

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

us.' There is a great blessing in suffering of reviling. The husbandman makes his ground fruitful by casting dung on it; so doth God make his saints fruitful by the casting revilings on them by wicked men. Why is it such a blessedness? Thou art to look on it as a blessed thing, that when thou art reviled for Christ, thou mightest have been reviled for thine own wickedness. And blessed are ye, for there is a great reward; 'great is your reward in heaven.' The Lord takes care of your names while you are so reviled. The use that we stood upon the last day is this, that if it be such a blessed thing to be reviled, to suffer for Christ, then it should teach the saints that when they are reviled not to revile again; for what need they? it is that that is turned into a blessing.

Again, We must not revile others. What! may we not charge others of the evil that they are guilty of? We spent a great deal of time the last day to shew you how you may charge others of what evil they are guilty of, and charge them deeply too, and not be guilty of reviling, because it was a hard work to have to do with other men's sins, and not to be guilty of reviling. Titus i. 10, 13, 'For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, especially they of the circumcision.' The word translated *sharply* is *cuttingly*,* and if any people of the world may be rebuked, they are the Cretons, that are liars. They may call them to the rule of the apostle. It is not safe, when any have provoked you, to fall presently a-rebuking. When the business concerns ourselves we may avoid the turning of reprehensions into revilings by deliberating of it; and if the sin be secret, then we must not in a public way speak evil of men; for then it is an argument that a man loves reviling, when he seeks to rake up secret things, and declares and publishes them in evil language to the world. If God keep them secret, then you should not reveal them; and you must not be glad of offences neither. Oh take heed of that! oh mourn for them, and be sure what language you give have a just foundation in the evil that is committed by those men that you speak against, and that you do not do it passionately and revengefully, but do it out of a meek and quiet spirit, and out of love to the truth. The more you speak against any, and charge any evil on them, you ought to pray the more from them; and specially, if you think there be anything of God in them, and if they have anything of God in them, do not speak anything against them but in prayer. Were these rules but observed, that as often as they prayed for them, they prayed for them as with a bitter spirit they spoke against them,† then thou wouldst

be clear in thy conscience of reviling. But not to proceed further in that which we spoke of the last day; a word or two more about this point in general.

If they be blessed that be reviled, let not the saints by reviling be put out of their way. Whenas Christ tells thee thou art blessed, what great hurt hast thou when such call thee such names, and speak such evil of thee, and thou canst bear it? Such as know what Christian religion means, indeed, they should not at all be turned out of their way because of reviling, nor dislike thereof. Do not sit down with this: Since I came to profess the Christian religion, what names have been cast on me, scorns, reproaches, and revilings! I remember a learned man hath this similitude, What a dishonour were it for a soldier with a puff of wind to be cast off his horse! Would not every one laugh at it? Such a dishonour is it for any one that is in a good way, or in a good cause, to be taken off by the reproaches of wicked men, which are but puffs of wind. Men are willing to suffer reproaches for their sin, shame, and any name for to have their lust; and wilt not thou be willing to suffer nicknames for the cause of Christ? Remember that Christ hath delivered thee from an eternal reproach: Dan. xii. 2. 'And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.' Yea, remember that Christ takes care of thy name, and thou art under a great many of promises for clearing thy righteousness as the noonday, and it is not to sit down and think to go out of the way by reason of reviling, but pray to the Lord. Take two or three scriptures for directions to the godly when they are reviled. The one is in Ps. cix. 1, 2, 'Hold not thy peace, O God of my praise; for the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful are opened against me: they have spoken against me with a lying tongue.' David was a type of the church, and he suffered exceeding much all kind of suffering and reviling as much as any. Their months was opened. What, then, in ver. 3? 'They compassed me about also with words of hatred; and fought against me without a cause.' Ver. 4, What then? What do I do, 'but I give myself to prayer.' The original, תפלה רבתי, is this, but I pray; that is my refuge; prayer is my help. So in Job xvi. 20, 'My friends scorn me, but mine eye poureth out tears unto God.' Ps. lvii. 2, 3, 'I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me. He shall send from heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up. Selah.' God shall send forth his mercy and his truth, and other like expressions of David. I have help in

as often as they reviled you, you prayed for them; and prayed for them with as loving a spirit as with a bitter spirit they spoke against you.—Ed.

* ἀσφραγίστως signifies cuttingly or precisely, or to the quick. So Estius.

† Probably the text should be something to this effect, 'that

heaven, and therefore I need not revile again, and be discouraged in my way. Nehemiah was reproached when he was in his work, and did he cease his work? No.

In the last place, If those be blessed that are reviled, then certainly those that are revilers are cursed. It is a blessed thing when men, being godly, are reviled for Christ. Then what dost thou think, that instead of suffering for reviling, that art a reviler? Those that were reviled, and being weary of it, art turned revilers. Oh take heed of them! there are no more bitter revilers of religion in the world than such as are apostatising professors. When you see any man that hath been a forward professor, and fallen off, and turned out, remember Rabshakeh's apostasy, that was the worst reviler of all. Surely revilers of those that are godly are in a very cursed condition, for men may pray against them: Neh. iv. 3-5, 'Now Tobiah the Ammonite was by him; and he said, Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall. Hear, O our God; for we are despised: and turn their reproach upon their own head, and give them for a prey in the land of captivity. And cover not their iniquity, and let not their sin be blotted out from before thee: for they have provoked thee to anger before the builders.' See for ignorant ones in that place of 2 Kings ii. 23, 24, 'And he went up from thence unto Bethel: and as he was going up by the way, there came forth little children out of the city and mocked him, saying, Go up, thou bald-head; go up, thou bald-head. And he turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the Lord: and there came forth two she-bears out of the wood, and tare forty-two children of them.' Oh take heed of reviling. Though you do it ignorantly, take heed of it; it is a most dangerous thing. You will say you do not revile them for their goodness, but because they are hypocrites. For that I will give you that scripture; you may think it may be an excuse, but it may prove to be an aggravation: Mark iii. 22, 'And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils.' They would not revile them, and say, We do not speak those evils of them because they have the Spirit of God, but it is by Beelzebub. Therefore from thence note this, that it is a dangerous thing to charge that on hypocrisy or any wickedness, and God knows it comes from his own Spirit. I might shew you divers scriptures—read the 59th and 57th Psalms, but especially the 59th Psalm—that they go up and down grieving through the city. You speak contemptible of the saints, and the Holy Ghost speaks very contemptible of you. God keeps their hands short, or else they would do more; for they go grieving up and down the streets. But to go on in the text, 'Blessed are

you when men revile you, and persecute you.' Here comes in persecution again.

First, From the doubling of this—for there is nothing in Scripture that is in vain; though there be repetitions, yet there is some reason—you are blessed, and your posterity is blessed. Christ pronounceth blessedness on such as suffer for his name's sake, that suffer persecution; and it may be a great comfort to any that have had their forefathers suffered, and Christ will own them the rather, Christ will own their posterity the rather. Suppose you should have one come to you in poor tattered rags, and beg at your door, and one should come and tell you this man's father lost all that he had for your sake—his grandfather lost his life in your cause; would not any man reward this child, when he knows this was the child of the father, or the grandchild of the grandfather that suffered for you? It may be you suffer persecution now, and ye be pronounced blessed, and ye find no blessedness comes; but you have a double blessing provided for you hereafter. Those men that now have reviling spirits, if God gives power into their hands, they will have persecuting spirits. Oh let us pray that the Lord would keep them short, for they would be in danger of being persecutors.

Secondly, And further, this is added, *persecuted*, because there are some that can bear ill language that cannot bear persecution. Some men care not what they say of them in words. Words break no bones; but if they come to suffer the loss of anything—of estate, imprisonment—then they are ready to fly off. Be not only willing to bear evil words, but to bear evil actions, then when they speak all manner of evil, they speak all speeches, all kind of evil. It is a strange thing that this should be said of the disciples, those that should be sent out, that they should have all manner of evil spoken against them, that they should be thought to be a little too strict, but not for all manner of evil to be spoken of them. But St Paul saith, 'We are the offscouring of the world,' 1 Cor. iv. 13. The word is taken, according to some interpreters, from the dung-carts; every one brings his dirt and casts into their carts, so saith Paul, 'We are the offscouring of the world,' and we are the dung-carts, and there is no man but hath some dirt or other to cast upon us.⁹ The apostle alludes to the expiation in use among the heathens, (saith Budans.) When certain condemned persons were brought forth, with garlands on their heads, to be put to death as an offering to Neptune, they used to say, *Sis pro nobis puripsum*, Be thou a propitiation for us; so as if the apostle had said, we are as hateful in the sight of the

* *περισβαφιαρα, puripsumtum*. The word signifies properly filth and dirt, and a dung cart that goes through the city, wherein all filth is cast. And so *περιφνημα, sorles*, filth. Both words signify the same.

people as those condemned persons that was offered up by way of expiation. And now we are loaded with cursings and revilings as those persons were. 'Blessed are ye when they speak all manner of evil.' There are some that can bear some reproaches, but not all reproaches; we must be willing to submit to all that God shall call us to—all manner of evil. It may be there is in some, some cause of suspicion, but they must not reprove men on suspicion; but if we went no further but only to speak evil because there is some ground of suspicion.* But the people of God must expect (if on no ground at all) evil men will revile them.

Secondly, Such kind of evil as is most contrary to them; as those that are the most sober and most temperate, they must be content to be reviled by the name of drunkards, and those that are the most chaste, they must be content to be reviled by the name of unchaste. Those that desire above all things in the world peace, and would not be causes of trouble, only so far as their duty calls them to, yet they must be accounted to be the troublers of the state and church. That evil which they do abhor they must be content to suffer; yea, whatsoever evil that any wicked men are guilty of, yet godly men are charged with it. When Nero would fire Rome, the Christians were the cause of it. They lay to their charge all kind of evil; why should they speak of all manner of evil? for if they be not guilty of it then it would be washed away, and to the shame of those that do cast it on them. But they will divulge the evil abroad, and abundance will come to hear of the reproach that cannot come to hear of the justification of the reproach, and of the answer to the reproach, and therefore boldly and strongly will they speak all manner of evil, though it be things that are as far distant from them as the east from the west. Yet they will seek to cause it to stick by casting it on them, take off who can, by speaking all manner of evil. From this let us learn not to judge of the saints by what we hear of them. What an infinite wrong will it be for us to think men to be guilty by whatever is cast upon them! we shall wrong the generation of the righteous, that if we should have the least thought of guiltiness by the reproaches that are abroad. And then let the godly labour to confute all evil that is said of them: 1 Pet. i. 15, 'But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.' It seems that the wicked they labour to revile with all manner of evil to cast on you, and do you labour in all your conversation to manifest all holiness, and that is the way to answer all manner of reviling.

* The meaning evidently is,—if they (evil men) went no further but only to speak evil because there is some ground of suspicion, it were not so bad; but the people of God, &c.—Ed.

Thirdly, further, 'Blessed are ye, when they revile you and persecute you, and speak all manner of evil falsely,' lyingly. It is a strange speech that some have; if so be that I were guilty it would nothing so much trouble me; but for them to charge me when I never thought on it, it must needs trouble me. If you were guilty, when they speak evil of you truly, then you had cause to roar and cry out in the anguish of your heart. Brethren, the best of all the saints they have some evil in them; therefore we should labour to walk that men, if they will revile us, we should be sure that they should not lit right; we are conscious of some evil to ourselves, but we should keep it from the eye of the world. But now, how shameful is it for those that profess godliness to give just occasion to be reviled! If men's mouths shall be opened, and it prove to be true that you are professors of religion, you by your sin put yourselves from under the blessedness. When men shall say you are thus and thus, and your own conscience tells you that you are worse than they do accuse you of, thou art in a sad condition when thou hast in thy bosom a reproving conscience. You talk of men's revilings, but what doth thy conscience? Men speak some evil of thee, but thy conscience speaks more evil of thee. Secondly, consider this, That if it prove true and not false that men reprove you for it, is the hand of God justly against thee. God doth spit in thy face, and cast shame on thee, by the reviling of other men.

Fourthly, Further, you are those that do hurt unto religion, you that give just occasion of men's reviling of them. Professors that walk scandalously, that make great show of religion, you are the men, and do the greatest mischief of any men on the earth. God will require all the sufferings of all his other saints at your hands. You do more hurt to religion than all the persecutors of the world; that Christian that makes profession of religion, and gives just occasion of reviling, he doth more hurt to religion than all the revilers of the world. And there is this reason for it: persecutors do but make men afraid to profess religion; they do not make them to be out of love with religion; but those that walk scandalously, they prevail upon men's consciences, so as to make men hate religion. Now, is not this a greater mischief for to make men hate it, than to make men afraid to profess it? Therefore look to yourselves, that if men speak any evil of you that they may speak it falsely; but if they speak it on just occasion, then you cannot make your moan to God, you are cut off from that privilege; but, being reviled falsely, then you can enjoy that privilege, as you may read in the 15th chap. of Jeremiah. It is the privilege of the saints, that when any men speak evil of them, and their conscience tells them that it is falsely, they can then go

to God. 'Then when they speak evil of you falsely for my sake,' be not offensive unto others in any matters that concern man and man. If you suffer, do not suffer as evil-doers, but suffer for the sake of Christ, suffer in the matter of God. As it is said in Dan. vi. 5, 'Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God.' Their consciences were convinced, that in all matters between man and man, there was nothing to do with him; but let us watch him between the matters of the Lord his God. The Lord deliver us from such kind of spirits! So long as Christians walk so that let the world pry, and in all their converse between man and man, they can find no fault—only in the matters of the Lord their God, only for Christ's cause, and the matters of the gospel. You shall have many say of their neighbour, The neighbour that lives by me he is an honest neighbour as any can live by me; but he is thus and thus, and hath taken up such an opinion, and is strict in the matters of God. And so of servants and wife. Blessed are ye when all that pry into your ways and lives, have nothing else in it. All that you suffer it is for the sake of the Lord your God. Certainly, if so be you shall suffer only for his sake, then it must be set on his score, and he will own it in that day of his. 'In all your afflictions he is afflicted,' Isa. lxiii. 9. 'In all their affliction he was afflicted; and the angel of his presence saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them, and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old,' Ps. lxxix. 4, 12. 'We are become a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and derision to them that are round about us. And render unto our neighbours sevenfold into their bosom the reproach wherewith they have reproached thee, O Lord.' If any man suffer for your sake, you account yourself bound to vindicate him; so the apostle, Rom. viii. 26, 'Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.' It is a comfort for the Lord to take notice of your sufferings, when thou sufferest for Christ's sake. Christ loves thee, he hath promised to help thee hereafter; he hath helped thee, and is engaged to help thee; for it is for his sake that thou sufferest. Therefore go on, and account thyself blessed for his sake. Certainly, if we be willing to suffer for his sake, certainly he will be willing to suffer for our sakes; when thou sufferest anything for Christ, he is infinitely worthy—he is worthy of all that thou hast. What hath he done

for thee? Hath he not done more for thee than thou hast done for him, or canst do for him?

Sixthly, Further, a very great use, 'Blessed are those that have all manner of evil spoken falsely for my name sake.' When you are reproached for Christ's sake you are blessed; but when Christ is reproached for your sake, Christ now is not in a way of merit. He hath finished the work; and yet, for all that, Christ may have some suffering, may have shame cast on him, even for thy sake, through thy wicked and ungodly life. Why, this is a cursed cursed thing, this is even to pull Christ down from heaven to suffer again. Why, did not Christ suffer enough, and wilt thou have him to suffer for thy sake more? Do not thou add to his suffering, but suffer as much for his sake as he hath done for thy sake. Rom. ii. 24, 'For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written.' See how God is reviled! The name of God is blasphemed for your sakes. When you walk scandalously, the name of God is reproached. If a professor of religion hath any temptation to sin, consider, if thou givest any permission to that sin, thou tramplest on the name of Christ. You trample on me, saith Christ. Wilt thou go on yet to the commission of sin, though the name of God lies before thee? Oh, hard-hearted wretch! that knowest the name of God lies there, and thou wilt trample on it. It follows in ver. 12—that is, 'Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; do not only account yourselves blessed, but rejoice and be exceeding glad. Luke vi. 23, 'Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy; for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did the fathers unto their prophets.' Leap for joy; skip and leap for joy wheras you are reviled for Christ, that it is not enough for Christians to be patient under suffering, but they must be joyful under suffering. It doth not become true Christians to manifest any kind of sorrow under any suffering for Christ, that when at any time we suffer in his cause,—whatever we do when we suffer for our sin, there we may manifest the work of sorrow.—But when we suffer persecution for Christ's sake, Christ would not have our hearts to be sorrowful at that time, but calls for rejoicing; and here is the difference between suffering for sin and suffering for the sake of Christ. There the Lord calls for mourning and weeping when affliction is on you for your sin; but when you suffer for Christ's sake, there the Scripture doth not call for any mourning or weeping, or any humiliation, but for rejoicing and blessing God that they are accounted worthy for to suffer for him.