

A SERMON AND A REMINISCENCE NO. 3112

A SERMON
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*“Unto you therefore which believe he is precious.”
1 Peter 2:7*

[Other sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon this passage are as follows—#242, Christ Precious to Believers, #2137, (same title as #242) and #3014, A Sermon from a Sick Preacher]

WHEN one has a cold in the head, it is a very effectual hindrance to thought, you may do what you will, and select what subject you may, but somehow or other the mind has lost its elasticity. I frankly confess that for this reason I selected this text for my discourse. I thought that, perhaps, if the head would not work, the heart might, and that if the thoughts came not, yet the emotions might. Emotions may well be stirred in the preacher, if not in the hearer, by the memories awakened by this passage. For I remember well that, more than twenty-two years ago, the first sermon that I ever attempted to make was from this text [The full story of that memorable period is told in C. H. Spurgeon’s Autobiography, Vol I, Chapter Nineteen, “The Boy Preacher of the Fens”].

I had been asked to walk out to the little village of Teversham, some little distance from the town of Cambridge, in which I lived, to accompany a young man whom I supposed to be the preacher for the evening, and on the way I said to him that I trusted God would bless him in his labors. “Oh, dear!” said he, “I never preached in my life. I never thought of doing such a thing, I was asked to walk with you, and I sincerely hope that God would bless *you* in *your* preaching.” “Nay,” said I, “but I never preached, and I don’t know that I could do anything of the sort.”

We walked together till we came to the place, my inmost soul being all in a tremble as to what would happen. When we found the congregation assembled, and no one else there to speak of Jesus, though I was only sixteen years of age, as I found that I was expected to preach, I did preach, and this was the text. If a raw recruit could speak upon anything, surely this theme would suit him. If one were dying, this would be the text, if one were distracted with a thousand cares, this would be the text because its teaching is experiential—its meaning wells up from the inner consciousness, and needs neither a clear brain nor an eloquent tongue.

To the believer, it is not a thing which somebody else has taught him, it is a matter of fact, which he knows within his own soul, that Christ is precious to *him*, and he can bear testimony concerning it although not always such bold testimony as he could wish. I intend to let my heart run over like water from a full cup, just as the thought comes to my heart, it shall be poured out. Let us go then at once to our text, and speak a little first, *about Believers*, then *about their appreciation of Christ*, and then *about how they show it*.

I. ABOUT BELIEVERS, “Unto you who believe.”

Believers are getting to be rather scarce nowadays, doubters have the sway, they are the men who claim to possess all the wisdom of the period. There is scarcely a single historical fact but what is doubted now. I fancy that the very existence of the human race must be a matter of question with some persons. I believe some imagine that not even they themselves are actually existent, certain ideas of themselves exist, but not themselves! We know not how far the human mind will go in this direction, but surely there must be a limit to doubting.

Wonderful is the capacity of faith, but a hundred times more wonderful is the capacity of unbelief. The most credulous persons in the world are unbelievers. He who refuses to swallow the gnat of Scriptural difficulty, usually swallows camels in large quantities of other difficulties of all sorts. The text speaks of believers, and for my part, I am happy to know that a man is reckoned among believers of any sort rather than with doubters.

But the believers mentioned here are not mere believers, they are spiritual believers, Christian believers, *they believe in Christ Jesus*. It is only to such that Christ is precious. In the Word of God there are many expressions with regard to believing in Christ. We read of believing *in* Him, believing *upon* Him, and believing Him.

Now, if I understand the Word aright, *believing in Him* means this, believing that He is what He claims to be, as for instance, that He is the Sent One of God, the Messiah, that He is King in Israel, that He is the Son of God, that He is the Word that was God, and Was in the beginning with God, that He is the Great High Priest making atonement for our sins, that He is the Head of the church, and so on. That is to believe in Him, to accept Him as being what God's Word says He is, to believe God's testimony concerning His Son.

But *believing upon Him* goes further than that, for when a man believes upon Jesus, or on Jesus, he trusts Him, he rests himself upon Him, for the pardon of his sin he relies upon the Savior's atoning sacrifice, for eternal life He rests upon the Savior's immortality, for his resurrection he looks to the Savior's power, for everything he looks to his Redeemer, he leans upon Him, he believes on Him.

And this, mark you, is essential to salvation, for we may believe Christ to be God, and yet perish, we may believe Christ to be the Great High Priest putting away sin by His atoning sacrifice, and yet perish. The faith that saves is a *trusting* faith, a reliant faith, a sacred recumbency, confidence, and leaning upon the Lord Jesus Christ. Dear hearer, do you possess it? Has the Holy Spirit given to you to cast yourself once for all upon Him whom God has set forth to be a propitiation for sin?

If you have, surely you will, through grace, proceed to the third form of faith, *you will believe Him*—His person as well as His words. You will believe Him whatever He may say, you will believe Him whatever He may do, you will be persuaded that He is Himself the essential truth, according to His own declaration, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." And then you will know what Paul meant when he said, "I know whom I have believed"—not "in whom," but "whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him."

If you could have asked a true believer, in Christ's day, "What is your creed?" He would have pointed to His Master, he would not have repeated certain articles of faith, but He would have said, "I believe that glorious Man, my trust is in Him, I believe Him." We have seen many books labeled upon their backs, "Body of Divinity," but of a truth Jesus is the only real "Body of Divinity." If you want theology, He is the true Theologos, the essential Word of God.

It is a grand thing when a man believes Jesus to be what Jesus is—a Savior from sin, and then believes the Christ to be what Christ is—the Anointed of the Lord, and so makes Him to be his Alpha and Omega—all his salvation and all his desire.

Divide yourselves upon this question as to how far you are believers, for we cannot assert that Christ is precious to you if you are not believers. We know He will not be your heart's Monarch if you have no faith. He will be the very reverse, but if you are believers in and upon Him, He will be precious to you beyond all comparison.

II. Now let us consider THE BELIEVER'S APPRECIATION OF HIS MASTER, and observe first, that *every believer appreciates Christ Himself*—His very person, "Unto you therefore which believe *He* is precious."

Some think the ordinances, which they call the "sacraments," very precious, so they are, but only *for His sake*. Others reckon the doctrines to be very precious, and always thrust doctrine into the forefront. We will not deny that every doctrine is precious, but it owes its value to the fact that Christ is in it. Dry doctrine is nothing better than a sepulcher for a dead Christ to be buried in, but the doctrine preached in

relation to His person becomes a throne on which He is exalted. It is a great pity when any of you Christians forget that you have a Savior who is alive, and overlook the personality of Christ. Remember that He is a real man, and as a real man on Calvary He died for you, and as a real man He is gone into heaven. He is no ideal personage, but an actual personage, and the very marrow of Christian experience lies in the realization of the personality of the Savior, “Unto you which believe he is precious.”

If you make doctrine the main thing, you are very likely to grow narrow minded, if you make your own experience the main thing, you will become gloomy and censorious of others, if you make ordinances the main thing, you will be apt to grow merely formal, but you can never make too much of the living Christ Jesus. Remember that all things else are for His sake. Doctrines and ordinances are the planets, but Christ is the Sun, the stars of doctrine revolve around Him as their great primal light. Get to love *Him* best of all.

Yea, I know you do if you are truly believing in Him. You love the doctrines, and would not like to give one of them up, but still, the incarnate God is the sum and substance of your confidence, Christ Jesus Himself is precious to you.

Now, as this appreciation concerns Christ, it may here be remembered that *it is, in the case of every believer, a personal appreciation*. As we appreciate Christ’s person, so we each in person appreciate Him. We do not pretend to appreciate Christ because others say that they do so, nor do we run with the multitude, but we judge for ourselves. Unto those that believe in Him, Christ is precious on His own account, from their own personal knowledge of Him. They have not borrowed it. They do not cry, “Yes, He is precious,” because their dear mother, who has gone to heaven, used to say so, her memory helps them, but they have a better reason for that. He is precious to *them*.

Beloved, there is nothing like personal religion. The religion which you inherit, if at the same time it is not yours personally, is not worth one single farthing. You will not be saved by hereditary godliness. If any man should say, “My ancestors believed so-and-so, and therefore I do,” that would be a reason why we should be Druids, for our ancestors were such. If our religion has come to us as an heirloom, like the family pew, or the family plate, and we have merely taken it at second-hand [See sermon #2624, Second Hand], it is of little or no account.

You must value Christ because you have tried Him, and know Him for yourself, for nothing short of a personal appreciation, and a personal appropriation, of the Lord Jesus, by faith, to your own case, and in your own heart, will ever bring you to heaven. Everything short of personal godliness falls short of eternal life. Remember that nobody can be born again for you.

You yourselves must be regenerated. Nobody can renounce “the pomps and vanities of the world” for you. Sponsorship in religion is the most transparent of frauds. Nobody can love Christ for you, your own heart must beat high with affection towards His dear name, it must be a personal religion if it is to be of any value to you.

As there must be an appreciation of the person of the Lord Jesus by our own selves, so, let me add, *our experience must be the basis of that estimate*. Christ is precious to us this day, because we have proved Him to be precious. What has He done for us? He has delivered us, first, from all the guilt of our past sins. You have not forgotten the day when—

“Laden with guilt, and full of fears”—

you crept to the Cross-foot and looked up and saw Him suffering there for you, and when you believed in Him, the burden fell from off your shoulders, and you received a liberty unknown before. Christ is very precious to the man who has once felt the work of the law on his conscience. I wish that some people, who slight Him, had been cast where some of us once lay, in spiritual wretchedness and deep depression of spirit [This experience is fully described in C. H. Spurgeon’s Autobiography, Vol I, Chapter Ten, “Through much Tribulation”].

Oh, the misery of a tortured conscience! We trembled in anticipation of the flames of hell, while our sins stared us in the face, but in an instant, by virtue of the application of the precious blood, fear was gone, guilt disappeared, and we were reconciled to God by Christ Jesus. Is He not precious if this has been the case?

Beside this, He has emancipated us from the chains of sin. Aforetime, passions mastered us, the flesh stood at the helm, and steered the vessel which way it would. Sometimes a fierce self-will, at another time the baser passions of the flesh ruled us. We could not overcome ourselves, Satan and the flesh were tyrants over us, but now the vices once so dear have become detestable, the chains of sin are broken, and we are the Lord's free men, and though sin strives to get the mastery over us, and we have much to mourn over, yet that same sword which has slain some sins is close at the throat of others, and by grace divine we know that we shall slay them all before long.

There is such a change in the character of some in this place to my knowledge, that Christ, the great Transformer, must be very precious to them. Once at the ale house where sinners congregate, once frequenting nameless haunts of vice, once a swearer, once passionate, once dishonest, once a liar, once everything that is evil, but now washed and sanctified, you cannot but prize your Deliverer. Oh, when I meet the reformed drunkard, and when I gaze into the face of the Magdalene, who now rejoices to wash the Savior's feet with her tears, I know that to such He is precious. A renewed character going with pardoned sin, as it always does, endears the Savior to the soul.

And O beloved, beside that, He is precious to us because He has changed the whole bent and current of our thoughts. We were selfish once, and cared for nobody else, but since the Lord Jesus Christ has saved us, we serve not self, but Christ, we do not live now to hoard money, or to get ourselves honor, or even to save our own souls, for that is completed, we now rise above the groveling love of self, and our whole being is devoted to Jesus. He is precious beyond all price, for He has taught us to live for God's glory, and for the welfare of our fellow men.

He is precious to us by experience because He has helped us in many a dark hour of trial. I shall not tell you tonight how often He has cheered me. If any spirit here is more than ordinarily inclined to despondency, perhaps it is mine, but ah, the sustaining influences of the presence of Christ! I can rise even to the seventh heaven of ecstasy when I do but fully come back to a simple faith in His precious name. Some of us could not live without Jesus Christ. It has come to this—it is hell here if we do not have Christ with us.

I remember slipping the cable of my belief once, and being driven out to sea before a furious wind of doubt. At first I reveled in that speedy sailing across a sea of fierce unbelief, but ah, when I began to see where I was going, and when I stood at the prow of the vessel, and marked the dreary cloud-land that lay before me, and knew not what rocks might be ahead, I felt a horror of great darkness, and cried for deliverance right loudly, and was glad when the anchor held fast again, and my dreadful cruise was over.

On Christ my soul has a hold as tight as the drowning man's death-grip, and I cling with all my might to His everlasting love, His personal love to my poor soul, and to the merit of His substitutionary sacrifice on my behalf. Believe me, He is precious to all whose whole mental thought has come to an anchorage in Him, whose faculties feel that their utmost reach and stretch cannot go beyond Him, for He is all in all. Yes, the text says, "Unto you therefore which believe he is precious."

Perhaps you imagine that I speak only of the past, as though Jesus had been precious. I meant that, but *He is precious now*, "Unto you therefore which believe he *is* precious." When one of the saintly martyrs had been tormented by persecutors, they said to him, "What can Christ do for you now?" and he replied, "He can help me to bear with patience that which you inflict upon me." When the murdered Covenanter's head was carried by the dragoon to the poor bereaved wife, and he asked her what she thought of her husband's face now, she said that he never looked bonnier when he lived than he did now that he had given up his life for Christ. Verily, we can say, today, that Christ never looked bonnier than He does tonight, when we think of Him as slain for us. We gladly sing that hymn—

“If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, ’tis now.”

Some people grow less lovely upon close acquaintance, but all lovers of Christ testify that His beauties bear the closest inspection, those who lie in His bosom the longest love Him best, and those who have served Him seventy years are the most fluent, and also the most sincere, in singing His praises. Oh, He is a most precious Savior!

Young man, do you trust Christ tonight? If you do, He is precious to you, and if He is not precious to you, then you have not believed in Him. May you be led to do so by the power of His Spirit, and then Christ will be precious to you indeed!

But I must add that although Christ is precious to us now on account of past experience and present enjoyment, *He is precious to us with a dash of expectation*. We expect to soon enter the cold shades of death, and it will be precious to have the Savior with us then. The question will sometimes come over every thoughtful mind, “Shall we, after all, die when we die? Are we like so many mites in a cheese, and shall we soon be crushed out of being, and cease to be?” Oh, dark and dreary thought!

But then, we remember that Jesus Christ arose from the dead, and if any historical fact is certain, that is. There may be doubts about whether Caesar was slain by Brutus, or whether Alfred was ever king in England, for there are not evidences one half so positive on those points as those which prove the resurrection of the Savior. I know not that anybody died as a witness for Caesar’s death, but many shed their blood joyfully rather than deny that the Christ who was hanged upon the cross actually rose again from the tomb. In that fact lies our hope of resurrection.

A man, a real man, who died on a tree, has risen from the dead, and we are one with that glorious man, who was also God, and because He lives, we shall live also. He is precious to us when we think of dying, and that should not be seldom. We shall soon come to it. Those who are strongest and most hale are nearing their last hour, and those who are sickly are nearer still, it may be. Oh, it is sweet to have Christ to live with, for then, let death come when it may, it will be a joyful thing for us, and once reconciled to our Maker through His Son, what have we to fear?

III. Lastly, we are to think of HOW BELIEVERS SHOW THEIR APPRECIATION OF CHRIST.

Some Christians seldom acknowledge that they are such. It is a beggarly business to love Christ in a corner, and to be ashamed to own Him. He was never ashamed to confess Himself the sinners’ Friend, yet there are sinners who profess to be saved by Him who are ashamed to be known as His followers.

“Oh,” says one, “if I were to say that I am a follower of the Crucified, and join His church and people, I would expect to be laughed at.” And are you afraid of a fool’s laughter? Was Christ ashamed to be laughed at for you? Oh, coward, to be ashamed to be ridiculed for Him! “Oh, but my friends would make such a hubbub at home.” And did not His friends, who should have helped Him, cast Him out and reject Him? Yet He bore it for your sake.

O craven spirits who will not take sides with Jesus, take heed as to what will happen to you when He comes, for those who deny Him before men shall be themselves denied before God and the holy angels. This day, the royal standard floats in the breeze, let all who are on Christ’s side rally to it, for the hosts on the other side are many and bold. The foes of Jesus insult Him to His face, some deny His deity, and others thrust a human “priest” into His place.

*“You that are men now serve Him
Against unnumbered foes;
Your courage rise with danger
And strength to strength oppose.”*

If He is precious to you, you will never blush to be called a fool for His sake.

Those who really judge Jesus to be precious rejoice in possessing Him. I cannot understand those Christians who say, “Christ is ours,” and yet go fretting and worrying through life. Dear brother, if Christ is yours, you have no cause for fretting. “What, none?” says one, “I am very poor.” You are not

poor, He who can call Christ his own cannot be poor. “But I am comfortless.” How can that be, when the Lord Jesus has given you a Comforter? “But I am bereaved.” Truly so, but you have not lost your Lord.

Come, dear brother, if a man were to go through the streets of London with twenty thousand pounds in his pocket, and when he reached the bank, found that a thief had stolen his cotton pocket handkerchief, I think the reflection that would rise in his mind would be, “Thank God I have not lost my money,” and the very loss of his handkerchief would only make him the more grateful that he had not lost his treasure. Look on all things you have here as nothing compared with Jesus, and say—

*“How can I bereaved be
Since I cannot part with Thee?”*

If you esteem Christ as you should, *you will refuse to give Him up at any cost*, and under any circumstances you will hold to what you believe. You will have to suffer loss, it may be, in social position or in business. Very well, do it gladly, and only wish you could suffer more for His dear sake. One might almost envy the martyrs, that they could earn that ruby crown which is not now within our reach. Let us, at any rate, be willing to take such little rebukes and rebuffs as may be given us for Christ’s sake.

If you love Jesus Christ, my brothers and sisters, you will be willing to make sacrifices for His cause. I wish this spirit were abroad throughout all the church, that Christ was really so precious to saints that they consecrated themselves and their substance to Him. We want personal consecration. I have heard that word pronounced “*purse-and-all* consecration,” a most excellent pronouncement certainly. He who loves Jesus consecrates to Him all that he has, and feels it a delight that he may lay anything at the feet of Him who laid down His life for us.

Once more, *he who really has this high estimate of Jesus will think much of Him*, and as the thoughts are sure to run over at the mouth, *he will talk much of Him*. Do we talk so? If Jesus is precious to you, you will not be able to keep your good news to yourself, you will be whispering it into your child’s ear, you will be telling it to your husband, you will be earnestly imparting it to your friend, without the charms of eloquence, you will be more than eloquent, your heart will speak, and your eyes will flash as you talk of His sweet love.

Every Christian here is either a missionary or an impostor. Remember that you are either trying to spread abroad the kingdom of Christ, or else you do not love Him at all. It cannot be that there is a high appreciation of Jesus, and a totally silent tongue about Him. Of course I do not mean by that, that those who use the pen for Christ are silent, they are not. And those who help others to use the tongue, or spread that which others have written, are doing their part well, but I mean this—that man who says, “I believe in Jesus,” but does not think enough of Jesus to ever tell another about Him, by mouth, or pen, or tract, is an impostor.

You are either doing good, or you are not yourself good. If you know Christ, you are as one who has found honey, and you will call others to taste it, you are like the lepers who found the food which the Syrians had cast away, and you will go into Samaria, and tell the hungry crowd that you have found Jesus, and are anxious that they should find Him too. Be wise in your generation, and speak of Him in fitting ways and at fitting times, and so in every place proclaim the fact that Jesus is most precious to your soul.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

1 PETER 2

Verse 1. *Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings,—*

This is what we are to lay aside, to put away from us, to banish altogether. These are the old garments of the flesh which we are to give up to the moths that they may devour them, and leave not a fragment of the old rags for us to wear. “Laying aside all malice.”

Has anybody injured you? Are you angry with him because of what he has done to you? Then freely forgive the injury, and wholly forget it. “And all guile.” That is everything that is of the nature of craftiness and deception. Be honest, simple, straightforward, transparent, this is a trait of character which well becomes all Christians. “And hypocrisies” of all sorts. Let us not profess to be what we are not, nor pretend to know what we do not know, nor talk of experiences which we have never felt, in fact, let us never be hypocrites in any respect whatsoever.

The God of truth loves His children to be the embodiments of truth. Hypocrisy He hates with a perfect hatred. “And envies.” We must lay them all aside—all envies of men because they are richer, or more gifted, or more highly esteemed than we are. Let us not envy anybody, for envy eats a man’s own heart out and slays him, as Eliphaz said to Job, “Envy slayeth the silly one.” “And all evil speakings.” We are not to be the repeaters of stories to the discredit of others, or to make up or to exaggerate any evil reports concerning anything in their lives. Let us have nothing to do with “evil speakings” of any kind. Lay all these rags aside. Is any one of them still clinging to you? Let it be laid aside this very hour.

2. *As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:*

The unadulterated “milk of the Word” is the best food for those who are, spiritually, “newborn babes.” Desire this unadulterated milk of the Word, not out of an idle curiosity, but that you may grow thereby—that you may grow wiser, holier, more earnest, more like your Savior—that you may grow up into the likeness of Him whose you are, and whom you serve.

3. *If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.* [See sermons #459, A Sermon for Men of Taste, and #2168, The Test of Taste].

If you have spiritually tasted this great truth, you have the flavor of it upon your palate, so that it makes you long for more of it.

4. *To whom coming,*—[See sermon #1334, Coming—Always Coming.]

That is, unto the Lord, and that name Peter evidently gives to Jesus Christ, and therefore we worship Him, and call Him, each one for himself or herself, even as Thomas did, “My Lord and my God.” “To whom coming,”—

4. *As unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious,*—

“Chosen of God.” The whole spiritual building is the result of the election, the choice of God. Jesus Christ, the great foundation and the chief corner stone, is chosen of God, and all the living stones that are built upon Him are also chosen of God. The whole fabric is like the foundation upon which it is laid, “Chosen of God, and precious”—precious to God and precious to us.

5. *Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.*

We hear of certain persons being “ordained” first deacons and then priests, but all who are truly in Christ, whether they are men, or women, or children, are priests. We are “a holy priesthood” if we are in Christ [See sermon #1376, The True Priesthood, Temple and Sacrifice]. All the sacrifices that can now be offered are spiritual sacrifices, which are to be offered, not by a few special persons set apart for that work, but by the whole company of God’s chosen people, and so they are “acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.”

6. *Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.* [See sermon #1429, Faith’s Sure Foundation]

Those who believe on Him are built upon Him, they rest upon Him, they are cemented to Him, and being living stones they grow into Him, and He grows into them, they participate in His life, and so the living temple becomes one, the chosen men and women who are the spiritual temple in which God dwells upon earth. We need not wonder if, like the chief corner stone, we are disallowed of men, but we may rejoice that, like our Lord and Savior, we are “chosen of God, and precious.”

7. *Unto you therefore which believe he is precious:*

He is preciousness, He is an honor, He is everything that is glorious to you. You can never think highly enough of Him, or speak well enough concerning Him. All the world beside may disallow Him, but unto you He is precious.

7-8. *But unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.*

The ungodly reject Him, and regard Him as of no account, but God has made Him “the head of the corner.” And He has done more than that, He has made Him “a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense” to them, “even to them which stumble at the Word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.”

That is a terrible truth upon which I am not going to speak just now, but I want you specially to note what an awful thing it is for men to “stumble at the Word”—to gibbet themselves upon Christ’s Cross—to turn the heavenly medicine into poison—to make Christ Himself, who is to others “the savour of life unto life,” to be to them “the savour of death unto death.”

“Being disobedient.” The fault lies with themselves, they willfully disobey the command to believe on Christ. “Whereunto also they were appointed.” So the divine purpose is accomplished, although the guilt and punishment of their disobedience rest upon themselves alone.

9. *But ye are a chosen generation,—*

There is the contrast between the disobedient and all true believers. “Ye” have the chosen Savior to be the chief Corner stone, upon whom “ye” who are living stones are to be built up into “a spiritual house,” which is to be the abiding place of the Most High God.

9. *A royal priesthood,—*

“Ye” are to be like Melchisedec, in whom the two offices of priest and king were combined in one person. More than that, “ye” are to be like your Lord, in respect to His royal priesthood. That He should have “loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God and his Father,” seems to be an honor which is far too high for us. It appears to bring us almost too near our Lord, yet it is not so, for Peter wrote under divine inspiration, “Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood,”—

9. *An holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:*

God’s grace has been bestowed upon you in order that you may show forth His praises, or as the marginal reading puts it, His “virtues.” Note what the Lord has done for you, He has called you “out of darkness” into light, into His light, “into his marvellous light.” There are three thoughts there that are beautifully blended into one. What marvelous light that is into which God calls us! Try to measure it by the darkness in which you were, try to measure it by the deeper darkness into which you were going, try to measure it by the eternal darkness which would have fallen upon you if you had died in the dark. God has graciously brought you “into his marvellous light.” [See sermon #2765, Marvellous Light]

10. *Which in times past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.*

How the apostle delights to set forth these contrasts between the past and the present of the Lord’s chosen people! By remembering what we were, we are made to appreciate and enjoy more what we now are. We may well praise Him who has wrought this wondrous change in us. We were not His people, we were sinners of the Gentiles, not the chosen Hebrew race. In times past, we were not worthy to be called a people, but we are now the people of God. We had not obtained mercy, we had not even asked for it, some of us were so blinded by our self-righteousness that we did not know that we needed God’s mercy, or did not want it, but now we have obtained mercy.

11. *Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;*

Fleshly lusts always hurt the soul. They do serious injury to the body, for they are contrary to the laws of health, but the main point for you to consider is that they “war against the soul.” No men or women can ever commit an act of uncleanness of the body without grievously injuring the soul. It leaves a weakness, a defilement, a wound, a scar upon the soul, so may God graciously keep us from it altogether!

12. *Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers,—*

This they are sure to do, and the more holy your life is, the more they will probably speak against you. Even if you could live like an angel, some would call you a devil, but you are not to be judged by men’s judgment, thank God for that, and so live, “that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers,”—

12-13. *They may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation. Submit yourselves to every ordinances of man for the Lord’s sake:*

We are to obey kings, and governors, and magistrates, even when they may not be all that we wish them to be, “Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake:”

13-15. *Whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men:*

Ignorance, you see, is a noisy thing. An empty drum makes a loud noise when it is beaten, and empty men, like empty vessels, often make the most sound. How then are we to silence this noisy ignorance? By argument? No, for it is not amenable to argument. Ignorance is to be silenced “by well doing.” Holy living is the best reply to infidel talking.

16. *As free,—*

For there are no others under heaven so free as God’s servants are, “As free”—

16. *And not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.*

Not talking about liberty in order to stab at order, not prating about liberty with the design of enriching yourself by robbing someone else. That is not God’s will, but “using your liberty...as the servants of God” should use it.

17. *Honour all men.*

Whoever they may be, be courteous, respectful, kind to all men because they are men. Whatever their circumstances, they are men, therefore “honour all men.”

17-19. *Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king. Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.*

Not always “sticking up for his rights,” as an ungodly man says, but feeling that the greatest right in the world is the right to do without your rights. To suffer wrongfully, will often glorify God much better than to stand up for what you have a right to be or to have.

20. *For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.*

It may be hard to bear, but in that very hardness lies much of the fragrance of it towards God. As spices must be bruised, so must you be pressed and crushed to bring out your sweetness. If you want to be where there is nothing to suffer, and no wrong to be endured, you are in the wrong world for that as yet, that will be in the world to come.

21. *For even hereunto were ye called:*

Called to do right, and to suffer for it! Ah me, what a call is that!

21-23. *Because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: who his own self bare our sins [See sermons #2790, Our Lord’s Substitution, #2887, A Dire Disease Strangely Cured, and #1143, Death for Sin and Death to Sin] in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto*

righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.