the man who has passed his threescore years and ten. As long as you are in this world, this is a standing reason for mercy.

Remember, again, that this is *a mighty reason*. It is not merely a reason why God should forgive little sins, or else it would be a slur upon Christ—as though He deserved but little. Can you tell how great your sin is? “Oh,” say you, “it is high as heaven, it is deep as hell.” Now can you tell how great Christ’s worthiness is?

I will tell you that His worthiness is deeper than hell can be and higher than heaven itself. What if your sin could reach from east to west, and from the highest star to the depth of the abyss, yet the worthiness of Christ is a fullness which fills all in all, and therefore it would cover all your sins. Your

sins, like Egypt’s hosts, are many and mighty—Christ’s worthiness is like the flood of the Red Sea—able to drown the whole, so that not one of their host shall be left. They shall sink into the bottom like a stone.

Your sins are like Noah’s flood, which drowned all mankind. Christ’s worthiness is like Noah’s ark which swims above the tide and mounts higher as the flood grows deeper. The deeper your sin, the more is Christ’s merit exalted above the heavens when JEHOVAH forgives you all your iniquities. Think not little of Christ. I would not have you think little of sin—but still think more of Christ. Sin is finite. It is the creature’s act. Christ is infinite. He is omnipotent. Whatever then your sin may be, Christ is greater than your sin, and able to take it away.

Then, brethren, it is a most *clear and satisfactory*—I was about to say, most reasonable *reason*, a motive which appeals to your own common sense? Can you not already see how God can be gracious to you for Christ’s sake? We have heard of persons who have given money to beggars, to the poor, not because they deserved it, but because they would commemorate some deserving friend.

On a certain day in the year, our Horticultural Gardens are opened to the public, free. Why, why should they be opened free? What has the public done? Nothing. They receive the boon in commemoration of the good Prince Albert. Is not that a sensible reason? Yes.

Every day in the year the gates of heaven are opened to sinners free. Why? For Jesus Christ’s sake. Is this not a most fitting reason? If God would glorify His Son, how could He do better than by saying, “For the sake of My dear Son, set the pearly gates of heaven wide open, and admit the chosen ones. See these myriads of spirits—they are all admitted to their throne of immortal glory for the sake of My dear Son. They are happy, but they are happy for His sake. They are holy, but they are holy for His sake.”

Casting their crowns at His feet, they sing, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.” You perceive at once that this reason appeals to common sense, and therefore I hope, dear friends, you will lay hold of it.

Let me say, poor sinner, that it is a reason *applicable to your case*. If you can—think of any one good and solid reason why God should forgive you! Turn them all over. You cannot see one! I know the time when I could not find half a reason why God should save me, but I could find fifty thousand reasons why He should damn me.

But when I see that, “For Christ’s sake,” O that is a reason. That is a *good* reason—it is a reason I can get hold of. Suppose me to be the blackest sinner out of hell, how it will glorify Christ if, for Christ’s sake, the blackest sinner that ever lived should be snatched from hell and taken to heaven for His sake.

Suppose I have been a blasphemer, unchaste, an adulterer, a murderer—what then? “For Christ’s sake.” The more sin I have, the more glorious will the merit of Christ seem to be, when, in opposition to all my unworthiness, it brings me pardon and eternal life, and takes me to the enjoyments of His right hand.

Sinner, grasp this motive. I know where you have been—you have been raking about in that filthy dunghill of your own heart. You have been turning the filth over to find a jewel in it. You will never find one. The jewels which once belonged to mankind were all lost by our father Adam. I know what you have been doing. You have been trying to be better in order to deserve well of God. Thus you thought you would manufacture a reason which should move the heart of God. Leave off this foolish work—come with nothing in your hands but Christ.

When the Molossians were threatened by their king to be cut to pieces for their rebellion, they pleaded very hard, but no argument would touch his heart till, one day, one of their ambassadors saw his son in the palace. Catching him up in his arms, he took and laid him down before his father’s feet, and said, “For your son’s sake, have pity upon us.”

Now, do this, sinner—take Christ in your arms and say, “For Christ’s sake.” The whole heart of the Gospel lies here. All true theology is comprehended in this, “For Christ’s sake.” Substitution—saving the guilty through the innocent. Substitution—blessing the unworthy through the worthy. Try this

precious plea, poor soul, and I will warrant you that, ere long, you shall find peace with God, if you can understand the power of this argument.

I may close these reflections by observing that this is *the only motive*, the only motive which can ever move the heart of God. You may cry as long as you will, reform as much as you please, pray as earnestly as you like—but the gate of heaven will never stir to your knocking till you plead, “For Jesus’ sake.”

There is the “Open Sesame,” which will make the gates of the city turn on their hinges. But if you have not this watchword, all your doings and almsgivings, and praying, and what not, will be but a heap of filth, piled up against heaven’s gate. Do remember that “other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid,” and that “there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved,” save Jesus Christ, the Righteous. Use that! Plead that and you shall succeed with God!

II. “FOR CHRIST’S SAKE” IS THE BELIEVER’S GREAT MOTIVE FOR SERVICE.

Two or three hints as to *what kind of service may be expected of us*. Then *a little exhortation by way of stirring us up to do this service for Christ*.

1. We begin with *a few hints as to what service is expected of us*. One of the first things which every Christian should feel bound to do “for Christ’s sake” is *to avenge His death*. “Avenge His death?” says one, “upon whom?” Upon His murderers. “And who were they?” Our sins! Our sins!

*“Each of our crimes became a nail,
And unbelief the spear.”*

The very thought of sin having put Jesus to death should make the Christian hate it with a terrible hatred. I do not wonder that the Highlanders bit their lips, and marched with awful determination, and dread resolve of vengeance against the rebel Sepoys, when they recollected how the murdered women filled up the well of Cawnpore. Every man must have felt then that he was twenty men in one for retribution, and when his arm smote, he wished to concentrate all the might of justice into each stroke of his sword.

When I recollect that my sins tore my Savior’s body on the tree, took the crown from His head, and the comfort from His heart, and sent Him down into the shades of death—I vow revenge against them. “O sin! Happy shall he be that taketh thy little ones and dasheth them against a stone.” Yea, doubly blessed is he who, like Samuel, shall hew the Agag of his sins in pieces before the Lord, and not spare so much as one single fault, or folly, or vice, because it slew the Savior. Be holy, be pure, be just, be you separate from sinners for Christ’s sake.

Then, next, the Christian is expected to *exalt his Master’s name*, and to do much to honor His memory, for Christ’s sake. You remember that queen, who, when her husband died, thought she could never honor him too much, and built a tomb so famous, that though it was only named for him, it remains, to this day, the name of every splendid memorial—the mausoleum.

Now let us feel that we cannot erect anything too famous for the honor of Christ—that our life will be well spent in making His name famous. Let us pile up the unhewn stones of goodness, self-denial, kindness, virtue, grace—let us lay these one upon another, and build up a memorial for Jesus Christ, so that whosoever passes by may know that we have been with Jesus and have learned of Him.

Should we not, for His sake, care for the growth of His kingdom, and the welfare of His subjects? Ought we not to minister to the wants of His servants and comfort the sorrows of His friends? If He has a poor brother anywhere, is it not at once an honor and a duty to aid him? As David cherished Mephibosheth, who was lame in his feet, for the sake of Jonathan, so should you and I look after every heavy-laden, faint-hearted Christian, for the sake of Jesus—bearing one another’s burdens, because Christ bore our burdens. Weeping with them that weep, because Jesus wept. Helping those who ask our help, because God has laid help upon One that is mighty, even our Redeemer.

And above all, “for Jesus’ sake” should be a motive to fill us with *intense sympathy with Him*. He has many sheep and some of them are wandering—let us go after them, my brethren, for the Shepherd’s sake. He has pieces of money which He has lost—let us sweep the house, and light our candle, and seek diligently till we find them, “for Jesus’ sake.”

He has brethren who are playing the prodigal—let us seek to bring them back—“for Christ’s sake.” Let the soul of the poorest little street Arab, let the soul of the grossest scoundrel, and the most abandoned harlot be very dear to us “for Jesus’ sake.” Let us care even for the obstinate and rebellious “for Jesus’ sake.”

As you look at souls, think you see Jesus weeping over them. As you look at perishing sinners, think you see *His* blood bespattered on them, and you will love them, “for Jesus’ sake.” Oh! brethren, you who are doing nothing for Christ—you who come here and listen to me, who sit at His table and take the bread and wine in remembrance of Him, what will you do when your Master comes, when you have to confess that you *did* nothing for Him. Your love was of such a sort that you never showed it—you talked of it, but you never gave to His cause, you never worked for His name?

Out on such love as that! What do men think of it—a love that never shows itself in action? Why, they say, “Open rebuke is better than secret love of that kind.” You had better have rebuked Christ than to have had a sneaking, miserable, untrue, unloving love to Him—a love so weak that it was never powerful enough to actuate you to a single deed of self-denial, of generosity, of heroism, or zeal.

Oh, brethren, let it not be so with us any longer, but let us seek, by God’s grace that “for Jesus’ sake” we may have a sympathy with Him in yearning over the souls of men and endeavoring to bring them to a knowledge of His salvation.

2. *A few words, lastly, by way of exhortation* on this point, and I will not weary your attention by longer talk. Clear as the sound of a trumpet startling men from slumber, and bewitching as the sound of martial music to the soldier when he marches to the conflict, ought to be the matchless melody of this word, “For Christ’s sake.”

It ought to make men perform deeds which should fit them to rank with angels. It ought to bring out of every regenerate man more than was ever forced from manhood by any other word, let it have what charm it might. It ought to make the least among us valiant as David, and David as the servant of the Lord.

Think, my brethren, what mighty wonders other words have wrought. *For philosophy’s sake* what have not men suffered? They have wasted their health over unhealthy furnaces, breathing deleterious gases. They have worn out their days and their nights burning the midnight oil. They have spent their last farthing to acquire the secrets of nature, beggared themselves and their families to unravel mysteries which have brought no more substantial reward than the honor of learned approbation and conscious power.

The martyrs of science are innumerable. If someone would write their story, it would make a bright page in human history. Think again of what men have done *for discovery’s sake* by way of traveling. Take down the books of modern travelers and you will be astounded at their zeal, their courage, and unselfishness.

They have mocked the fever, have laughed at death, have left friends, and kindred, and the comfort of home, have gone to inhospitable climes among more inhospitable men, have wandered about in weariness, wet with the rain, frozen with the cold, or burnt up with the heat, hungry, and thirsty, sick and weary—have journeyed on and on to find the source of a river or a passage through a frozen strait.

When I think of such expeditions as those of Ross and Franklin, I marvel at and reverence the endurance of humanity. How these bold men have braved old Boreas in his own ice-palace and faced grim desolation in its own domain. The text “Quit you like men,” gets a new emphasis when we think of these conquerors of famine, and cold, and peril. And shall the inquisitiveness of mankind prove a stronger motive than God-given love to Jesus! If so, shame be upon us!

Think, again, of what men have done *for false religion’s sake*. In years gone by, the scimitar flashed from the Arab’s sheath and the Arab’s eye flashed fire at the very name of Mahomet. For the one dogma, “God is God, and Mahomet is his prophet,” blood flowed in rivers, and fields were strewn with the slain rejoicing to be slain, because they dreamed that Paradise was to be found under the shadow of swords.

Think how the heathen cast themselves before the car of Juggernaut, to be crushed into a hideous mass of mangled flesh, and broken bones, and oozing blood for their god’s sake! their filthy, horrid god’s sake! How many have given themselves to die by Gunga’s stream! How many a woman has gone up to the funeral pile and thrown herself upon her husband’s dead body, giving herself an offering to her cruel gods.

I know not what men have not suffered for the horrid deities which they have chosen for themselves. Martyrs to fanaticism and deception are not a few, and shall the truth find us unready and unwilling to run risks for its sake!

Review, my brethren, *the heroic struggles of the Lord’s people*, and here we turn to the brightest page of the world’s annals. Think of the suffering of God’s people through the Maccabean war! How marvelous was their courage when Antiochus Epiphanes took the feeblest among the Jews to constrain them to break the law, and found himself weak as water before their dauntless resolve.

Aged women and feeble children overcame the tyrant. Their tongues were torn out. They were sawn asunder. They were broiled on the fire. They were pierced with knives—but no kind of torture could subdue the indomitable spirit of God’s chosen people.

Think of the Christian heroism of the first centuries. Remember Blandina tossed upon the horns of bulls and set in a red-hot iron chair. Think of the martyrs given up to the lions in the amphitheatre amidst the revilings of the Roman mob—dragged to their death at the heels of wild horses, or like Marcus Arethusa, smeared with honey and stung to death by bees. And yet in which case did the enemy triumph? In none! They were more than conquerors through Him Who loved them. And why? Because they did it all, “For Christ’s sake,” and Christ’s sake alone.

Think of the cruelty which stained the snows of the Switzer’s Alps, and the grass of Piedmont’s Valleys, blood-red with the murdered Waldenses and Albigenses, and honor the heroism of those who, in their deaths, counted not their lives dear to them “for Christ’s sake.” Walk this afternoon to your own Smithfield, and stand upon the sacred spot where the martyrs leaped into their chariot of fire, leaving their ashes on the ground, “for Jesus’ sake.”

In Edinburgh, stand on the well-known stones consecrated with covenanting gore, where the axe and the hangman set free the spirits of men who rejoiced to suffer for Christ’s sake. Remember those fugitives for Christ’s sake, “meeting in the glens and crags of Scotia’s every hill, “for Christ’s sake.” They were daunted by nothing—they dared everything “for Christ’s sake.”

Think, too, of what missionaries have done “for Christ’s sake.” With no weapon but the Bible, they have landed among cannibals and have subdued them to the power of the Gospel. With no hope of gain, except in the reward which the Lord has reserved for every faithful one, they have gone where the most enterprising trader dared not go, passed through barriers impenetrable to the courage of men who sought after gold, but to be pierced by men who sought after souls.

Think of the Moravians, first and choicest of warriors for God. Think of them selling themselves for slaves that they might teach other slaves the liberty of the Gospel—consenting to be confined in leper colonies for life—with the absolute certainty of rotting away piece-meal with leprosy and with diseases fouler still, only that they might save the leper’s soul, and have an opportunity of teaching the poor diseased one the way by which his spirit might be made whole through Jesus, the great Physician.

And what have you and I ever done? Oh, pigmies, dwarfs, sons of nobodies, our names will never be remembered. What have we done? Preached a few times, but with how little fire. Prayed at certain seasons, but with how little passion. Talked now and then to sinners, but with what half-heartedness. Given to the cause of Christ, but seldom given till we denied ourselves and made a real sacrifice.

Believed in God at times, but oh with what unbelief mixed with our faith. Loved Christ, but with what cold, stolid hearts.

“For Christ’s sake.” Do you feel the power of it? Then let it be like a rushing mighty wind to your soul to sweep out the clouds of your worldliness and clear away the mists of sin. “For Christ’s sake,” be this the tongue of fire that shall sit on every one of you. “For Christ’s sake,” be this the divine rapture, the heavenly afflatus to bear you aloft from earth, the divine spirit that shall make us bold as lions and swift as eagles in our Lord’s service. Fixed, fixed on God with a constancy that is not to be shaken, resolute to honor Him with a determination that is not to be turned aside, and pressing on with an ardor never to be wearied.

I cannot preach as I would on such a theme as this, but I leave it with you. How much owe you unto my Lord? Has He ever done anything for you? Has He forgiven your sins? Has He covered you with a robe of righteousness? Has He set your feet upon a rock? Has He established your goings? Has He prepared heaven for you? Has He prepared you for heaven? Has He written your name in His book of life? Has He given you countless blessings? Has He a store of mercies which eye has not seen nor ear heard?

Then do something for Christ worthy of His love. Wake up from natural sleepiness and this very day, or ever the sun goes down, do you something in some way by which you shall prove that you do feel the power of that divine motive, “for Christ’s sake.” May God accept and bless you, dear friends, “for Jesus’ sake.” Amen.

*“See from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!
Did e’er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?”*

*“His dying crimson, like a robe,
Spreads o’er His body on the tree;
Then am I dead to all the globe,
And all the globe is dead to me.*

*“Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.”*

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.