

August 12

Mark 10:32-34. Christ again predicts his sufferings.

As we read the history of our Savior, we are continually struck by the union of courage and of tenderness in his character. He was now on his way to comfort two weeping sisters, by raising their beloved brother from the grave. He was also on his way to the place of his own execution. Bethany was a village very near to Jerusalem. What different scenes were soon to be witnessed at those two places! In Bethany the Lord would restore another's life; in Jerusalem lay down his own! But though he knew the painful trials that awaited him, He went willingly to the appointed spot, while his fearful disciples followed him reluctantly. Had we seen them on their journey, we might have supposed that one of them was going to receive honors, and the rest to endure sufferings. Whereas it was He who went boldly before, who was to be the victim, while those who followed trembling were to escape.

The Lord Jesus took his disciples alone by themselves, to unfold to them the history of his approaching sufferings. He took them apart, because he did not choose to declare before his enemies the deeds which they would commit against him; for such declarations would have emboldened them in wickedness. But to his own disciples he revealed even the particulars of the dreadful transactions. On this occasion it is recorded for the first time that he spoke of his deliverance to the Gentiles, and of the insulting spitting of his enemies. These degrading circumstances were now unfolded to his disciples, who revered him as the Son of God. Had they understood the meaning of their Master's words, their feelings would have been outraged, and harrowed up to the utmost pitch. Yet the words seem so plain that we can scarcely conceive how they could have been misunderstood. But, perhaps, as the Lord often used figurative language, the disciples supposed that his prophecies concerning himself were figurative; perhaps, though they often understood him literally when he was speaking figuratively—they thought he was speaking figuratively when he was speaking literally. This is still the great difficulty in the interpretation of prophecy—to distinguish the figurative from the literal; and perhaps future ages will show that the church in these days has fallen into some of the same errors as the apostles.

Great was the loss they sustained in consequence of their slowness of understanding. Had they been prepared to see their Lord bleeding on the cross, they would not have forsaken him in the hour of distress; and had they kept in mind the promise of his rising again, they would have been spared the bitterest tears they ever shed. That day of bitter tears during which the Prince of Life lay in his tomb, would have been to them a day of bright hopes, had they remembered his words. With what joy would they have hastened to the grave on the dawn of the third day, if they had expected to hear that he was risen!

In looking back on our past lives, can we not remember many seasons which would not have been so sad had we remembered the Savior's gracious promises?—seasons of doubt and perplexity—seasons of suspense and anxiety—seasons of disappointment—seasons of bereavement—seasons of darkness and of the shadow of death? When those seasons have been past we have felt, "O had I from the beginning of the trial, and throughout its course, remembered my Lord's words, 'Fear not, I am with you,' and many similar words, what bitter pangs should I have been spared!" In all our troubles here

below there is one promise that ought, above all, to cheer us. It is his promise, "I will come again, and receive you to myself." The words are plain. "He will come again!" he will actually come in a glorious body, and our eyes shall behold him. Come, Lord Jesus! come quickly.