

THE ARROWS OF THE BOW BROKEN IN ZION

NO. 791

A SERMON
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 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

*“There brake he the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle.”
 Psalm 76:3*

THE writer of this song of triumph gloried as a patriot in the defeat of his country's foes. He did better, he triumphed as a believer in JEHOVAH in the victories which were worked by the power of the Lord his God. I have sometimes wished that we English Christians blended in ourselves a little more of the two characters of patriots and believers. I am persuaded that if our poets had been holy and devout men, and at the same time bold patriots, like David, they would not have lacked subjects for the most glorious national hymns.

The events of English history are not less stirring than the annals of Judah and Israel. What a theme for a master singer would be the defeat of the proud Spanish Armada, or the frustration of Rome's knavish tricks on November the fifth, or the gallant fights of Oliver and his valiant Ironsides, or the landing of William III, and the overthrow of the hopes of the enemies of the Gospel! Our national minstrelsy has never been so devout as it should be, and we are poor in holy national song as compared to the Hebrews, may the taste of coming ages improve in this respect.

Let us, in the events which occur in our own time, see the hand of God, and if we cannot write psalms and hymns, yet at any rate let us feel the spirit of glowing thanksgiving to that God who has bidden the ocean gird our native isle, and thus protected her with a better guard than gates of brass or triple steel. Blessed be the Lord our God, who till now has held the shield of omnipotence over this land, and made it the citadel of liberty, the refuge of the oppressed, and the stronghold of the Gospel of Christ.

We will not, however, detain you with such subjects, but invite you to more spiritual considerations. Our Salem is the peaceful church of God, and our Zion is the abode of Gospel worship, where the general assembly of the firstborn unite in holy joy.

The psalmists of Israel, when they rehearsed the Lord's mighty acts in the midst of His people, spake of the overthrow of Pharaoh in the Red Sea, and we who believe in Jesus can join with the song of Moses the song of the Lamb, while we behold the overthrow of sin, death, and hell, by our all-glorious Champion, and cry with all our hearts and voices, “Sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously, the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.”

Israel chanted her paeon of victory over the accursed Canaanites whom Joshua slew with great slaughter. They were firmly established in their own country, they dwelt in cities which were walled up to heaven, and they rushed forth to war, riding in chariots of iron, with sharp scythes upon their axles, and spearmen darting their javelins afar. Their warriors were swift and valiant, and their numbers like the sand of the sea, but behold their boasted armies dissolved at the advance of Joshua as the hoar frost melts in the sun!

Hittites and Amorites, Hivites and Jebusites, fell before the sword of the Lord, and Israel magnified JEHOVAH who “smote great kings, and slew famous kings, and gave their land for an heritage, even an heritage unto Israel his servant: for his mercy endureth for ever.”

We also have a better Canaan in prospect, and more terrible enemies have been subdued by Jesus, the Captain of our salvation. Let us not be slow to praise the name of the Lord. No Jew could forget the victories achieved under the leadership of David over the Philistines. They had giants among them, and their ranks were filled with veterans, men of war from their youth up, yet the sling and the stone brought

down the champion, and the troops of God were made valiant in fight, turning to flight the armies of the aliens.

Give unto the LORD, O ye mighty, give unto the LORD glory and strength. Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; for even thus has Jesus vanquished evil, and given His servants grace to conquer through His blood.

The grand defeat of Sennacherib, which this Psalm commemorates, when no swords or spears were used, but the Lord sent an angel who cut off all the mighty men of valor, and all the leaders and captains in the camp, so that the proud Assyrian returned with shame of face to his own land, was the subject of many a holy song in Judah's happy land. But the everlasting defeat of the accuser of the brethren by the angel of the covenant of grace, should waken yet more thrilling music in the choirs of the church of the living God.

All the wonders recorded in the book of the wars of the Lord are eclipsed in the Gospel annals, for they are but the destruction of men's bodies, the temporary deliverance of cities and of nations from the oppression of war. But the Gospel tells of eternal redemption. As spiritual affairs far exceed material interests, so the spiritual victories of God in the midst of His church are far more resplendent than His triumphs against His foes on behalf of Israel.

May the Holy Spirit quicken us, raise our courage, strengthen our faith, and confirm our confidence in Him while we think upon what God has done and is doing in the midst of His church. "There brake he the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle." Right valiantly has the Lord wrought *for us* and *in us*. And He will also do great things *by us*.

I. First, he has fought victoriously FOR US.

Our God has wrought for us great spiritual victories, by which all the ingenious weapons of our many adversaries have been snapped.

Let me remind you, beloved, in the first place, of what the Lord our God did in the day of our redemption by the sufferings of Christ. Let us celebrate *the triumphs of Cavalry*. The Lord of angels descended from heaven, and left the glories of His Father's throne to take upon Himself the form of a servant, and to be made in the likeness of man. Throughout the whole of His life of humiliation He was attacked by the enemy, but He was victorious at every point.

Hell strove to empty out all its quivers upon Him, and the sword of Satanic malice sought with its keenest edge to wound Him, but never was He staggered, or so much as scarred, He quenched every fiery dart and repelled every barbed arrow. The prince of this world watched Him with jealous eye, and scanned Him from head to foot, but found no place for the entrance of sin, nothing within His soul upon which evil could gain a footing. Jesus was unconquerable, to show us that in the power of grace manhood may overcome the sword of evil, and break the arrows of temptation.

At length the fullness of time ushered in that dreadful night when all the powers of darkness met, and collected all their infernal might for one last tremendous charge, buckler, and sword, and arrow, and every weapon of offense and defense were wielded by the leaguered hosts of hell, but all in vain. Our Champion was hard put to it. He sweat as it were great drops of blood, falling to the ground. He was numbered with the transgressors. He was led away like a malefactor, tried and condemned, the Lord JEHOVAH made to meet on Him the iniquity of us all, but in all and over all He was more than conqueror.

You never can forget, for it is written upon the fleshy tablets of your grateful hearts, how His enemies dragged Him to the mount of crucifixion, fastened Him to the accursed tree, lifted Him up all bleeding and suffering, exposed Him to the glare of the sun, dashed the cross into its place, dislocating all His bones, sat around and stared upon Him and mocked His miseries, but in all this He remained invincible.

These griefs, which were outward and conspicuous to our eyes, were but a small part of His agonies—the inward strife, the internal conflict, the soul-desertion and depression were heavier far. Sin's utmost weight, the fury of vengeance, the curse of the law, the sword of justice, the malice of

Satan, the bitterness of death—all these He knew and more, and yet, single-handed, He sustained the fight and earned the crown.

That glorious cry of “It is finished,” was the death-knell of all the adversaries of His people, the breaking of “the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle.” I think I see before me the hero of Golgotha using His cross as an anvil, and His woes as a hammer, and dashing to shivers bundle after bundle of our sins, those poisoned “arrows of the bow,” trampling on every charge, and destroying every accusation.

What glorious blows the mighty breaker gives! How the weapons fly to fragments, beaten small as the dust of the threshing floor! Behold, I see Him drawing from its sheath of hellish workmanship the dread sword of hellish power! See He snaps it across His knee, as a man breaks dry wood of kindling, and casts it into the fire.

Like David, he crieth, “He teacheth my hands to war; so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms.” “I have pursued mine enemies, and destroyed them; and turned not again until I had consumed them. And I have consumed them and wounded them, that they could not arise: yea, they are fallen under my feet....Then did I beat them as small as the dust of the earth; I did stamp them as the mire of the street.”

Beloved, no sin of a believer can now be an arrow mortally to wound him, no condemnation can now be a sword to kill him, for the punishment of our sin was borne by Christ, a full atonement has been made for all our iniquities by our blessed Substitute and Surety. Who now accuses? Who now condemns? Christ hath died, yea, rather hath risen again. Let hell, if it can, find a single arrow to shoot against the beloved of the Lord. They are all broken, not one of them is left.

Christ has emptied the quivers of hell, has quenched every fiery dart, and broken off the head of every arrow of wrath. The ground is strewn with the splinters and relics of the weapons of hell’s warfare, which are only visible to us to remind us of our former danger, and of our great deliverance.

Sin has no more dominion over us. Jesus has made an end of it, and put it away forever. O you enemy, destructions are come to a perpetual end. Talk ye of all the wondrous works of the Lord, ye who make mention of His name, keep not silent.

When our Lord, after a short sojourn in the grave, rose again on the third day, *His resurrection* effectually crushed all the remaining hopes of hell. So long as He was in the tomb, it might seem as though His people were in jeopardy, but when He “rose again for our justification,” our security was undoubted. In His death He paid the debt, in His resurrection He obtained the receipt, and exhibited the precious writing to heaven, and earth, and hell, by nailing the handwriting of ordinances to His cross.

The rising of Christ from the grave is to us the warrant of our final perseverance. Has He not Himself said, “Because I live, ye shall live also”? It is to us the pledge of our resurrection, for as the head has arisen, so all the members of the body must arise.

Had Jesus seen corruption, had the grave still held His body in durance vile, our hope would have been but slender, but now that Jesus lives, and death has no more dominion over Him, we rejoice that by one sacrifice He has perfected forever them that are set apart. Our risen Lord shines forth in transcendent majesty beside the empty tomb, surrounded by the broken swords and bucklers of His people’s foes.

*“Shout, ye seraphs! Gabriel, raise
Fame’s eternal trump of praise:
Let the earth’s remotest bound
Hear the joy-inspiring sound. Hallelujah.”*

*“Lives again our glorious King!
‘Where, O death, is now thy sting?’
Once He died our souls to save;
‘Where’s thy victory, boasting grave?’”*

Yet further, when after forty days, our Lord *ascended* from us to take possession of the purchased possession in our name, and to prepare a place for us at the right hand of the Father, in that day He again gave to hell such a defeat as it shall never be able to recover. Had Jesus Christ remained still upon the earth, it had been thought that heaven was still shut to believers, and we might have entertained a fear that between us and the celestial gate there would be such hordes of enemies that we should never be able to hew a pathway to our rest.

But Jesus has completely cleared the king's highway to glory for all His saints, and they traverse in safety the road to the celestial gate. As the watchmen fled from the grave's mouth when the living Lord arose, and as the stone was rolled away from the sepulcher, so all the fiends that might have kept us out of heaven have fled also, and every barrier to our entrance to the celestial reward is effectually removed.

See the incarnate God returning to His throne! Your imaginations can conceive the splendor of His triumphal entrance when all the angels hailed Him with glad acclaim, and disembodied spirits, who had long ago been redeemed by the foresight of His death, met Him with their congratulations when the Paternal Deity said, "Well done!" and bade Him take His reward at His right hand.

Ah! then, He led captivity captive, and made a show of His enemies openly. Then He finally broke the "arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle," and gave to His people a confirmation of the assurance that it shall never be possible to keep so much as one of them out of the eternal rest, since their Covenant Head has taken possession on their behalf, to hold it safely for each one until "the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."

Nor is the story quite ended yet. Jesus is now *exalted* far above all principalities and powers, and every name that is named, but the enemy of our souls, though defeated, continues maliciously to attempt our destruction. Satan's head is bruised, but he still lives, and continues perpetually to assault the saints of God.

We seldom stand before the angel without Satan coming forward as our accuser. The accuser of the brethren unceasingly clamors against the saints, but here is our joy—whatever may be the arrows of Satan's bow, whatever sword he may wield against us, there *He* stands, our great Captain, our Shield and the Lord's Anointed, and as fast as the arrows are shot He breaks them, and as often as the sword is drawn, He turns aside its edge.

Courage, Christian! Your foes may be unceasing in their attacks, but Jesus Christ is unfailing in your protection. For Zion's sake He does not hold His peace, and for Jerusalem's sake He does not rest, but His intercession comes up perpetually before the eternal throne, and the constant presentation of His omnipotent merit evermore preserves the tempted, succors the needy, and upholds those that are ready to fall. Let us be of good cheer, for there, in the New Jerusalem to which our laboring souls aspire, the intercession of Jesus breaks "the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle."

Nor does it end there, for here below our exalted Lord is master over all events, *providence* is ruled and guided by the Man whose head was surrounded with the crown of thorns.

***"Lo! in His hands the sovereign keys
Of heaven, and death, and hell."***

To this hour the adversaries of truth seek the overthrow of the church of God. *We* may be sometimes idle, but they are always diligent. "The enemy goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." He assails the people of God in successive ages from different points of the compass with cunning and fury, and we should have poor hope, we who are like a few lambs in the midst of wolves, if it were not that our Master is present by His eternal Spirit, and rules all things by His providential government.

He can make those wheels which are so high that they are terrible, so to revolve that the greatest enemies of the church shall be cut off or shall be converted, and He can raise up from the dunghill men that shall be princes in the midst of Israel, to be defenders of the truth, and shepherds to His people. He

can cause to be born in a humble cottage in the wood a Luther, who shall shake off the fetters from the nations. He can bring forth from the wildest village of France a Calvin, whose words shall be as nails fastened by the master of assemblies. And He can raise a flaming Knox, and nourish his fiery spirit in Geneva till Scotland needs him, or raise up in the quiet parsonage of Lutterworth a Wickliffe, to shine as the morning star of the Reformation in England.

God is never short of men. He never has to bethink Himself of means. He knows no difficulties or dilemmas. If His church needed it, He could tomorrow make emperors repent of their sins, and doff their crowns to become ministers of the Word, and compel the most violent persecutors of the church to crouch at her feet, and lick the dust.

Let us be confident in the reigning power of our ever loving Savior. Let us be reassured by the history of the church in the past, and expect to see divine interpositions in our own day. Fear not, for still it shall so be said of Zion, "There brake he the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle."

For His redeemed ones, it is most evident that the Lord Jesus is more than conqueror, not only putting adverse darts aside, but breaking them. Not merely averting the violence of the sword, but breaking that sword, tearing the buckler from the enemy and leaving him defenseless, stripping him of all his arms, both of offense and defense, that his defeat may be total and irretrievable. "Arms and the man, I sing," said the great Roman poet, a nobler theme by far would be "*Arms and the Son of God.*"

II. May we have help from on high while we now ask you to consider the victories which Jesus Christ has won IN US.

Brethren, we who are members of the church of Christ, have been subdued by sovereign grace. Whereas we were enemies, we are now reconciled unto God by the death of His Son. Now, if we could each tell his story of conversion, the children of God would be ready to burst out with one simultaneous shout of joy, as they perceived that in the midst of His church the Lord, in the hearts of His people, has broken the arrows of the bow.

Let me take you back to the time of *your conversion*. Some of us were very stout-hearted. We knew the truth, but we did not love it. We understood the Gospel, but we abhorred it. We were often entreated to consider the welfare of our souls, but we cared for the frivolities of the moment, and we let the realities of eternity slip by. We were thundered at by the law, we were gently wooed by the Gospel, the tears of a mother united with the earnest warnings of a teacher, and the admonitions of a pastor, but all these were powerless upon our slumbering conscience.

Some of us went to great lengths of rebellion, and hardened ourselves more and more, and it seemed impossible for us to do enough against the Lord our God. When we talk of great and black sinners, it brings tears to our eyes as we remember that such were some of us, but we have been washed.

Ah! brethren, the bringing in of great sinners is indeed a glory to Christ—and the salvation of great moralists is not a secondary victory, for perhaps of the two it is more difficult to subdue the righteous self than the sinful self of men. To have made those who have been kept pure outwardly to feel their inward impurity, and to bewail it, is a triumph great and masterly.

Rejoice when the harlot bows before the Savior with breaking heart, be glad when Saul of Tarsus yields his persecuting heart to the Savior's scepter, but equally adore the majesty of love when the young man who has kept all these commandments from his youth up seeks the one thing which he lacks, and trusts his heart with Jesus Christ without delay!

When we shall get to heaven, we will astonish the angels with what we shall have to tell, the depths of sin out of which we have been delivered, the fiery lusts from which we have been rescued, the stiff necks that have been made to bow, and the unyielding knees that have been compelled to bend. Glory be unto God.

I cannot help saying so again, Glory be to God, for as I look around this place and think of some of you in whom God's great and wondrous arm has been revealed in redeeming you from all your

iniquities, I dare make it my boast that here the Lord has broken “the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle.”

Since conversion, dear friends, how often has the great Conqueror been obliged to interpose on our behalf to save us from our rebellious lusts? I do not know how you find it, but it strikes me that conflict is the principal feature of the Christian life this side heaven. We do know what communion is, we are no strangers to the banqueting house, where the banner of love is waving, but still to contest every inch of ground on the road to immortality, to wrestle hard with sins, and doubts, and fears, is our average experience.

We do get beyond this sometimes, but not for long. We have soon to come back again, either to fight with the lions, or Apollyon, or to climb the Hill Difficulty, or to traverse the valley of the death-shadow, or to pass through Vanity Fair, or to endure the sleepy influences of the enchanted ground, or to lie in Doubting Castle.

It is not an easy path to heaven, it is warfare from beginning to end. There are times with us when we are so sore beset with temptations that our feet have almost gone, our steps had well-nigh slipped. We have long ere this fallen, to our shame and confusion, if another arm than ours had not held us up.

Oh, what strong temptations some of us have endured! Those of us who have passionate, fiery, strong, willful natures, have to fight frequently against suggestions which we would scarcely whisper in the ear of those we love the best. We have overcome as yet, we have been upheld till now, but who could have held us up but the Lord Himself?

Our temptations occasionally are plied so craftily, and are so exactly fitted to the situation, so precisely adapted to the state of our bodily health, or the condition of our outward business, that it is a wonder that we have not yielded.

Ay, and we have almost yielded, as we must mournfully acknowledge, and then Apollyon has hissed at us from between his teeth, “You have been unfaithful to your Lord already in your heart. You know you have gone back in your soul, and broken your covenant. How can you hope to be accepted at the last? Go back to the world at once, for you are playing the hypocrite, you know you are,” saith he, “for thy heart is deceitful. Go back therefore, in your outward life.”

Though we have been able still to wield the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, and have kept the weapon of all-prayer in our hand, yet we have been almost overcome, and have narrowly escaped. We have to bless God that we have escaped like a bird out of the snare of the fowler, but only escaped as by the skin of our teeth.

We have not broken the arrows of the bow, we have not been able to break the sword of the enemy, but Christ has done it, blessed be His name! We have fled to the foot of His cross. We have looked up and seen the streams of His precious blood. We have cowered down beneath the shadow of the atonement, and we have come away strong to fight with our corruptions and to overcome our besetting sins.

Further than this, those who know anything of the inner life, if their inward struggles are at all like mine, will frequently have to contend with *doubts and fears*, suspicions and forebodings. Glory be to God, it is not always so. “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.”

My brethren, we often walk in darkness and see no light. Many of God’s people are harassed with questions as to their interest in Christ, or are afflicted with deep depression of spirit. And when it is so, if we try to comfort them, what a task it is!

I have tried all the promises of the Bible which I could remember upon some of the sorely troubled ones. I have reminded them of the person of Christ, and His consequent power, of the suffering of Christ and His consequent ability to cleanse from sin. But I have had this answer, “When God shutteth up, who can deliver?” and I have been made to feel, as a pastor, very often, that *I* could not quench the fiery darts of the enemy for other people, that I could not break the sword of the enemy for others, or even for myself.

What a sweet relief it is to be assured that Jesus can break the arrows of the bow, subdue our doubts, and cause His people with reviving courage to say, “Rejoice not over me, O mine enemy, for when I fall I shall rise again!”

I have seen many excellent believers whose lives have been examples to us all, who, nevertheless, have said, “If you knew what was in my heart, you would not speak to me as a Christian. Oh, how great are my sins! I feel that I live at a great distance from God. I am of little or no service to His church. When I am in trouble, I do not act like a believer, and cast my burden upon the Lord, but I bear it till my soul is sorely burdened.”

Then I have read to them such a psalm as the one which follows our text, where David says, “In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord: my sore ran in the night, and ceased not: my soul refused to be comforted. I remembered God, and was troubled: I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. Selah. Thou holdest mine eyes waking: I am so troubled that I cannot speak....Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favorable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? Doth his promise fail forevermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up His tender mercies?”

I have always found such souls get relief when they have come to Christ just as they did at first, and if they have said, “I am afraid I never did come,” they have soon rejoiced in the light of His countenance when they have been able to add, “But if I never came, I will now”—

*“Just as I am—though toss’d about
With many a conflict, many a doubt,
Fightings within, and fears without,
O Lamb of God, I come.”*

To creep to the cross foot feeling as if the earth would open and swallow you up, and yet resolved that if you perish, you will perish with your arms about the atonement, resting on the expiatory sacrifice, this is the sure way to comfort. Tried one, you cannot perish beneath the cross, you must be safe there. Standing there, you shall understand that there Jesus breaks “the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle.”

Not to leave this subject for a moment, I would notice that all which is yet to come in the inner life is secured by our Lord Jesus Christ. As up till now we have not been mortally wounded, nor have cast away our confidence altogether, so shall it be to the close. No doubt, other conflicts will arise. The past seems to warrant our prophesying that the future will not be calm and peaceful. The hours of old age and consequent debility are stealing on apace. The days of sickness, and all the depression of spirit which sickness usually brings, are drawing nigh.

Last of all, and most terrible to some, the solemn article of death approaches, and speak of it as we may, death is terrible to a living man. The river of death is cold and chill, and for a man to plunge into it boldly, will need courage more than ordinary.

But let us not sit down and deplore our future ills, nor petulantly wish to avoid life’s trials—we cannot if we would. Let us set our face steadfastly towards Jerusalem, and go onward, persuaded that every foe in advance is already defeated. Christ Jesus leads the way. No enemy has been able to stand against Him, and none shall stand against us all the days of his life. Death has lost its sting since Jesus died. “The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

I wish that I had the power to speak of these things as they deserve, but I leave them with you as topics for your thankfulness. O my brethren, how ought we to praise and bless God for what He has wrought in us from the first day until now. A dear friend said just before service, “I am very grateful, and what is more, if I am not grateful, I ought to be, for I owe so much.”

Oh, if ever I get to heaven, I will sing the loudest of any there, for I am sure I shall owe more to God than any of you. The responsibilities of my office overwhelm me. When I sit and think of the many,

many, many who call me by the name of pastor, and the tens of thousands who read the word which I preach every week, I am overwhelmed.

If I shall at the close of life be able to say as George Fox, the Quaker, said after his last sermon, “I am clear! I am clear!”—I would give all the world if I had it, to know that I shall be able to say that, for this is my one and sole desire, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, but being wrapped about with the fair white linen of His righteousness. If safe at last, I shall have to praise Him who has delivered me from a thousand temptations, and kept my feet in slippery places.

I know that to each one of you your place seems as peculiar as mine does to me. I do not doubt but what I am as much fitted for mine as you are for yours, and therefore, I believe that your condition has its peculiar dangers, and I doubt not you receive peculiar helps and special deliverances. Defraud not my Master of your gratitude. Give Him your hearts. Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar, for God is our God which hath showed us light. Let what He has done for us bind us to Him, and encourage us to hope in Him. “Thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.”

III. And now, lastly, as this has been done for us, and in us, it will be done BY US.

The church of God is God’s battle-axe and weapons of war in fighting His battles for truth and righteousness, and up till now, history shows that none have been able to stand against God in the midst of His people. If I could give you a brief epitome of church history, I should be glad to do so, but there is not time this morning, and will not be, I fear, at any of our services, but it is a fact, that along the whole line of spiritual battle the victory has been to God’s people.

At first the enemy attacked the church with persecution. Those rough and barbarous weapons of war were used which were to be found in the Coliseum, with its wild beasts and cruel men, or in the axe, the stake, and the rack. Men have grown somewhat wiser now, but in those days, men and devils sought to destroy the testimony of our God by the destruction of the saints, and what was the result? O persecution, where are thy trophies? The virgin daughter of Zion has shaken her head at thee, and laughed thee to scorn.

The church, like a good ship beaten by the waves, has cut through every billow and has been hastened on her way by the storm. Washed and cleansed and purged by opposition, the more the church has been opposed the more brightly glorious has she shone forth. God was in the midst of her and helped her, He helped her, and that right early. Our pulse beats fast, and our blood grows hot when we read of the persecutions of old pagan Rome.

And when we turn to the story of the Reformation, and see the hunted ones among the Alps, the Huguenots driven out of France, our own Lollards and the Covenanters of Scotland, we feel proud to belong to such a race of men, we glory in their lineage, and are amazed that the policy of persecution should so long have been continued by shrewd, sharp-witted men, when it ought to have been clear to them that in every case in which they persecuted the church it multiplied the more exceedingly. God has indeed broken “the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle,” by sustaining His people in times of persecution.

The church has also been assailed with deadly errors. There is scarcely a doctrine of our holy faith which has not been denied. Every age produces a new crop of heretics and infidels. Just as the current of the times may run, so doth the stream of infidelity change its direction. We have lived long enough, some of us, to see three or four species of atheists and deists rise and die, for they are short lived, an ephemeral generation.

We have seen the church attacked by weapons borrowed from geology, ethnology, and anatomy, and then from the schools of criticism fierce warriors have issued, but she survives all her antagonists. She has been assailed from almost every quarter, but the fears that tarry in the church today are blown to the wind tomorrow. Yea, the church has been enriched by the attacks, for her divines have set to work to

study the points that were dubious, to strengthen the walls that seemed a little weak, and so her towers have been strengthened, and her bulwarks consolidated.

To disprove the Word of God and to overthrow Christianity is still the fond dream of wicked men, and therefore we may expect yet worse attacks. There are looming in the future even now, fresh clouds of skeptical theory, but as certainly as God has blown away these things like chaff before the wind in times gone by, so will He in the days that are yet to come.

It is in the church itself that the victory is generally won. I am inclined to believe that the writers against different heresies, when they have done their best, have done comparatively little with the masses, and that our learned men, when they assail new forms of skepticism, however successful they may be with the few, do but very little with the many.

The true place of victory is not in the scholar's study, nor in the classroom of the university, but in the church itself. If you want to answer the infidel, live a holy life. If you desire to stop the skeptic, let your faith bring forth patience, your patience experience, your experience hope that maketh not ashamed. Zeal for the truth as it is in Jesus, earnest prayer for the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom, and industrious effort for the spread of the truth, will be much more victorious over the insinuations of evil men than the most cogent arguments that reason can devise.

There, on the death-bed of the consumptive girl, with scarce strength enough to speak, who bears witness that Christ is precious, and His love a sweet savor in her departing moments, there our precious Jesus breaks the arrows of the bow.

There, in the working man's cottage, which was once the haunt of drunkenness and the den of vice, and the abode of misery—but which has now become a little paradise, where the children are trained for heaven, where father and mother are knit together in love, there the grace of God breaks the shield, and the sword, and the battle.

There where the weeping sinner finds peace, where the troubled merchant wins rest to his spirit, where the tempted young man overcomes the temptation, and stands fast in the day of trial—there it is where suffering is endured with patience, where labor is performed with perseverance, where the command is obeyed with holiness, and sin is resisted with steadfastness. There it is that the Gospel of Jesus breaks the “arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle.”

My dear friends let nothing ever daunt us as a church. God has given us some signal triumphs in the conversion of remarkable sinners. Let nothing therefore ever hinder us in seeking the conversion of men. Some of you I know are industrious every day in seeking to turn men to Christ. Do not give up the most hardened cases, where you get nothing but a sneer, where the door is slammed in your face. Do not be cast down at rebuffs or blasphemies, those who are most opposed frequently yield the first. It is harder work to deal with those who say, “Yes, yes, yes,” but who forget what we say—it is more hopeless work to deal with them than with those who turn against us and seek to rend us.

In God's name push on, ye soldiers of the cross! The darkest alley may be made light, the back courts of London may become the courts of King Jesus. The house that is now a den of infamy may be purged, and be made to have a church within its walls. Be confident in the energy of the eternal Spirit, that He can subdue the obdurate heart! Be steadfast in the exercise of ministry, and continue to preach the Gospel, for it is by preaching through the Holy Spirit that men shall be saved.

Brethren and sisters, we anticipate the happy day when the whole world shall be converted to Christ. We are looking forward to the time when the gods of the heathen shall be cast to the moles and to the bats, when Romanism shall be exploded, and the crescent of Mohammed shall wane never again to cast its baleful rays upon nations. We expect the time when every sail that whitens the deep shall bear the herald of the cross, when kings shall bow down before the Prince of Peace, and all nations shall call their Redeemer blessed.

I know that some despair of this. They look upon the world as a vessel that is breaking up and going to pieces, never to float again. We are to pluck, they say, the elect from off her, but the world itself is to be destroyed, and cast away as an unclean thing. We are of another mind, and look for something more

glorifying to God than this desponding theory. We know that the world and all that is therein is one day to be burnt up, and afterwards we look for new heavens and for a new earth, but we cannot read our Bibles without the conviction that—

*“Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
Doth his successive journeys run.”*

We are not discouraged by the length of His delays, we are not disheartened by the long period which He allots to the church in which to strive and struggle with little success and much defeat. We believe that God will never suffer this world, which has once seen Christ's blood shed upon it, to be always the devil's stronghold.

Brethren, Christ came here to take the lion by the beard and to rend him, and to deliver this world entirely and altogether from the detested sway of the powers of darkness. It shall be so, for Jesus cannot lose His reward. We expect to see the mountain of the Lord arise. It has risen now—it is no mean hill already, but we expect to see it rise higher, and higher, and higher, till it shall be exalted upon the top of the hills, above all the highest peaks of earth, and nations *shall* flow unto it.

The handful of corn upon the top of the mountains shall yet shake like Lebanon, and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth. What a shout shall that be when men and angels shall join together to cry, “Hallelujah, hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!” What a satisfaction will it be in that day to have had a share in the fight, to have helped to break the arrows of the bow, and to have aided in winning the victory for our Lord Jesus.

In closing, let me solemnly remark how unhappy are those who are on the side of evil! It is a losing side, and it is a side whereon to lose is to lose forever. Be ye reconciled unto God! this is the Gospel message. “Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, while his wrath is kindled but a little.”

Lastly, how happy are they who trust themselves with this conquering Lord, and who fight side by side with Him, doing their little in His name and by His strength! Thrice happy, my brethren, are we, to have the honor of winning souls! Let us seek to get more of such honor! Let us be insatiable to promote Christ's Gospel! Let us be ambitious, to the highest bent of our minds, to extend the Redeemer's kingdom! And God do so to you, and more also, as ye shall seek to do unto Him, and unto the sons of men for their good, evermore. Amen.

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.