

## SERMON XXXV.

OR,

## SOME HEADS FROM WHAT HATH BEEN SAID ABOUT THE BLESSEDNESS OF PERSECUTION.

*'Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'*—MAT. v. 10.

WE have already preached, you know, divers sermons about the point of persecution, shewing you what it is, and when men are persecuted for righteousness' sake; and how men may be guilty of persecuting others for righteousness' sake, and not think of it themselves. The last day we opened the blessedness that there is in suffering persecution; but I shall not look back, but shall proceed, only for this ver. 10, to give you a few heads, by way of application, from what hath been said about the blessedness of suffering persecution. It is a blessed thing to suffer persecution; not only that blessedness and persecution may consist together, that a man may be a blessed man *though* he be a persecuted man. No; but a man is a blessed man *because* he is a persecuted man. The world can hardly tell how blessedness and persecution can both consist; but of all the saints in the world those saints that are most persecuted are most blessed. This is a great paradox to the world, but comes out of the mouth of Christ; and by what we said the last day, we made it good.

Then by way of use.

Hence we see the excellency of a Christian's state. Look upon him in his worst condition, he is blessed; yea, and the worst condition that he can be put into makes him blessed. Surely his estate is excellent; he gets by his sufferings. The philosopher's stone is commended for turning all things to gold. Why, grace in a Christian hath the virtue to turn all their losses, all their sufferings, and the dirt and dross that is cast upon them, to turn it into blessedness, and therefore excellent. Surely, then, godly people are not fools, that are willing to suffer so much in the cause of God. They know what they do; for they know how it furthers their blessedness.

Secondly, It is a vain thing for the men of the world to think to take off the saints from any way of Christ by persecution. It may be you are engaged against servants, friends, kindred, neighbours, wife, or others, and you think with yourselves you will make them do otherwise than they do. Why, what

will you do? You will make them to suffer loss in such and such things that they might have. You will put them to hard usage, and you think that will do. There is a great mistake in that; persecution rather raises the spirits of the saints than any way takes them off from God. It improves their graces; it heightens their graces; they are above you in your persecution. I remember one told Modestus, that was the emperor's officer, when he had to deal with Basil, 'Let him alone; for Basil is above you,' said he. Those men that are carnal and wicked, they think with themselves, It would discourage us in any way of religion if we should suffer by it, and therefore they think that they can discourage others by making them suffer by it. It is true, if others went upon no better principles than thou dost, they would be discouraged by persecution; but because thou art conscious to thyself of the base principles thou goest upon, and knowest that thou wouldest be discouraged, thou thinkest that others go upon the same principles. Thou art mistaken; their principles are higher and more noble; and therefore, though persecutions would discourage thee, it will not discourage them. In Jer. xxiii. 27, saith the prophet there, 'Which think to cause my people to forget my name, by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbour.' He speaks here of the false prophets, and that that is said of them may well be applied to this case, to persecution: they think to cause my people to forget my name. Oh no, they are mistaken; for their dreams could not make those that were true saints to forget God's name: so no sufferings of persecution can make the faithful to decline from the ways of God; no, they see a blessedness in them. Can you delude them from any way by making them blessed? Why, the more you rage against them the more blessed they are.

Thirdly, If it be such a blessed thing to suffer persecution, oh, how base and vile are those hypocrites and apostates that do decline from God for fear of persecution! How beneath are they those that

are true Christians! One rejoices at it, blesses God for it, accounts it an addition to his glory; he is strengthened, encouraged in the ways of God. And on the other side, thou lookest upon it as so great an evil, as thou wilt leave God, Christ, thy conscience, the truth, thy possession, saints, and all, rather than suffer in thy estate, in thy liberty, in thy name, but especially if the danger be greater. Oh, thou hast a drossy and vile spirit! thou knowest not the things of God, that art so shy of persecution, as rather will lose the greatest riches than to be willing to venture upon God, in that that God himself saith to be riches. Thou mightest be blessed by it; and thou wilt rather venture the loss of thy portion in God, and thine inheritance in the Almighty; thou wilt rather venture thine own conscience, and putting thyself under the wrath of the eternal God, than thou wilt venture upon the wrath of man. Such a one is enraged against thee; why, to avoid his provocation and his raging, thou wilt hazard thy soul and body to be under the wrath of the eternal God for ever. Oh, thou art a besotted fool by thy lusts, that wilt forsake Christ and his cause for fear of persecution, whereas Christ himself saith, 'Those are blessed that suffer persecution!'

Fourthly, Christians should labour to establish themselves in this truth for the preparing of themselves for persecution. Look up to Christ, and see him pronouncing this blessedness. Consider of the several particulars that have been spoken, but especially the glory of the kingdom of heaven, that will strengthen thee against persecution; for the very sight of that glory, if thou canst make it real to thy soul, it will put a magnanimity upon thy spirit, it will raise thy spirit above the world, it will make thee look upon all things as under thee, despising and contemning them. As it is said of Christ, when he looked to the joy that was set before him, he despised the shame, he looked upon it as a contemptible thing. There is nothing will make the heart of a man truly magnanimous so as the real sight of the glorious things in the kingdom of heaven; this will darken all the glory of the world in thine eyes. If once thou hast had but a glimmering of the glory of the things in the kingdom of heaven, and looked upon them as certain and real, how easy would it be for thee to suffer anything in the world. That scripture, Heb. x. 32-34, is remarkable for this: 'But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; partly, whilst ye were made a gazing-stock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used. For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.' How came they to be strengthened to take

joyfully the spoiling of their goods? Mark the text, 'Knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and enduring substance.' Observe the phrase. He doth not say that you have heard say so, but knowing in yourselves; there was a revelation of it by the Holy Ghost unto their souls to assure them of it, to settle their hearts in it: 'Knowing in themselves that they had in heaven a better and enduring substance.' I confess, after all that I have preached to you about this, if you know it only by what I have said, or what you hear from others, that will never enable you to suffer with joy the spoiling of your goods; but when you know it in yourselves, when you have a certain sure knowledge of it by the Spirit of God revealing it to your souls, this will make you to suffer with joyfulness the spoiling of your goods. As I remember Joseph said when he sent to Jacob, 'Regard not the stuff, for the riches of Egypt are yours;' so a gracious heart, when it comes to see the riches of heaven, the joys of eternity, he looks upon these things as stuff and lumber, he is fit to suffer any loss whatsoever, and endure any evils that can be inflicted.

Fifthly, If it be such a blessed thing to suffer with Christ, how blessed is it to reign with Christ! Take a Christian at the lowest, cast him into prison, put fetters and bonds upon him, yet he is a blessed man; take away food and raiment, let the malice and rage of all the devils in hell and men in the world inflict what evils they possibly can upon him, he is a blessed man. If he be blessed now, oh how blessed will he be when he shall reign with Christ, when he shall have the crown upon his head, and stand with glorious robes before the Father, and Jesus Christ, and angels, and sit with Jesus Christ to judge the world, and reign for ever with them! Oh how blessed will he be then!

Sixthly, Let us not have too low and mean esteem of sufferers; let us look upon them as honourable, as those that are blessed; let us not be shy of them. It is usual in the world, that when any come to suffer in a good cause, they leave them, they are shy of them, and let them shift for themselves. Oh, it is a wicked thing so to be. Like as it is in a herd of deer, they go together till the huntsman comes and shoots one of them, and when the rest of the deer see the blood come, they will push him out of their company, and will go no longer with him; and so it is many times in this vile world. Those that profess religion, if they prosper in the world, they will be content then to join with them, and make much of them, and keep company with them; but if the providence of God calls out any particular one to suffer more than other, you shall have all the other, that were wont to be inward and intimate with them, withdraw from them, and will scarce own them. Oh this is a wicked and cursed thing. Why wilt thou not own them now? What! dost thou look upon them in a worse

condition than they were? Why, now they are made blessed. As I remember Ignatius said when he felt his bones crashing by the mouths of the wild beasts, 'Now I begin to be a Christian.' So he begins to be a Christian; and it is a sign that God looks upon him as more eminent than thou, because he is called to suffer. Oh therefore be not thou ashamed of those that Christ glories in, and saith that they are blessed. It is very remarkable that we read of John, in Rev. i. 9. John speaks of himself there, and mark what he glories in: 'I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.' John doth glory in this, that he is the companion of the saints in tribulation. John doth not glory in this, Why, I John, that am an apostle, that am the beloved disciple of Christ, I John, that lay in the bosom of Christ. No; but I John, that am your companion in tribulation, and John that was banished to the isle of Patmos for the word of God, and the testimony of Christ. John glories in this, to be the companion of others that suffer in the cause of Christ, and so that forenamed scripture in Heb. x., saith he, 'Partly whilst ye became companions of them that were so used.' And this is a useful note that we are to lay up against such a day that the saints suffer, be willing to own them, and be not at all ashamed of them. That one scripture I shall name about glory in suffering; Christ himself he glories in suffering, and when he would shew forth his glory to Paul, in Acts ix., to bring him down, mark what he saith there, 'I heard a voice saying, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.' Thou kickest against the pricks in persecuting me. Thou persecutest me; it is not my saints but myself that thou persecutest; I own them, they are mine. And I remember there is another scripture that saith, when Jesus speaks of himself, he saith, 'Jesus of Nazareth.' Now Nazareth was the place that he was scorned in, and he was scorned because he came out of Nazareth, and yet Christ glories in that title, Jesus of Nazareth.

Seventhly and lastly, If those be blessed that suffer persecution, then it becomes the saints in all their sufferings to suffer with meekness, to suffer with gentleness, not to manifest any passion in their sufferings. Why? because you are blessed in suffering. Let those have their hearts enraged that are cursed in their sufferings, but for those that are blessed in their sufferings, let their hearts be quieted and still, and be not troubled at your sufferings; carry yourselves so as to be more quiet than your persecutors. I remember I have read of Socrates, speaking to men how they should carry themselves meekly towards

those that they suffer by, saith he, If you meet one in the street that hath a body more diseased than yours, will you be angry with them because of their bodies? And so, if you meet with those that wrong you, it is the disease of their souls, and therefore let not our spirits rise against them, but rather pity them. And this was the commendation of the martyrs, to pity them, and to pray for them as Stephen did; and this indeed is true Christian like. But I am not willing to proceed further in this point, but we shall go on to the next verse.

*'Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.'—Mat. v. 11.*

Christ having spoken of persecution in general, here he comes to instance in a particular persecution, and that is the persecution of the tongue. 'Blessed are ye,' saith he, 'when men shall revile you,—that is, persecute you in reviling you,—and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake.' The argument that this verse holds forth unto us it is, the persecution of the tongue for the sake of Jesus Christ. 'Blessed are you when men shall revile you.'

Revile you. The word it signifies to reproach with detestation and with eliding; to object evil against men, and so to elide and fall out with men, and give them evil language, that is the propriety of the word. The English word revile you, it comes from the Latin that signifies vileness, to use one as if they were base and contemptible, not worthy to be regarded, to speak so of any as vile, to seek to render a man vile and contemptible by our words. I Peter ii. 23, you have the same word in your books of Christ, 'that when he was reviled he reviled not again.' But it is not the same word in the Greek, but yet to the same purpose. Now there are divers points here, but the main it is:—

Observe, That the saints must expect this ill-usage from wicked men while they live here, to be reviled in the cause of Christ.

Secondly, So long as it be for Christ, and falsely, (lying,) so the word is; here it is translated, when they shall say all manner of evil falsely, when they speak all manner of evil (lying) while it is for Christ, and false, the saints are blessed in their sufferings, in this reviling that they must expect. Reviling and speaking all manner of evil, every evil thing, so is the word, they must expect; whatever hell or wicked men can invent against them, that they must expect to be cast upon them. The time would quickly be gone if we should look over scriptures to see how the saints have been reviled in all times; that it is no new thing, but that I shall rather omit till I come to the next thing, where it is said, 'For so did they use the prophets.' There we shall see how the saints in all

times have been reviled, and therefore we shall spare the mentioning of scriptures in this place, referring it to that they must expect reviling from wicked men, because wicked men hate them, and malice is very inventive to find out false accusations. Where there is hatred, if they cannot reach them with the hand, they will reach them by the tongue; those that can they will reach by the hand and tongue both, but there are not many that can do so, but there is no wicked man but can reach another by the tongue. Every wicked man hates those that are godly, and therefore will be ready to reach them by the tongue; so that it is impossible for any to live godly, but he must suffer from the tongues of men. It is possible for a man to live so as to be delivered from the hands of wicked men, but never from their tongues, because every wicked man can reach them that way, and their hearts hate them. In Prov. xvi. 27, 'An ungodly man diggeth up evil, and in his lips there is a burning fire.' If he can see no evil in those that are godly, he will dig for it, he will labour to find it out, nay, he will frame it and conceive it; if he cannot get any real evil he digs for it. And in his lips there is a burning fire, in speaking evil, and provokingly. And the ungodly they look upon the ways of God as irrational ways; they can see no reason for them, and hence it is that they revile the saints. They do not understand their principles in their ways, and therefore they think they are but hypocrites; for indeed if a wicked man should do the same thing that the saints do, he would be a hypocrite, because he hath not principles to carry him through. Now they do not know their principles to carry them through, therefore they say they are hypocrites and false, and revile them with ill names.

Yea, they see the godly in their ways to condemn them, and that enrages them. The godly challenge a more interest in God than they have, and that they cannot bear; therefore they will invent all the ways in the world they can to cast contempt upon them. For if they should not, their godliness would make them honourable in the eyes of the world, and they do envy the honour that they have, because they are dishonoured and disgraced by it. You read of Sanballat and Tobiah, that did labour to cast reproach upon them, and what was the reason of it? This is the reason that is given by interpreters. This same Sanballat and Tobiah had their temple at Samaria. There was a temple built there in contestation about the temple in Jerusalem. Now when the temple came to be built at Jerusalem, they thought, surely now our temple at Samaria will be disgraced. Everybody would be ready to go from them to the temple at Jerusalem. When indeed the temple of Jerusalem was down, then the temple of Samaria they thought might be honoured; but if the temple at Jerusalem

were built, the temple at Samaria would be accounted nothing; therefore they raise all the accusations that possibly they can against Nehemiah, that so the honour and the credit of their temple might not go down. This is for all the world the guise and way of men that are in any way of wickedness; that is, not according to God. If any shall come to set up a way that hath any kind of seemingness of more strictness in it, oh then their hearts are embittered, and then they seek, by calumnies and reproaches, and all the ways they can, to beat down the esteem of those men. For, say they, if those go up, then ours goes down; and those that are godly will go to the temple that is built there, for it doth seem to have the more appearance out of Scripture to be the better, and therefore it is time for them to be stirring. This is the reason of the reproaches that were cast upon Nehemiah by Sanballat and Tobiah; ever such as are most forward in ways of reformation must expect reviling. We read in Zecl. iii. 2, 3, 'He shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him,' &c. 'Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel.' Mark, Joshua here was the great instrument of good in the work of reformation; now Satan stands at his right hand to hinder him in his work, by which means he doth seem to cast filth upon Joshua. Joshua stands clothed with filthy garments, with reproachings and revilings, and this was the way that Satan thought to hinder. And those that are forward in the work of reformation Satan seeks to hinder by reproachings and revilings. And he seeks to do it, because that indeed there is nothing more grievous to an ingenuous spirit than reviling and reproaching. It was very grievous to Christ; Christ cried out when they nodded the head at him. And we never read of the saints making their moans and complaints to God in a more lamentable manner than when reproaches were cast upon them. It is more grievous to a spirit of ingenuity than imprisonment is, than loss of goods, than pain in their bodies, yea, many times than death. Some men have been able to withstand imprisonment, loss of their estates, danger of death, that have not been able to withstand reviling and reproaching. The devil hath prevailed by that way, when he could not prevail by any other opposition of the saints. Now, then, the devil seeing that this is so grievous to an ingenuous spirit, therefore he labours by this means; if he cannot prevail with the other, he hopes he shall prevail with this, and therefore the saints must expect revilings and reproaches.

Yea, God many times hath some hand in it, in suffering them to be reviled and reproached; God sometimes doth chastise his people by the revilings of ungodly men, though it turns to their blessing at length.

They are humbled by that means ; but that we are not to speak of in this place, for we are to speak only of their reviling for the name of Christ. Wherefore then by way of use ;—

Hence then, when any of you enter upon the profession of religion at first, make account of this beforehand, make account that your dearest friends will be ready to revile you, make account in the family to have those that will revile you. And if you meet with revilings in the ways of God, do not account it a strange thing presently ; upon your profession of religion you must expect reproaches and contempt to be cast upon you. Lay in for that you, young professors that begin in the ways of godliness, that you may not be turned out of the way whensoever you meet with them.

Secondly, Let the saints labour to walk more exactly because of this : ‘ Blessed are you if you be reviled for my sake falsely.’ You see the world is set upon reviling ; take heed that you give no occasion to revile you ; but if they do revile you, that they revile you for nothing but for Christ’s sake. Oh that is an excellent thing when Christians can so walk, as when their enemies seek to find out anything, yet they have no reproach to cast upon them, but merely their forwardness in the ways of God ; and if they will revile them for anything else, it must be either by hearsay from others, or from devices of their own. Do not suffer like fools. Oh let not Christians suffer as evil-doers ; why, they are like to suffer for Christ’s sake.

Thirdly, Must the saints expect revilings from wicked men ? Oh, then, let not saints revile saints ; it is enough that the saints are reviled by the ungodly ; let not those that are professors of religion add to them. Do not you bind me, as Samson said ; so let not such as are reputed godly revile me. Oh let not the godly make the lives of other godly men to be grievous unto them any way ; though Christ will turn it to a blessing, yet it is very hard for the saints to endure revilings, especially from those that are godly too. David saith in one of the Psalms that he was reviled by his neighbours ; it was he that ate bread with me at my table, it was my friend and intimate acquaintance ; and in that David was a type of Christ, that was betrayed by Judas, that was his intimate friend. You that are the people of God, you should be very careful of one another’s names, for certainly the devil laughs much at it : there is no greater matter of joy in hell than when one godly man reviles another. Oh you make sport even for the devils themselves, and certainly there was never the like of that as within these few years. Those that are the people of God should not revile the vile wicked ones, much less the saints. I remember I have read of Darius his general, one Mennon, that having soldiers in his

presence which did revile Alexander, against whom he fought, smote him with his lance on the head, and said, ‘ Sirrah, I pay thee thy wages to fight against Alexander, and not to revile and miscall him.’ Oh, where you see any work of grace, take heed of reviling !

We might bring now that question in here, Why may we not speak evil of men that are evil ? It will either belong to this place, or when we come in way of application to the second, that those are blessed that are reviled ; wherein we should shew how the saints should behave themselves, that though they be reviled should not revile again. Those that suffer reviling are blessed ; they are blessed many ways. Not to name the many scriptures which we might, 2 Cor. xii. 10 ; Heb. xi. 26. But to shew wherein they are blessed when they suffer reviling ;—

First, Hereby they see a great difference that God hath made between them and others ; they may think thus with themselves, I might have been among the number of revilers ; but behold I am reviled for Christ’s sake. Oh what a blessed thing is that : I that have as wretched a heart as any, I that might have been left to myself to have been among the rout of revilers of the saints, yet that I should rather be reviled than be among the revilers, the difference is great !

But, secondly, Blessed are they that are reviled, for by this means they come to increase in grace, rather than any way to be hindered. It is said of Luther that he was fed with reproaches that wicked men cast upon him. And indeed God doth suffer the revilings of wicked men to make the saints more fruitful, as the casting of dung upon the earth maketh it more fruitful. Blessed are they therefore—they never grow more than when they are most reviled.

Thirdly, but then further, Blessed are they for all the reproaches that are cast upon them, Christ doth own ; I account them as mine, saith Christ, and Christ takes care of their names. And Christ will honour them, Christ will reward them for every reproach, for every nickname that is cast upon them shall have a great reward in heaven ; therefore they are blessed.

Now, then, if it be so, though there be divers particulars for application, yet this is the main thing that I shall now insist upon, that if it be a blessed thing to be reviled for Christ, then those that are reviled should not seek to help themselves by reviling again. Why wilt thou in a rage revile back again ? Why, I am reviled ; who can bear it ? Why, what hurt canst thou get by it ? Christ saith thou art blessed in it, therefore thou mayest be the better patient under it ; yea, the more patient thou art in it, the more will Christ own thee. Ps. xxxviii. 12, 15, David he had been reviled and reproached, ‘ They also that seek after my life lay snares for me ; and they that

seek my hurt, speak mischievous things, and imagine deceits all the day long.' What then? 'But I as a deaf man heard not, and I was as a dumb man that opened not his mouth; thus I was as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs.' Mark now, 'For in thee, O Lord, do I hope; thou wilt hear, O Lord my God.' The less we hear in our revilings, the more will God hear; and if we hear too much, God's ears will be the more stopped. God's people know ways how to help themselves rather than by returning reviling again. Indeed, you have many people who are scolding in the streets, and if one should cast dirt at them, they will cast dirt at them again; that is all the weapons that scolds have, to cast dirt upon one another. Now those that have manhood in them, they will not run to the kennels to help themselves, but to their other weapons. But you will say this, Do not we find in Scripture that when men are wicked and vile, that the Scripture doth give them their own; the Scripture doth speak of them as vile, and casts contemptible names upon them. And may not we do so with those that do deal wickedly and sinfully; may not we open their eyes, and deal with them according to their folly, and shew their shame unto the world, and seek thereby for to humble them by aggravating their evil upon them—will you call this a reviling again?

Indeed, we read of Christ, in 1 Peter ii. 23, his example is set before us, 'Who when he was reviled, reviled not again; but committed to him that judgeth righteously.' But now, I beseech you, observe first, What the Scripture doth in some cases; secondly, Observe the rules that should be observed to make them to be different from reviling.

Certainly the saints must not revile again, that must be laid as a ground and principle, yet they may rebuke others sharply. In Titus i. the apostle there speaks of the Cretans, that were liars, and mark what words the apostle uses; ver. 10, saith he, 'There are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, especially they of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped.' And then again, 'One of themselves said, The Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies; this witness is true, therefore rebuke them sharply'—rebuke them cuttingly, rebuke them so as even to cut. And you know John, who was of so loving a spirit, having to deal with Diotrephes, saith he, 'If I come, I will remember his deeds which he doth, prating against us with malicious words.' And Paul, when he had to deal with Elymas, he looks upon him, and saith, 'O thou child of the devil,' &c. And Christ, when he had to deal with the pharisees, 'O generation of vipers.' Now here lies the skill of a Christian, to know how to deal, and that according to the nature of the thing, sharply, and not to be guilty of the nature of reviling. All that I would do now for the close o

this exercise, is but to help you to deal with such as are evil, either wicked men or professors of religion—to deal with them plainly, and yet not to revile; therefore these rules are to be observed:—

First, If so be that a man should be guilty of what is charged upon him by another, then I confess, though the other be never so wicked and sinful in his charge, yet he is to put it up patiently, and not to rebuke him that is passionate with him, if himself be guilty, for that time. As Shimei comes to David, O thou bloody man, and reviles him, yet David he was under guiltiness at that time, and his conscience accused him; though Shimei did revile him in saying so, having a wicked intention in it, yet David would not speak one word; he would not say to Shimei, Why dost thou say thus? No; he was guilty himself, and therefore he dared not speak a word, but was humbled under the hand of God. If your conscience tells you you are guilty, take heed; though others should have an ill spirit in speaking evil of you, yet, I say, take heed of turning upon him again.

Secondly, You must not do it presently. Suppose that any have done anything against you, and done it wilfully, and you are not guilty—first, If you be guilty, then you are to say nothing, but put it up, and be humbled before God;—but if you be not guilty, then it is not fit presently to fall upon him that hath unjustly accused you—you had need consider of it, pray over it, examine your hearts. Those that as soon as ever they hear of any one that accuses them for any evil, presently have foul language against them, these are they that are subject to fall into the sin of reviling, instead of a just defence or reprehension of that that is evil in others.

Thirdly, You may reprove others for their sin, reprove them sharply; but it must not be for their sin of weakness, but there must be some wilfulness in the sin before you do reprove them sharply. You should consider, such a one is sinful, but is it of weakness or of wilfulness? If it be a sin of weakness, I must pity them; I may not give them any harsh language at all, as Christ did to Peter, 'Avoid, Satan.' Certainly it was a sin of weakness in Peter, when, as Peter prayed him, 'Master, favour thyself,' he rebuked him with that cutting term, and called him Satan. Not that Peter was malicious in it, but because the nature of the thing that he spake had so great evil in it; therefore Christ was the more sharp. But when the thing is of weakness, and there is no such great consequence in the nature of the offence, then you must deal tenderly. But if there be any word now that hath displeased you, and presently you go and speak sharply, you will turn to be a reviler.

Fourthly, If the offence be repented of, then, though it were a great offence, we must not deal sharply with

any. Whereas ordinarily it is in men that do revile the saints, they will revile them for the least weakness; yea, and will revile them for the sins that they have repented of; they will bring up all old things that were in the time of their ignorance, when they knew not God, to make them odious. But if it be an offence that hath been repented of, as the Lord buries it, so must we.

Fifthly, If the sin be a secret sin, then we must not reprove it before others, not to give any hard language before others: if God hath kept it secret, do not you in the presence of others reveal it. Whereas those that are of reviling spirits, if they can find out anything, though never so secret, they will blaze it presently, only that they might cast a reproach upon such as they have a love to revile.

Sixthly, You must not be partial in your hard language. You shall have many that are carnal and wicked men, that if a professor of religion do anything amiss, oh what hard and bitter language will they give against him. But let one of their companions do that which is worse, they will give no reviling speeches to him; but a professor of religion, they will be sure to lay load upon him. Now that is a sign that thou dost not reprove according to the way of Christ, when thou art partial in thy reproofs.

Seventhly, You must be sure not to give harder language than the matter will bear; that is a reviling, and not to observe the rules that before we set.

Eighthly, The manner of our spirits must be observed. It must not be passionate, that is, manifest that we are in a heat; but when we speak of the evil of others, we had need have as quiet a spirit as at any time in the world. Now, we know whence comes reviling; when men and women are put into a heat, they care not what they say. But if you come to examine, you spake such and such things, and you say they do deserve so and so, and they are guilty, what then? Why, it is not for you passionately to reprove them; but your spirits must be quiet at that time, and you must labour to still all passion when you are about the reprehension of your brethren.

Ninthly, You must not do it revengfully. It is not enough to say that they do deserve it, but you may revenge yourselves in speaking that that is but right. Perhaps they are guilty of such things; ay, but you may charge them with it, not out of a hatred to their sin, or doing them good, but out of a spirit of revenge to thyself. Shimei, whom we named before, he did revile, though the thing were true he said. Why? because he did it out of a spirit of revenge. But certainly some there are that sharp speeches does tend more to do them good; those that are Cretons, that the Scripture speaks of. The cutting speech to a Cretan is more suitable, and tends to his good rather than another speech.

Tenthly, We should observe whether they be of such natures that soft ways will do them good rather than harsh ways; and if they be of such natures that we find by anything else that any soft and gentle ways will do them good, certainly we should use them rather than sharp ways.

Eleventhly, The more sharp we are at any time in our dealing with others, the more prayers we should use. I would appeal to those, both from the former rule and this, when you deal with men that you are exasperated against, do not your consciences tell you that if they should be guilty of such a thing, that a fair reasoning the case with them would more convince them than if you should be sharp; there I say we should look to ourselves that we do convince them that way. We should use much prayer: never pray more for a man or woman than when you are most sharp towards them. Let your consciences testify this to you, and then you will have peace: that you can appeal to God in this, that though they may think you deal sharply with them, yet then I can carry them before the throne of grace, and pray heartily for them; and if they be wicked and ungodly, thou mayest pray against them, as Paul did against Alexander the coppersmith.

Twelfthly, Another rule may be this, Be ready upon the acknowledgment of the evil to close with them again. You should never so sharply reprove any, but if they shall be ready to acknowledge the evil, you should be ready to close with them, and bless God for them. But you do revile others if they shall come and acknowledge the evil that you say, and yield to you in that thing you speak against them for—nay, you are the more against them; that is a sign thou art a reviler. But if thou didst carry thyself graciously, and the other comes to acknowledge it, oh you would join with them, and bless God for them, and be more united to them than ever.

Thirteenthly, Another rule is this, That is a reviler that speaks evil of another, and is glad that he hath such an evil to speak of him. This is not one that reproves sharply according to the mind of God; but such a one, I have an advantage against him in such a sin he hath committed, and I am glad of it. Oh this is a wicked thing! That is as much as to say, I prize more my particular advantage than I do the honour of God. When thou hast to deal with an adversary, if there be anything that is evil that thou hast to say against him, I say, thou shouldst charge him according to the nature of the offence, and withal be sorry that God hath left him to such a sin; and mourn for it—appeal to God. Do you do so that do revile others—I mean, that speak evil of others? for no man will acknowledge himself to be a reviler. No; they say they have just cause to speak of it. But grant it that you

have just cause; but are you sorry from your souls that there is just cause? how doth it grieve your souls that this man is left to so much evil, that you have so much advantage against him? Certainly, if it be so, there is no fear of reviling.

Fourteenthly, lastly, When men shall come and speak evil of others before they are called to it, there certainly it doth argue a guiltiness. Herein this

man or woman is in danger to be guilty of the sin of reviling; so that now observe but these rules, (for the heart of man is very unruly,) and then you may come to know how to carry yourselves in a Christian way when you have to deal with others that do deserve sharp reprehension; you may reprehend them sharply, and not at all revile them; for he is a blessed man that is reviled falsely for Christ's sake.

## SERMON XXXVI.

OR,

### A WORD OF USE TO THOSE WHO ARE REVILED.

*'Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.'*—MAT. v. 11.

THIS last rule of our Saviour's for blessedness is the most strange to flesh and blood of all the other, for them to be blessed that are persecuted, reviled; yea, the rather blessed, because persecuted and reviled. This is a riddle to flesh and blood, therefore Christ is the more large in it. There is but one short verse for any of the other, and three large verses for this. For the point of persecution, we have opened what it is, and the condition of the saints, what that is, wherein the blessedness of that consists, because few will acknowledge that they persecute for righteousness. We gave some convictions for men, whereby they may come to know that in their persecution of godly men, that it is righteousness that they may persecute. And what is contained in that promise, 'theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'

We came the last day to speak of this particular persecution, the persecution of the tongue, reviling—'Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you.' The word for reviling, signifies to reprove one, to cast in their teeth any evil with detestation. Now the condition of the saints is such that they must expect to be reviled in the world, and to be reviled and reproached, and that we shewed you from Scripture; and for example, we shall refer to the latter end of it,—'For so persecuted they the prophets.' The use of reviling I gave the last day, the hatred and malice that there is in the hearts of men. All ungodly men hate the saints; but yet all cannot persecute them, but every one may revile them. They have the

\* Query, 'rise'? or 'cause'?—Ed.

liberty of the tongue to speak of them as they will, though not to persecute them; and the devil knows that reviling it is a powerful way to prevail, to weary them in their profession. Your spirits cannot bear reviling; it is a sore and heavy affliction unto many, and hard to bear, and he seeth that many times when he cannot prevail by persecution that he doth prevail by reviling. Reviling is a sore evil, and doth go very deep into the spirits of men. Many uses were made of the point in general, as when men take up their profession of religion at first, let them make account of reviling, account of all ill language; it may be parents, kindred, friends, acquaintance, masters, and all will revile you, and will have names to revile you by—and make account of this before. And then, secondly, Labour to be careful in your conversation; men will revile you, do what you can, but let them not find anything in you whereby they may revile you. Thirdly, Let not saints revile one another, for it is very sad so to do; it is that that the psalmist complained of in Ps. xxxi. 11, 'I was a reproach among all mine enemies; but especially among my neighbours, and a fear to mine acquaintance; they that did see me without fled from me.' He makes a complaint of the reproach of his enemies, but especially amongst his neighbours; that was sore to him; it was not so much for the saints to suffer reviling languages by prelates, as to suffer one from another; this is exceeding sad. 'Do you not bind me,' saith Samson; so the godly will say of their fellow-brethren, 'Do not you bind