

PROSPERITY UNDER PERSECUTION

NO. 997

A SERMON
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 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

*“Come on, let us deal wisely with them;
 lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that,
 when there falleth out any war, they join also unto our enemies,
 and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land.
 Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens.
 And they built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Raamses.
 But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew.”
 Exodus 1:10-12*

THE children of this world are wise in their generation. Their policy may be short-sighted and their stratagems crooked, nevertheless the world admires the wisdom of their counsels and makes light of the craftiness of their projects. In their opposition to the Christian church, the men of the world might certainly have been as well able to outwit her by the variety of their maneuvers as to overwhelm her by the force of their numbers, were it not that there is an unseen One in her midst, who is more than a match for the guile of their hearts and the might of their hosts.

Looking back at the early struggles of the Hebrew race to gain a footing among the nations, it is very clear that had the contest been merely between Pharaoh and Israel, the Egyptian king could exercise power and policy enough to defeat the sons of Jacob and reduce them to serfdom. But when a new name is brought in, and the contest appears to be truly between Pharaoh and JEHOVAH the God of Israel, it is quite another matter and a far different issue may be counted upon.

There is One behind the curtain that takes Israel's part. He sees through all Pharaoh's plots. Or ever his thoughts have ripened into plans they are forestalled. Fast as they are set up they are upset. For every intrigue there is a reprisal. Thus He takes the wise in their own craftiness.

The whole history of the long feud between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent illustrates the subtlety of the serpent's seed and the simplicity of the woman's seed. But still more does it bring to light the infinite wisdom of Him who rules the seed of the woman, and who will in the end bruise the serpent's head, and give unto His people and the cause they have espoused a complete triumph.

Whatever has been done by the enemies in rage or in recklessness, God has always met it calmly and quietly. He has shown Himself ready for every emergency. And He has not only baffled and utterly defeated all the inventions of wicked men, but He has turned their strange devices to good account, for the development of His own sovereign purposes.

He has made His enemies work for Him, aiding the enterprise they eschewed: He has turned their curse into a blessing: He has made evil productive of good. He has extracted sweetness out of their bitter spleen and distilled healthful medicine out of their deadly animosity. He has His way in the whirlwind—the clouds are the dust of His feet. He does not only meet evil with good, but He takes the evil and subjects it to His own eternal purpose, and from it brings forth a course of events that results in His own glory, the benefit of His children, and the fulfillment of their destiny.

Of this general principle we shall now proceed to consider three special illustrations. First, *the circumstances of the children of Israel*. Secondly, *the history of the church of Christ*. Thirdly, *the experience of individual Christians*.

I. IN THE CASE OF ISRAEL, it did seem to be a deep-laid plot, very political and crafty indeed, that as the kings of Egypt, themselves of an alien race, had subdued the Egyptians, they should prevent the other alien race, the Israelites, from conquering them.

Instead of murdering them wholesale, it did seem a wise, though a cruel thing, to make them slaves, to divide them up and down the country, to subject them to toil till their spirits were broken, to appoint them to the most menial work in the land, that they might be crushed down and their spirits become so base that they would not dare to rebel.

Thus we may suppose it was hoped that their physical strength would be so relaxed, and their circumstances so reduced, that the clan would soon be insignificant if not utterly extinct. But God met and overruled this policy in various ways: "The more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied." The census proved the error of their calculation. The cause looked likely, but it was not productive of the consequence expected.

Had it been another people, the tactics might have been successful, but they were God's people, endeared to Him by their ancestry, ennobled in His sight by their covenant destiny, and encompassed with His favor as with a shield. No conspiracy formed against them could thrive. And so it came to pass, that like certain herbs which spring up when trodden down, or like certain trees that grow taller if loaded with weights, Israel rose superior to all her disadvantages. "The more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew."

The glory of God shines forth conspicuously in the use to which He turned the persecutions they endured. The severe treatment they had to bear from the enemy became to them a salutary discipline. This comes of the Lord of Hosts, who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working.

From that time the children of Israel began to feel disgust with Egypt. They had settled down very quietly in Goshen and thought that it was their rest. They had imbibed much of the manners and customs of the Egyptians. We have it on record that they worshipped the gods of Egypt. They seemed greatly to have appreciated what they afterwards called the luxuries of the land—the leeks, the garlicks, the onions, the melons, and the cucumbers.

They appear to have been almost naturalized to that country. They were little better than Egyptians. Perhaps persons traveling, except by certain tones of language and contour of countenance, would scarcely have known but what they were descendants of Ham. But now their masters treat them cruelly and they loathe the Egyptians.

They are scattered up and down throughout the land, and Goshen is no longer dear to them. They are treated like strangers and they feel they are strangers. Now that they hear from morning till night the taskmaster's oaths, and the crack of the cruel whip, and are subjected to incessant toil and bondage, they think far less of Egypt than they used to do.

This is what the Lord designed. He never intended that His people Israel should be absorbed into any other family. He never meant them to be other than sojourners on that soil. He had some better thing for them than that they should dwell in that land and be as the heathen were. God was thus answering one purpose. And He did more than this.

Now they began to remember, as their bondage waxed more and more severe, the God of their fathers whom they had forgotten. I have reminded you that they had fallen into the worship of the gods of Egypt, but now they turn with abhorrence from the gods of their oppressors, and they bethink themselves of the covenant which JEHOVAH had made with Abraham, and with Isaac and Jacob, and they betook themselves to their knees.

In secret, they utter their groanings before the Most High, and when their taskmasters make them smart, they lift their eyes, suffused with bitter tears, and silently appeal to heaven, to the God of their fathers, that He would have mercy upon them.

They had forgotten to pray until then. The mass of them had been unused to call upon the name of the Lord. But now the scourge drives them to seek help from above. Their terrors, their pains, their

griefs, and their vexations compel them to lift up that cry to heaven which came into the ears of JEHOVAH and moved His hand to help them.

More than that, remember that it was necessary for this people to be altogether rescued from that land which for many a year had taxed their labor and bounded their enterprise, because it was not the land which had been promised them as an inheritance. It was God's intention and covenant purpose to give them the land of Canaan, a land that flowed with milk and honey.

But it is not very easy to induce a nation, numbering some millions, to leave a country in which they have been born and nourished and found a home. Only some very fearful evil can induce them to expatriate themselves. Had Moses gone to the children of Israel before the time of their bondage and said, "Up! get you hence unto the land which the LORD swears that he will give it to you," he would have seemed to them as one that mocked. They would have laughed him to scorn.

In order to cut loose the bonds that bound them to Egypt, the sharp knife of affliction must be used. And Pharaoh, though he knew it not, was God's instrument in weaning them from the Egyptian world, and helping them as His church to take up their separate place in the wilderness, and receive the portion which God had appointed for them.

Once more—and here you may see the wisdom of God—the very means which Pharaoh devised for the effectual crushing of the people—the destruction of the male children—became the direct, nay, the divine provision for educating a deliverer for them. Moses had never been, in all probability, trained in the courts of Pharaoh if he had not been put in the basket of bulrushes on the brink of the Nile.

And his mother would certainly never have put him there if there had not been a pitiless edict that the male children should be put to death. Moved by maternal instinct to save her child, and moved by faith in God not to obey the king's command, she places her child in the ark. Pharaoh's daughter finds the child, compassionates its cry, extricates it from peril, loves it fondly, adopts it capriciously, and educates it in the very court of Pharaoh.

That child grows up to be the man who should vex the fields of Zoan—the man of God, who with a high hand and an outstretched arm, would lead forth the slaves of Egypt to become a great nation, which God should bless. So you see the Lord in all points meets Pharaoh and foils him.

This Pharaoh was the great representative in those days of the power of evil and he stands still to the Christian church as the type of the seed of the serpent. But the Lord withstands him, despoils him of his purpose, and turns all he does to the very highest and best end. Such the narrative, full of instruction and charged with portent, that serves as a type of the Lord's doing when He makes bare His arm for the salvation of His own heritage.

II. Let us now carry the same thought a stage farther and take a brief survey of THE HISTORY OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD.

The like means will appear in manifold operation. Men meditate mischief, but it miserably miscarries. God grants protection to the persecuted and provides an escape from the most perilous exposure. Full often the dark conspiracy is brought to the direst confusion. No sooner does Christ gather a church in any place, be it a renowned empire or a paltry village, than opposition is stirred up.

"If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed," is the first check for the serpent's wiles, the first ray of hope for his helpless victims. And the prediction will continue to be fulfilled till at last, according to the Word of the Lord, the tares are bound in bundles to burn them and the wheat is gathered into His garner.

Whenever there has been a great persecution raised against the Christian church, God has overruled it, as He did in the case of Pharaoh's oppression of the Israelites, by making the aggrieved community more largely to increase. The early persecutions in Judea promoted the spread of the Gospel. Hence, when after the death of Stephen the disciples were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles, the result is thus given, "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word."

So, too, when Herod stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church, and killed James, the brother of John, with the sword, what came of it? Why, Luke tells us in almost the same words that Moses had used, “The word of God grew and multiplied.” Those terrible and bloody persecutions under the Roman Emperor by no means stayed the progress of the Gospel, but strangely enough seemed to press forward for the crown of martyrdom.

The church probably never increased at a greater ratio than as when her foes were most fierce to assail and most resolute to destroy her. It was so in after times. The Reformation in this country and throughout Europe never went on so prosperously as when it was most vigorously opposed.

You shall find in any individual church that wherever evil men have conspired together, and a storm of opposition has burst forth against the saints, the heart of the Lord has been moved with compassion, and the hand of the Lord has been raised to succor, till we have come to look upon opposition as an omen of good, and persecution for righteousness’ sake as a tearful seed-time, quickly to be followed by a harvest of joy.

We have looked on our adversaries, though they seemed like stormy petrels, as being the index of a favorable wind to the good barque of Christ’s church. Persecution seems to be the wave that, when it leaps up around her, speeds her course. Let the mountains be removed and cast into the midst of the sea, but after long experience of JEHOVAH’S faithfulness towards His people, we are confident that His church shall not be moved—in quietude shall she possess her soul.

Persecution has evidently aided the increase of the church by the scattering abroad of earnest teachers. We are very apt to get hived—too many of us together—and our very love of one another renders it difficult to part us and scatter us about. Persecution therefore is permitted to scatter the hive of the church into various swarms and each of these swarms begins to make honey.

We are all like the salt if we be true Christians, and the proper place for the salt is not massed in a box, but scattered by handfuls over the flesh which it is to preserve. We are of good service when we are kept together in great bands—happy we certainly are in the presence of each other. But we are to separate and scatter, and we shall conquer as we are scattered abroad.

You remember the days of our Puritan forefathers, when the dominant church of the day determined to crush out pure evangelism. To what extent did it succeed? Did it destroy their faith and their confidence? Nay, my brethren—by driving them out of an apostate church, and compelling them to take up their stand as separated believers outside the camp, bearing Christ’s reproach and cross, an everlasting testimony for pure truth was enshrined.

Was the crisis prolonged? Were deeds of violence legalized? By the increasing rigor of such persecution, our forefathers were constrained to leave their native shores, and they had to pass in the *Mayflower*, and afterwards in some succeeding vessels, across the blue Atlantic, sadly but surely to found another center for the proclamation of the Gospel.

And upon the wide continent of a new world they became the progenitors of another nation holding fast the fundamentals of the faith and rejoicing in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free. There might have been no church in the United States if it had not been that our sires were driven to the wilds amongst the Red Indians, there to establish themselves and set up a banner for the truth as it is in Jesus.

It will always be so. I could almost wish that in this island, though I dread calamity, I could almost wish, for the Master’s honor, that some irresistible impulse should force His disciples to go abroad to the regions beyond our present sphere of life and labor. I rejoice, though I love not to miss my friends, when I find them led or driven, it may be, to emigration, whether it be to Australia, Canada, or anywhere else, because I trust that if they are living seed, they will be as a handful of corn sown in the new land and the fruit whereof shall shake like Lebanon.

Christian men are sometimes called to leave positions of great comfort and to occupy stations of great hardship. They may account it a reverse of fortune, while God designs it as an appointment to special service. If they bear Christ’s Gospel with them to a people sitting in darkness, that will be great gain in the long run to the church.

Your being sent to a village, though you like it not, may be a lasting blessing to the hamlet. Your residing among strangers, when you would far rather find a more congenial home among your own kindred, may be for the good of that neighborhood. Who knows? Where should lamps be set up but in dark places?

Where should we have a guard for Christ's army, but where the enemy is most likely to make the assault? Be patient, then, my brethren, amidst the persecutions or trials you may be called upon to bear, and be thankful that they are so often overruled for the growth of the church, the spread of the Gospel, and the honor of Christ.

Moreover, beloved, persecution in the church—even when it does not take the form of burning or imprisonment, but of slander, of cruel mockings, jesting, jeering, and venomous spite—in whatever form it is sent, persecution helps to keep up the separation between the church and the world. I fear most the rich when they bring gifts. I loathe the world most when it fawns and flatters.

When I heard of a lady who had put on Christ by baptism, that the cold shoulder was given her in all the circles in which she moved, did I, think you, feel more disposed to condole or to congratulate? It was said that now she had but few invitations to such places and such society as she had previously frequented, and I rejoiced and thanked God for it. I was glad of it, for I felt she was farther removed from temptation.

When I heard of a young man that, after he joined the church, that those in his workshop met him at once with loud laughter and reproached him with bitter scorn. I was thankful, because now he could not take up the same position with themselves. He was a marked man. They who knew him discovered that there was such a thing as Christianity and such a one as an earnest defender of it.

It is no evil to the church, depend upon it, to have a great gulf fixed between her and the world. The worst thing that ever could happen for us is when affinities are made between the sons of God and the children of Belial. This brought on the Deluge, and if it could ever be carried out thoroughly again, it would bring on judgments terrible to think of.

It is ill for the worldly, since "they who are far from God shall perish." But it is a thousand times worse for the professing when they play foul with their profession, for so it is written, "Thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee." Summary vengeance is their lot. "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters."

This is a text that needs to be thundered in trumpet tone. What says the great King unto the spouse? "Forget also thine own people, and thy father's house; so shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy LORD; and worship thou him." "Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind."

Too much laxness, giving way to the world a friendship full of fascination, brings on leanness of spirit and causes us to be scarcely known as Christians, weakens our testimony, and in every way promotes Satan's ends. But when persecution breaks forth, barriers are set up, and distinctive colors are worn, so the two camps are kept in open hostility. and when brought to battle with each other, the church is kept pure with armor bright. Victory waits her march and her champions win their laurels.

Again, persecution in the Christian church acts like a winnowing fan to the heaps gathered on the threshing floor. In these soft and silken days any man may be a Christian professor. Oftentimes it pays well to make a profession of godliness. Men think the better of you. It brings customers to the shop. No one knows how many conveniences may attach to the profession of religion.

Albeit, if it be pretense without pretext, everlasting destruction awaits such violation of truth, for God will surely avenge hypocrisy. But in days of persecution, to profess Christ is very inconvenient. Then to be baptized in water may involve a baptism of blood. Then for the soul to burn with zeal for Christ would probably be followed with the body being burnt at the stake.

Then a word for Jesus would bring a word of conviction from the judge's mouth, and close at the heels of that word, death. Then they who loved not Christ betook themselves to the other side—the

cowards and the spies shrink away. Demas went, and Judas went, and all of that brood to their own company, and then only the true and the brave, the regenerate, the elect of God were left.

They stood fast and firm—all the stronger for losing such ill company. Then in those days the church was like a heap of golden wheat, all winnowed and clean grain, fit for a burnt offering to the Most High, to be offered up as a meat offering upon His altar. Her martyrs were amongst her noblest sons, the very glory of the church and of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So you see persecution is overruled for this great good. It ought never to be, while there are sinners in this world—it ought never to be that the Christian escapes opposition. I take it that if a man makes an advance in life, comes to a position of fame, he ought to win it—ought to fight for it. Men ought not to be crowned until first of all they have strived for the mastery.

And it should be so in the church of God that we must fight if we would reign. It should not be that we should think it an easy thing and a light matter to be a follower of Him whose life was sorrow, and whose death was the death of the cross. If we are to be conformed to Him, it cannot be by ease and sloth. Not the downy couch, but the crown of thorns. Not the triumph, but the shame, must be the portion of the imitators of the Crucified.

Persecution has a further beneficial use in the church of God and it is this. It may be that the members of the church want it. It is a sorrowful thing that slander should be so often used against God's people. It is a grievous thing that their little faults should be severely criticized and magnified, but on the whole, it is good and profitable.

It is a great blessing to be made to walk carefully. The Roman who professed that he would like to have a window in his bosom, that everybody might see his heart, would have wished, I should think, before long for a shutter to that window. Yet it is no slight stimulus to a man's own circumspection for him to know that he is observed by unfriendly eyes.

Our life ought to be such as will bear criticism. As Christian men we serve a jealous God, and our works will have to stand the test of fire at the last great day. The wood, and the hay, and the stubble that we have builded will be consumed, and only the gold, the silver, and the precious stones will remain.

Are we, therefore, to be afraid of the ordinary ordeal of human censure and malignity? If we run with the footmen and they weary us, what shall we do when we contend with horses? And if in this land of comparative peace we are weary, what shall we do in the swelling of Jordan? This is the opposition appointed for us. It is through much tribulation we are to inherit the kingdom, and if we are sincere, and honest, and true, we shall not flinch at this. We shall feel that God will overrule it for our sanctification, by making us take heed unto our ways, because the wicked watch our paths.

And this persecution, dear brethren, has a further usefulness. Often does it happen that the enmity of the world drives the Christian nearer to his God. How many prayers have been offered up as the result of persecution that would never have been offered else, heaven alone can tell! How many a groan, and sigh, and tear, acceptable to God, have been forced from true hearts by their sufferings, God alone knows!

Ah! in the soft days, the summer days of peace and prosperity, we are apt to gad abroad after vain delights, but when the winter comes, with its keen and cutting blast, we haste to our own abode, we cleave to our own hearth, we love to dwell with our own kindred. Even so right frequently, with hearts all chill and cheerless, we have sought the house of our Father and our God, drawn near to His altar and found refreshment we fain could wish that we might never leave.

Why, oh! why, are we so fickle? If we could find succor and solace apart from the Rock, away from the Sun, absent from our Lord, our wayward hearts would do so. But when the waters of affliction have covered all the earth, then we fly back to our Noah, our ark, and find rest for the sole of our foot.

The friendship of this world is enmity to God. It rivals God's friendship, it deceives and deludes many hearts. But when the world frowns, it is a blessed frown that makes me seek my Savior's smile. Anything that drives me to my knees is good. Anything that makes me trust in the promise, and wait

only upon God because my expectation is from Him, is healthful to my soul, infuses courage, and inspires confidence, and invests her with fresh strength.

O brethren, the very glory of the church is to live nearer to God. The more she thinks of her great and glorious Head, and the more she leans upon the invisible arm of the Eternal, the more invincible she is. Persecution, in driving her to her stronghold, is overruled to her help.

And yet, further, the dark days of fiendish persecution have witnessed bright deeds of Christian heroism never to be forgotten. How often have the richest and the ripest fruits of the Spirit been put forth by the Lord's people when they have been most grieved and smitten! Then the saints have been like clusters thrown into the winepress, but who shall bring forth the red wine? Whose but the feet of God's enemies shall tread the grapes?

And as with exultation they bruise and trample down, they shall crush nothing in the dust but husks, the living wine shall flow and God shall receive the whole of it. They work—these foes work—and think that with axes they can break down our carved work, and cast fire into the sanctuary of God, but all the while they burn not the true sanctuary. They burn but the base wooden erection with which man has defaced the living temple.

Let them burn on. They do no hurt—but good ensues. If you read "*Foxe's Book of Martyrs*," or any of the martyrologies of earlier ages, you will find there patience, self-denial, consecration, confidence in God, and all the finer graces of temper in full bloom, perfuming the air with their fragrance. One is astonished at what our poor, weak humanity has been able to endure for the truth, when strengthened by the Spirit of God.

Verily, humble and weak, and timid women have shown true mettle, waxing valiant, and cheering on men of muscle and sinew, whose hearts had grown faint. We could mention the names of many saints, if this were the time, who have endured torment as severe as inquisitors could devise or relentless executioners could inflict, and yet they have not denied their Lord.

This is the patience of the saints, I think, when the martyrs perished in the Roman Amphitheatre, and the cruel crowd looked down to watch their agonies as their bones were crushed between the jaws of wild beasts. Angels gathered in tiers, invisible multitudes of them gathered, and looked on with eyes of admiration at the spectacle of mortal men ravished with the love of God—waving the banner of immortal truth, while from frightful wounds and horrid gashes their life-blood streamed.

Oh! what God can do by us when He works in us! Perhaps heaven itself, save when it gazed upon the cross, never saw a nobler spectacle than when men and women, who bore the cross of Christ in their hearts, gave themselves up wholly as living sacrifices unto Him. The church looks fairer and shines brighter when she is in the furnace.

Not the smell of fire does pass upon her. Her Lord is with her, and if the fire be heated seven times hotter, His glory is seven times brighter. Thus again, the principle of the text is brought out, "The more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied." Their enemies try to deal wisely with them to put them down, but their wisdom is folly. God has blessed the church by her persecution.

And do you not think that persecution and opposition—such little oppositions as we meet with now—little indeed compared with those of olden times—are permitted for our good, as in Israel's case, to make us feel that this is not our rest and cause us to long for the better land? Perhaps, dear Christian, if you lived in a Christian household, where all the wonted order helped your piety, if you were put into the conservatory of a gracious providence, you might be content to dwell below always. We soon take root in this soil, for we are earthy by nature and we cling to earth—like to its like.

But when there comes the jeer, the unkind remark, the cruel innuendo, the bitter sarcasm, then we feel, "This is not my rest. I must seek better company than this. a better land, and a better portion than I shall find this side of Jordan." And then we long for the home-bringing, when the King, the Husband, shall fetch home His spouse, and the marriage shall be consummated in the skies.

Oh! how sometimes, when the world has been very cold, you have longed for the warm bosom of your Savior! You would have nestled in the world's bosom if you could, but when she would not receive

you but thrust you forth, then you came to your true self and exercised your right senses, and you said, "I will return unto my husband. It was better with me then than now."

O that our hearts were always set on heaven! There is our treasure—there let our hearts be also. There is our Lord and King—to Him should our hearts fly. There are the best ones of our families, our relations, who are everlastingly our associates—brethren and sisters whose brotherhood and sisterhood no death can bring to an end—

*"There my best friends my kindred dwell,
There God my Saviour reigns."*

We ought to long for that land, and I say the whip of persecution is helpful, because it makes us learn that this is the house of bondage, and moves us to long after and seek for the land of liberty—the land of joy.

III. And now I close this address by just very briefly hinting that THIS GREAT GENERAL TRUTH APPLIES TO ALL BELIEVERS.

But I will make a practical use of it. Dear brother, dear sister, are you passing through great trials? Very well then, to meet them I pray that God's grace may give you greater faith. And if your trials increase more and more, so may your strength increase. You will be acting after God's manner, guided by His wisdom, if you seek to get more faith out of more trial, for that trial does strengthen faith.

Through divine grace experience teaches us, and as we make full proof of the faithfulness of God, our courage, once apt to waver, is confirmed. Do pray the Lord that when the trials multiply you may get faith wherewith to meet them. That out of the eater you may get meat, and out of the strong find strength.

So, too, if you know the truth of God to be at any time assailed, and your own mind is beset with doubt about any doctrine, always ask God to open that particular truth to your understanding and endear it to your heart, that by the assaults you are enabled to repel, your faith may be the more confirmed.

Oh! there is a light way of holding truth and there is a tenacious way of grasping it. I have held doctrines, as it were, in my hand, like a boy's ball that might be thrown away. But it is another thing when the King prints the mark of the doctrine right into your very soul, so that you could no more part with it than you could part with life itself.

Trials often burn doctrines into us, and heresies and infidelities make the good confession dear in our sight as a prize which we could never part with. Thus opposition to the truth leads to the multiplication of evidences in its support, and the more we are assailed with the arguments of science, falsely so-called, the firmer we adhere to the oracles of God.

Or it may be, dear Christian worker, that of late you have met with a great many discouragements. You seem to have labored in vain and spent your strength for nought. Ask then, in prayer, and act accordingly, that the more you are defeated the less you may be disposed to yield. But rather that you may be endowed with fresh energy for the service, and strive with increased assurance for the victory.

When you feel, "I am foiled in that point," say, "Nevertheless, I cannot be beaten. I belong to a seed that cannot be vanquished. If I did not belong to the house of Israel, I might have been destroyed and overcome, but none can stand against the Hebrew race, against true Israelites—they must win the day."

Therefore, settle it in your mind that if you do not win souls one day, you will another, and if you cannot press into your enemies' territory in one part, you will in another. And if he defeats you at any time, then multiply your efforts to do good. Always take revenge on Satan if he defeats you, by trying to do ten times more good than you did before.

It is in some such way that a dear brother now preaching the Gospel, whom God has blessed with a very considerable measure of success, may trace the opening of his career to a circumstance that occurred to myself. Sitting in my pulpit one evening, in a country village where I had to preach, my text slipped from my memory, and with the text seemed to go all that I had thought to speak upon.

A rare thing to happen to me, but I sat utterly confounded. I could find nothing to say. With strong crying I lifted up my soul to God to pour out again within my soul the living water that it might gush forth from me for others. And I accompanied my prayer with a vow that if Satan's enmity thus had brought me low, I would take so many fresh men whom I might meet with during the week and train them for the ministry—so that with their hands and tongues I would avenge myself on the Philistines.

The brother I have alluded to came to me the next morning. I accepted him at once as one whom God had sent, and I helped him, and others after him, to prepare for the service, and to go forth in the Savior's name to preach the Gospel of the grace of God. Often when we fear we are defeated, we ought to say, "I will do all the more. Instead of dropping from this work, now will I make a general levy and a sacred conscription upon all the powers of my soul, and I will gather up all the strength I ever had in reserve, and make from this moment a tremendous life-long effort to overcome the powers of darkness, and win for Christ fresh trophies of victory."

After this fashion you will have an easier time of it, for if you do more good the more you are tempted, Satan will not so often tempt you. When he knows that all the more you are afflicted, so much the more you multiply, very likely he will find it wiser to let you alone, or try you in some other method than that of direct and overt opposition.

So whenever you have a trial, take it as a favor. Whenever God holds in one hand the rod of affliction, He has a favor in the other hand. He never strikes a child of His but He has some tender blessing in store. If He visits you with unaccustomed affliction, you will have unusual delight. The Lord will open new windows for you and show His beauty as He shows it not to others.

According as your tribulations abound, so also shall your consolations abound in Christ Jesus. In the deeper waters you shall find Him nearer, for He has said, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee." He will be with you always, but He has promised to come to you specially and peculiarly, and as it were, by appointment, when you are driven out into the wilderness or harassed by the foe. He comforts those who are cast down. Rejoice, therefore, in your afflictions, if so be you have faith to believe that they shall be blessed for your good.

What is all this to the unconverted? Ah, sirs! while the men of God flourish in adversity, the men of this world are ruined by their prosperity. Even the cup of pleasure and sensual enjoyment, of which you delight to drink, has its bitter dregs which you shall be compelled to swallow. Yet even now all your days are not passed in sunshine. You have your troubles, but you have no God to resort to. You will have many sorer plagues than you have ever yet been visited with, but if you continue in unbelief, you will still have no God to trust in.

Perhaps you go to some friends in any emergency now, but no friend can help you in the dying hour. No brother can go with you through the swellings of Jordan. O friendless one, O Christless sinner! do you not want God to be your helper and Christ to be your friend? If you do, then on the cross behold the Savior. Turn to Him your eye—penitently trust Him—rely upon Him and He is yours. And then henceforth the Lord of Hosts shall be with you, and God of Jacob shall be your refuge, and your afflictions also shall work your good.

May God bless each one of you, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

MR. SPURGEON hopes to be permitted to preach on July 2. He is most thankful to inform all friends that he is better in health, and trusts he may be able again to occupy the pulpit of the Tabernacle from Sabbath to Sabbath.

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.