

SUFFERING WITHOUT THE CAMP

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A SERMON
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“Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.”
Hebrews 13:12

IN one sense, sanctification is wholly the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, but there is another meaning, which is more usually affixed to the term, in which sanctification is rightly described as the work of God the Holy Spirit. Many disputes have arisen concerning this doctrine, because all men do not distinguish between the two meanings of the same word. There is one kind of sanctification which signifies setting apart, and in that sense, God's people were sanctified from all eternity. They were sanctified in election, before they had a being, for they were even then set apart from the impure mass, to be vessels of honor fit for the Master's use.

Further, as redemption has in it much of peculiarity and specialty, God's people were sanctified, or set apart, by the blood of Christ, when on Mount Calvary He offered up Himself, an offering without spot or blemish, for the sins of His people. So it is true that Jesus is not only made unto us wisdom and righteousness, but also sanctification.

You will remember that, in one of my recent sermons [Sermon #2634, Volume 45, “*Jesus Only, A Communion Meditation*”], the text of which was “Jesus only,” I made the remark that it was “Jesus only” for sanctification, and I have not had any reason to retract that expression, for there is a sense in which sanctification, as far as it means setting apart, is an eternal work, and is a work wholly completed for us by the election of the Father and the blood of Jesus Christ. Still, sanctification sometimes, and most generally too, signifies another thing, it means the work of the Spirit within us.

There is a work which God the Holy Ghost carries on, from the first moment of our spiritual birth, to the last moment when we are taken to heaven,—a work by which corruptions are overcome, lusts restrained, faith increased, love inflamed, hope brightened, and the spirit made fit to dwell with the glorified above. That is the work of God's Holy Spirit, yet we must remember that, even though it is the work of the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ even in this still sanctifies His people. For with what does the Holy Spirit sanctify them?

Beloved, He sanctifies them with the precious blood of Jesus. We know that, when our Savior died, His sacrifice had a double objective, one objective was pardon, the other was cleansing, and both the blood and the water flowed from the same source, to show us that justification and sanctification both spring from the same divine fountain, and though sanctification is the work of the Spirit in us, yet to accomplish this purpose, the Holy Spirit uses the sacrificial blood of Jesus, and the sacred water of His atonement applied to our heart, sprinkling us from dead works, and purging us from an evil conscience, that we may serve God without let or hindrance.

So, then, Christian, in your sanctification, look to Jesus. Remember that the Spirit sanctifies you, but that He sanctifies you through Jesus. He does not sanctify you through the works of the law, but through the atonement of Christ. And will you therefore remember that, the nearer you live to the cross of Jesus, the more of sanctification, and growth, and increase in all spiritual blessings will His Spirit give to you? So, then, we see that, whatever sanctification may mean, the text is still true, “Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate.”

Let us pause here a minute, and let each of us, as we begin a new year, ask this question—How far has Christ’s purpose of sanctifying me been answered in my own case? I know that, in one sense, I am completely sanctified, but in another sense, I still feel my imperfections and infirmities. How far have I progressed in sanctification during the past year? How much has my faith increased during the year? How many of my corruptions have I overcome? How much nearer am I living to Christ, now, than on the first Sabbath of last year? How much do I know of the Savior? How much closer do I approach in my likeness to Him? Have I more power in prayer? Am I more careful in my life? Is my spirit more loving than it used to be? Am I more decisive for that which is right? At the same time, am I more meek in standing up for it? Am I, in all respects, more like my Master than I was a year ago?

Or on the other hand, have I been going backward? Stand still, I cannot, I must either go forward in grace or go backward. Which have I been doing during the past year? And I charge you, O my heart, whatever answer you have to give to these questions, still to remember that, if you are never so much sanctified, you have not yet attained perfection. I beseech you, forget that which is behind, and press forward toward that which is before, looking still unto Jesus, who is both the Author and the Finisher of faith. The Lord give you so plenteously of His grace that you may be sanctified wholly, body, soul, and spirit, and I pray God to preserve you all unto His coming and glory.

I. But now the principal subject, upon which I wish to discourse, is the fact that JESUS CHRIST SUFFERED WITHOUT THE GATE.

You know that, when the High Priest offered the sin-offering, because it typified sin, it was so obnoxious to God that it might not be burned upon the great altar, but it was always burned without the camp, to show God’s detestation of sin, and His determination not only to put it away from Himself, but also to put it away from His church.

Now, when our Lord Jesus Christ came into this world to be our Sin-offering, it behooved Him also to be put outside the camp, and it is very interesting to note how remarkably Providence provided for the fulfillment of the type. Had our Lord been killed in a tumult, He would most likely have been slain in the city, unless He had been put to death judicially, He would not have been taken to the usual Mount of Doom. And it is remarkable that the Romans should have chosen a hill on the outside of the city to be the common place for crucifixion and for punishment by death.

We might have imagined that they would have selected some mount in the center of the city, and that they would have placed their gibbet in as conspicuous a spot as our Newgate, that so it might strike the multitude with greater awe. But in the providence of God, it was arranged otherwise. Christ must not be slain in a tumult, He might not die in the city, and when He was delivered into the hands of the Romans, they had not a place of execution within the city, but one outside the camp, that by dying without the gate, He might be proved to be the Sin-offering for His people.

Concerning this great truth, I have one or two remarks to offer to you very briefly. First, I want to ask you a question. *Do you know who the people were who lived outside the gate?* If you could have gone to the great camp of Israel, you would have seen the tents all placed in order, the standard of Dan there, of Judah there, of Ephraim there—surrounding the ark of the covenant, but you would have seen a few wretched huts far away in the rear, outside the camp, and if you had asked, “Who lives there? Who are the poor people that are put away from kith and kin, and who cannot go up to the sanctuary of the Lord, to present their offerings unto Him, or to join in the songs of praise unto His holy name?”—the answer to your inquiry would have been, “The people out there are lepers and others who are unclean.”

And if, in later days, you had walked through some of the shady glens around the city of Jerusalem, you might have heard in the distance the cry, “Unclean! Unclean! Unclean!”—a bitter wail that sounded like the sighing of despair, as if it came from some poor ghost that had been commanded to walk this earth with restless steps forever. Had you come nearer to the unhappy being, who had uttered so mournful a sound, you would have seen him cover his upper lip, and again cry, “Unclean! Unclean! Unclean!”—to warn you not to come too near him, lest even the wind should blow infection towards you from his leprous skin. If, for a minute, he had moved his hand from his mouth, you would have

seen, instead of those scarlet, ruddy lips of health, which God had originally put there, a terrible white mark not to be distinguished from his teeth. His lips were unclean, for there the leprosy had discovered itself, and in a minute, he would have again covered up that lip that had the white mark of disease upon it, and again he would have cried, “Unclean! Unclean! Unclean!”

Of whom was that leper a type? He was a picture of you and me, my brethren, in our natural state, and if the Holy Spirit has quickened us, and made us to know our ruined condition, we shall feel that the leper’s cry does well become our unholy lips.

Perhaps, I have, within the walls of this house of prayer, a hearer who is today separate from all mankind. With worldlings, he dares not associate any longer, the harlots and others, with whom he spent his living riotously, are not now his companions, he cannot bear their pleasures, for they are dashed with bitterness. With the children of God, he dares not go, he feels that they would put him outside the camp, for he has no hope, no Christ, no faith, he cannot say that Christ has died for him, he has no trust in Jesus, not so much as one pale ray of hope has stolen into his poor bedarkened heart, and tonight, the inward wail of his now-awakened spirit is—

***“Unclean! Unclean! Unclean!
Unclean, and full of sin,
From first to last, O Lord, I’ve been
Deceitful is my heart.”***

Leper, leper! be of good cheer, Christ died without the camp, that you might be sanctified through His blood. I see the leper now stealing through the desert places, not daring to sip of the clear stream that lies in his track, lest he should communicate contagion to the next person who drinks from it, but seeking out some filthy puddle, that there he may satisfy his thirst, where no others are likely to drink. I see him covering up his lip. If his father met him, he must run away from him, if the wife of his bosom saw him, she must shun his presence, for a loathsome disease is in his skin, and in his garments, and in the very breath that comes from his lips there is death.

Well, suddenly, as he steals along, he sees a cross, and on it lifted up One who is dying. He stands there astonished, he thinks that surely he may come near to a dying man, leper though he be, to the living, he must not approach, but to the dying he cannot bring a new death. So he draws nigh to the cross, and the lips of the dying man are opened, and He says, “Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.”

Oh, what joy and rapture rush through his poor leprous spirit! How his heart, that had long been heavy, and baked like a black coal within him, begins again to burn with lambent light! He smiles, for he feels that that marvelous Man upon the cross has forgiven him all his sins, and ere he has begun to feel it, his leprosy is cleansed, and soon, he goes his way, for his flesh has come unto him like the flesh of a little child, and he is clean. O leprous sinner, hear this, and believe it for yourself! Tonight look unto Him who died without the camp, that poor unclean sinners might find a Savior there.

That is my first lesson from the text, if the Lord the Spirit shall graciously apply it to your souls, it will be a very precious one to many a sin-distracted heart.

But, believer, did you never feel as if you too, were unclean, and without the camp? Brethren, let me tell you just a little of my own heart’s feelings, and let me see whether you have ever felt the like. You have often known yourselves to be children of God, I have felt myself, with much joy, to be certainly assured of my interest in Christ, but suddenly, sin has surprised me, some unhappy propensity has developed itself, and I have felt as if I could not meet my God.

When I was on my knees in prayer, I seemed as if I could not pray, I felt like the unclean one that must be put outside the camp—like Miriam, who, though the leprosy was but for a little time, would still be unclean for seven days. And when I have come to the house of God, I have felt as if the lowliest Christians there were so much superior to myself that I would but have been glad to have been a

footstool at their feet. I would have crept into any part of the fold, if I might but have known myself to be the lowliest lamb in the flock of Jesus. I have seen the deacon, and I have seen the church member, and I have thought, “Brethren, you are happy, but my heart is sad, for I am not worthy to be called God’s son. Father, I have sinned, I have done grievously, and have transgressed against You.”

For a little while, faith has seemed sluggish, and hope has been dull, and the sense of sin has rested on us, and we have seemed to be quite put away from our Lord’s presence. We have read the Bible, but we could get no comfort there. The heavens seemed like brass above our heads, no shower of grace fell upon our thirsty souls, both God and man seemed to put us outside the camp. I believe that, many times, in a Christian’s experience, he will have to feel what I have been describing. I do not mean merely little Christians, but I mean the greatest Christians, those who have lived nearest to their God, those who have been eminent in the Lord’s service—God’s Aarons and Miriams, who sometimes have to be put without the camp.

Who, then, is there amongst us who will not sometimes be unclean? Surely, not any of the great ones of Israel could always live without contracting some ceremonial defilement, for you know that, under the Jewish law, the sitting upon the bed of a leper made a man unclean, and many things that happened to men rendered them unclean for seven days.

And who can wonder if, through the infirmities of our bodies, through the companionships into which we are called, through the evil thoughts of our mind, we are often unclean as the Jews were? And who wonders that, sometimes, the Lord should put us, as it were, out of the camp for a little season, till we have been purged with hyssop, and have been made clean—till we have again been thoroughly purified by the washing of water through the Word?

Ah! but brethren, what a mercy it is that, when we are outside the gate, Christ is outside the gate too! O poor backslider! does your conscience shut you out of the Church today? Remember, Christ shut Himself out too. He was “despised and rejected of men.” Do you feel tonight, as if you cannot come to His table—as if your Master would spurn you from it? Remember, if you are His, you are welcome, for His table is where His cross is, and His cross is outside the gate.

Come, sinner! Come, backsliding saint! Come, and welcome! God may seem to have put you away, but it is only seeming, for we know He has written that He hates to put away. Come, you, and though you be without the gate, behold your Lord, who, “that he might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate.”

II. I have only one more thought to bring before your notice. The apostle says, in the next verse to our text, “Let us go forth, therefore, without the camp, bearing his reproach.” So, AS CHRIST SUFFERED WITHOUT THE CAMP, LET US NOT BE ASHAMED TO SUFFER THERE, TOO.

I do not think much of the religion of that man who is not put without the camp. If you can dwell with the wicked, if you can live as they live, and be “hail-fellow well met” with the ungodly, if their practices are your practices, if their pleasures are your pleasures, then their god is your god, and you are one of them. There is no being a Christian except being shut out of the world’s camp. I can scarcely conceive it possible for any man to be a true saint, a holy man, one who is set apart unto God, and sanctified in Christ Jesus, unless he is reproached while on earth for being too strict, too Puritanical, perhaps, sometimes, too melancholy.

There must be a grave distinction between a Christian and a man of the world, and where there is no such distinction, or only a slight one, there is most solemn cause for suspicion that all is not right. When I see a man dress like worldlings, when I hear him talk like worldlings, when I know that all his outward carriage is just like a worldly man’s, when I can detect no difference, when I see no mark of the Lord Jesus upon him, when I can hear no “shibboleth” in his speech, whereby he is to be detected from a sibboleth-speaking world, when I discover no distinction between him and others, then this I know, “God is not mocked,” that man is in the flesh, and he shall “of the flesh reap corruption.”

Nay, I will go further still. In this age I can scarcely imagine it possible for a man to serve his Master faithfully unless he is sometimes shut out of the camp, even of the church itself. I do not mean

excommunicated—I mean something far different from that, I mean that the man, who serves his God aright, will often feel himself left in the minority, even in the church. It is never his business so to act, and so to think, that others are obliged to differ from him, it is folly to be singular, except where to be singular is to be right, but so lax has the professing church become, so low in its doctrine, so light in its experience, and sometimes so unholy in its life, that, to be Christians now, we must be elect out of the elect—elect out of the church as well as elect out of the world.

What pride, on the one hand, what sloth, on the other, what anger, what distrust, what covetousness, what worldly-mindedness we constantly see! The most of us are too much mingled with the world, too much joined unto Egypt, and the man who is firm in the faith, and loves his Master well, is a rarity. The man of a loving spirit, the man of a large heart, and yet of a determined zeal, and of a steadfast mind—such a man will have to go without the camp, and he will have to suffer now, even as all have had to suffer who have dared to go into the front of the sacramental host of God’s elect, in advance of the more tardy followers of the Lamb. If any minister of Christ dares to be too bold, too plain, too honest for the common run of professors, he must expect to be traduced. Let him reckon on that, and let him willingly go forth without the camp, for that is where his Master went before him.

If I turn to the page of history, to find out the best men who ever lived, do you know where I find them? I never find them among those who were called “respectable” in their time. There, in the page of history, I see great names, Erasmus and others, mighty and learned men, but on a dirty-thumbed page, I see the name of Luther associated with such epithets as these, “dog, adulterer, beast,” and everything else that Rome’s malice could suggest, and I say, “Ah! This is the man whom God chose, for he went without the camp.”

That list of great divines, and of schoolmen, and of theologians—you may wipe them all out without much regret, but this man without the camp, he is somebody, depend upon it, he is the man whom God has blessed. Turn to another list of archbishops, bishops, deans, rural deans, rectors, and curates, there they are, all as respectable as possible and great volumes of their sermons may be found on bookshelves, nowadays, with the dust of years upon them. I read their names, there is one, there is another, there is another; but there is nothing special about any of them.

At last, I find a picture by Hogarth—a caricature of a man preaching, with devils coming out of his mouth, and underneath it written, “Fire and brimstone!” I look at the portrait, and I say, “See, that is Mr. Whitefield.” Ah! there is the man of the age, depend on it, that man, all black, charged with crimes that Sodom never knew, that is the man! Not the curate in the other picture, who is preaching to a congregation all asleep, but this man here that is abused, that is laughed at, that is mocked, this is the man who is somebody.

So you may go on as long as you like, and you shall always find that those “intruders into the ministry,” as some call them, those that the parliament of parsons dislikes, those that the great mass reject, and laugh and scoff at—those are the very men whom God blesses. So, if you go outside the camp, you will be in very good company.

The great and holy men of years gone by have all been put outside the camp. If an ungodly throng have thrust out our fathers, and have said, “Get you gone, we want you not,” it is true, their children build their sepulchers, and then they thrust us out. What if it be so? We are content to share the lot of so goodly a parentage. We think it a high honor to be thrust out of those gates whose only glory is that good men once passed through them, and whose great disgrace is that good men pass through them the wrong way—not into them, but out of them. So, beloved, be you content to be cast without the camp.

But mark, going without the camp in itself is nothing, it is suffering without the camp that is the great thing. Making myself different from everybody else, is nothing, it is suffering for the truth’s sake that is the truly noble thing. It is being crucified with Christ that is honorable. It is not my being a Sectarian or a Separatist, it is not your going outside the camp that is any good, it is your suffering without the camp that proves you to be a believer.

O Christians, if you have to do the same, rejoice! And now, as you come to this communion table, I shall bid you only recollect that word *suffered*, “Jesus suffered without the gate,” and I shall ask you, as you sit there, to meditate upon that word. Turn it over again and again, and think how His body and His soul all suffered for you. Then, when you have meditated upon that great truth, will you be in a fit frame of mind to commune with Him who has sanctified you by His own blood, by suffering without the gate.

May the God of mercies give to sinners grace, that, like lepers without the camp, they may look to Jesus crucified for them, and so obtain eternal life! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

JEREMIAH 5:1-6, 10-31, REVELATION 22:1-7

Jeremiah 5. Verse 1. *Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if you can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it.*

It was a very wonderful offer, on the part of God, to forgive the inhabitants of the whole city of Jerusalem for the sake of one man, and it was all the more remarkable because He gave them time to make a thorough search to see whether such a person could be found, “if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth.” Into what a horrible state of guilt must the Jewish capital have fallen when there was not one man, even among the magistrates or the priests, who cared for that which was just and true. May God prevent London and England from becoming like Jerusalem and Judah! May truth and righteousness flourish in our land!

2. *And though they say, The LORD liveth; surely they swear falsely.*

Even those who assumed an appearance of being religious, and who said, “JEHOVAH liveth”—even they were false swearers. To what a terribly sad state had the age come when its very religion was a lie, and its professedly holy things were thoroughly rotten!

3. *O LORD, are not thine eyes upon the truth?*

If there is any truthful man anywhere, God sees him. His eyes are upon him, He regards him with attentive delight, and He will take care of him with the utmost vigilance. But what was the real character of these people? Listen.

3. *Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return.*

Nothing could make them act rightly; whatever God did with them, they still persisted in their iniquity.

4-5. *Therefore I said, Surely these are poor; they are foolish: for they know not the way of the LORD, nor the judgment of their God. I will get me unto the great men, and will speak unto them; for they have known the way of the LORD, and the judgment of their God:*

But he found no improvement among them, they were even worse than the poor and ignorant, for he goes on to say,—

5-6. *But these have altogether broken the yoke, and burst the bonds. Wherefore a lion out of the forest shall slay them, and a wolf of the evenings shall spoil them, a leopard shall watch over their cities: every one that goeth out thence shall be torn in pieces: because their transgressions are many, and their backslidings are increased.*

Now let us continue our reading at verse ten, where we shall see that both the house of Israel and the house of Judah had turned aside from the Lord their God.

10-12. *Go ye up upon her walls, and destroy; but make not a full end: take away her battlements; for they are not the LORD'S. For the house of Israel and the house of Judah have dealt very treacherously against me, saith the LORD. They have belied the LORD,—*

They have made it out as though God Himself were a liar. They have contradicted Him whose word is the truth itself. They have despised His threatenings, they have refused His invitations, they have disbelieved His promises, “They have belied the Lord,”—

12-14. *And said, It is not he; neither shall evil come upon us; neither shall we see sword nor famine: and the prophets shall become wind, and the word is not in them: thus shall it be done unto them. Wherefore thus saith the LORD God of hosts, Because ye speak this word, behold, I will make my words in thy mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them.*

It is a dreadful state of things when God turns from pleading with men to threatening them, when He ceases to invite them to return to Him, and denounces them as transgressors against His laws. At such times, He makes the words that come out of the mouths of His prophets to be like fire, and men are utterly consumed by them as the stubble in the field is destroyed by the devouring flames.

15-18. *Lo, I will bring a nation upon you from far, O house of Israel, saith the LORD: it is a mighty nation, it is an ancient nation, a nation whose language thou knowest not, neither understandest what they say. Their quiver is as an open sepulcher, they are all mighty men. And they shall eat up thine harvest, and thy bread, which thy sons and thy daughters should eat: they shall eat up thy flocks and thine herds: they shall eat up thy vines and thy fig trees: they shall impoverish your fenced cities, wherein thou trusted, with the sword. Nevertheless in those days, saith the LORD, I will not make a full end with you.*

See how, in the midst of His wrath, God remembers mercy. He utters a terrible sentence concerning transgressors, and then He pauses, and says, “Nevertheless”—listen to the gentle note of pity in that word—“Nevertheless in those days, saith the LORD, I will not make a full end with you.” Still does He spare the guilty, and in His longsuffering He gives them further opportunities for repentance.

19. *And it shall come to pass, when ye shall say, Wherefore doeth the LORD our God all these things unto us? then shalt thou answer them, Like as ye have forsaken me, and served strange gods in your land, so shall ye serve strangers in a land that is not yours.*

A man may often see his sin in its punishment. Because they had served strange gods, therefore the Lord sent them to serve strangers in a strange land. Remember, O transgressor, that your sin will come home to you in some form or other! If we sow the wind, we shall reap the whirlwind. “Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” Therefore, let us beware of scattering seeds of sin, for they will produce a terrible harvest of woe.

20-21. *Declare this in the house of Jacob, and publish it in Judah, saying, Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding; which have eyes, and see not; which have ears, and hear not.*

And, alas! there are far too many of such people about still. They hear God’s Word, yet it never reaches their hearts. They see what God’s hand is doing all around them, yet they do not and they will not really see it as they should.

22. *Fear ye not me? saith the LORD: will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it?*

There is a little belt of sand which checks the surging sea, and says to it, “Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed.” Now, if sand, which is so weak a thing, can, nevertheless, control the mighty ocean within bounds, how readily ought you and I to be governed by God, and held in check even by the slightest intimations of His will!

23. *But this people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart; they are revolted and gone.*

God restrains the sea, but nothing seems to be able to restrain the sinfulness of man. Man breaks over every barrier that should keep him back; he is like a desolating torrent when he gives way to iniquity.

24. *Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the LORD our God, that giveth rain, both the former and the latter, in his season: he reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest.*

Though God gives timely and suitable seasons for the growth and ingathering of the corn—rain when it is needed to aid the upspringing of the blade, and fine weather for garnering the harvest—yet many men see not the hand of God at all, and they are therefore not moved by gratitude to bless His name, and fear Him to whom they are indebted for all that they receive. Oh, what an ungrateful and blind creature is man!

25. *Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good things from you.*

Does any unconverted man here know what good things he has missed up to the present moment? Suppose you, my friend, were to be saved tonight, yet can you even imagine what joy you have lost through all the years of your past impenitence? Nothing can ever give back to you the years that have gone, or impart to you, in the future, the joy you might have had, but which you have missed. And mark you, if there were no hell to be endured, it is enough of hell to have missed heaven. It will be grief enough to your heart, at the last, to find that “your sins have withholden good things from you.”

26. *For among my people are found wicked men:*

“Among my people,” says the Lord—in the very church itself, making as loud a profession as the most genuine Christian—“Among my people are found wicked men.” Here, in this place, tonight, mingling with the godly in this congregation, are found wicked men. The Lord have mercy upon them, and turn them from their evil ways!

26. *They lay wait, as he that setteth snares; they set a trap, they catch men.*

Beware of these man-catchers, who entrap souls, and ruin them forever, ensnaring them by leading them into evil habits and transgressions.

27-28. *As a cage is full of birds, so are their houses full of deceit: therefore they are become great, and waxen rich. They are waxen fat, they shine: yea, they overpass the deeds of the wicked:—*

The manifestly wicked—

28-29. *They judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, yet they prosper; and the right of the needy do they not judge. Shall I not visit for these things?*

Angels in heaven, God says to you, “Shall I not visit for these things?” And they answer, “Yea, Lord.” Even to the devils in hell, He may put the same question. They are already smarting under His wrath, and He may say to them, “Shall I not visit for these things?” And they also answer, “Yea.” He puts the question to all intelligent beings who know what is right and true, “Shall I not visit for these things?” And they, with one consent, reply, “Yea, LORD; it must be so.”

29-31. *Saith the LORD: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this? A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so:*

It is a most horrible thing that God’s own people should ever be willing that error should be preached, and that oppression and wrong-doing of any kind should be practiced. You know that, if God’s own people did not tolerate false doctrine, it would soon cease to be heard in many places. But it is when those who profess to know God’s Word endorse that which is contrary to the truth that error is kept in power in the land, “The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so.”

31. *And what will ye do in the end thereof?*

That is a question which I would propose in God’s name to all here. Is your religion of such a character that, when you come to die, it will bear you up? Or have you taken up with some form of falsehood which will not stand the test of your dying hour? Are you living in neglect of God? Is your life such that He must be angry with you, for He is angry with the wicked every day? Then, take home to yourself the question with which this chapter closes, “What will ye do in the end thereof?”

I am going to speak to you presently about those who go forth with Christ, without the camp, bearing His reproach, so let us read a few verses about the glory which awaits them by and by.

Revelation 22. Verse 1. *And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.*

Infinite sovereignty bestows grace, the river of grace flows from the throne of God. It is the King who saves His people, yet the atonement is ever connected with the sovereignty, “He showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.”

2. *In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.*

God will enrich His church by giving her a great variety of good things, “twelve manner of fruits.” There shall also be a constancy and perpetuity about supply of them, for this tree “yielded her fruit every month.” And if there be ought of ill remaining anywhere in the world in those halcyon days, God shall supply a cure for it: “The leaves of the tree were for the healing of nations.”

3. *And there shall be no more curse:*

The curse shall be taken from the soil on which it fell obliquely when God said to Adam, “Cursed is the ground for thy sake.” There shall be no curse upon man’s body; there shall be nothing but blessing. Blessing shall swallow up the cursing, and God shall be manifest everywhere.

3. *But the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him:*

This is what we try to do now, but we shall more fully accomplish the blessed task in those brighter days which every revolution of the wheel of time is hastening on.

4. *And they shall see his face;*

Oh, that is glorious service—to serve the Lord and to see His face at the same time! Communion and service are ever best when they are blended. There can be no fellowship better than that which serves, and no service sweeter than that of those who continue to see the face of their Master while they are serving Him.

4. *And his name shall be in their foreheads.*

There will be no mistaking them, they shall bear in their foreheads the glorious name of God, just as the high priest of old had the words, “Holiness unto the LORD” upon his brow.

5. *And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun;—*

Even the sun is only worthy to be ranked with a candle in comparison with the light of God Himself. John puts the two things in one sentence, “They need no candle, neither light of the sun;”—

5-7. *For the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever. And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to show unto his servants the things which must shortly be done. Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.*

Even so, come, Lord Jesus; come quickly! Amen

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