

OUR LORD'S HEROIC ENDURANCE

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*“For consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners
against Himself, lest you be weary and faint in your minds.”*
Hebrews 12:3.

IF we regard the Christian as a racer contending for the great race, we see that he is subject to several dangers. He may give up the race and turn back unless everlasting mercy shall prevent so dreadful a calamity. He may leap out of the track and leave for a time the only path that leads to victory and reward. Or he may be so clogged and hampered with weights that though he may run, he may run altogether in vain. Or he may be tripped up and fall—and so others may pass him and take the prize of his high calling. But even if he shall fully have avoided all those dangers, if he shall keep to the course, if he shall be kept upon his feet, and if his racing should be of the best kind, yet there is still the possibility—for the best Christian is still flesh and blood—that he may faint.

A man when running for a prize exerts every nerve and sinew and muscle. He throws his whole being into the effort. If he may not pass his rival by several lengths, he will at least seek to pass him by a neck and to this end he strains and strives even to the point of agony, if by any means he may attain unto the first place and so win the reward. Now, while the body is in such a state of tension as that, it is possible that it may suddenly give way—that the overworked frame may not be able to endure the toil and stress, and the man, with the best of intentions, may yet lack the power to carry them out. He may grow weary and though just now he almost grasped the prize in the fond anticipation of hope, he may fall dead upon the ground like a stone through faintness. The Apostle knew this, for I do not doubt that even he, in his great fight with afflictions, when he had fought with beasts at Ephesus and when he had passed through trials of every shape and form, even he sometimes felt as if he might faint and might, after all, be unsuccessful. Hence it is that instead of merely exhorting us not to faint and bidding us not be weary, he does what is far better and more helpful—he supplies us with a double restorative whereby our strength may be recruited. Just as Antaeus is said to have revered his strength when he touched mother earth and, therefore, he could not be killed until Hercules held him in the air and strangled him there, so is the Christian strengthened by the act which the Apostle Paul here speaks of—by touching Christ, by looking again to Jesus, by considering Him—and the only possibility for the destruction of the Christian would be so to separate him from Christ that he would not be able to derive any strength from considering the great Apostle and High Priest of his profession! The Apostle does as good as say to us, “You are very likely to faint in your minds, and to grow weary in your spirit, so if you would prevent this, I recommend you to consider the Lord Jesus Christ, to think much of Him, to have Him constantly before your mind’s eye.” And he is very precise about this, for he not only bids us consider Christ, but he exhorts us to consider Him under a very special aspect, that is, as a Sufferer, and from one particular form of trial, namely, “suffering the contradiction of sinners against Himself.”

It seem to me as if the Apostle felt that one of the most likely things to make Christians faint would be the contradiction which they meet with from sinners. The persecution, the slander, ill-usage, bad return and recompense which they get from an ungodly world—all this would be likely to make them weary at heart in well-doing.

So he bids them look away to the Savior, bravely enduring the same trials. “Consider Him,” he says, “who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest *you* be weary and faint in your minds.”

I am not able to speak to you this evening as I would gladly speak. I scarcely feel in the condition either of body or of mind suitable to the study and proclamation of so gracious a topic as the one before us, but in my weakness I desire also

to consider Him who was wearied and sat upon the well. And in speaking to you, I would ask His help that my weakness may not rob you of the blessing.

I shall introduce the theme to your attention in this way—first, let us consider *the contradiction of sinners which Christ endured*. Secondly, let us for a minute or two consider *His endurance of it*. And then, thirdly, coming to the fullness of the text, let us *consider Him who endured such contradiction*.

The particular form of trial of which we are invited to think is—

I. THE CONTRADICTION OF UNGODLY MEN WHICH THE SAVIOR ENDURED.

Even early in His ministry He had to endure this. At the very first sermon which He preached in the synagogue of His own town, was he received with joy? No acclamations awaited Him who spoke as never man spoke, but the whole congregation gnashed upon Him with their teeth! And had it not been for His supernatural escape, they would have taken Him to the brow of the hill whereon the city was built and have cast Him down headlong! And yet it was not that He had said anything bitter against the town. It was not that He had inveighed against their favorite vices. It was only that He had committed that most unpardonable of all sins, namely, that He had preached the Doctrine of Divine Predestination! They listened to Him well enough until He said, “Yes, and many widows there were in Israel, but unto none of them was the Prophet sent except to the widow of Zarepta,” and when He thus declared the Doctrine of Divine Sovereignty—when He spoke of the giving of the blessing to the Gentiles who were the most unlikely individuals—then it was that they gnashed their teeth and would have cast Him down headlong from the brow of the hill! Nothing, it seems, excites some men's envy like the Doctrines of Grace. Throughout the whole of our Savior's life, this which was at the commencement followed Him! His speech teems with wisdom. He preeminently carried out His own teaching, “Be you wise as serpents and harmless as doves.” It is true His teaching was very bold, but at the same time it need not have irritated anyone. Those who thus took His teaching to themselves and perceived that He spoke of them, might be irritated apart from that. I suppose that never did man put the Truth of God in a better form, or after a fashion less likely to provoke prejudice, but the Pharisees were always contradicting Him. They endeavored to catch Him in His speech. Sometimes it is puzzling questions about the Law with some woman in the midst. At another time it is something about the government of the country. The Herodians joined with the Pharisees in the endeavor to embarrass, to perplex Him, to catch Him in His talk, to make Him an offender for a word. They plotted to draw Him out in speech, somehow or other, that they might get some sentence they could use against Him. Never did they listen with candor, never regarded Him with any honesty, but dogging His footsteps like bloodhounds, waiting for the first opportunity when they might tear Him in pieces! So, during His lifetime, He endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself.

And you know, besides this, how men of the baser sort offered contradiction against Christ's life. They said He was a drunk and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. They that sat in the gates spoke against Him and He became the song of the drunk! Reproaches fell upon Him—the reproaches of them who reproached without a cause. Our Lord Jesus Christ was thus perpetually, constantly and wholly the butt of slander and of scorn! He was permanently standing in the pillory to be ill-treated by the hands of them whom His power had *created*, and whom His own love had spared! What a “contradiction of sinners against Himself!”

But I think what was especially in the Apostle's mind was that which came at the time when He was betrayed by Judas. Then, Brothers and Sisters, the old serpent vented his worst venom. They could not find witnesses that agreed together, though they found many false witnesses, yet even none of them agreed together till they had at last induced two, their evidence being words which the Savior had used in a certain sense, twisted to another sense in order to try to get it to be strong enough to stain the charge which they brought against Him—which was neither more nor less than this—in Pilate's court, the *civil* court, treason! In the court of Annas and Caiaphas, the *ecclesiastical* court, blasphemy! What a contradiction of sinners against Himself was this! Being Almighty God to be accused of blasphemy! And being truly the King of the Jews to be accused of treason! I wonder not that the Apostle should have said, “*Such* contradiction of sinners!”

Just let us look, then, at this contradiction of sinners which came upon Him at the last, and I think you will see the grievousness of it when you observe, first, the *grossness of the charges alleged against Him*. Before Pilate's court it was no minor offense with which He was charged. It was treason—the highest offense in the category of the Roman Law. He had made Himself to be another king in opposition to Caesar, who was the world's monarch! This was a very gross

charge to bring against the Savior and more especially because He, of all men, must be acquitted of anything like sedition! How often did He hide Himself when multitudes who had been fed by His bounty would have made Him a king? And how often when His own disciples were anticipating the coming of a great earthly kingdom, did He set Himself directly in opposition to all their ideas and taught them that He came to suffer rather than to reign—and that His Kingdom was not of this world—not a Kingdom that would touch Caesar's kingdom, nor an empire that would interfere with the kings on the earth! He was not only free from treason, but was throughout His life such an opponent of it, such an abstainer from interfering with the politics of men at all, that to charge Him with this was a gross and wantonly wicked charge!

As for blasphemy, His reverence of God was supreme! He had laid aside His own Glory as Deity in order to honor His Father in man's redemption and was even now, when so vilely slandered, ready to be obedient even unto death! "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased," is God's witness to Him, and yet His enemies say that He blasphemed the Infinite Jehovah!

Now, dear Friends, I can conceive that some of you have been pure and unblemished in your lives and yet suddenly you might find yourselves accused, not of a minor and trivial offense, and you say, "Oh, what a trial to be accused of this!" Well, consider Him who endured just such contradiction, who was accused of a capital crime and of blasphemy in the same breath! Who are we that we should not be called Beelzebub when the Master of the house has been so named? Consider the contradiction of Christ in this respect and it may give you comfort.

Let me say further, while speaking of this contradiction of sinners, that it was not only a very gross charge, but we are sometimes apt to think that a charge which is unfounded is very cruel to us. I have heard people say, sometimes, and I have laughed when I have heard them say it, "Sir, Mr. So-and-So has charged me with such-and-such a thing, but I am quite innocent. I should not have minded if I had been guilty." Then I have thought, Ah, then you ought to have minded it, but being innocent you have no cause to mind it at all! But is it not so that the more unfounded a charge is, the more deeply does it seem to cut us from the very wantonness of its cruelty? Well, then, you know how innocent the Savior was—the next time you feel innocent when you are thus accused—"consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself," and who had to suffer both gross charges and unfounded ones!

Moreover, *these charges were sustained by words which had been deliberately twisted.* And sometimes a man has to say to himself, "Now, I never said anything of the kind, and my enemies know I did not! They have let a word out here, and put another word in there, and have cruelly misrepresent me—they have made me say what I did not even *think*—and what I *did* think, and what I *did* say, they have so utterly altered that it is no longer mine." Now you are apt to grow very faint in your mind after such a thing as this occurs, but you will recollect that just such contradiction of sinners the Savior endured. The only grounds or pretence upon which they brought these charges against Him was that He had uttered certain words concerning His body which were construed to relate to the Temple. So, dear Friends, do not be greatly troubled, as though it were a strange thing what has happened to you. If your good words are taken out of your mouth and mischief is made of them, bear it without bitterness or retaliation, for so He also suffered the "contradiction of sinners against Himself."

There certainly was, too, a sting about these contradictions arising from *the place where they were brought.* They were brought before the court of judicature. It is not likely that any of us have had to smart in this direction, but we may have had to feel this—"I should not have minded if this contradiction had come against me at home in the family, but it has come in my business where it will injure me." Or it may have been the reverse. Perhaps you have had to say, "I would not care if this man had said such-and-such in the outward world, but he has poisoned the very home of my joy and my peace." Well, dear Friends, the Savior had His contradiction brought against Him in a worse place, it seems to me, than home, or any of the resorts of commerce, for He was actually brought before the courts of His own native land as well as before the courts of the foreign invader who was then dominating the country!

It is not likely that this will come to you in these times as God's people, but in the olden times the saints had often to stand before kings and princes for Christ's sake. But if ever this should be your lot, you will then fall back upon this as your invigoration and consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself!

Above and beyond all this, however, in the contradiction which Christ endured was *the malice which suggested it.* They did not falsely accuse Him out of mere error, but it was out of malice that had determined on the destruction of this

innocent Man. "Whether we can accuse Him rightly or not," they said, "it is not fit that such a Fellow should live." It was malice against One who had never done them a wrong! Against One who had healed their sick and raised their dead! Against One who had scattered bounties with both His hands along their streets and who had made their wilderness like Eden and their desert like the garden of the Lord! Against One who had gathered together the sheep without a shepherd that were scattered on every hill! Against One who had fed the hungry, had comforted the mourner, had proclaimed liberty to the captive! Against One who had shone upon the Holy Land and made it truly whole—had shone upon Palestine like a newly-risen sun, the Sun of Righteousness with healing beneath His wings! He might well say, "For which of these works do you stone Me? You have hated Me without a cause." Well, now, suppose that to be your case? Suppose you have to say, "I should not mind this charge, but I can see deliberate malice in it. My enemies seek to destroy me and to pervert my way out of a diabolical hatred to my soul. They come upon me to eat up my flesh. They compass me like dogs to devour me. Oh, how hard is my lot!" Come, Christian, come, consider Him! Consider Him! You are in the same plight as your Master! It always gives comfort to a common soldier to see the officers in the same position and enduring the same hardships as himself—with the shots flying everywhere round about them. And when I see the darts of wicked contradiction flying around our blessed Lord and King, I feel it would be a shame for me to have an easier or safer position than He knew!

I might thus dwell, for it is a very tempting subject, upon the contradiction of sinners which the Savior endured. And I think a consideration of this would save us from being weary and faint in our minds. But we must pass on to the second point. We have now to consider—

II. THE SAVIOR'S ENDURANCE of the contradiction of sin against Himself. How did He endure this sore trouble? Brothers and Sisters, He endured it with singular courage and holy equanimity. It is wonderful to see Him in the first contradictions with which He met during His ministry—how calm He is. If we are made warm in temper, we are off our guard and are but half men. The Savior was never so taken. You observe Him. They spin their webs like spiders and they think to entangle Him. So they would such poor flies as we are—but He looks on and sees it all—and then sweeps every cobweb away before Him! And yet no angry word He answers.

Sometimes He makes them answer themselves, but then He turns it against themselves. Sometimes He makes them confess themselves defeated and then, with a solemn emphasis, as on the occasion when He said, "He that is without fault among you, let him cast the first stone." And they, being condemned by their own consciences, went out, beginning at the eldest even to the youngest. All left and went their way! At the last, however, you perceive that the contradiction of sinners is borne by the Savior after this fashion—*with entire silence!* Never was there such silence as that—the grandest silence ever known! It is an amazing silence! It seems to have in it something of contempt, but yet more of Omnipotent patience. He will not answer. Why should He answer such as they are? He will not answer! If He answered, it might be their doom! And therefore He spares them! "He is led as lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth!" Brothers and Sisters, we are generally too fast with our tongues when anybody accuses us! I am afraid we are not always so quick to defend our Master as we are to defend ourselves. If there is a false accusation in the newspapers, one's finger wants to be at the pen to answer it, which of all things is the most foolish. Let them write! Let them write who will, till they have used up their ink, but the wise man answers them not a word! But we are always so ready if anybody brings a false accusation against us to say, "It is not so! You lie!" Or to make some sharp reply like that. Oh, that we could consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, and endured it with the holy patience of silence! There was a crest and motto which some of the old Reformers used to use, and which I commend to any of you who are under this trial of slander. It was an anvil with a number of hammers, all broken, lying around. And this was the motto when translated, "*The anvil breaks many hammers.*" And how does it do this? Not by striking again! Oh, no! The anvil simply endures the blows—just keeps its place and lets the hammers fall, fall, fall until they are broken upon their handles! And this is exactly what the Savior did. They, the accusers, were the hammers, He was the anvil. And who shall say that the anvil did not break the hammers in pieces, that the silence of the Savior was not far more eloquent than all the clamor of the evil multitude? "He held His peace," it is said of Him. May it also be said of you and of me, and when we have to suffer similar trials, may we bear them, like the Savior, in silence.

Yet the silence of the Savior is not all. We ought to admire the patient serenity with which He so beautifully held His peace, but ought we not also to admire the way in which He *unswervingly kept His course?* Many a man would have

turned either to the right hand or to the left, but the heroic Savior keeps right on. Ah, Beloved, how many of us would have given up the work altogether! We might have said, "I came to bless these men, but they reject me. They despise me. They ill-treat me. Let them go, then, unblessed! These graceless people shall receive no blessing at my hands." But not so, our brave Lord! He came into the world to save sinners and He kept on just at that one thing—and let no rebuffs turn Him aside. The zeal of God's House had eaten Him up and He kept straight on in the saving of sinners! He never turned back, let sinners do what they would in the way of contradicting Him! He never wavered for one moment from His one life-objective—the saving of their souls!

Now, let it be so with you so that you may be kept from growing weary. If in the Sunday school a class seems unmanageable. If the boys cannot be taught. If the girls seem so giddy. If in the little village station the hearers seem so dull, so inattentive, so careless and so forgetful—if in any other sphere of labor you do not seem to be appreciated, but to meet with very serious rebuffs, never mind! These are nothing compared with the contradictions which the Savior endured and yet He never swerved! And therefore swerve you not. Let the Divine Life that is in you urge you constantly onwards. Make no provision for the flesh nor for the ease thereof. If, indeed, it is your life-work—go and complete it! If you feel that God has called you to be the stern advocate of the right, go onward and vow to go onward by the love of Christ—and let nothing stop you! If hunger can break through stone walls, much more shall a hunger to do the Master's will! To a man who can dare and do because he feels that he is consecrated and destined to work, nothing is impossible! You, too, shall break through a wall. You, too, shall dash through a host. A man who believes that God has called him to work would tunnel through the globe, itself, before he would be turned from his purpose! He would thread the stars on strings before he would be disappointed of his great life-work! Do you but feel this, and never turn aside, but remember how Christ endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself!

And, once more, I think it is worthwhile to notice that while the Savior did not swerve, *He did not even seem to pause*. He did not stop to take a breath. All these persons came rushing round Him and tried to push Him out of His course, but He did not even stop, I say, to take a breath! All that they did, did but rather quicken His pace, if possible, and made Him still more set upon His great purpose. So let it be with us. We take far too much notice, I think, of some of our troubles and oppositions. I sometimes quote in your hearing those brave lines of Anne Askew. Poor soul! After having been racked to torture many times, you still hear her singing—

*"I am not she to lie,
My anchor to let fall:
For every drizzling mist
My ship's substantial."*

Such a substantial vessel did she seem to ride in that she was not going to let her anchor out! The being racked, as she cruelly was, was no "drizzling mist," I think, but a very horrible tempest which might well make some of us afraid, even unto death, but then, we make so much of little things! Our fathers plucked up sycamore trees by the roots, but we are afraid if only one or two sere leaves blow wildly across our path! They spoke unto mountains and said, "Be you moved hence, and cast into the midst of the sea." But we sit down and murmur over molehills as though they were Alps, the summits of which we should never be able to reach! We are a puny race, I fear, but may the Lord feed us and we shall then grow stronger—and though it adds not a cubit to our stature, yet we shall grow *spiritually*! And we shall grow in this way if we consider how Christ bore the mighty trials which came upon Him. He was bowed down. He did stagger and did sweat great drops of blood when He was under the deep depression of His own spirit—caused by our sins being laid upon Him. Even a strong man may quail there, but before Herod or Pilate, or His Jewish accusers, or ribald and mocking men, He never showed a sign of faltering! No, not He! But He "*endured* such contradiction of sinners against Himself."

Consider Christ thus, then, and you need not be and never will be, weary! But now, lastly, the great thing is—

III. TO CONSIDER HIM.

There is the point of the text. We are not only to consider the contradiction and His endurance of it, but to consider Him. To consider His endurance is well, but the striking point should be to consider the dignity of Him who did thus endure. We are told by the historians of Alexander the Great that it very much cheered and assisted the troops in their long and weary marches from Persia, sometimes without water and without food for many hours under a burning sun, that they always saw Alexander walking on foot, too. The Persian monarch would have been riding in some dainty cha-

riot, or in the royal palanquin, reclining upon beds of down, fanned by unknown hands and attended by his many fair damsels. But there was Alexander, covered with dust and splashed with mire, going through the ditches, climbing the hills with his face all bronzed and browned. He would suffer hunger and thirst like the rest of them—and when the bowl of water is brought to the mighty monarch, he passes it on to some common soldier who is even yet more thirsty than himself. It was said that one Macedonian was worth ten thousand Persians because the king was with them and they would dash to battle and to death for such a monarch as that! Now consider Christ—your King—the King of the earth, before whom all other kings should renounce their diadems! Consider Him, the King of Heaven, whom to serve is the seraph's highest glory! The King of Hell, before whom the fiends and dragons of the pit gnash their teeth in fear! He, even He, “endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself!”—

*“Christ leads us through no darker rooms
Than He went through before.”*

The dignity of the Savior has invested suffering and especially brave endurance with great honor and glory. There is a halo round about our griefs since Jesus Christ endured them first!

It is not only in His greatness that I think He should impress us, but also in *the perfection of His Nature*. He endured, and yet He was perfect. How, then, ought I to endure, who am so imperfect? He without a fault, smarts! A Son without sin, but not without the scourge! Consider *Him*, then, you imperfect one. When the coals are hot, you mass of ore with so much of alloy about you, consider that the pure gold felt the fire and how much more should you? Consider, you vessel defiled and filthy, the alabaster vase was washed in a sea of trouble, and how much more shall such one as you are be washed? If He who was all gold must go through the flame, how much more shall you?

Now, there is yet a further point out of which the Apostle, I think, would have us dig some delight, namely, that we are to consider Him not only in His character, but now, *in His present position*. It is true He endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself. It is true He was delivered to be Crucified. It is true, sorrowfully true, that He was despised and rejected of men. But what of it now? What of it now? Oh, see Him yonder! But your poor eyes cannot bear this dazzling sight! Brighter than the sun is His Glory! Grander than Heaven, itself, is His splendor! There He sits, King of kings and Lord of lords! Where is the mockery now? The shame and the spittle—where are they now? The crown of thorns, the vinegar, the sponge, the nails—where are they now? Our Lord is all over glorious! Now crowns become the Victor's brow and on His head are many crowns. Christian, as He was, so are you also in this world! And as He is, so shall you also be. Christ's triumph is the triumph of every true and right principle. It is the triumph of every true and right heart. You will have to suffer for it. There is no victory to be achieved nowadays except in the same way as the Savior achieved it, namely, by suffering. Is not Christ's greatest triumph which He achieved on Golgotha? The triumphal chariot in which He subdued sin and death, and Hell, was none other than His own Cross! So, Beloved, we must expect to conquer, but it must be by shame. You must expect to triumph, but it must be by being made to suffer and by being despised. But you shall triumph after all. In the day when the trumpet sounds, when—

*“From beds of dust and silent clay,
To realms of everlasting day,”*

every obscure and despised child of God shall awaken—then shall it be seen whom God delights to honor! You are in the minority now. You stand alone. You are mocked by cruel enemies, and the ribald world asks you, “Where is your God?”

You are by yourself, now, a solitary protester in the midst of a multitude who are going astray. But the tables shall be turned soon. You shall not then be in a minority, but in a great majority—in the day when shouts of triumph shall be heard for the truth and for the right, and when shame and confusion of face shall be the portion of those who are now the despisers! They shall then wonder and perish and ask the rocks to hide them and the hills to cover their confusion. He endured, and yet He mounted to His Throne amidst the shouts of angels and acclamations of Heaven! So also shall you! Therefore consider Him in this light lest you be weary and faint in your minds.

And then, last of all, you must consider that He who went through this to get to His crown *is very Man akin to us all*. He loves us tenderly. He considers us now. He knows all the sorrows that tempt men, for He has felt the same. You are not alone—He is with you. Three of you in the furnace? No, there is a fourth, and that fourth is the Son of God! Into your griefs He enters, for His own griefs have put into His hand a master-key to fit the locks of every human grief that ever can be known. He can comfort us with all consolation seeing that He, Himself, has passed through all tribulation. He is never forgetful of you. He is with you now. If you smart, He smarts. If you are despised, He suffers. “Paul, Paul,

why do you persecute Me?" He cried. Why, it was but a few poor men and women being hauled away to prison or to be scourged in the synagogue, but Christ takes it as being done to Himself! "Why do you persecute Me?" Oh Christian, with such nearness to Christ, and such sympathy flowing from Him, be of good courage! Then hear Him say, "In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His Presence saved them." So may you lift up the hands that hang down and confirm the feeble knees and go on your way rejoicing in Him!

I would to God you could all take home this text, but some of you cannot, and here is the sorrow of it, that you should live and die with such rare comforts at your door, but you cannot take them! Oh, Sinners, flee to Christ! Put your trust in Him and you shall soon be able to find consolation in every part of His life and in every trait of His death-pangs. God bless you very graciously, for His name's sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
HEBREWS 12:1-17.

Verses 1, 2. *Therefore seeing we are also compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which does so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross, despising the shame, and has set down at the right hand of the throne of God.* We can have no doubt about the great Truths of God which we believe, for we are compassed about with a cloud of witnesses. The former Chapter gives us the names of many of these glorious bearers of testimony, who all by faith achieved great wonders and so bore witness to the Truth of God. Having, therefore, no room for doubt, let us throw our whole strength into our high calling and run with patience having our eyes always fixed upon Him, the Beginner and Finisher of our faith, who has run the race, Himself, and won the prize—and now sits down at the right hand on the Throne of God.

3, 4. *For consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest you be wearied and faint in your minds. You have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.* It has never come to a bloody sweat with you as with Him, nor to death upon a Cross as in His case. Shall the disciple be above his Master or the servant above his Lord?

5, 6. *And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks unto you as unto children, My son, despise not you the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when you are rebuked of Him: for whom the Lord loves, He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.* With doting parents it is not so—often he whom his mother loves is allowed to do as he pleases and to escape chastening, but this is folly! The love of God is higher and wiser than the partialities of parents. "Whom the Lord loves, He chastens." It is a token of His favor to us that He takes the trouble to remove our love of sin by sharp and bitter pain.

7-10. *If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons, for what son is he whom the father chastens not? But if you are without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are you illegitimate, and not sons. Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness.* What a bright light this sheds upon all affliction—that it is for our profit—that it is, thereby, we are made partakers of the holiness of God! Oh, blessed result from a little smart and bitter.

11-13. *Now no chastening for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Therefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.* Look at chastisement, then, in the Divine Light of God and be comforted, be strengthened, be healed of the infirmity of your weakness! Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might!

14. *Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.* "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." A man's god is like himself and until he become like God we cannot see God! We misunderstand God until we have been trained to imitate Him.

15-17. *Looking diligently lest any man fall short of the Grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up troubles you and, thereby, many are defiled; lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For you know how that afterwards, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was re-*

jected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears. It was done and could not be undone. Does it not seem strange that after speaking to us about being God's sons and favored with His love, yet even then, in that clear blaze of light, there comes in this caution against fornication and profanity? Ah me, how near a foul spot may be to lily-like whiteness! How Judas may sit side by side with favored and true-hearted Apostles, yes, and may be near the Master, too! "Let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall." And, oh, Friends, if at any time the pottage should seem very sweet and we should be very hungry—if the world's gain should be almost necessary to our livelihood and we are tempted to do an unrighteous thing to get it—let us take care, for Esau could not undo the terrible act of selling his birthright and neither could we if we were permitted to do so! God grant we may be spared from such a dreadful crime!

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

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