

he was first converted, the very first time he gave in his name to Jesus Christ, the first thing that he must be told was this, what great things he must suffer for Jesus Christ. The Lord Christ will train up converts

at the very first in this point. This is, therefore, a very useful point for young professors of religion to consider of: that all that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer affliction.

## SERMON XXXII.

OR,

### DISCIPLES OF CHRIST MUST EXPECT PERSECUTION.

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

WE made a little entrance into the first point; and it was towards the close of the exercise, so that we went but a little way.

That all the disciples of Christ must expect persecution. This is the first lesson that Christ teaches any that come to him. 'If any will be my disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me;' and in Acts ix. 16; as soon as ever Saul was converted, presently it was declared to him what things he must suffer for Christ's sake; and in 2 Tim. iii. 12, the apostle pronounces that all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. We spent a little time in the opening of that text, shewing what an emphasis there is almost in every word. But I shall proceed for the farther opening of the point by Scripture, examples, and reason, and so apply it.

We read in the book of Joshua of the Jebusites, as soon as ever they had entered into covenant with Joshua and the people of God, the kings round about them rose up against them. They were quiet enough with their neighbours before, but when they had entered into covenant with Joshua, then they rose up against them. Though men may be quiet enough living in the world, before God works upon their spirits, but if they will give up their names to Jesus Christ to come into the covenant with him, then they must expect to suffer persecution, that all the world will be against them. In Gen. xv. 12, 17, see what the Lord tells Abraham concerning his posterity: 'When the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him.' (It was presently upon the covenant that God had made with him and his seed.) Ye shall find, in the beginning of the chapter, God appeared to him, and told him he was his shield, and his exceeding great reward; and in ver. 5 he makes

him a promise of his seed likewise: Look towards heaven, 'and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them; so shall thy seed be,' and he believed in the Lord, and he counted it to him for righteousness. It was therefore a covenant of grace that God made with Abraham, couched under some dark expressions. Yet Abraham knew it to be a covenant of grace, and therefore his faith was justifying faith, it was accounted for righteousness. Now as soon as he had made this promise, in ver. 12, God caused him to fall into this deep sleep, and a horror of great darkness fell upon him. To what end was that? It was to shew him, that though he had brought his seed into covenant with him, yet they must suffer great afflictions in Egypt. And ver. 17, 'It came to pass that when the sun went down and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces.' That was presented to him to declare to him the sufferings of his seed in Egypt, which was a type of the sufferings of all believers to the end of the world. That text likewise from the New Testament may be instead of all: Acts xiv. 22, 'Exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.' You must expect tribulation in the entering into the kingdom of God; that is the godly man's text. The worldly man's text is in Job xxi. 13. There is a text that a worldly heart will close with: 'They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave.' That concerns a worldly man; here he shall spend his days in wealth, though in a moment he goes down to the grave: but the godly, he must through many tribulations enter into the kingdom of heaven. You find that Peter dared not pray against all persecutions for the saints. 1 Pet. v. 10: 'But,' saith he, 'the God of all grace,

who hath called us into his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make ye perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.' The God of all grace. Though he had in his prayer to deal with the God of all grace, yet he would not pray so much as that they should be presently established, but after they had suffered a while, then to make them perfect. As if Peter should say, I know the mind of Christ, and God's counsels concerning all these that will profess the truth: that while they are going on towards perfection they must suffer hard things; and therefore, though God be the God of all grace, I dare not so much as pray that they should be made perfect without any sufferings at all. But after ye have suffered a while, then to make you perfect. It is very observable, if you read the story of the seven churches in the book of the Revelation, which you have in the 2d and 3d chapters of that book. You shall find that there were but two of all those seven churches of which there is but little spoken concerning their sufferings; but of the other five there is much said. And which are those two that there is so little spoken of their suffering? If you examine the Scripture, you shall find, first, the church of Sardis, and then the church of Laodicea. The church of Sardis; read what is said of that. It was a church that the Holy Ghost saith, 'I know thy works, thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.' And the church of Laodicea; it was a lukewarm church: chap. iii. 16, 'So then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth.' Those two churches they were the worst of all the seven; and yet those two, you read, had less sufferings than the other: ay, they would escape better than the rest. Those that had a name to live and were dead, and those that were lukewarm, they would escape suffering of persecution. The worse men are that profess religion, for the most part they escape sufferings more; and the more power and life of godliness, the more they are like to suffer. Christians they must expect persecutions. Christ here was preaching to his disciples, and they found the use (or the reality) of this sermon of Christ in this part of it; for partly the Scripture and partly ecclesiastical stories do tell us of every one of the apostles that suffered a violent death, except only John; and yet the Scripture tells us that he suffered banishment. And some stories tells us that he was cast into a cauldron of hot, scalding lead, though God miraculously delivered him; but that he suffered banishment is clear, in Rev. i. He was banished into the isle of Patmos for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ; and we have ecclesiastical stories, which none yet that I know do question the truth of, that doth declare the violent death of all the other apostles—not only suffering some troubles, but suffering unto blood.

Though, it is true, some differ in the manner of their death, but yet all agree in this, in their violent death. If you read where they are all twelve named, you shall find, first, concerning Peter, that stories tells us he was crucified; but he would not be crucified as Christ, but with his heels upward, as Christ was with his head upwards; and Andrew, he was likewise crucified by Egeus, king of Edessa; and James the son of Zebedee, he was slain by Herod with the sword; and then John, he was banished, as before, though we do not certainly read of his death; and Philip, he was crucified at Hierapolis, in Asia; and Bartholomew, while he was preaching the truth, multitudes fell upon him, and beat him down with staves; and Thomas, he was slain with a dart; and Matthew, he was slain with a spear, or, as some say, run through with a sword; and James the son of Alphens, who was called the just, was thrown down from off a pinnacle of the temple, and having some life left in him, he was brained with a fuller's club: Lebbeus was slain by Agbarus, king of Edessa; Paul, the apostle, was beheaded at Rome, under Nero; and Simon, the Cananian, he and Jude was slain in a tumult; and Matthias, he was stoned to death. Thus the apostles they found what Christ had said, that they should suffer persecutions. Christ armed them beforehand with this scripture, preaching unto them; for so it was specially to his disciples and apostles that were nearest to him; and by this armed them for persecution, which every one of them afterwards suffered, even unto death, save only one.

Now if you should ask me, first, How it comes to pass that they suffer persecution?

First, From the devil. Secondly, From the nature of wicked men. Thirdly, From the holy ends that God hath in the sufferings of his people.

First, From the devil. He is the old serpent, the scorpion, the old dragon—Satan, that signifies an adversary, a roaring lion, that seeks whom he may devour. The devil doth infinitely hate God; and hating God, he must needs hate all that belongs to him, or anything so far as it hath anything of God in it. The devil's sin it is a sin of malice, and therefore of the same nature with the sin against the Holy Ghost. Now this is the nature of the sin against the Holy Ghost, that it makes any one that hath committed it to hate God, and to hate anything of God that they see anywhere, and therefore to wish all hurt unto others. As I remember I have heard a story of a man that was thought to sin against the Holy Ghost, and they asked him, though he had no thoughts to be saved himself, yet whether he would not have his wife and children to be saved. This was the answer he gave: There was a time, indeed, that I would have been glad to have had my wife and children saved; but now I wish that both they and all the

world were damned—and merely from hence, upon his hatred to God; it was not so much in hatred to his wife and children, or to the world, but because he hated God, and would have all to be enemies to God, as himself was. This is the nature of the sin against the Holy Ghost, though I do not think but it may be committed where this is not expressed, but there is this kind of malice. Now the devils having committed the sin of the same nature, because of their hatred to God, they hate the image of God, and hate all things that have any tendency unto God; and therefore, if possibly they can, they would have none to be saved; but if they cannot hinder but that some shall be saved, they resolve that they shall be saved with as much difficulty as they can help, and now the devil is called the prince of this world, and he prevails in this world much. The world it is in captivity to him. He rules, and he is called the god of this world. Now he, hating God and his saints so much, surely, while he hath so much to do in the world as he hath, all the saints of God must needs expect hard things.

Secondly, This poison of the old serpent, it is sucked up by wicked and ungodly men: Gen. iii. 15, 'I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed.' There is a natural enmity between the golly and the wicked, a secret antipathy; now antipathy is the greatest opposition, the strongest, the most secret and deadliest opposition, and constant opposition, and such an antipathy there is between the saints, and wicked and ungodly men. I read of tigers, that they are put into a rage by the smell of spices; and the savour of the graces of God in the saints will put the tigers of the world into a rage. There is in the hearts of men an opposition to godliness that is beyond all kind of reason; for it is an antipathy. Now an antipathy, you know, is an opposition of one creature against another, that there can be no reason given of it; as that a lion should be such a terrible creature, not fearing the neighing of horses, nor the beating of drums, nor rattling of spears, and yet that the crowing of a cock should scare him, and so between the elephant and the mouse, that no reason can be given for. So it is in the opposition between the wicked and the saints; let godly men walk never so inoffensively, yet there will be an opposition, though there can be no reason given. Some men, if such a dish come to a table, they are ready to faint; but they can give no reason of it. And so it is between the wicked and the golly; and therefore the apostle Paul, after his conversion, he could say and acknowledge in his persecuting of the saints he was a madman: Acts xxvi. 11, 'And being exceedingly mad against them.' Why, Paul, there was a time thou thoughtest it to be reason what thou didst. Ay,

but now Paul looks upon it as madness. There is an antipathy between the hearts of the wicked and godly men, and antipathies can never be cured without the death of one; and certainly this opposition between wicked and godly men can never be cured in this world till God doth take away the saints from them, or them from the saints; as there is a natural opposition between the fire and the water, even so the golly and the wicked, there will be an opposition between them. Read Prov. xxix. 27; there you shall see that the righteous is an abomination to the wicked, and the wicked an abomination to the righteous.

Ay, but you will say, Though the devil and wicked men be of such vile natures as they will hate the saints, yet doth not God rule over all? doth not the Lord reign in the world?

Ay, he doth so, and there is cause of rejoicing; for were it not that God did reign by his almighty power, wicked men would never suffer a saint to be alive in the world. As soon as ever any godliness were but appearing, the father would not suffer it in his child, nor one neighbour in another; but it is God that keeps in the rage of the devil, and the rage of wicked men. But yet God suffers his saints to be under persecution, and he hath many holy ends in the suffering of it.

As, first, To shew forth that great power of his, in carrying forth poor weak creatures through all the sufferings that they meet withal. I remember a heathen, looking upon the Christians in the primitive times, suffering with so much courage such great tortures and torments, he cries out, 'Of a truth the God of the Christians is a great God,—a great God, that doth enable those that are his worshippers to go through such great sufferings with so much courage and cheerfulness. God's great power is seen in keeping the graces of the Spirit alive in the hearts of the saints in the midst of persecutions.'

And then, as much of the power of God is seen, so there is much of the exercise of grace that God aims at; therefore, in his holy will and counsel he suffers his saints to be under persecution, that their graces may be exercised, that their love to himself may be exercised. It was a boasting of Scipio, a Roman, that he had so many soldiers, that if he should bid them go up upon the top of such a tower and throw themselves down, they would all be willing to lose their lives, merely in respect to me, saith he. The Lord Christ may say so: he hath thousand thousands of his saints, that if it be his will that they shall go through fire and water, and suffer the loss of their goods, liberties, lives, they will do it. Now the Lord takes a great deal of delight in the exercise of the grace of love and faith and patience and humility. Never was the church more fruitful

than when it was watered with its own blood; when the church was as a vine watered with her own blood, then it grew more fruitfully. The rose is never so sweet upon the stalk as when it is cast into the still; then it smells more sweet than it doth when it grows in all its beauty upon the bush. The exercise of grace it is a greater good than the enjoyment of any comfort in this world. Oh that we were rightly principled in this one great mystery of godliness! Whether do you account the exercise of a grace to be a greater good unto you than the enjoyment of a world, or of any comforts in this world? Oh if we did, we would not think our condition to be so hard when we are under afflictions and troubles. Thou thinkest it a fine and brave thing to live at ease, to have thy house and shop, and comings in, and clothes, and provisions for thy family and for thy children, and leaving great portions, and rich matches, and these things are brave things to the eye of flesh; but now canst thou account the exercise of the grace of humility, the exercise of the grace of faith, of the grace of patience, to be a greater happiness to thee than the enjoyment of all these good things? Certainly this were an argument indeed of a spiritual heart, of a heart that is acquainted with the ways of God, that is instructed from heaven. The Lord takes from me these outward comforts, respect and honour and esteem in the world, and my estate and liberty, and, it may be, lays heavy things upon my body too; but I bless his name I find I have more exercise of grace than ever I had. I never knew what the exercise of grace was, so as methinks I find it now. I never knew what the exercise of patience and humility was. Surely if I had not been brought into this low estate I should never have had the exercise of these graces; and I bless God I see more excellency in the exercise of these graces than there is in the enjoyment of all the comforts that I had before in the world. If thou canst say so, blessed art thou; flesh and blood hath not revealed these things unto thee. Thy heart is according to the very heart of God, who art taught in such a thing as this is; and therefore, when thou shalt suffer from the hands of God himself, yet if it be to exercise grace, thou art no loser; and if thou shalt suffer never such sore and grievous afflictions from the hands of men, yet if thou findest this effect of all thy sufferings, that God doth thereby draw forth the exercise of thy graces, certainly thou art blessed in this, and this is God's end that he doth aim at in permitting his people to be under persecutions.

And then a third end, and that is of very great use to consider of: It is for discovery of the hearts of men. If there were no suffering for his name sake, there would be little discovery between the hypocrite and between the sound professor. I re-

member I have read of Pametrius, a heathen: saith he to the Bishop of Rome, Let me be made a bishop, and I will be a Christian—seeing the honour of the bishop; let me but have that, and I will be a Christian as well as any. If there were nothing but prosperity in the profession of Christ's kingdom, how would the truth and sincerity of men's hearts appear, and how would the hypocrisy of others appear? Fiery trials makes great separation; and indeed it is to make a discovery of our own hearts to ourselves. Before the time of suffering we do not know our own hearts, what drossiness there is in them: but when suffering comes, we may discover much drossiness of our own hearts—and to discover us to others too. In Luke ii. 35, speaking of the sufferings that should follow upon the profession of the gospel, he tells the Virgin Mary, 'That a sword should pierce through her soul, that the thoughts of many hearts may be discovered.' Whenas there is such hard things following upon the profession of the gospel as if a sword did pierce through the soul, then the thoughts of many hearts shall be discovered. God intends to discover the thoughts of men's hearts by persecution. Formal professors are as withered leaves upon a tree. Now the storm will discover what leaves are withered, and what leaves have sap and juice from the root of the tree. Hang heavy things upon a rotten bough, and it will bow and break; but it will be discovered whether the bough be sound or no if it will bear a great weight when it is hung upon. So, when persecution comes, there is a discovery of who are sound and who are not. When godliness and men's own ends do part one from another, then you may discover what men did aim at in godliness. As thus, when a serving-man follows two gentlemen in the street, you cannot tell which man's servant this is; but now, do but stay till these come at a parting way, and then you shall find that the serving-man leaves one and follows the other, that is his master. So there are some that seem to follow Christ, but they follow their own ends too. Now, so long as Christ and their own ends go together, so long nobody can tell whether it be Christ they follow or their own ends. But when Christ and their own ends part one from another, then you will know whose servant this is; then you will know what the affections of their hearts are. Now the Lord doth take a great deal of delight in discovering the hearts of men here in this world.

Fourthly, That the Lord aims at is to make the saints conformable to his Son, to Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul, in Phil. iii., professeth that he accounted all things as dung and dross, not only for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, that he might be found in him, having on his righteousness, but that he might be made conformable to his death. Who

would not be conformable to the glory of Christ in heaven? But to be conformable to his death. It is said of Christ, Ought he not to suffer these things, and so to enter into his glory? Now the Lord would have all his people conformable to his Son, as, my brethren, God hath chosen us before the foundation of the world to be conformable to the image of his Son; that is, to be holy, as his Son is holy. It is that that God aimed at in the eternal election of men. I will have such and such men from the common lump of the world, and I will have them to be conformable to my Son. And he would have all the members of his Son to be conformable to him in his sufferings.

Fifthly and lastly, The Lord suffers his people to be under persecutions in a way of righteous judgment against the wicked and ungodly of this world, that they should be left to their own base corruptions, and stumble at this stumbling-stone, and so to perish for ever. I verily believe that it hath been an occasion of the eternal destruction of thousand thousands, the sufferings of godly people. Many other holy ends we might speak of that God doth aim at in suffering of the saints to be under persecution; but this is not the point I would enlarge myself in.

Now by way of use briefly.

Let none that begins to take up any profession of religion ever make account of any rest in this world; never think of it. Thou art infinitely mistaken in the matter of the profession of Christian religion. In Micah ii. it is said, 'Depart, here is not your rest.' Never bless yourselves in the enjoyment of habitations, of comings in, of repute and esteem, of liberty in the world, of credit and honour. Depart, let your hearts begone from these things, for certainly here is not your rest. No, you are appointed to persecution, as Paul said when they would not have him go up to Jerusalem for fear of suffering; saith he, I know not what I shall meet withal at Jerusalem, but I know that wheresoever I am, 'persecution, and bonds, and afflictions do attend me.' I have taken up this for a granted and sure principle, that wheresoever I am, bonds and afflictions do attend me. And therefore that is the special use that concerns us all, to prepare beforehand, and to lay up beforehand for such times. Let us never think, why, now we hope we shall have days of peace and prosperity, and the like.

Ay, but is this a point that doth concern us now?

I confess I would hardly have chosen such a text as this on purpose, but only that it falls in my way; therefore, seeing that providence brings this text to me, let me say thus much, that there may be much evil in men's hearts that they do not know of. It is true what the prophet told Hazael what he should

do, that he should be thus and thus cruel to many. Why, saith Hazael to the prophet, is thy servant a dead dog, that I should do these things? So do but tell men before they come to have power in their hands, that they will make the dear servants of God to cry to heaven for the burdens that they will lay upon them; why, they would think it the most uncharitable thing, yea, they would think in their own hearts that they were but as dead dogs, if they should do these things. Truly we cannot deny, but must say that men do such things already, such as heretofore they themselves would have thought they should never have done. How many heretofore were of dear and intimate acquaintance one with another, that did use to unbosom themselves each to other, that did use to pray and fast together, and shed tears together, groaning under the persecution that was before, and yet I will not say that they are come to such a height as to have the denomination of persecutors; but do not some begin very fair to be very harsh and very hard even towards such brethren as were as dear as their own souls, and such as are not fallen off to be worse than they were; but their consciences will tell them that they keep as close to God as ever, and yet there is a mighty alteration in their spirits; and therefore, because we do not know what the depths of evil is in the hearts of men, therefore we have cause in all times to prepare for this persecution; there is no time that is so peaceable and so serene but we have cause to lay in and to prepare for sufferings. Therefore set down and reckon upon it, when thou beginnest the profession of religion, that persecutions will attend thee. In Acts xxii. you may see how Paul reckoned upon sufferings wheresoever he came. And therefore, that you may prepare, I will not enter largely into the commonplace of preparing for sufferings, and carrying of ourselves under suffering. But only in a few words, that you may prepare.

First of all, You that profess religion, do not take profession of religion upon mere hearsay, or upon any by-ends, or to give content to your friends. No; but when you enter upon the profession of religion, be sure you lay a good foundation, know what you build upon, and let it not be enough that the word hath a little affected your hearts, and you have gone away with joy. You know the stony ground did so; but when troubles did arise, by and by they were offended, the Scripture saith. Therefore when you hear the word, and are a little affected, do not think that the work is done presently; oh, but labour to get the foundation to be laid deep, the main foundation. It is for thee to understand aright the way of the covenant of grace; be thoroughly informed in it, and likewise let your hearts be thoroughly humbled before God, that so, through the work of humiliation, there

may be a softening of the heart for the seed to soak in, and so to take root. That man or woman that ever hath been made sensible of the dreadful breach that sin hath made between God and their souls will not much regard persecutions. I remember Luther speaks of himself divers times, that though he was a man that was threatened with persecutions as much as any man, yet he was so acquainted with trouble of spirit and humiliation for sin, yet he was not afraid of all the bulls of the pope. We read of Paul, that saith that all must suffer persecutions; and it was told him as soon as he was converted what he must suffer for Christ's sake. But how did the Lord prepare the heart of Paul? He knew that, as he was to be a chosen vessel to bear the name of Christ, so he must suffer hard things. How did God humble him? He strikes him down off his horse, makes him cry out, 'Lord, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' Ay, this man was fitted to suffer anything for Christ afterwards; so those that ever knew what sin meant, they will not think much of suffering. The reason why sufferings are so heavy to us, it is because sin is so light unto us. Labour, therefore, at first to be deeply rooted and grounded upon Jesus Christ, and sensible of the evil of sin; and learn that great lesson that prepares, in Mat. xvi. 24, 'Then said Jesus, if any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.' That man or woman that hath learned the lesson of self-denial, will learn to take up the cross; denying our self-excellency, our self-esteem, our self-will, and our self-lusts. There are a great many selfs in one man's self. I say, there is self-excellency, and self-esteem, and self-opinion, and self-will, and self-lusts; we must learn to deny ourselves, and to be as nothing in ourselves. What is it for us to be willing to suffer anything, that are wretched, cursed creatures in ourselves, whenas any man or woman can come to see themselves as vile as nothing, worse than nothing, as a firebrand of hell? I might have suffered the eternal torments of hell, I might have been fuel for the anger of God to burn upon to all eternity; and what is it for me to be called upon to suffer for his name's sake? This one meditation hath as much power as any one I know, both to prepare men for suffering, and to help them in their sufferings, when they can but think thus: Lord, what evils can men inflict upon me that shall any way be like to those evils that I might have suffered from the wrath of God for my sin? I might have been a firebrand of hell, and been under those eternal torments, in those everlasting flames of hell, roaring and crying with devils and damned spirits to all eternity. What is it to suffer a nickname, to suffer a prison and the loss of my estate, or to be frowned upon by great men? Oh let us labour to be emptied of ourselves, and let us conclude thus, that it is better

to lose for God than to enjoy for ourselves. Principle yourselves in that principle. Abundance of other such means might be named, but I would gladly have made some entrance into the other point: Blessed are they that suffer persecution for righteousness' sake. Why, if men suffer persecution for their wickedness, then they are cursed; but when they suffer persecution for righteousness, then they are blessed.

You will say, for righteousness; how many men suffer persecution for righteousness?

I, in the opening of the point, the last day shewed you something about it. But,

First, I shall shew you that all sufferings of men for matters of religion is not suffering persecution.

But then, secondly, That many men may be persecuted of others for righteousness' sake, and yet little think of it themselves. These two things I especially intended in the opening of this point.

For the first, you will say, How far may men suffer in matters of religion? when should there be any sufferings of men for matters of religion?

Men may suffer in some cases for matters of religion, and suffer righteously; and it is righteous in those that make them suffer.

First, If men sin in matters of religion against that that is against the light of nature, that by the light of nature men might, if they would, be convinced of to be a sin; in this they may suffer, and that justly. I will give you one scripture for this; it is in the case of idolatry, and in that men may justly suffer: Job xxxi. 26, 'If I beheld the sun when it shined, or the moon walking in brightness, and my heart hath been secretly enticed, or my mouth hath kissed my hand, this also were an iniquity to be punished by the judge.' Now this scripture cannot be so answered as some may that you have out of the Old Testament of the Kings of Judah. I confess I think that the strength of what men suffered in the time of the law, of the Kings of Judah, is not so strong as many others are; for there is a great deal of difference between them and governors now. I have shewn some difference between the people that were under the pedagogy of the law, and the power of the Kings of Judah, and governors now. But now, as for Job, he was not under the pedagogy of the law. The Kings of Judah are said to be types of Christ, and their government was typical. But now this that is spoken of here in Job doth not at all concern any type, but that that was agreeable to the light of nature, and approved of by God. Therefore 'if I beheld the sun when it shined, or the moon walking in brightness, and my heart hath been secretly enticed, or my mouth hath kissed my hand, this were an iniquity to be punished by the judge.' That is idolatry that a man may be convinced of by the light of nature if he will; as the worshipping of the sun and moon, it is an iniquity to

be punished by the judge. So that there is some evil in matters of religion that may be punished by men; idolatry which is so clear that men by the light of nature may be convinced of it, magistrates should not suffer that idolatry.

But may we go no further?

Yes, surely. In other things that are of an inferior nature, though it is not the light of nature that will convince men, yet such things as are against the common light of Christianity, that are so clearly revealed that even those that are in place and power, and the community of the people, may take it upon them that these men, if they be ignorant, are willfully ignorant. Such things likewise are not to be suffered; for there is the same reason why they should be punished by Christians, as why those that have only the light of nature should punish those things that are against the light of nature.

Yea, so far a magistrate may go, that through the evil carriage of men in their turbulency, in their pride, manifesting apparently a stubborn spirit—if either through the nature of the thing, or through their wicked carriage, they may take upon them, as they would answer it to Jesus Christ at the last day, that they do evidently see mere wantonness and stubbornness, and not weakness and infirmity—so far as may be suitable to help against wantonness and stubbornness, the Lord hath appointed outward means, even outward punishment to be an ordinance of his; for it hath an efficacy put into it by nature. External things have by the God of nature an efficacy put into them to help against that that doth appear outwardly to be stubbornness, wantonness, or stoutness. Thus far there may be suffering in matters of religion; and those that will go farther than this, they had need make it very clear. Such as would have every kind of error as they think in matters controversial; though men should behave themselves never so meekly and humbly before others, yet if they think that God hath appointed the civil sword to put an end to the controversies in religion—I say, if they take not heed, when they think to do God good service, they will run upon the danger of being guilty of bringing the people of God under persecution.

But the other two that I have spoken of are enough to clear many from that great error that is cried out of amongst us—that men would have no kind of government, but would have all kind of things to be suffered. But now the lord judge in this case, in this wrong unto such men, that because they only plead for no further suffering a toleration but in this case where men can no way, either by the horribleness in the fact, in their opinions, or by the turbulency and pride and insolency of their carriage, be convinced to err through wantonness and stubborn-

ness; there they say that there should be a forbearance. But now to think that all kind of things should be tolerated, all kind of blasphemy tolerated! This is a most infinite wrong; and whosoever hath been guilty of this, to charge it upon them, surely there is much guilt upon such for this; and if God gives them not hearts to repent of it, it will be required of them another day. But now this is all that is pleaded for—that all those men that agree with us both in doctrine and worship that is fundamental, and all those that carry themselves in a peaceable, humble, and meek way, that these should have forbearance from their brethren. Now, what peace will this hinder among us? Why may not we live and enjoy one another, and never have such terms one against another, either that one would have all things suffered, or that others are persecutors, because they will not suffer all things? Thus you see that a man may suffer in matters of religion, and may suffer justly and righteously. But now this is to be limited according to the cautions that I spake to before. Now, on the other side, to convince men that they may, before they are aware, bring men in to suffer for righteousness' sake. You will say, Who will make any man suffer for righteousness' sake? Surely there is scarce any so vile.

To that I answer, The devil himself would never cause any of the people of God to suffer under the name of suffering for righteousness. If the devil did raise any persecutions against the saints, he would have some pretence or other for their sufferings. You never read of that, that the devil did cry out of men merely for their righteousness; but it is under some other name that always he hath to bring sufferings upon the professors of religion. When the devil would bring the people of the Jews to suffer, Haman comes and tells the king 'That it is not for the king's profit to suffer such men;' and it is a rebellious city, and always against government. Haman did stir up the king against the people of the Jews, that were the only church of God then, and upon this ground, that they were against government. Not merely because they were the people of God—he did not own them so; but they were against government. And so you shall find it all along. When as the apostle Paul suffered, it was not for righteousness, but he was a pestilent fellow, a mover of sedition; and these did turn the world upside down, and they made a great deal of stir in the world. And in the primitive times, why, all the troubles that were abroad in the countries were ever charged upon the Christians; and under that name they suffered, as being the cause of all their troubles. And many do in this case like the heathens, when they would set the dogs upon the Christians; they would put them into wild beasts' skins, and then they would

set the dogs upon them to tear them. And this hard usage the people of God have met withal from time to time. They indeed desire to walk righteously before the Lord. Now there is so much beauty and excellency in the ways of righteousness, that men dare not persecute under that name. Therefore they will put some other name upon it, and raise some nickname and slander upon this people; and under that they fall upon them, and there they suffer. So that the saints may suffer for righteousness' sake by evil men, and yet they are not aware of it. Now something I had thought to have spoken by way of

conviction, to convince many men whose hearts are against the people of God for righteousness' sake, and yet they do not think so. And though they plead that it is for this reason and the other that they are thus and thus, yet it is for righteousness; that lies at the bottom. And it would be a good means to restrain some men, if not a means to turn them back, and to cause them to begin to bethink themselves, were they but convinced that it were for righteousness. But this would require more time than we have for the present; and therefore we shall let it pass.

## SERMON XXXIII.

OR,

### REASONS WHY RIGHTEOUSNESS MUST EXPECT TO SUFFER.

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

JOHN preached in a way of terror: 'Now is the axe laid to the root of the tree.' Christ's preaching is to convey his doctrine by shewing them to be blessed that do embrace it. In this long sermon of Christ, he begins with blessedness; his blessing is such as is above the apprehension of reason, even in every particular. He begins with the poor, and ends with the persecuted; blessed are the poor in spirit, and blessed are they that are persecuted.

Righteousness is enough to stir up the hearts of men to oppose it, and to cause them to persecute it. For that you have scripture plentiful: 1 John iii. 12, 'Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him?' Surely he did him some wrong—he did not behave himself like a brother. Cain was the elder brother, and Abel the younger, and he did not know his distance. No, that was not the matter. 'Wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.' There was no other reason why Cain fell upon his brother, but because his works were evil, and his brother's righteous. It was for righteousness' sake, and there is the first persecution that we read of in the world. I will name but another scripture: 1 Peter ii. 19, 'For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience towards God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.' There is a suffering merely for conscience towards God. I shall need name no more.

The reasons are these:

First, Because that righteousness itself, it is that that doth oppose the corruption of men's hearts, it is that that crosses men in the ways of their corruption, and men can endure much in anything but only against their corruptions, against some sinful distempers of their hearts. Righteousness in one kind opposes one man's corruptions one way, and another's another way, but all men's corruptions are opposed by righteousness. As a godly man can bear anything, but only when it is against righteousness, so wicked men can bear anything, for some are of patient and quiet spirits, but only in that that opposes their corruptions, and that they cannot bear.

Secondly, Again, righteousness is such a thing that carnal hearts see no reason for. They see men to be forward in a way of profession of righteousness, but they cannot understand it; it is a hidden thing to them. So that in 1 Peter iv. 4, 'They think it strange that you should not run with them to the same excess of riot;' that you will not do as they do.

Thirdly, Righteousness condemns the world; as it is said of Noah, that he condemned the world. Were it not for some men whose righteousness is raised up to a higher pitch than others, other men would be accounted good honest men; but when there are some that are raised in a profession higher than they, upon this they are condemned; even in their