

THE REDEEMER'S FACE SET LIKE A FLINT

NO. 2738

A SERMON
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“For the Lord God will help Me; therefore I will not be disgraced: therefore have I set My face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed.”
Isaiah 50:7.

THESE are, in prophecy, the words of the Messiah. This is the language of Jesus of Nazareth, the promised Deliverer, whom God has sent into the world to be the one and only Savior. We know that this is the case because it is to Him, and to Him alone, that the verse preceding our text must refer: “I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting.” This is the declaration of Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews—and it is He who said of old in prophecy, and afterwards carried it out in actual life, “I set My face like a flint.” Luke seems to have had this passage in his mind when he wrote the 51st verse of his 9th chapter, in which he says of our Lord that, “when the time was come that He should be received up, He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem.” There is the same meaning in the two passages, and one cannot help feeling that the words recorded by Isaiah were brought by the Holy Spirit to the memory of Luke when he penned that expression. The fact is that our Master, even from *eternity*, resolved to save His people, and nothing could keep Him from the accomplishment of His purpose. From eternity He foresaw that they would fall from their first estate and He entered into covenant engagements to redeem them—and from the pledge He gave of old, He never turned back.

Time rolled on and men fell, and afterwards multiplied upon the face of the earth, but Christ's delights were still with the sons of men and often did He, in one form or another, visit this earth to converse with Abraham, or to wrestle with Jacob, or to speak with Joshua, or to walk in the burning fiery furnace with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. He was always anticipating the time when He would actually assume human nature and fulfill His covenant engagements. At last, the appointed hour arrived and then He did not disdain the virgin's womb, or the Bethlehem manger, or the workshop of Nazareth where He became subject to His reputed father. Even as a child, He said, “Know you not that I must be about My Father's business?” The set purpose to redeem His people was an all-consuming passion that always burned within His soul—for what He said once to His disciples He always felt, “I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it is accomplished!” He felt bound and hampered until He could get to His chief work—He longed to be at it. With ardent desire He had desired to eat that last of Passovers on the eve of Himself becoming the Lamb of God's Passover, for He had set His face like a flint upon the accomplishment of the task He had undertaken and He had resolved to go through with it even to the end!

I may not be able to say much that is fresh upon this theme, but I hope that I shall be helped by the Spirit to “stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance.” My great objective is to lead you to love Him who so loved you that He set His face like a flint in His determination to save you! O you redeemed ones, on whose behalf this strong resolve was made—you who have been bought by the precious blood of this steadfast, resolute Redeemer—come and think awhile of Him, that your hearts may burn within you and that your faces may be set like flints to live and die for Him who lived and died for you!

First, I am going to speak to you upon *His steadfast resolve tested*. Secondly, upon *His steadfast resolve sustained*. And, thirdly, upon *His steadfast resolve imitated*.

I. First, our Lord said, “Therefore have I set My face like a flint,” and we are to think of HOW HIS STERN RESOLVE WAS TESTED.

Our Lord was tempted to turn aside from this purpose, first, by *the offers of the world*. The populace wanted to take Him by force and make Him a king. He was, at times, so popular among the multitude that the Pharisees did not dare to seize Him, for they feared the people. When He rode through the streets of Jerusalem in triumph, it appeared as if all the inhabitants of the city were, for a while at least, upon His side. They were, it is true, laboring under a great mistake. They supposed that He was about to set up a *temporal* sovereignty—and if He would do that and drive away their Roman conquerors, they would gladly follow Him. But when they perceived that He had no such designs, but that His kingdom was purely spiritual, and not of this world—that He cared nothing for honor from men, but only sought to make them holy, then they changed their note and cried, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!”

Yet many a man, possessed by a high resolve, has been turned aside from his purpose by the bauble of earthly honor. He might have become great in his Master's esteem, but he chose to receive a worldly title and to wear a ribbon. He might have been a blessing to his fellow men, but he was dazzled by the glitter of a coronet, so he left the path of usefulness to pursue the road of earthly fame. There have been hundreds and thousands of cases in which men's characters appeared to be opening like a rose—but the worm of wealth was gnawing at the root and before the rose could fully expand and flood the air with its perfume—it had been destroyed.

But Christ, when He was taken by Satan to an exceedingly high mountain and set upon a place where He could see all the kingdoms of the earth in a moment of time—and was offered all of them if He would fall down and worship the power of evil—was not to be turned aside from His steadfastness! His zeal was too fervent, His purpose was too strong, and His compassion for His people was too intense for Him to yield to the tempter! Had He not voluntarily left the thrones and royalties of heaven and stripped Himself of the glorious array which He had worn within His Father's courts, to come down here to be a carpenter's son? So who could bribe Him to turn from His purpose? No one, for He had set His face like a flint to put off all thought of seeking earthly honor—and to endure the utmost depths of shame—that He might redeem His people from the wrath to come.

His steadfast purpose was tried, next, by *the persuasions of His friends*. It is very dangerous, when you are possessed by a high purpose, to go and consult with flesh and blood, for if you are worthy of such an honor, there are few who can match you. Men who live for God's glory and the well-being of their fellow men, are like giants on the mountaintops, while others are hidden away in the depths of the valleys, hoarding up their gold, or living only for self. He who would be a God's man, and such a man as Christ was, must not consult with flesh and blood, or ask his dearest friend's advice when he once knows his Lord's will. Christ's kinsmen said that He was beside Himself and they would have laid hold of Him and confined Him if they could. They thought His zeal had carried Him beyond the bounds of reason—and when He told His disciples about His approaching death upon the cross, “Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him, saying, Be it far from You, Lord: this shall not be unto You”—and all the disciples would have persuaded Him to choose an easier path than that which led to Calvary and the grave.

In the present day there are many men who might have been both good and great if they had not been spoiled by their friends. They listened to what they thought was meant to be uttered in love to them, but which was really a siren song luring them away from their proper course on to the rocks—and thus they lost the opportunity which they might have had of serving God and man. But not so was it with Christ! He recognized the hand of Satan in Peter's temptation, so He said to him, “Get you behind Me, Satan: you are an offense unto Me: for you savor not the things that are of God, but those that are of men.” Thus our Savior resisted all persuasions, and with His face set like a flint, went on with His work even until the hour of His death.

A far worse trial, however, to Christ's steadfast resolve was furnished by *the unworthiness of those He came to help*. “He came unto His own”—and how did they treat Him? “His own received Him not.” He came into the vineyard as God's heir, but what said the husbandmen who had been put in charge of it? “This is the heir; come, let us kill Him and the inheritance shall be ours.” Look even at Christ's 12 apostles when He was about to die. Judas betrayed Him and Peter denied Him—but what of the rest of the chosen twelve? “Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled.” Yet these were the men for whom He was going to die and He might well have asked Himself, “Are they worth such a sacrifice?” There were others of mankind for whom He had come to die—what were they doing? If you had been in Jerusalem at that time, you might have heard them in the streets crying, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” Even when Pilate was convinced of His innocence and sought to deliver Him from the demented mob, they cried, “His blood be on us, and on our children”—little dreaming how terribly their imprecation would be ful-

filled at the destruction of their beautiful city and its guilty inhabitants! These were the very people for whom Christ shed His precious blood, for, in that crowd there were thousands who, a few weeks afterwards, heard Peter preach on the day of Pentecost, and believed in that Christ whom they had, with wicked hands, crucified and slain!

If you are about to do a man a kindness and you find that he is ungrateful and unthankful—or that he is even worse than that—a traitorous, treacherous villain, you stay your hand and ask yourself, “Why should I make any sacrifice for him?” The apostle Paul wrote to the Romans, “scarcely for a righteous man will one die.” But for unrighteous men, for rebels, for those who ill-treat you—who among men would ever think of dying? Yet our Lord Jesus Christ “died for the ungodly.” Let me tell you what always appears to me to be the most amazing thing about Christ’s death—it is that *He died for me*. And if you are a believer in Him, you can also say, “He loved me and gave Himself for me.” This is the crowning mercy of His death, that there is nothing in us that could have merited such a sacrifice! On the contrary, there is everything in us which, if Jesus had been like other men, would have forced Him to say, “I will not give My life for such creatures as these.” Yet He set His face like a flint to carry out His purpose—whatever His elect might do, He still determined to plead their cause and to support His plea even by the shedding of His own blood.

But all these things were comparatively small trials to the great-hearted and resolute Christ, for He was still more severely tested as to His steadfast resolve *by the bitterness which He tasted at His entrance upon His great work as our substitutionary sacrifice*. The first drops of that awful tempest, which fell upon Him in the garden of Gethsemane, were hot and terrible. His soul was sorrowful, even unto death, so He resorted to prayer. Yet He had little comfort even in that holy exercise, so He rose from His knees and went to His disciples that He might speak with them as men usually talk to their sympathizing friends in their direst agony. But He found them asleep, so back He went to His Father, and once again prayed, “If it is possible to achieve the salvation of My people, and yet for Me not to drink this cup, let it pass from Me.” But when He found that it was *not* possible and that His thrice-repeated prayer received no response, He gave Himself up to die without murmuring a word, and bade His slumbering disciples arise, for he who would betray Him was at hand.

If anything could have broken our Savior’s resolution, it would have been the agony and bloody sweat of Gethsemane, yet all that could not turn Him from His purpose. Did you ever feel such exceeding sorrow or were you ever so terribly depressed in spirit that you wished, a thousand times over, that you had never been born, or that you could die? Have you ever been subject to dire despair? Some of us have felt as though a sword had been thrust into our bones, slaying all the life of our joy. At such a time, resolves that have been wisely made are often unwisely broken. The strongest man can scarcely stand up against depression of spirit. Solomon truly said, “The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?” Yet Christ was so resolved to achieve the redemption of His people that, even when reproach had broken His heart and He was full of heaviness, He still set His face like a flint and determined that He would accomplish the work that He had undertaken.

I hope I somewhat stir you up to think with gratitude of my blessed Lord and of His great love to you, by thus reminding you of His steadfastness of purpose. O you who love Him, help me by giving your best thoughts to sacred meditation upon this wondrous Savior of ours! This morning, [Sermon #1570, Volume 26—THE LAMENTATIONS OF JESUS—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>] in speaking upon the words, “When He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it,” I showed you that there was no flint in the heart of Jesus. And I am now trying to show you what flint there was in His face—how steadfastly this tender-hearted man could move in the direction which He had from eternity determined to take in order to procure the salvation of His people!

After our Savior’s trial in Gethsemane, His resolve was further tested *by the ease with which He could have relinquished the enterprise if He had wished to do so*. I have known some people keep to their course of life merely because they could not get out of it. They had a certain purpose in view, to which they had committed themselves in such a manner that they could not withdraw from it. But our blessed Lord had many opportunities when He might have abandoned His purpose. For instance, when before Pilate, He had to deal with a man who might have been conciliated by a single sentence. Yet, “as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth.” Pilate greatly marveled that Jesus answered him nothing—and if our Lord had spoken to him and fully explained matters, he might have released Him. It is clear that Pilate had no wish to let Him be put to death. In fact, he had a thorough distaste to the dastardly deed and tried all he could to prevent it. If Christ had wished to do so, He might

easily enough have turned Pilate against His accusers and induced him to call for the Roman soldiers to disperse and even to slay the mob in the street! But He did not do so. Even after Christ had been betrayed, there was not a moment in which He might not, with a wish, have set Himself free and, with a word, have chased away all His adversaries! But, all the while, His face was steadfastly set upon His one great purpose of achieving the redemption of His people—and He resolved that the great deed of love must be done, cost what it might.

If He had not been so resolute as He was, He might have been turned from His purpose *by the taunts of those who scoffed at Him*. Wicked men have nailed Him to the accursed tree—do you see Him bleeding, suffering, and dying? He utters an agonizing cry, “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?” and the heartless spectators pun upon it. He cries to El, the Strong One, and they mock Him by saying, “He calls for Elijah.” The chief priests, scribes and elders joined in the mockery and said, “He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross and we will believe Him.” He could have come down if He had pleased, but His steadfast resolve held Him to the cross. He might have leaped down into the midst of the ribald throng, like the destroying angel in Egypt, and have swept them all to hell in an instant! Yet there He hung in order that He might redeem men from destruction—and all their taunts could not make Him move from His purpose. There was one who hung there dying by His side, who said to Him, “If You are Christ, save yourself, and us,” taunting Him even with the guilty, miserable lips of a dying thief! And, often, taunts are all the sharper when they come from mean, debased men—yet Jesus bore it all without flinching. Though all the devils from hell might gibe at Him and men from all parts of the earth might gather to mock, and jeer, and leer at Him, yet still His face was set like a flint to accomplish the task which He had undertaken! It must be done! It shall be done! He will certainly die for His people and nothing can turn Him aside from that resolve!

But how shall I tell you of that last trying test to which He was subjected *by the full stress of the death-agony*? After all, the griefs of His body were but the body of His grief—but the sufferings of *His soul* were the soul of His sufferings. And who can adequately describe these? No mortal tongue ever can fully set them forth. Jehovah had permitted Him to stand in the place of guilty men and, finding Him there, where the actual sinners should have been, He smote Him! It was necessary that there should be concentrated into those strokes all the punishment that was due to the vast mass of guilt which was laid upon the great Sin-Bearer and, therefore, Christ bore—I cannot put it better than in Hart's words—

*“Bore all Incarnate God could bear,
With strength enough, but none to spare.”*

That awful cry, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” was the concentration of the very essence of misery and woe! Then it was that the alabaster box was broken and the precious ointment was poured forth to perfume the air all the way from earth to heaven, for God Himself smells a sweet savor of rest in the sacrifice of His well-beloved and only-begotten Son! Death could not keep Him back from the accomplishment of His purpose to redeem His people! Well did Charles Wesley sing—

*“Stronger His love than death or hell—
Its riches are unsearchable!
The first-born sons of light
Desire in vain its depths to see—
They cannot reach the mystery,
The length, and breadth, and height.”*

Thus have I shown you how our Lord's steadfast resolve was tested.

II. Now, very briefly, notice HOW HIS STEADFAST RESOLVE WAS SUSTAINED.

Remember that we are now speaking of Jesus, not as God, but as man, or, if you will, in the united personality in which the two natures find a wondrous and mysterious union in the God-man, Christ Jesus, the friend of sinful man.

According to our text and its connection, our Lord's steadfastness resulted, first, *from His divine schooling*. This is described in the 4th verse: “The Lord God has given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: He wakens morning by morning, He wakens My ears to hear as the learned.” Christ never played at covenanting with God, nor did He ever play at saving men. He had given Himself up for us, even from eternity, as a whole burnt-offering, and when He actually became our Savior, He carried out His purpose to the full. This passage seems to teach us that in His earthly life, His Father was always near Him, awakening Him and teaching Him, morning by morning. As a Son, He learned obedience by the things which He suffered and, as the Holy Spirit

rested upon Him without measure, His steadfast resolve remained strong and invincible. And, dear friend, if you mean to be resolved to live as a Christian should, you must also be taught of God. You must go to the Word of God to learn what God the Lord has spoken, or else you will be ignorant and fickle—sometimes hot and sometimes cold—and changeable as the wind. Christ's resolution was sustained by Divine schooling, and it must be the same with yours also.

Then, next, His steadfastness was sustained by *His conscious innocence*. That is a grand challenge in the 8th verse: "He is near that justifies Me; who will contend with Me?" Christ knew, all the while that He was suffering for sin, that He had personally done no wrong. Even when His Father forsook Him for a time, because He was occupying the place of the guilty, He knew that He was free from all guilt of His own. There is something wonderfully sustaining in the consciousness of innocence under false accusations. I do not think that Job could have survived his many trials if it had not been for the conviction that he was innocent of the charges that his accusers brought against him. And if God helps you to live a godly life, my dear friend, there is nothing like it to enable you to persevere under all difficulties. "Conscience," when it is once defiled, "makes cowards of us all." But if we have a conscience void of offense toward God and men, that is a fountain of courage, and the source of great strength. Well might our Savior's face be set like a flint when He could say, "He is near that justifies Me: who will contend with Me? Let us stand together: who is My adversary? Let him come near to Me."

But, according to our text, the Lord Jesus Christ's resolve was maintained by *His unshaken confidence in the help of God*. Read the whole verse: "For the Lord God will help Me; therefore I will not be disgraced: therefore have I set My face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed." How greatly the Father strengthened Christ in lonely midnight hours, we cannot tell, for we have no records of the fervent prayers to which the cold mountains could have borne witness. He went wearied to the mountainside—not to sleep, but to cry to God—and He came back with the drops of dew still clinging to His locks, but He was strong to face the multitude, or to perform any task that might be required of Him, for He had been with His Father in the midnight hour and often the whole night through! It was God's own Spirit that came upon Him, when He was weary and faint, and strengthened Him for further service. His own testimony to His disciples, concerning this secret sustenance, was, "I have meat to eat that you know not of." The Father helped Him and the Spirit helped Him—and that is how you also need to be helped. If the "strong Son of God" put Himself into such a condition for our sakes, that He needed such aid as this, how much more must you and I need it, our weakness being so manifest, and our fickleness so evident?

There was one thing more by which Christ's resolve was sustained. That was, *by the joy that was set before Him*. You know the passage in which Paul wrote to the Hebrews, "Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame." What was that joy but the joy of saving immortal souls? The joy of vindicating the broken law of God? The joy of breaking down the power of evil in the world and setting up a kingdom of goodness and of love? The joy of bringing to men a remedy for all their diseases, a cure-all for their miseries? The joy of gathering unto Himself a multitude that no man can number, redeemed by blood out of every nation and kindred and tongue, who should glorify God, even the Father, forever and ever? There have been mothers who have borne a thousand sorrows for the sake of their children. There have been brave warriors who have endured wounds and death, itself, for the sake of their country. But what shall I say of this glorious One, whose joy it was to lift us up who were so low, to cleanse us who were so foul, to find us who were lost, and to save us who, without His saving grace, would have been all cast away forever? There must have beamed, in the Savior's eyes, a light of supreme benevolence as He said to Himself in His last agonies, "I am dying, but I am, by My death, redeeming My people from destruction. I am suffering more than tongue can tell, but, by means of My sufferings, they shall be rescued from the wrath to come. The pouring out of My blood is scattering seeds of bliss in the furrows of earth that once were cursed by sin, and from them a seed shall arise to serve my Father, and to be unto Him a chosen generation, a peculiar people. Multitudes of weary ones shall find rest by coming unto Me, and troubled spirits shall be filled with joy as, by faith, they behold Me dead and risen again." This was the joy that sustained our Savior under all He had to endure.

III. My time is almost gone, so I will say just a little upon the last part of my theme, which is, **CHRIST'S STEADFAST RESOLVE IMITATED.**

Brothers and sisters in Christ, I speak especially to you. We serve a Master who steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem in order that He might accomplish the one great purpose for which He came to earth, and from which He could not be turned. Therefore it behooves us to be faithful to Him and to par-

take as far as we can of His spirit. Does He not seem to accuse us, without saying a word, for His face was set like a flint—while our faces are often made to blush with shame when we are called upon to speak up for Him, or perhaps when we are ashamed to do so? O you fickle Christians, hot in a revival service, and lukewarm afterwards, you who sing—

“Here, Lord, I give myself away”—

and yet do nothing of the kind! O you who say that you love the Lord with all your hearts, and declare that you are willing to die for Him, yet go into the world to put Him to an open shame by your inconsistencies, look at your Lord, and then blush to such a crimson hue as no one can take out of your face again! If we truly follow such a Lord as Christ is, we also ought to be flinty-faced for all holy purposes—and I ask you, dear friends, to pray to God the Holy Spirit to make you so.

To attain this end, *if there is anything right in this world, be on the side of it.* No matter what it costs you, no matter whether you lose friends or not, if it is right, stand up for it, for Jesus would have done so. Policy would suggest that you might as well tack just a little—do not go over to the wrong side, but be a neutral—take the golden mean, which often is both “golden” and “mean” too! Do nothing of the kind, I implore you! Oh, that we might have grace to say, “Gold or no gold, right is right, and we are on that side even if death follows for the right and the true.”

Next, *if you have a right purpose that glorifies God, carry it out.* It is difficult to do that, you say. Well, then, you must be all the more determined in your resolve to do it! There is nothing in the world so hard but something harder will cut it. So, if your own resolve becomes harder than the difficulty you have to face, the thing can be done. It ought to be so with us, for it was so with Christ. Are you resolved, dear friend, that being a Christian you will spread the Redeemer's kingdom? Then break that cowardly silence which has so long held you in captivity—and speak for Christ! How can a dumb tongue glorify Him? How can you expect to win others to Him if you never speak about Him? If this is a cross to you, resolve that you will take it up and carry it bravely for Christ. I pray that not one of the members of this church may be barren and unfruitful! Is there one of you who has never brought another soul to Christ? I am afraid there are some such members among us, yet I am very happy to testify that I have seen many of your faces in the sweetest possible association—by that expression I mean that I have seen you bring a friend to me and say, “Here is a soul that I have tried to comfort, that I hope I have really led to Christ. And I have brought him to you that he may confess his Savior, and unite with the Lord's people in church fellowship.”

There used to sit, in the left-hand gallery there, an old man who had a small annuity, who had his time to himself. He brought to me, one after the other, I can scarcely tell you how many persons whom he had induced to come into this place, and sit in his seats. He took a whole pew in order that he might bring people into it, and he would walk in Hyde Park, from day to day, till he met with a likely gentleman who would accept the seat ticket, and come here at the next service. And there are many here today who are now members of this church who gratefully remember old Mr. Hobson, because they would never have been likely to be here if he had not brought them where they could hear of Christ, and learn to trust Him! When our friend died, I greatly missed him, for I scarcely knew another who spent himself as he did. He had no powers of speech, but he bought the printed sermons, and gave them to people, saying that he heard that sermon preached, and as he liked it, would they mind reading it? And when he brought the converts to join the church, I tell you that there never was any mother who showed her first-born child with such delight as he had when he said to me, “When can you see another, sir? I have caught another, blessed be God!” Oh, if all of you with little ability or with great talents would try to live as Mr. Hobson, for Christ's sake, you would set your face like a flint in your holy resolve not to go to heaven alone, feeling that you must have others to share its glories with you!

You barren Christian, I cannot bear to think of you remaining as you are, never having brought one soul to the Savior! What will you feel in heaven when you get there? I have no doubt you will be happy, but there will be nobody to come up to you, and say, “Blessed be God that I see you here, for you brought me to Jesus!” Oh, I am sorry for you, brother, sister! You will get up in a corner, all alone, I am afraid—I will try to come round your way, if I can, but I think that even in heaven, those who have worked most for Christ will like to get together—and they will like to have around them a cluster of those of whom they can say to God, “Here am I, and the children whom You have given me.”

I must say just this closing word. There are some of you, working men, who come here, and who begin to fear the Lord. But when you get into the workshop, everybody jeers at you. Now, set your face like a flint, and resolve not to mind it. I pray God that in the midst of the chaff and the foul language

with which your ears will be assailed, you may be able to stand fast for God, even as Christ Jesus stood fast for you! The Lord bless you all, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 50.**

This chapter might well have been written by our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, at the time when He was upon the earth.

Verse 1. *Thus says the LORD, Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away? Or which of My creditors is it to whom I have sold you?*

There were some who said God had put away, like a divorced woman, His ancient people, that He had sold His children into slavery. But He says, "It is not so. Where is the bill of divorcement? To whom have I sold you?"

1. *Behold, for your iniquities have you sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away.*

That is to say, the nation, which was their mother, had lost the favor of God—not because of His fickleness, but because their sins had cried aloud for justice and for judgment. It could not be that God should be in friendly relationship with such a people, so hypocritical, so false, so every way rebellious against Him!

2. *Why, when I came, was there no man? When I called, was there none to answer?*

Christ came to this world at a time when there practically seemed to be none left on the earth who were good for anything. The Pharisees, who were, outwardly, the most religious of men, were proud formalists, and base hypocrites; and the whole nation had gone astray from God, so that Christ might well ask, "When I came, why was there no man? When I called, why was there none to answer?"

3. *Is My hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? Or have I no power to deliver? Behold, at My rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness—their fish stink because there is no water and die for thirst.*

Here the Lord reminds them of what He did at the Red Sea. This same Christ, who came here and found none to answer to His call, is the true God who was the Redeemer of Israel. He led the tribes through the Red Sea, drying it up by the word of His mouth, that there might be a way for His ransomed to pass through! Yet, when this great Redeemer came to earth, as far as most of the men were concerned, there were none to welcome Him. Even though He came in love and tenderness, there were none to answer to Him.

3, 4. *I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering. The Lord GOD has given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: He wakens Me morning by morning, He wakens My ears to hear as the learned.*

Notice the wonderful contrast between the third verse and the fourth. It is the same, "I," who says, "I clothe the heavens with blackness," who becomes a scholar in God's school, and bows His ears to listen to the teachings of the Father! "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience." He was so great that He counted it not a prize to be grasped to be equal with God, dividing the sea, and covering the heavens with blackness, yet He condescended to take upon Himself the form of a servant, and as a servant He received His instructions from the great Lord of all.

5, 6. *The Lord GOD has opened My ears, and I was not rebellious, neither turned back. I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting.*

That same Divine One was, in due time, veiled in human flesh, and, then, He who covered the heavens with blackness, gave His back to the smiters, and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair! Oh, wondrous condescension of our glorious Lord! I want you again to notice the contrast in this chapter—let me read two verses, one after another. "I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering." "I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting." I think anything I might say would only detract from the marvelous force of contrast which these words reveal between the Godhead and the humanity of Christ!

7, 8. *For the Lord GOD will help Me; therefore I will not be disgraced: therefore have I set My face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed. He is near that justifies Me; who will contend with Me? Let us stand together: who is My adversary? Let him come near to Me.*

Christ is innocent and, therefore, He defies all His accusers. Christ has suffered the penalty of the sin which He bore on our behalf, but He has so completely put it away that, notwithstanding our guilt, He defies all our accusers, and there rings through earth and heaven this bold challenge, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us."

9. Behold, the Lord GOD will help Me; who is he that shall condemn Me? Lo, they all shall wax old as a garment; the moth shall eat them up.

The enemies of Christ shall all pass away. They shall be utterly destroyed. Now comes a blessed lesson for us. As Christ persevered in His great work even to the end, so let us do the same.

10. Who is among you that fears the LORD, that obeys the voice of His servant, that walks in darkness, and has no light? Let him trust in the name of the LORD, and rely upon his God.

Let not the darkness keep you back any more than it did your Master—still go on, and rely upon your God.

11. Behold, all you that kindle a fire.

Listen to this, you who live without God, yet think yourselves happy! You who have no hope of the great hereafter, yet are content with the present! "Behold, all you that kindle a fire"—

11. That compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire and in the sparks that you have kindled.

"Be happy while you may! Have 'a short life and a merry one' if that is your choice."

11. This shall you have of My hand.

When your walking is done, see what will be the end of it—

11. You shall lie down in sorrow.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—439, 942, 291.

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