

## SOWING AND REAPING

### NO. 3109

A SERMON  
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*DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,*  
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*“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap.”*  
*Galatians 6:7.*

I FIND, on reference to Luther's Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians, and to Calvin's Commentary on this passage, that both those learned expositors consider that this refers to the treatment of ministers by their people in the matter of their financial support. They very properly point out the connection between the 6<sup>th</sup> verse and the 7<sup>th</sup>—“Let him who is taught in the Word share with him who teaches in all good things. Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap.” I suppose that there was a need for such an injunction in Paul's day—and there is a need for it now. There were some hearers of the Gospel, then, who contributed generously towards the maintenance of the preacher and the Apostle says that what they gave would be like sowing good seed in return for which God would give to them an abundant harvest. But there were others who gave sparingly and who would, therefore, have a proportionately small return.

But I feel sure that the Apostle had a wider range than that and that these words express a general principle—“Whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap.” So I begin my discourse by reminding you that our present lives are of the utmost possible importance, for on these winged hours hang eternal issues. Our present actions are not trifles, for they will decide our everlasting destiny. Everything we do is, to some extent, a sowing of which eternity will be the reaping.

**I.** So I pray you to notice, first, that our text tells as that GOD IS NOT TO BE TRIFLED WITH. “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap.”

Some trifle with God by holding, practically, if not theoretically, that *there will not be rewards for virtue, nor punishment for sin*—that one end will come alike to all—that whatever the dignity or the degradation of character may be, we shall all go to the same place and sleep there in oblivion. Or that if there *is* any future life, it will be common to us all and that, in fact, the whole question concerning the hereafter is a matter so utterly unimportant that we can afford to regard it with complete indifference!

But, dear Friends, it is not so. There is an Omnipotent, Omniscient, and Omnipresent God—and He is the moral Governor of the universe. He will not see His laws broken with impunity, His name deferred, His Gospel despised, His Son rejected. He is intensely sensitive to the actions of mankind. He is not a god of granite or of steel. He takes note of the acts, words and even of the *thoughts* of those whom He has created! And if they are finally impenitent, sooner or later He will say, as He did in Isaiah's day, “I will ease Me of My adversaries and avenge Me of My enemies.”

Others seem to suppose that, even if there is a future, an eternity of rewards and punishments—the reaping of which this life is the sowing—a *bare profession will suffice to save them*. They appear to imagine that if they only compliment their Maker with an occasional “Thank God!” and utter a few words of mere formal prayer, and are not grossly licentious, but live tolerably decent lives, that will satisfy God's requirements. Nothing can be more mistaken than such an idea as that! God in the highest heavens is Himself perfectly pure—His perfect Law is like Himself—and it is not for Him to accommodate His righteous Law to the wills of fallen man! Do not fancy that He will accept the mere external homage of your being. He must have your heart, soul, mind, and strength, or He will not be content. It is vain for anyone to attempt to mock God by supposing that anything will do for Him in place of that heart-surrender and heart-service that He demands.

There are others who seem to suppose that *if they make a profession of religion*, that will suffice. They think that if they attend the parish church or the dissenting chapel and subscribe regularly to religious and philanthropic societies, that is all that is required of them. *That is how they mock God*—that same God who came to the top of Sinai and there, amidst thunder and lightning—gave the Ten Commandments! But He is not to be satisfied by a bare profession of religion. To confess what we do not really feel is but to increase our sin—a hypocritical profession is a further aggravation of our sin. Does God accept your heartless sacrifices, your meaningless words and empty phrases? No! He is not to be mocked by mere outward religious forms and ceremonies.

Others imagine that God can be imposed upon *by a formal compliment when they are near death*. A man is dying and immediately the cry is, “Send for a minister!” They often send for a dissenting minister, though they have never attended his ministry! And they appear to imagine that by some sort of magic we can work wonders even for the poor creature who is probably unconscious before we get to him! And if he has not trusted in Christ before that time, no one can enable him to do it then. Yet his friends call us up in the middle of the night, thinking that we can do something for him. I am not now speaking of you who regularly hear the Gospel and who are, therefore, likely to know better—yet this opinion is very generally held. But I loathe the idea of having anything of priestly power imputed to me. I have not an atom more power than any of you, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ! I am only a preacher of the Gospel and I would gladly hear the Gospel message from any one of you! It is blasphemous to pretend that sacred unction can be imparted by a mortal man. You must yourselves repent and turn to God—I cannot do this for you. It is your own sowing, in this respect, that must bring you a blessed reaping—not anything that you can get a so-called “priest” or even a minister of the Gospel to sow for you! [See Sermon #1250, Volume 21—THE PRIEST DISPENSED WITH—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

**II.** Now, secondly, I want to remind you that **GOD’S MORAL LAWS, AS WELL AS GOD, HIMSELF, ARE NOT TO BE TRIFLED WITH** “Whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap.”

First, *it is so in nature*. If it were possible for God *not* to observe what man does, yet what man does is, of itself, full of a power which will be to him what the harvest is to the soil. And just what he sows, he will be sure to reap one of these days, or in eternity if not in time. If a man were to sow his field with garlic and expect to reap barley, he would be bitterly disappointed. If he were to sow tares, he might pray as long as he pleased for a crop of wheat, but he would not get it. God never so changes His Laws as to make tares come up wheat and He never will! The sowing always is, and always will be, the father of the reaping.

*It is also so in Providence*. A man is idle and neglects his business—he sleeps in the morning when he ought to be at work. He is dilatory and careless about his affairs and so, as the inevitable consequence, he goes from bad to worse and soon is a bankrupt. As he sows, so he reaps. Another indulges in the sins of the flesh. So, when you see him with a broken constitution and his whole being the very incarnation of misery, you are not surprised. Another gambles and wastes all his substance and, sooner or later, he comes to beggary. As he sows, so he reaps. If a man is a drunkard, the poison he swallows will take effect sooner or later, however strong a constitution he may have.

As it is in nature, and in Providence, *so it is in the general moral government of God*. Does not a man’s own conscience tell him to expect that what he does will come home to him? And though a man strives to lull his conscience to sleep, yet now and then it wakes up and shakes him with its thunders and causes him to be ill at ease. How is it that graceless men cannot bear to be alone? It is because conscience shakes them and makes them think of the future and dread still grater misery than they at present endure! Just suppose, for a moment, that this Law of God could be reversed and that I could now say to you, “You may sin as you like, and no evil consequences will follow.” Could you imagine any proclamation which would spread such alarm and terror? Why, the very fabric of society would be shattered in such a state of things! Suppose that I had to say, “There is nothing better in being generous and noble than there is in meanness and vice.” Why, it would be enough to put out the least spark of virtue that might be in existence anywhere! But we have not to talk in that immoral fashion. There is a God who judges actions, words and even thoughts—and “he that sows to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that sows to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.” God’s Word, which is our ultimate Court of Appeal, tells us that in the great reaping time that is coming, Christ will “gather His wheat into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” The Book of Revelation, foretelling the future, says that “the books were opened...and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.” O you gay, light-hearted and frivolous ones, it is not we who say this, but it is the

declaration of the Spirit of God that, after death, comes the judgment! And that, at that Judgment Seat you shall all appear! And for the acts committed in your lives you shall all be tried! And as your lives have been, so shall your eternal destiny be fixed!

III. This leads me to my third remark, which is that EVIL SOWING WILL BRING EVIL REAPING. “Whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap.”

*This is seen in the present result of certain sins.* “He that sows to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption.” By “the flesh” is meant our corrupt human nature in such sins as are mentioned in the 19<sup>th</sup> verse of the 5<sup>th</sup> Chapter of this Epistle, where we read, “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envying, murders, drunkenness, revellings and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in times past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.” These are “the works of the flesh.”

I am not going to expound this passage [Mr. Spurgeon’s expositions of the whole passage, Galatians 5:13-26 will be found in Sermons #2632, Volume 45 and #2831, Volume 49—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] fully, but I want briefly to show you that there are four classes of sins mentioned here. First, Paul mentions sins of lust—*adultery*, which violates the most sacred ties—*fornication*, which defiles the body. *Uncleanness*, which is secret, not known to others, but which is fully known to God. Fleshly thoughts, fleshly words and fleshly acts—*lasciviousness*, the outward uncleanness which “society” condemns, yet often practices. He who is doing any of these things is sowing to his flesh and he will, most surely, “of the flesh reap corruption.” You who are true Christians, of course, hate all these things, as Jude says, “hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.” But mind that you also hate all books in which these things are worked up into attractive narratives, for you cannot even casually glance at such books, much less read them, without polluting your whole being! But as for those who practice these sins, which the Apostle here enumerates, let them not dream that they can be saved while they continue to love that which God hates with a perfect hatred!

The next sins in the Apostle’s black catalog are idolatry and witchcraft. Idolatry, which is forbidden by the Second Commandment—“You shall not make unto you any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in Heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: you shall not bow down yourself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord, your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me: and strewing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me, and keep My Commandments.” To bow in worship before a so-called “altar,” or a cross, or an image or picture of a saint, or before a real or supposed “holy” relic, or anything of the kind, is nothing but sheer idolatry! Yet multitudes are committing this great sin under the notion that they are doing God service! There is a form of idolatry which is not so gross as this, yet it is also sinful—the idolatry of loving ourselves, or our wife, or husband, or child, or father, or mother, or sister, or brother more than we love the Lord.

Then the Apostle mentions witchcraft, by which is intended all real or pretended communion with evil spirits or with the dead. Necromancy, spiritualism and everything of the kind are absolutely forbidden to all who desire to “inherit the Kingdom of God.” Then follows a third set of evils which may be classed under the head of *sins of temper*—“hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envying, murders”—all kinds of acts and forms of feeling which are not in harmony with Christian love. If you really *want* to sow to the flesh, you have only to make these things your own—if you give way to a contentious spirit, foster disagreements, are filled with hatred and envy so that you cannot bear to know that others prosper more than you, and desire to drag them down to your level—if you give way to bursts of passion, or indulge in backbiting, for that is strife—you are sowing to the flesh. I grieve to say that these evil things abound all around us but, O men and women of God, keep clear of all these things!

Then, lastly, Paul mentions sins of appetite—“drunkenness, reveling and such like,” for you must include gluttony with drunkenness. All who commit any of the sins in this long black catalog are sowing to the flesh and not to the Spirit! And when a man sows to the flesh what will the harvest be? “He shall of the flesh reap corruption”—putridity, rotteness, death! The sin that the sinner thought was sweet as honey turns bitter as gall to him. There are many men and women in this world who have lived in sin till it has become its own punishment. But if it is not so in this world, it will be so in the world to come!

What a dreadful thing sin is when it comes to the full! If there were no fire that shall never be quenched and no worm that shall never die, you need not need any worse Hell than that of wicked men by themselves, with nobody to control them, no public opinion to hold them in check! You need not even turn the devil in with them—just leave them to themselves, with no restraint upon their wickedness—and I can hardly imagine that Hell itself can be worse than those sinners would soon become!

Ah, my Friend, if you go on living in sin, you will wake up, one day, surrounded by the fruition of your own guilt in all its awful enormity. On every hand the harvest of your sowing to the flesh will stare you in the face—and God will place in your hand a sharp sickle and will say to you, “Reap here! Reap there!” You will say, “I cannot do it.” But you sowed it, so you must reap it! What terrible misery there will be for you there! Yet it will only be your own sin in its ripeness, your own transgression fully developed—and that awful harvesting will be infinitely more than you will be able to bear. “Whatever a man sows, *that* shall he also reap.” The man who gripped the widow’s throat, the other day, and took away her few sticks of furniture, will look upon her tearful face to all eternity! The man who led a fellow creature to sin will see her pale sorrow-stricken face before him forever and ever! He may try to escape from it, but he will not be able to do so. Does that description fit anyone here? And does he complain that I am very personal in my remarks? That is what I am and what I mean to be, in the hope that he may repent of his great transgressions and, looking to Jesus upon the Cross, may receive forgiveness of his sins before it is too late!

**IV.** But now, lastly, I have something better to say, and that is that GOOD SOWING WILL BRING GOOD REAPING.

I hear someone object, “But is not that salvation by works? Do you not preach that salvation is all of Grace through faith in Jesus?” Yes, of course I do, but it is still true that good sowing will bring good reaping. But what sort of sowing do I mean? Why, the sowing that is mentioned in the verse following our text—“He that sows to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that sows to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.” When a man sows to the flesh, he deceives himself, for the flesh is his old fallen nature, and such sowing is nothing but evil! But to sow well is to sow under the influence of another Power and to sow in another manner! In fact it is, as the Apostle says, to “sow to the Spirit.”

First, *we must sow under the influence of another Power.* Sowing to the Spirit lifts our sowing altogether above the idea of human merit. He who sows to the Spirit is led and guided by the Spirit of God—led to repent of sin, led to believe in Jesus, led to a new life, led to holiness, led to sanctification and, therefore, he does not take any credit to himself for anything in him that is good, for he knows that it was all implanted there by the Holy Spirit! Ah, my dear Hearers, if we would have a good harvest, we must give up sowing to ourselves and must sow to the Spirit. And the Spirit is freely given to all who seek His aid at the foot of Christ’s Cross. Jesus said to His disciples, “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?” May the Spirit of God come upon you and prompt you so to pray that you may truly sow to the Spirit as to be regenerated in heart and renewed in life, for then you shall most assuredly “reap life everlasting.”

*We are also to sow in another manner.* When the Jews, at Capernaum, asked Jesus, “What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?” He answered, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.” That is the first thing for you to do if you wish to sow to the Spirit—“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” When you have rested upon the great atoning work which Christ forever finished on the Cross of Calvary, you will begin to walk in newness of life and you will seek in all things to be conformed to God’s will. So you “shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.”

In verses 22 and 23 of the 5<sup>th</sup> Chapter of this Epistle, the Apostle tells what “the fruit of the Spirit” is. Firstly, “love.” You are not really saved if you have not a loving spirit. Secondly, “joy.” Christians ought to exhibit a joyful cheerfulness, so that all around might see how happy they are. Thirdly, “peace”—the opposite of variance. Fourthly, “long-suffering”—patience under provocation. Fifthly, “gentleness”—consideration for others, readiness to help them in any way that we can. Sixthly, “goodness”—not any holiness of which you boast, but such “goodness” as other people can see and admire. Seventhly, “faith”—reliability, keeping good faith with others, so that they know that your word is as good as your bond. Eighthly, “meekness”—that does not push itself to the front and does not easily get provoked.

Ninthly, “temperance”—which keeps every passion under control, not only with respect to meats and drinks, but with regard to everything else.

Now, if you thus sow to the Spirit, you will “reap life everlasting.” The Apostle does not say that you will reap everlasting existence, but *everlasting life*, which is quite another thing. “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” That is the perfection of love and joy—you shall have that, and you shall ascend to successive stages of holiness and virtue through the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus and the sanctification of the Spirit—and one of these days you shall throw out the last trace of the slough of sin! And then your disembodied spirit shall dance before the flaming eyes of Him who is purer than the sun and, by-and-by, “the Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout,” and your redeemed body shall rise, purified like the body of your own dear Lord and Savior, which could not see corruption because it contained no trace of sin—and then your perfected body and soul and spirit shall triumph and reign with Jesus here below in His millennial Glory! And after that you shall have the fullness of “life everlasting” in the Glory yet to be revealed. All this honor will be given to you, not because you have deserved it, but of the free, Sovereign Grace of God. It is only given to those in whom there is the Spirit of God and who, therefore, in their lives manifest that holiness of character, “without which no man shall see the Lord.”

May the Lord graciously give to all of us His Holy Spirit and may we all meet in Heaven to part no more forever, for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:**  
*PSALM 80; MATTHEW 9:36-38; 10.*

**Psalms 80:1-3.** *Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, You that lead Joseph like a flock; You that dwell between the cherubims, shine forth. Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh stir up Your strength and come and save us. Turn us again, O God, and cause Your face to shine; and we shall be saved.* To whom could Israel go, in times of distress, but unto her God? It was well that her Psalmists should teach her thus to pray. Notice the form of this prayer—“Come and save us. Turn us again, O God.” We cannot be saved except by being turned from the ways of sin into the path of holiness. But who shall turn us? What power can reverse the current of the human soul? As well might Niagara begin to ascend of its own accord as for man to turn to God except as God turns him!

**4-7.** *O LORD God of Hosts, how long will You be angry against the prayer of Your people? You feed them with the bread of tears, and give them tears to drink in great measure. You make us a strife unto our neighbors and our enemies laugh among themselves. Turn us again, O God of Hosts, and cause Your face to shine; and we shall be saved.* Israel was evidently in very deep distress, yet still God’s own. It is no evidence of our having ceased to be God’s people that we are made to drink deep draughts of tears. We are not to imagine that God has cast us off because He chastens us. No, rather are we to argue the other way, “for whom the Lord loves, He chastens.”

**8-15.** *You have brought a vine out of Egypt: You have cast out the heathen, and planted it. You prepared room before it, and did cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land. The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars. She sent out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the river. Why have You then broken down her hedges, so that all they which pass by the way do pluck her? The boar out of the wood does waste it, and the wild beast of the field does devour it. Return, we beseech You, O God of Hosts: look down from Heaven, and behold, and visit this vine; and the vineyard which Your right hand has planted, and the branch that You made strong for Yourself.* Notice how a soul, in deep distress, usually gets to God. Under some aspect or other, by some way or another, the heart gropes its way till it finds Him out. If poor Israel is as a vineyard given up to the wild boar of the woods, there is still hope through that “righteous Branch” of whom the Lord said to Jeremiah, “In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely.”

**16, 17.** *It is burned with fire, it is cut down: they perish at the rebuke of Your Countenance. Let Your hands be upon the Man of Your right hand, upon the Son of Man whom You made strong for Yourself.* “If You will not hear us, yet hear Him. If You will put no honor upon us, we will ask You to put the highest honors upon Him. Save us for His sake. Deliver Your vineyard from the wild boar and restore the hedges that have been broken down, for is not this the vineyard of red wine which all belongs to Him?”

**18, 19.** *So will not we go back from You: quicken us, and we will call upon Your name. Turn us again, O LORD God of Hosts, cause Your face to shine; and we shall be saved.*

**Matthew 9:36.** *But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.* The sight that Christ saw, deeply affected His heart—“He was moved with compassion for them.” The expression is a very strong one indicating that His whole being was stirred with an emotion which put every faculty into forceful movement.

**37, 38.** *Then said He unto His disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; pray you therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest.* Pretenders were many, but real “laborers” were few. God only can thrust out or “send forth laborers.” Man-made ministers are useless, yet they abound all around us—but where are the instructive soul-winning ministries? Let us plead with the Lord of the harvest to care for His own harvest and to thrust out His own harvestmen.

**Matthew 10:1.** *And when He had called unto Him His twelve disciples, He gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.* They were first Christ’s disciples and then He sent them forth as His Apostles, clothed with power and authority very similar to His own.

**2-4.** *Now the names of the twelve Apostles are these. The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus, Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him.* The 12 Apostles linked the spiritual Israel with the 12 tribes of the literal Israel which had typified it. They are mentioned in pairs, but this last couple is not a pair, for Simon the Zealot had little in common with the cool, cunning, calculating Judas Iscariot. There were only 12 Apostles, yet one of them was a traitor! Among the leaders of the nominal Christian Church today, is it possible that there is one traitor in every twelve?

**5, 6.** *These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter you not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.* This was “a mission to the Jews” only—meant for the general awakening of the chosen nation. It was a mission from Israel to Israel—not to the Gentiles, and not even to the people who were most like the Jews—“Into any city of the Samaritans enter you not.” After our Lord’s Resurrection, He gave the wider commission, “Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.”

**7, 8.** *And as you go, preach, saying, The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely you have received, freely give.* They were to be medical missionaries—preaching the Gospel and healing the sick—and it was all to be done “freely.”

**9, 10.** *Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat.* The people at that time were favorably disposed to our Lord and thus His Apostles might expect treatment of a more generous kind than can be looked for in these times. Certain of these regulations were altered on a subsequent mission, when the people were less favorably disposed.

**11-15.** *And into whatever city or town you shall enter, enquire who in it is worthy, and there abide till you go thence. And when you come into an house, salute it. And if the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. And whoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when you depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city.* Disclaim all fellowship with those who will not have fellowship with your Lord. Let them know that you leave them because they refuse to receive your Master’s message. If they continue to reject the Savior, their doom will be even more terrible than that of Sodom and Gomorrah.

**16.** *Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves.* “Behold, I send you forth.” What power there is in the word of the King of kings! “‘I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves.’ You are like sheep, helpless and defenseless; yet ‘I send you forth,’ and therefore it is right for you to go even into ‘the midst of wolves.’” We might have imagined that the wolves would have devoured the sheep, yet, at the present time, there are a great many more sheep in the world than there are wolves. Sheep have always been weak and helpless, yet they have multiplied! Wolves have always been strong and savage, yet they have diminished until there is not one of them left in this land. And in many other countries the same thing has happened. So, the weak, the helpless who come under the care of “our Lord Jesus, that Great

Shepherd of the sheep,” shall be preserved from all the wolves that would devour them, and even from the devil, who, “as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour.”

16. *Be you therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.* “Be you harmless because you are like sheep, but be you wise as serpents because you have to dwell with wolves.” You, too, Beloved, ought to be very wise because of the wisdom which has been imparted to you by the Master who has sent you forth. And you ought to use your best wits in His service, yet never use that wisdom with any ill intent, for the Christ who sends you does no harm to men, but only good.

17, 18. *But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; and you shall be brought before governors and kings for My sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.* “Do not try to live on popular applause, ‘but beware of men.’ Expect ill treatment from them. If they can persecute you with the scourge, they will do so, but if that is out of their power, they will persecute you with their tongues. You will be misunderstood, misrepresented, maligned—expect such treatment for I, your Lord and Master, have had it before you.”

19, 20. *But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what you shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what you shall speak. For it is not you that speaks, but the Spirit of your Father which speaks in you.* It is very remarkable what wise answers many of the martyrs often gave. Illiterate men, when confronted by the learned ones of the earth, completely baffled them! And weak women nonplused their assailants and judges. A notable instance of that is recorded in the history of the brave Anne Askew. After they had tortured her upon the rack and her poor body was full of pain, she sat upon the cold slab of her prison and put such questions to the popish bishops and inquisitors as utterly confounded them! And Christ, still by His Holy Spirit, enables His faithful followers to triumph over all the craft and malice of men.

21, 22. *And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents and cause them to be put to death. And you shall be hated of all men for My name’s sake: but he that endures to the end shall be saved.* When we give ourselves to Christ, we must do it without any reserve and be prepared to follow Him even to the bitter end if necessary. If all men should forsake us—if death should be our portion because of our allegiance to Christ—we dare not draw back! To do that would lead to our destruction—but to endure unto the end—this is eternal salvation!

23. *But when they persecute you in this city, flee you into another: for verily I say unto you, you shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of Man has come.* I suppose Christ here alludes to that wondrous coming of His in the destruction of Jerusalem. They had but a short time in which to evangelize that land, so they had to be quick in gathering out the Lord’s elect before He came in that terrible judgment. This same Truth of God ought to quicken the action of every servant of Christ today. Be quick about your work, for your Master is on the road and will soon be here. You may almost hear the rattling of His chariot wheels, for long ago He said, “Surely I come quickly.” The trumpets are beginning to sound and you will scarcely have gone over all the cities of the world before the Son of Man shall come unless you hasten with the great task which He has entrusted to you.

24, 25. *The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he is as his master, and the servant as his lord. They that have called the master of the house, Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?* I do not know what worse names they might give to us than they gave to our Master, but, no doubt, they might do so, for as the servants are worse and less than their master, the world might, if it acted upon the rule of proportion, apply much worse names to us than it has ever done to our blessed Lord and Master. Are we to be esteemed and revered in a world that persecuted and crucified Christ, our Lord and Savior? Be not so foolish as to think so! And when you receive scorn and contumely, accept it as being the lot of a follower of Christ.

26. *Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; and hid that shall not be known.* When men slander you, they cannot take away your good name before God. There will be a resurrection of reputations as well as a resurrection of bodies. And good men, though their good names lie deeply buried, will certainly have a resurrection. There is Wycliffe—how little, comparatively, has ever been said about probably the greatest man since the time of the Apostle Paul! But his name and fame will yet arise and all history will ring with the praise of it. Depend upon it, no man who has faithfully served his Savior, shall miss the honor which he has truly deserved. “Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father”—so be content to wait.

27. *What I tell you in darkness, that speak you in light: and what you hear in the ear, that preach you upon the housetops.* There must first be that quiet lonely hearing—that calm sitting at the Master’s feet to learn the lesson. And then afterwards must come the brave telling of it out—speaking out though kings should hear and never being silenced because of sinful shame.

28-31. *And fear not those who kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father’s will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear you not, therefore, you are of more value than many sparrows.* Do you not see the force of this argument? These little creatures that are of so little account among men are watched over by your Heavenly Father! They cannot die—no, they cannot even light upon the ground without your Father noting it! Can He then forget you who are worth so much more than many sparrows? Will He not deal very gently, and tenderly, and considerately with you?

32, 33. *Whoever, therefore, shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father who is in Heaven. But whoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father who is in Heaven.* You acknowledge Christ here and Christ will acknowledge you there. Dare to bear reproach for Him and you shall be glorified together with Him, by-and-by. But if the tenor of your life is that you do not claim Christ—if you practically live as if there were no Savior, ignoring Him, depriving Him of the trust which He deserves and the honor which He has earned—then, when He comes in the Glory of the Father, He will say, “you never knew Me, and I never knew you. Depart!”

34. *Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.* That is to say, the first consequence of Christ’s coming will not be that we shall lead easy and comfortable lives, but, on the contrary, He comes to enlist us in His army and to make soldiers of us—and soldiers have to endure many hardships.

35, 36. *For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household.* Many of the children of God have found this to be true, greatly to their sorrow. No foes can wound us so sorely as those of our own household. They get at our hearts and cut us to the very quick, while others can only give us flesh wounds. Well, it must be so. Wherever light comes, darkness will be opposed to it. Truth will always find error ready to devour it if it can. Expect this, and half the bitterness of it will be gone when it comes because you expected it. “To be forewarned” here “is to be forearmed.”

37-42. *He that loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: and he that loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he that takes not his cross and follows after Me, is not worthy of Me. He that finds his life shall lose it; and he that loses his life for My sake shall find it. He that receives you receives Me, and he that receives Me receives Him that sent Me. He that receives a Prophet in the name of a Prophet shall receive a Prophet’s reward, and he that receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man’s reward. And whoever shall give unto one of these little ones, a cup of cold water to drink in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.* God’s great reward for little service are given, not of debt, but of Grace, “according to His riches in Glory by Christ Jesus.”

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