

CHAPTER 19

Though in the history hitherto this evangelist seems industriously to have declined the recording of such passages as had been related by the other evangelists, yet, when he comes to the sufferings and death of Christ, instead of passing them over, as one ashamed of his Master's chain and cross, and looking upon them as the blemishes of his story, he repeats what had been before related, with considerable enlargements, as one that desired to know nothing but Christ and him crucified, to glory in nothing save in the cross of Christ. In the story of this chapter we have,

- I.** he remainder of Christ's trial before Pilate, which was tumultuous and confused (v. 1-15).
- II.** Sentence given, and execution done upon it (v. 16-18).
- III.** The title over his head (v. 19-22).
- IV.** The parting of his garment (v. 23, 24).
- V.** The care he took of his mother (v. 25-27).
- VI.** The giving him vinegar to drink (v. 28, 29).
- VII.** His dying word (v. 30).
- VIII.** The piercing of his side (v. 31-37).
- IX.** The burial of his body (v. 38-42). O that in meditating on these things we may experimentally know the power of Christ's death, and the fellowship of his sufferings!

⌄ JOHN 19:1-15

CHRIST ARRAIGNED BEFORE PILATE

Here is a further account of the unfair trial which they gave to our Lord Jesus. The prosecutors carrying it on with great confusion among the people, and the judge with great confusion in his own breast, between both the narrative is such as is not easily reduced to method; we must therefore take the parts of it as they lie.

I. The judge abuses the prisoner, though he declares him innocent, and hopes therewith to pacify the prosecutors; wherein his intention, if indeed it was good, will by no means justify his proceedings, which were palpably unjust.

1. He ordered him to be whipped as a criminal, v. 1. *Pilate*, seeing the people so outrageous, and being disappointed in his project of releasing him upon the people's choice, *took Jesus, and scourged him*, that is, appointed the lictors that attended him to do it. Bede is of opinion that Pilate scourged Jesus himself with his own hands, because it is said, *He took him and scourged him*, that it might be done favourably. Matthew and Mark mention his scourging after his condemnation, but here it appears to have been before. Luke speaks of Pilate's offering to *chastise him, and let him go*, which must be before sentence. This scourging of him was designed only to pacify the Jews, and in it Pilate put a compliment upon them, that he would take their word against his own sentiments so far. The Roman scourgings were ordinarily very severe, not limited, as among the Jews, to *forty stripes*; yet this pain and shame Christ submitted to for our sakes.

(1.) *That the scripture might be fulfilled*, which spoke of his being *stricken, smitten, and afflicted*, and *the chastisement of our peace being upon him* (^{<2815>}Isaiah 53:5), of his giving his back to the smiters (^{<2816>}Isaiah 50:6), of the ploughers ploughing upon his back, (^{<4938>}Psalm 129:3). He himself likewise had foretold it, (^{<4119>}Matthew 20:19; ^{<4124>}Mark 10:34; ^{<2833>}Luke 18:33).

(2.) *That by his stripes we might be healed*, (^{<4124>}1 Peter 2:4). We deserved to have been chastised *with whips and scorpions*, and *beaten with many stripes*, having known our Lord's will and not done it; but Christ underwent the stripes for us, bearing the rod of his Father's wrath, (^{<2811>}Lamentations 3:1). Pilate's design in scourging him was that he might not be condemned, which did not take effect, but intimated what was God's design, that his being scourged might prevent our being condemned, we having fellowship in his sufferings, and this did take effect: the physician scourged, and so the patient healed.

(3.) That stripes, for his sake, might be sanctified and made easy to his followers; and they might, as they did, rejoice in that shame (^{<4154>}Acts 5:41; 16:22, 25), as Paul did, who was *in stripes above measure*, (^{<4123>}2

Corinthians 11:23. Christ's stripes take out the sting of theirs, and alter the property of them. *We are chastened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world,* ^{<4110>}1 Corinthians 11:32.

2. He turned him over to his soldiers, to be ridiculed and made sport with as a fool (v. 2, 3): *The soldiers, who were the governor's life-guard, put a crown of thorns upon his head; such a crown they thought fittest for such a king; they put on him a purple robe, some old threadbare coat of that colour, which they thought good enough to be the badge of his royalty; and they complemented him with, Hail, king of the Jews* (like people like king), and then *smote him with their hands.*

(1.) See here the baseness and injustice of Pilate, that he would suffer one whom he believed an innocent person, and if so an excellent person, to be thus abused and trampled on by his own servants. Those who are under the arrest of the law ought to be under the protection of it; and their being secured is to be their security. But Pilate did this,

[1.] To oblige his soldiers' merry humour, and perhaps his own too, notwithstanding the gravity one might have expected in a judge. *Herod, as well as his men of war, had just before done the same,* ^{<4231>}Luke 23:11. It was as good as a stage-play to them, now that it was a festival time; as the Philistines made sport with Samson.

[2.] To oblige the Jews' malicious humour, and to gratify them, who desired that all possible disgrace might be done to Christ, and the utmost indignities put upon him.

(2.) See here the rudeness and insolence of the soldiers, how perfectly lost they were to all justice and humanity, who could thus triumph over a man in misery, and one that had been in reputation for wisdom and honour, and never did any thing to forfeit it. But thus hath Christ's holy religion been basely misrepresented, dressed up by bad men at their pleasure, and so exposed to contempt and ridicule, as Christ was here.

[1.] They clothe him with a mock-robe, as if it were a sham and a jest, and nothing but the product of a heated fancy and a crazed imagination. And as Christ is here represented as a king in conceit only, so is his religion as a concern in conceit only, and God and the soul, sin and duty, heaven and hell, are with many all chimeras.

[2.] They crown him with thorns; as if the religion of Christ were a perfect penance, and the greatest pain and hardship in the world; as if to submit to the control of God and conscience were to thrust one's head into a thicket of thorns; but this is an unjust imputation; *thorns and snares are in the way of the froward*, but roses and laurels in religion's ways.

(3.) See here the wonderful condescension of our Lord Jesus in his sufferings for us. Great and generous minds can bear any thing better than ignominy, any toil, any pain, any loss, rather than reproach; yet this the great and holy Jesus submitted to for us. See and admire,

[1.] The invincible patience of a sufferer, leaving us an example of contentment and courage, evenness, and easiness of spirit, under the greatest hardships we may meet with in the way of duty.

[2.] The invincible love and kindness of a Saviour, who not only cheerfully and resolutely went through all this, but voluntarily undertook it for us and for our salvation. Herein he commended his love, that he would not only die for us, but die as a fool dies. *First, He endured the pain*; not the pangs of death only, though in the death of the cross these were most exquisite; but, as if these were too little, he submitted to those previous pains. Shall we complain of a thorn in the flesh, and of being buffeted by affliction, because we need it to hide pride from us, when Christ humbled himself to bear those thorns in the head, and those buffetings, to save and teach us? ⁴⁰⁷2 Corinthians 12:7. *Secondly, He despised the shame*, the shame of a fool's coat, and the mock-respect paid him, with, *Hail, king of the Jews*. If we be at any time ridiculed for well-doing, let us not be ashamed, but glorify God, for thus we are partakers of Christ's sufferings. He that bore these sham honours was recompensed with real honours, and so shall we, if we patiently suffer shame for him.

II. Pilate, having thus abused the prisoner, presents him to the prosecutors, in hope that they would now be satisfied, and drop the prosecution, v. 4, 5. Here he proposes two things to their consideration: —

1. That he had not found any thing in him which made him obnoxious to the Roman government (v. 4): *I find no fault in him; oudemian aitian heurisko* — *I do not find in him the least fault, or cause of accusation*. Upon further enquiry, he repeats the declaration he had made, ⁴⁰⁸John 18:38. Hereby he condemns himself; if he found no fault in him, why did he scourge him, why did he suffer him to be abused? None ought to suffer

ill but those that do ill; yet thus many banter and abuse religion, who yet, if they be serious, cannot but own they find no fault in it. If he found no fault in him, why did he bring him out to his prosecutors, and not immediately release him, as he ought to have done? If Pilate had consulted his own conscience only, he would neither have scourged Christ nor crucified him; but, thinking to trim the matter, to please the people by scourging Christ, and save his conscience by not crucifying him, behold he does both; whereas, if he had at first resolved to crucify him, he need not have scourged him. It is common for those who think to keep themselves from greater sins by venturing upon less sins to run into both.

2. That he had done that to him which would make him the less dangerous to them and to their government, v. 5. He brought him out to them, wearing the crown of thorns, his head and face all bloody, and said, "*Behold the man* whom you are so jealous of," intimating that though his having been so popular might have given them some cause to fear that his interest in the country would lessen theirs, yet he had taken an effectual course to prevent it, by treating him as a slave, and exposing him to contempt, after which he supposed the people would never look upon him with any respect, nor could he ever retrieve his reputation again. Little did Pilate think with what veneration even these sufferings of Christ would in after ages be commemorated by the best and greatest of men, who would glory in that cross and those stripes which he thought would have been to him and his followers a perpetual and indelible reproach.

(1.) Observe here our Lord Jesus shows himself dressed up in all the marks of ignominy. He came forth, willing to be made a spectacle, and to be hooted at, as no doubt he was when he came forth in this garb, knowing that he was set for a *sign that should be spoken against*, ⁴¹²³ Luke 2:34. Did he go forth thus bearing our reproach? Let us go forth to him *bearing his reproach*, ⁴⁸³³ Hebrews 13:13.

(2.) How Pilate shows him: *Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man. He saith unto them:* so the original is; and, the immediate antecedent being *Jesus*, I see no inconvenience in supposing these to be Christ's own words; he said, "*Behold the man* against whom you are so exasperated." But some of the Greek copies, and the generality of the translators, supply it as we do, Pilate saith unto them, with a design to appease them, *Behold the man*; not so much to move their pity, Behold a man worthy your compassion, as to silence their jealousies, Behold a man not worthy your

suspicion, a man from whom you can henceforth fear no danger; his crown is *profaned, and cast to the ground*, and now all mankind will make a jest of him. The word however is very affecting: *Behold the man*. It is good for every one of us, with an eye of faith, to behold the man Christ Jesus in his sufferings. *Behold this king with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him*, the crown of thorns, ²¹⁸¹Song of Solomon 3:11. “Behold him, and be suitably affected with the sight. Behold him, and mourn because of him. Behold him, and love him; be still *looking unto Jesus*.”

III. The prosecutors, instead of being pacified, were but the more exasperated, v. 6, 7.

1. Observe here their clamour and outrage. *The chief priests*, who headed the mob, *cried out* with fury and indignation, and their officers, or servants, who must say as they said, joined with them in crying, *Crucify him, crucify him*. The common people perhaps would have acquiesced in Pilate's declaration of his innocency, but their leaders, the priests, *caused them to err*. Now by this it appears that their malice against Christ was,

(1.) Unreasonable and most absurd, in that they offer not to make good their charges against him, nor to object against the judgment of Pilate concerning him; but, though he be innocent, he must be crucified.

(2.) It was insatiable and very cruel. Neither the extremity of his scourging, nor his patience under it, nor the tender expostulations of the judge, could mollify them in the least; no, nor could the jest into which Pilate had turned the cause, put them into a pleasant humour.

(3.) It was violent and exceedingly resolute; they will have it their own way, and hazard the governor's favour, the peace of the city, and their own safety, rather than abate of the utmost of their demands. Were they so violent in running down our Lord Jesus, and in crying, *Crucify him, crucify him?* and shall not we be vigorous and zealous in advancing his name, and in crying, *Crown him, Crown him?* Did their hatred of him sharpen their endeavours against him? and shall not our love to him quicken our endeavours for him and his kingdom?

2. The check Pilate gave to their fury, still insisting upon the prisoner's innocency: “*Take you him and crucify him*, if he must be crucified.” This is spoken ironically; he knew they could not, they durst not, crucify him; but it is as if he should say, “You shall not make me a drudge to your

malice; I cannot with a safe conscience crucify him.” A good resolve, if he would but have stuck to it. He found no fault in him, and therefore should not have continued to parley with the prosecutors. Those that would be safe from sin should be deaf to temptation. Nay, he should have secured the prisoner from their insults. What was he armed with power for, but to protect the injured? The guards of governors ought to be the guards of justice. But Pilate had not courage enough to act according to his conscience; and his cowardice betrayed him into a snare.

3. The further colour which the prosecutors gave to their demand (v. 7): *We have a law, and by our law, if it were but in our power to execute it, he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.* Now here observe,

(1.) They made their boast of the law, even when through breaking the law they dishonoured God, as is charged upon the Jews, ^{<312>}Romans 2:23. They had indeed an excellent law, far exceeding the statutes and judgments of other nations; but in vain did they boast of their law, when they abused it to such bad purposes.

(2.) They discover a restless and inveterate malice against our Lord Jesus. When they could not incense Pilate against him by alleging that he pretended himself a king, they urged this, that he pretended himself a God. Thus they turn every stone to take him off.

(3.) They pervert the law, and make that the instrument of their malice. Some think they refer to a law made particularly against Christ, as if, being a law, it must be executed, right or wrong; whereas there is a woe to them that *decree unrighteous decrees, and that write the grievousness which they have prescribed,* ^{<311>}Isaiah 10:1. See ^{<316>}Micah 6:16. But it should seem they rather refer to the law of Moses; and if so,

[1.] It was true that blasphemers, idolaters, and false prophets, were to be put to death by that law. Whoever falsely pretended to be the Son of God was guilty of blasphemy, ^{<315>}Leviticus 24:16. But then,

[2.] It was false that Christ pretended to be the Son of God, for he really was so; and they ought to have enquired into the proofs he produced of his being so. If he said that he was the Son of God, and the scope and tendency of his doctrine were not to draw people from God, but to bring them to him, and if he confirmed his mission and doctrine by miracles, as undoubtedly he did, beyond contradiction, by their law they ought to

hearken to him (⁴⁵⁸⁸Deuteronomy 18:18, 19), and, if they did not, they were to be *cut off*. That which was his honour, and might have been their happiness, if they had not stood in their own light, they impute to him as a crime, for which he ought not to be crucified, for this was no death inflicted by their law.

IV. The judge brings the prisoner again to his trial, upon this new suggestion. Observe,

1. The concern Pilate was in, when he heard this alleged (v. 8): When he heard that his prisoner pretended not to royalty only, but to deity, he was *the more afraid*. This embarrassed him more than ever, and made the case more difficult both ways; for,

(1.) There was the more danger of offending the people if he should acquit him, for he knew how jealous that people were for the unity of the Godhead, and what aversion they now had to other gods; and therefore, though he might hope to pacify their rage against a pretended king, he could never reconcile them to a pretended God. “If this be at the bottom of the tumult,” thinks Pilate, “it will not be turned off with a jest.”

(2.) There was the more danger of offending his own conscience if he should condemn him. “Is he one” (thinks Pilate) “that makes himself *the Son of God*? and what if it should prove that he is so? What will become of me then?” Even natural conscience makes men afraid of being found *fighting against God*. The heathen had some fabulous traditions of incarnate deities appearing sometimes in mean circumstances, and treated ill by some that paid dearly for their so doing. Pilate fears lest he should thus run himself into a premunire.

2. His further examination of our Lord Jesus thereupon, v. 9. That he might give the prosecutors all the fair play they could desire, he resumed the debate, went into the judgment-hall, and asked Christ, *Whence art thou?* Observe,

(1.) The place he chose for this examination: He *went into the judgment-hall* for privacy, that he might be out of the noise and clamour of the crowd, and might examine the thing the more closely. Those that would find out the truth as it is in Jesus must get out of the noise of prejudice, and retire as it were into the judgment-hall, to converse with Christ alone.

(2.) The question he put to him: *Whence art thou?* Art thou from men or from heaven? From beneath or from above? He had before asked directly, *Art thou a King?* But here he does not directly ask, *Art thou the Son of God?* lest he should seem to meddle with divine things too boldly. But in general, “*Whence art thou? Where wast thou, and in what world hadst thou a being, before thy coming into this world?*”

(3.) The silence of our Lord Jesus when he was examined upon this head; but *Jesus gave him no answer.* This was not a sullen silence, in contempt of the court, nor was it because he knew not what to say; but,

[1.] It was a patient silence, that the scripture might be fulfilled, *as a sheep before the shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth,* ^{<251P>}Isaiah 53:7. This silence loudly bespoke his submission to his Father's will in his present sufferings, which he thus accommodated himself to, and composed himself to bear. He was silent, because he would say nothing to hinder his sufferings. If Christ had avowed himself a God as plainly as he avowed himself a king, it is probable that Pilate would not have condemned him (for he was afraid at the mention of it by the prosecutors); and the Romans, though they triumphed over the *kings of the nations* they conquered, yet stood in awe of their gods. See ^{<411B>}1 Corinthians 2:8. *If they had known him to be the Lord of glory, they would not have crucified him;* and how then could we have been saved?

[2.] It was a prudent silence. When the chief priests asked him, *Art thou the Son of the Blessed?* he answered, *I am,* for he knew they went upon the scriptures of the Old Testament which spoke of the Messiah; but when Pilate asked him he knew he did not understand his own question, having no notion of the Messiah, and of his being the *Son of God*, and therefore to what purpose should he reply to him whose head was filled with the pagan theology, to which he would have turned his answer?

(4.) The haughty check which Pilate gave him for his silence (v. 10): “*Speakest thou not unto me? Dost thou put such an affront upon me as to stand mute? What knowest thou not that, as president of the province, I have power, if I think fit, to crucify thee, and have power, if I think fit, to release thee?*” Observe here,

[1.] How Pilate magnified himself, and boasts of his own authority, as not inferior to that of Nebuchadnezzar, of whom it is said that *whom he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive.* ^{<211B>}Daniel 5:19. Men in power

are apt to be puffed up with their power, and the more absolute and arbitrary it is the more it gratifies and humours their pride. But he magnifies his power to an exorbitant degree when he boasts that he has power to crucify one whom he had declared innocent, for no prince or potentate has authority to do wrong. *Id possumus, quod jure possumus* — *We can do that only which we can do justly.*

[2.] How he tramples upon our blessed Saviour: *Speakest thou not unto me?* He reflects upon him, *First*, As if he were undutiful and disrespectful to those in authority, not speaking when he was spoken to. *Secondly*, As if he were ungrateful to one that had been tender of him: “Speakest thou not to me who have laboured to secure thy release?” *Thirdly*, As if he were unwise for himself: “Wilt thou not speak to clear thyself to one that is willing to clear thee?” If Christ had indeed sought to save his life, now had been his time to have spoken; but that which he had to do was to lay down his life.

(5.) Christ's pertinent answer to this check, v. 11, where,

[1.] He boldly rebukes his arrogance, and rectifies his mistake: “Big as thou lookest and talkest, *thou couldst have no power at all against me*, no power to scourge, no power to crucify, *except it were given thee from above.*” Though Christ did not think fit to answer him when he was impertinent (then *answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like him*), yet he did think fit to answer him when he was imperious; then *answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit*, ²²⁰⁴Proverbs 26:4, 5. When Pilate used his power, Christ silently submitted to it; but, when he grew proud of it, he made him know himself: “All the power thou hast is given thee from above,” which may be taken two ways: — *First*, As reminding him that his power in general, as a magistrate, was a limited power, and he could do no more than God would suffer him to do. God is the fountain of power; and the *powers that are*, as they are ordained by him and derived from him, so they are subject to him. They ought to go no further than his law directs them; they can go no further than his providence permits them. They are God's hand and his sword, ²¹⁷³Psalm 17:13, 14. Though the axe may *boast itself against him that heweth therewith*, yet still it is but a tool, ²³⁰⁵Isaiah 10:5, 15. Let the proud oppressors know that there is *a higher than they*, to whom they are accountable, ²¹⁸⁸Ecclesiastes 5:8. And let this silence the murmurings of the oppressed, *It is the Lord*. God has bidden Shimei curse David; and let

it comfort them that their persecutors can do no more than God will let them. See ^{<251D>}Isaiah 51:12, 13. *Secondly*, As informing him that his power against him in particular, and all the efforts of that power, were *by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God*, ^{<412B>}Acts 2:23. Pilate never fancied himself to look so great as now, when he sat in judgment upon such a prisoner as this, who was looked upon by many as the *Son of God* and king of Israel, and had the fate of so great a man at his disposal; but Christ lets him know that he was herein but an instrument in God's hand, and could do nothing against him, but by the appointment of Heaven, ^{<402>}Acts 4:27, 28.

[2.] He mildly excuses and extenuates his sin, in comparison with the sin of the ringleaders: *“Therefore he that delivered me unto thee lies under greater guilt; for thou as a magistrate hast power from above, and art in thy place, thy sin is less than theirs who, from envy and malice, urge thee to abuse thy power.”*

First, It is plainly intimated that what Pilate did was sin, a great sin, and that the force which the Jews put upon him, and which he put upon himself in it, would not justify him. Christ hereby intended a hint for the awakening of his conscience and the increase of the fear he was now under. The guilt of others will not acquit us, nor will it avail in the great day to say that others were worse than we, for we are not to be judged by comparison, but must *bear our own burden*.

Secondly, Yet theirs that delivered him to Pilate was the greater sin. By this it appears that all sins are not equal, but some more heinous than others; some comparatively as gnats, others as camels; some as motes in the eyes, others as beams; some as pence, others as pounds. *He that delivered Christ to Pilate* was either,

1. The people of the Jews, who cried out, *Crucify him, crucify him*. They had seen Christ's miracles, which Pilate had not; to them the Messiah was first sent; they were his own; and to them, who were now enslaved, a Redeemer should have been most welcome, and therefore it was much worse in them to appear against him than in Pilate.
2. Or rather he means Caiaphas in particular, who was at the head of the conspiracy against Christ, and first advised his death, ^{<314B>}John 11:49, 50. The sin of Caiaphas was abundantly greater than the sin of Pilate. Caiaphas prosecuted Christ from pure enmity to him and his

doctrine, deliberately and of malice prepense. Pilate condemned him purely for fear of the people, and it was a hasty resolution which he had not time to cool upon.

3. Some think Christ means Judas; for, though he did not immediately deliver him into the hands of Pilate, yet he betrayed him to those that did. The sin of Judas was, upon many accounts, greater than the sin of Pilate. Pilate was a stranger to Christ; Judas was his friend and follower. Pilate found no fault in him, but Judas knew a great deal of good of him. Pilate, though biassed, was not bribed, but Judas took a *reward against the innocent*; the sin of Judas was a leading sin, and let in all that followed. He was a *guide to them that took Jesus*. So great was the sin of Judas that *vengeance suffered him not to live*; but when Christ said this, or soon after, he was gone *to his own place*.

V. Pilate struggles with the Jews to deliver Jesus out of their hands, but in vain. We hear no more after this of any thing that passed between Pilate and the prisoner; what remains lay between him and the prosecutors.

1. Pilate seems more zealous than before to get Jesus discharged (v. 12): *Thenceforth*, from this time, and for this reason, because Christ had given him that answer (v. 11), which, though it had a rebuke in it, yet he took kindly; and, though Christ found fault with him, he still continued to find no fault in Christ, but *sought to release him*, desired it, endeavoured it. *He sought to release him*; he contrived how to do it handsomely and safely, and so as not to disoblige the priests. It never does well when our resolutions to do our duty are swallowed up in projects how to do it plausibly and conveniently. If Pilate's policy had not prevailed above his justice, he would not have been long seeking to release him, but would have done it. *Fiat justitia, ruat coelum* — *Let justice be done, though heaven itself should fall*.

2. The Jews were more furious than ever, and more violent to get Jesus crucified. Still they carry on their design with noise and clamour as before; so now they cried out. They would have it thought that the commonalty was against him, and therefore laboured to get him cried down by a multitude, and it is no hard matter to pack a mob; whereas, if a fair poll had been granted, I doubt not but it would have been carried by a great majority for the releasing of him. A few madmen may out-shout many wise men, and then fancy themselves to speak the sense (when it is but the

nonsense) of a nation, or of all mankind; but it is not so easy a thing to change the sense of the people as it is to misrepresent it, and to change their cry. Now that Christ was in the hands of his enemies his friends were shy and silent, and disappeared, and those that were against him were forward to show themselves so; and this gave the chief priests an opportunity to represent it as the concurring vote of all the Jews that he should be crucified. In this outcry they sought two things: —

(1.) To blacken the prisoner as an enemy to Caesar. He had refused the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them, had declared his kingdom not to be of this world, and yet they will have it that he *speaks against Caesar; antilegei* — *he opposed Caesar*, invades his dignity and sovereignty. It has always been the artifice of the enemies of religion to represent it as hurtful to kings and provinces, when it would be highly beneficial to both.

(2.) To frighten the judge, as no friend to Caesar: “If thou *let this man go* unpunished, and let him go on, *thou art not Caesar's friend*, and therefore false to thy trust and the duty of thy place, obnoxious to the emperor's displeasure, and liable to be turned out.” They intimate a threatening that they would inform against him, and get him displaced; and here they touched him in a sensible and very tender part. But, of all people, these Jews should not have pretended a concern for Caesar, who were themselves so ill affected to him and his government. They should not talk of being friends to Caesar, who were themselves such back friends to him; yet thus a pretended zeal for that which is good often serves to cover a real malice against that which is better.

3. When other expedients had been tried in vain, Pilate slightly endeavoured to banter them out of their fury, and yet, in doing this, betrayed himself to them, and yielded to the rapid stream, v. 13-15. After he had stood it out a great while, and seemed now as if he would have made a vigorous resistance upon this attack (v. 12), he basely surrendered. Observe here,

(1.) What it was that shocked Pilate (v. 13): *When he heard that saying*, that he could not be true to Caesar's honour, nor sure of Caesar's favour, if he did not put Jesus to death, then he thought it was time to look about him. All they had said to prove Christ a malefactor, and that therefore it was Pilate's duty to condemn him, did not move him, but he still kept to his conviction of Christ's innocency; but, when they urged that it was his

interest to condemn him, then he began to yield. Note, Those that bind up their happiness in the favour of men make themselves an easy prey to the temptations of Satan.

(2.) What preparation was made for a definitive sentence upon this matter: *Pilate brought Jesus forth, and he himself in great state took the chair. We may suppose that he called for his robes, that he might look big, and then sat down in the judgment-seat.*

[1.] Christ was condemned with all the ceremony that could be. *First*, To bring us off at God's bar, and that all believers through Christ, being judged here, might be acquitted in the court of heaven. *Secondly*, To take off the terror of pompous trials, which his followers would be brought to for his sake. Paul might the better stand at Caesar's judgment-seat when his Master had stood there before him.

[2.] Notice is here taken of the place and time.

First, The place where Christ was condemned: in a *place called the Pavement, but in Hebrew, Gabbatha*, probably the place where he used to sit to try causes or criminals. Some make *Gabbatha* to signify an *enclosed place*, fenced against the insults of the people, whom therefore he did the less need to fear; others an *elevated place*, raised that all might see him.

Secondly, The time, v. 14. It was the preparation of the passover, and *about the sixth hour*. Observe,

1. The day: It was the preparation of the passover, that is, for the passover-sabbath, and the solemnities of that and the rest of the days of the feast of unleavened bread. This is plain from ^{<27:54>}Luke 23:54, *It was the preparation, and the sabbath drew on*. So that this preparation was for the sabbath. Note, Before the passover there ought to be preparation. This is mentioned as an aggravation of their sin, in persecuting Christ with so much malice and fury, that it was when they should have been purging out the old leaven, to get ready for the passover; but the better the day the worse the deed.

2. The hour: *It was about the sixth hour*. Some ancient Greek and Latin manuscripts read it about the third hour, which agrees with ^{<15:25>}Mark 15:25. And it appears by ^{<27:45>}Matthew 27:45 that he was upon the cross before the sixth hour. But it should seem to come in here, not as a precise determination of the time, but as an additional aggravation

of the sin of his prosecutors, that they were pushing on the prosecution, not only on a solemn day, the *day of the preparation*, but, from the third to the sixth hour (which was, as we call it, church-time) on that day, they were employed in this wickedness; so that for this day, though they were priests, they dropped the temple-service, for they did not leave Christ till the sixth hour, when the darkness began, which frightened them away. Some think that the sixth hour, with this evangelist, is, according to the Roman reckoning and ours, six of the clock in the morning, answering to the Jews' first hour of the day; this is very probable, that Christ's trial before Pilate was at the height about six in the morning, which was then a little after sun-rising.

(3.) The rencounter Pilate had with the Jews, both priests and people, before he proceeded to give judgment, endeavouring in vain to stem the tide of their rage.

[1.] He saith unto the Jews, *Behold your king*. This is a reproof to them for the absurdity and malice of their insinuating that this Jesus made himself a king: "*Behold your king*, that is, him whom you accuse as a pretender to the crown. Is this a man likely to be dangerous to the government? I am satisfied he is not, and you may be so too, and let him alone." Some think he hereby upbraids them with their secret disaffection to Caesar: "You would have this man to be your king, if he would but have headed a rebellion against Caesar." But Pilate, though he was far from meaning so, seems as if he were the voice of God to them. Christ, now crowned with thorns, is, as a king at his coronation, offered to the people: "*Behold your king*, the king whom God hath set upon his holy hill of Zion;" but they, instead of entering into it with acclamations of joyful consent, protest against him; they will not have a king of God's choosing.

[2.] They cried out with the greatest indignation, *Away with him, away with him*, which speaks disdain as well as malice, *aron, aron* — "*Take him*, he is none of ours; we disown him for our kinsman, much more for our king; we have not only no veneration for him, but no compassion; *away with him* out of our sight:" for so it was written of him, he is one *whom the nation abhors* (^{230E}Isaiah 49:7), and they *hid as it were their faces from him* (^{250D}Isaiah 53:2, 3. *Away with him from the earth*, ^{400D}Acts 22:22. This shows, *First*, How we deserved to have been treated at God's tribunal. We were by sin become odious to God's holiness, which cried, *Away with them, away with them*, for God is *of purer eyes than to behold*

iniquity. We were also become obnoxious to God's justice, which cried against us, "*Crucify them, crucify them, let the sentence of the law be executed.*" Had not Christ interposed, and been thus rejected of men, we had been for ever rejected of God. *Secondly*, It shows how we ought to treat our sins. We are often in scripture said to crucify sin, in conformity to Christ's death. Now they that crucified Christ did it with detestation. With a pious indignation we should run down sin in us, as they with an impious indignation ran him down who was made sin for us. The true penitent casts away from him his transgressions, *Away with them, away with them* (²¹²Isaiah 2:20; 30:22), *crucify them, crucify them*; it is not fit that they should live in my soul, ²⁴⁸Hosea 14:8.

[3.] Pilate, willing to have Jesus released, and yet that it should be their doing, asks them, *Shall I crucify your king?* In saying this, he designed either, *First*, To stop their mouths, by showing them how absurd it was for them to reject one who offered himself to them to be their king at a time when they needed one more than ever. Have they no sense of slavery? No desire of liberty? No value for a deliverer? Though he saw no cause to fear him, they might see cause to hope for something from him; since crushed and sinking interests are ready to catch at any thing. Or, *Secondly*, To stop the mouth of his own conscience. "If this Jesus be a king" (thinks Pilate), "he is only kin of the Jews, and therefore I have nothing to do but to make a fair tender of him to them; if they refuse him, and will have their king crucified, what is that to me?" He banters them for their folly in expecting a Messiah, and yet running down one that bade so fair to be he.

[4.] The chief priests, that they might effectually renounce Christ, and engage Pilate to crucify him, but otherwise sorely against their will, cried out, *We have no king but Caesar*. This they knew would please Pilate, and so they hoped to carry their point, though at the same time they hated Caesar and his government. But observe here, *First*, What a plain indication this is that the time for the Messiah to appear, even the set time, was now come; for, if the Jews have no king but Caesar, then is the *sceptre departed from Judas, and the lawgiver from between his feet*, which should never be till Shiloh come to set up a spiritual kingdom. And, *Secondly*, What a righteous thing it was with God to bring upon them that ruin by the Romans which followed not long after.

1. They adhere to Caesar, and to Caesar they shall go. God soon gave them enough of their Caesars, and, according to Jotham's parable,

since the trees choose the bramble for their king, rather than the vine and the olive, an evil spirit is sent among them, for they could not do it truly and sincerely, ~~(1002)~~ Judges 9:12, 19. Henceforward they were rebels to the Caesars, and the Caesars tyrants to them, and their disaffection ended in the overthrow of their place and nation. It is just with God to make that a scourge and plague to us which we prefer before Christ.

2. They would have no other king than Caesar, and never have they had any other to this day, but have now *abode many days without a king, and without a prince* (~~(3004)~~ Hosea 3:4), without any of their own, but the kings of the nations have ruled over them; since they will have no king but Caesar, so shall their doom be, themselves have decided it.

~~(6016)~~ JOHN 19:16-18

THE CRUCIFIXION

We have here sentence of death passed upon our Lord Jesus, and execution done soon after. A mighty struggle Pilate had had within him between his convictions and his corruptions; but at length his convictions yielded, and his corruptions prevailed, the fear of man having a greater power over him than the fear of God.

1. *Pilate gave judgment* against Christ, and signed the warrant for his execution, v. 16. We may see here,

1. How Pilate sinned against his conscience: he had again and again pronounced him innocent, and yet at last condemned him as guilty. Pilate, since he came to be governor, had in many instances disobliged and exasperated the Jewish nation; for he was a man of a haughty and implacable spirit, and extremely wedded to his humour. He had seized upon the Corban, and spent it upon a water-work; he had brought into Jerusalem shields stamped with Caesar's image, which was very provoking to the Jews; he had sacrificed the lives of many to his resolutions herein. Fearing therefore that he should be complained of for these and other insolences, he was willing to gratify the Jews. Now this makes the matter much worse. If he had been of an easy, soft, and pliable disposition, his yielding to so strong a stream had been the more excusable; but for a man that was so wilful in other things, and of so fierce a resolution, to be

overcome in a thing of this nature, shows him to be a bad man indeed, that could better bear the wronging of his conscience than the crossing of his humour.

2. How he endeavoured to transfer the guilt upon the Jews. He *delivered him* not to his own officers (as usual), but to the prosecutors, the chief priests and elders; so excusing the wrong to his own conscience with this, that it was but a permissive condemnation, and that he did not put Christ to death, but only connived at those that did it.

3. How Christ was *made sin for us*. We deserved to have been condemned, but Christ was condemned for us, that to us there might be *no condemnation*. God was now entering into judgment with his Son, that he might not enter into judgment with his servants.

II. Judgment was no sooner given than with all possible expedition the prosecutors, having gained their point, resolved to lose not time lest Pilate should change his mind, and order a reprieve (those are enemies to our souls, the worst of enemies, that hurry us to sin, and then leave us no room to undo what we have done amiss), and also lest there should be *an uproar among the people*, and they should find a greater number against them than they had with so much artifice got to be for them. It were well if we would be thus expeditious in that which is good, and not stay for more difficulties.

1. They immediately hurried away the prisoner. The chief priests greedily flew upon the prey which they had been long waiting for; now it is drawn into their net. Or *they*, that is, the soldiers who were to attend the execution, they took him and led him away, not to the place whence he came, and thence to the place of execution, as is usual with us, but directly to the place of execution. Both the priests and the soldiers joined in leading him away. Now was the *Son of man delivered into the hands of men*, wicked and unreasonable men. By the law of Moses (and in appeals by our law) the prosecutors were to be the executioners, ^{<617E>}Deuteronomy 17:7. And the priests here were proud of the office. His being *led away* does not suppose him to have made any opposition, but *the scripture must be fulfilled*, he was *led as a sheep to the slaughter*, ^{<418E>}Acts 8:32. We deserved to have been *led forth with the workers of iniquity* as criminals to execution, ^{<4C3E>}Psalms 125:5. But he was led forth for us, that we might escape.

2. To add to his misery, they obliged him as long as he was able, to carry his cross (v. 17), according to the custom among the Romans; hence *Furcifer* was among them a name of reproach. Their crosses did not stand up constantly, as our gibbets do in the places of execution, because the malefactor was nailed to the cross as it lay along upon the ground, and then it was lifted up, and fastened in the earth, and removed when the execution was over, and commonly buried with the body; so that every one that was crucified had a cross of his own. Now Christ's carrying his cross may be considered,

(1.) As a part of his sufferings; he endured the cross literally. It was a long and thick piece of timber that was necessary for such a use, and some think it was neither seasoned nor hewn. The blessed body of the Lord Jesus was tender, and unaccustomed to such burdens; it had now lately been harassed and tired out; his shoulders were sore with the stripes they had given him; every jog of the cross would renew his smart, and be apt to strike the thorns he was crowned with into his head; yet all this he patiently underwent, and it was but the *beginning of sorrows*.

(2.) As answering the type which went before him; Isaac, when he was to be offered, carried the wood on which he was to be bound and with which he was to be burned.

(3.) As very significant of his undertaking, the Father having *laid upon him the iniquity of us all* (²³¹⁶Isaiah 53:6), and he having to *take away sin by bearing it in his own body upon the tree*, ⁴⁰²⁴1 Peter 2:24. He had said in effect, *On me be the curse*; for he was made a curse for us, and therefore on him was the cross.

(4.) As very instructive to us. Our Master hereby taught all his disciples to take up their cross, and follow him. Whatever cross he calls us out to bear at any time, we must remember that he bore the cross first, and, by bearing it for us, bears it off from us in great measure, for thus he hath made *his yoke easy, and his burden light*. He bore that end of the cross that had the curse upon it; this was the heavy end; and hence all that are his are enabled to call their afflictions for him *light, and but for a moment*.

3. They brought him to the place of execution: He *went forth*, not dragged against his will, but voluntary in his sufferings. He went forth out of the city, for he was *crucified without the gate*, ⁸⁸⁰Hebrews 13:12. And, to put the greater infamy upon his sufferings, he was brought to the common

place of execution, as one in all points *numbered among the transgressors*, a place called *Golgotha, the place of a skull*, where they threw dead men's skulls and bones, or where the heads of beheaded malefactors were left, — a place *ceremonially unclean*; there Christ suffered, because he was *made sin for us*, that he might *purge our consciences from dead works*, and the pollution of them. If one would take notice of the traditions of the elders, there are two which are mentioned by many of the ancient writers concerning this place: —

(1.) That Adam was buried here, and that this was the place of his skull, and they observe that where death triumphed over the first Adam there the second Adam triumphed over him. Gerhard quotes for this tradition Origen, Cyprian, Epiphanius, Austin, Jerome, and others.

(2.) That this was that mountain in the land of Moriah on which Abraham offered up Isaac, and the ram was a ransom for Isaac.

4. There they crucified him, and the other malefactors with him (v. 18): *There they crucified him*. Observe

(1.) What death Christ died; the death of the cross, a bloody, painful, shameful death, a cursed death. He was nailed to the cross, as a sacrifice bound to the altar, as a Saviour fixed for his undertaking; his ear nailed to God's door-post, to serve him for ever. He was lifted up as the brazen serpent, hung between heaven and earth because we were unworthy of either, and abandoned by both. His hands were stretched out to invite and embrace us; he hung upon the tree some hours, dying gradually in the full use of reason and speech, that he might actually resign himself a sacrifice.

(2.) In what company he died: *Two others with him*. Probably these would not have been executed at that time, but at the request of the chief priests, to add to the disgrace of our Lord Jesus, which might be the reason why one of them reviled him, because their death was hastened for his sake. Had they taken two of his disciples, and crucified them with him, it had been an honour to him; but, if such as they had been partakers with him in suffering, it would have looked as if they had been undertakers with him in satisfaction. Therefore it was ordered that his fellow-sufferers should be the worst of sinners, that he might *bear our reproach*, and that the merit might appear to be his only. This exposed him much to the people's contempt and hatred, who are apt to judge of persons by the lump, and are not curious in distinguishing, and would conclude him not only malefactor

because he was yoked with malefactors, but the worst of the three because put in the midst. But thus the scripture was fulfilled, *He was numbered among the transgressors*. He did not die at the altar among the sacrifices, nor mingle his blood with that of bulls and goats; but he died among the criminals, and mingled his blood with theirs who were sacrificed to public justice.

And now let us pause awhile, and with an eye of faith look upon Jesus. Was ever sorrow like unto his sorrow? See him who was clothed with glory stripped of it all, and clothed with shame — him who was the *praise of angels* made a *reproach of men* — him who had been with eternal delight and joy in the bosom of his Father now in the extremities of pain and agony. See him bleeding, see him struggling, see him dying, see him and love him, love him and live to him, and study what we shall render.

JOHN 19:19-30

THE CRUCIFIXION

Here are some remarkable circumstances of Christ's dying more fully related than before, which those will take special notice of who covet to know Christ and him crucified.

I. The title set up over his head. Observe,

1. The inscription itself which Pilate wrote, and ordered to be fixed to the top of the cross, declaring the cause for which he was crucified, v. 19. Matthew called it, *aitia* — *the accusation*; Mark and Luke called it *epigraphe* — *the inscription*; John calls it by the proper Latin name, *titlos* — *the title*: and it was this, *Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews*, Pilate intended this for his reproach, that he, being *Jesus of Nazareth*, should pretend to be king of the Jews, and set up in competition with Caesar, to whom Pilate would thus recommend himself, as very jealous for his honour and interest, when he would treat but a titular king, a king in metaphor, as the worst of malefactors; but God overruled this matter,

(1.) That it might be a further testimony to the innocency of our Lord Jesus; for here was an accusation which, as it was worded, contained no

crime. If this be all they have to lay to his charge, surely he has done nothing worthy of death or of bonds.

(2.) That it might show forth his dignity and honour. This is Jesus a Saviour, *Nazoraïos*, the blessed Nazarite, sanctified to God; this is the *king of the Jews*, *Messiah the prince*, the *sceptre that should rise out of Israel*, as Balaam had foretold; dying for the good of his people, as Caiaphas had foretold. Thus all these three bad men witnessed to Christ, though they meant not so.

2. The notice taken of this inscription (v. 20): *Many of the Jews read it*, not only those of Jerusalem, but those out of the country, and from other countries, strangers and proselytes, that came up to worship at the feast. Multitudes read it, and it occasioned a great variety of reflections and speculations, as men stood affected. Christ himself was set for a sign, a title. Here are two reasons why the title was so much read: —

(1.) Because the place where Jesus was crucified, though without the gate, was yet *nigh the city*, which intimates that if it had been any great distance off they would not have been led, no not by their curiosity, to go and see it, and read it. It is an advantage to have the means of knowing Christ brought to our doors.

(2.) Because it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin, which made it legible by all; they all understood one or other of these languages, and none were more careful to bring up their children to read than the Jews generally were. It likewise made it the more considerable; everyone would be curious to enquire what it was which was so industriously published in the three most known languages. In the Hebrew the oracles of God were recorded; in Greek the learning of the philosophers; and in Latin the laws of the empire. In each of these Christ is proclaimed king, in whom are hid all the treasures of revelation, wisdom, and power. God so ordering it that this should be written in the three then most known tongues, it was intimated thereby that Jesus Christ should be a Saviour to all nations, and not to the Jews only; and also that every nation should hear *in their own tongue the wonderful works* of the Redeemer. Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, were the vulgar languages at that time in this part of the world; so that this is so far from intimating (as the Papists would have it) that the scripture is still to be retained in these three languages, that on the contrary it teaches us that the knowledge of Christ ought to be diffused throughout every

nation in their own tongue, as the proper vehicle of it, that people may converse as freely with the scriptures as they do with their neighbours.

3. The offence which the prosecutors took at it, v. 21. They would not have it written, *the king of the Jews*; but that he said of himself, *I am the king of the Jews*. Here they show themselves,

(1.) Very spiteful and malicious against Christ. It was not enough to have him crucified, but they must have his name crucified too. To justify themselves in giving him such bad treatment, they thought themselves concerned to give him a bad character, and to represent him as a usurper of honours and powers that he was not entitled to.

(2.) Foolishly jealous of the honour of their nation. Though they were a conquered and enslaved people, yet they stood so much upon the punctilio of their reputation that they scorned to have it said that this was their king.

(3.) Very impertinent and troublesome to Pilate. They could not but be sensible that they had forced him, against his mind, to condemn Christ, and yet, in such a trivial thing as this, they continue to tease him; and it was so much the worse in that, though they had charged him with pretending to be the king of the Jews, yet they had not proved it, nor had he ever said so.

4. The judge's resolution to adhere to it: "*What I have written I have written, and will not alter it to humour them.*"

(1.) Hereby an affront was put upon the chief priests, who would still be dictating. It seems, by Pilate's manner of speaking, that he was uneasy in himself for yielding to them, and vexed at them for forcing him to it, and therefore he was resolved to be cross with them; and by this inscription he insinuates,

[1.] That, notwithstanding their pretences, they were not sincere in their affections to Caesar and his government; they were willing enough to have a king of the Jews, if they could have one to their mind.

[2.] That such a king as this, so mean and despicable, was good enough to be the king of the Jews; and this would be the fate of all that should dare to oppose the Roman power.

[3.] That they had been very unjust and unreasonable in prosecuting this Jesus, when there was no fault to be found in him.

(2.) Hereby honour was done to the Lord Jesus. Pilate stuck to it with resolution, that he was the king of the Jews. What he had written was what God had first written, and therefore he could not alter it; for thus it was written, that Messiah the prince should be *cut off*, ²⁰¹⁵ Daniel 9:26. This therefore is the true cause of his death; he dies because the king of Israel must die, must thus die. When the Jews reject Christ, and will not have him for their king, Pilate, a Gentile, sticks to it that he is a king, which was an earnest of what came to pass soon after, when the Gentiles submitted to the kingdom of the Messiah, which the unbelieving Jews had rebelled against.

II. The dividing of his garments among the executioners, v. 23, 24. Four soldiers were employed, who, *when they had crucified Jesus*, had nailed him to the cross, and lifted it up, and him upon it, and nothing more was to be done than to wait his expiring through the extremity of pain, as, with us, when the prisoner is turned off, then they went to make a dividend of his clothes, each claiming an equal share, and so they *made four parts*, as nearly of the same value as they could, *to every soldier a part*; but *his coat*, or upper garment whether cloak or gown, being a pretty piece of curiosity, *without seam, woven from the top throughout*, they agreed to *cast lots for it*. Here observe,

1. The shame they put upon our Lord Jesus, in stripping him of his garments before they crucified him. The shame of nakedness came in with sin. He therefore who was made sin for us bore that shame, to roll away our reproach. He was stripped, that we might be clothed with *white raiment* (⁶⁶⁸ Revelation 3:18), and that when we are unclothed *we may not be found naked*.

2. The wages with which these soldiers paid themselves for crucifying Christ. They were willing to do it for his old clothes. Nothing is to be done so bad, but there will be found men bad enough to do it for a trifle. Probably they hoped to make more than ordinary advantage of his clothes, having heard of cures wrought by the touch of the hem of his garment, or expecting that his admirers would give any money for them.

3. The sport they made about his seamless coat. We read not of any thing about him valuable or remarkable but this, and this not for the richness, but only the variety of it, for it was *woven from the top throughout*; there was no curiosity therefore in the shape, but a designed plainness. Tradition

says, his mother wove it for him, and adds this further, that it was made for him when he was a child, and, like the Israelites' clothes in the wilderness, *waxed not old*; but this is a groundless fancy. The soldiers thought it a pity to rend it, for then it would unravel, and a piece of it would be good for nothing; they would *therefore cast lots for it*. While Christ was in his dying agonies, they were merrily dividing his spoils. The preserving of Christ's seamless coat is commonly alluded to to show the care all Christians ought to take that they rend not the church of Christ with strifes and divisions; yet some have observed that the reason why the soldiers would not rend Christ's coat was not out of any respect to Christ, but because each of them hoped to have it entire for himself. And so many cry out against schism, only that they may engross all the wealth and power to themselves. Those who opposed Luther's separation from the church of Rome urged much the *tunica inconsutilis* — *the seamless coat*; and some of them laid so much stress upon it that they were called the *Inconsutilistae* — *The seamless*.

4. The fulfilling of the scripture in this. David, in spirit, foretold this very circumstance of Christ's sufferings, in that passage, ^{<328>}Psalm 22:18. The event so exactly answering the prediction proves,

(1.) That *the scripture* is the word of God, which foretold contingent events concerning Christ so long before, and they came to pass according to the prediction.

(2.) That Jesus is the true Messiah; for in him all the Old-Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah had, and have, their full accomplishment. *These things therefore the soldiers did*.

III. The care that he took of his poor mother.

1. His mother attends him to his death (v. 25): *There stood by the cross*, as near as they could get, *his mother*, and some of his relations and friends with her. At first, they stood near, as it is said here; but afterwards, it is probable, the soldiers forced them to stand afar off, as it is said in Matthew and Mark: or they themselves removed out of the ground.

(1.) See here the tender affection of these pious women to our Lord Jesus in his sufferings. When all his disciples, except John, has forsaken him, they continued their attendance on him. Thus *the feeble were as David* (^{<328>}Zechariah 12:8): they were not deterred by the fury of the enemy nor

the horror of the sight; they could not rescue him nor relieve him, yet they attended him, to show their good-will. It is an impious and blasphemous construction which some of the popish writers put upon the virgin Mary standing by the cross, that thereby she contributed to the satisfaction he made for sin no less than he did, and so became a joint-mediatrix and co-adjutrix in our salvation.

(2.) We may easily suppose what an affliction it was to these poor women to see him thus abused, especially to the blessed virgin. Now was fulfilled Simeon's word, *A sword shall pierce through thy own soul,* ⁴⁰²⁵ Luke 2:35. His torments were her tortures; she was upon the rack, while he was upon the cross; and her heart bled with his wounds; and *the reproaches wherewith they reproached* him fell on those that attended him.

(3.) We may justly admire the power of divine grace in supporting these women, especially the virgin Mary, under this heavy trial. We do not find his mother wringing her hands, or tearing her hair, or rending her clothes, or making an outcry; but, with a wonderful composure, *standing by the cross*, and her friends with her. Surely she and they were strengthened by a divine power to this degree of patience; and surely the virgin Mary had a fuller expectation of his resurrection than the rest had, which supported her thus. We know not what we can bear till we are tried, and then we know who has said, *My grace is sufficient for thee.*

2. He tenderly provides for his mother at his death. It is probable that Joseph, her husband, was long since dead, and that her son Jesus had supported her, and her relation to him had been her maintenance; and now that he was dying what would become of her? He saw her standing by, and knew her cares and griefs; and he saw John standing not far off, and so he settled a new relation between his beloved mother and his beloved disciple; for he said to her, "*Woman, behold thy son,* for whom henceforward thou must have a motherly affection;" and to him, "*Behold thy mother,* to whom thou must pay a filial duty." And so *from that hour*, that hour never to be forgotten, *that disciple took her to his own home.* See here,

(1.) The care Christ took of his dear mother. He was not so much taken up with a sense of his sufferings as to forget his friends, all whose concerns he bore upon his heart. His mother, perhaps, was so taken up with his sufferings that she thought not of what would become of her; but he admitted that thought. *Silver and gold he had none* to leave, no estate, real

or personal; his clothes the soldiers had seized, and we hear no more of the bag since Judas, who had carried it, hanged himself. He had therefore no other way to provide for his mother than by his interest in a friend, which he does here.

[1.] He calls her *woman*, not mother, not out of any disrespect to her, but because mother would have been a cutting word to her that was already wounded to the heart with grief; like Isaac saying to Abraham, *My father*. He speaks as one that was *now no more in this world*, but was already dead to those in it that were dearest to him. His speaking in this seemingly slight manner to his mother, as he had done formerly, was designed to obviate and give a check to the undue honours which he foresaw would be given to her in the Romish church, as if she were a joint purchaser with him in the honours of the Redeemer.

[2.] He directs her to look upon John as her son: “Behold him as thy son, who stands there by thee, and be as a mother to him.” See here, *First*, An instance of divine goodness, to be observed for our encouragement. Sometimes, when God removes one comfort from us, he raises up another for us, perhaps where we looked not for it. We read of children which the church shall have after she has lost the other, ^{<342>}Isaiah 49:21. Let none therefore reckon all gone with one cistern dried up, for from the same fountain another may be filled. *Secondly*, An instance of filial duty, to be observed for our imitation. Christ has here taught children to provide, to the utmost of their power, for the comfort of their aged parents. When David was in distress, he took care of his parents, and found out a shelter for them (^{<421>}1 Samuel 22:3); so the Son of David here. Children at their death, according to their ability, should provide for their parents, if they survive them, and need their kindness.

(2.) The confidence he reposed in the beloved disciple. It is to him he says, *Behold thy mother*, that is, I recommend her to thy care, be thou as a son to her to guide her (^{<2518>}Isaiah 51:18); and *forsake her not when she is old*, ^{<122>}Proverbs 23:22. Now,

[1.] This was an honour put upon John, and a testimony both to his prudence and to his fidelity. If he who knows all things had not known that John loved him, he would not have made him his mother's guardian. It is a great honour to be employed for Christ, and to be entrusted with any of his interest in the world. But,

[2.] It would be a care and some charge to John; but he cheerfully accepted it, *and took her to his own home*, not objecting the trouble nor expense, nor his obligations to his own family, nor the ill-will he might contract by it. Note, Those that truly love Christ, and are beloved of him, will be glad of an opportunity to do any service to him or his. *Nicephoras's Ecclesiastes Hist. lib. 2 cap. 3*, saith that the virgin Mary lived with John at Jerusalem eleven years, and then died. Others, that she lived to remove with him to Ephesus.

IV. The fulfilling of the scripture, in the giving of him vinegar to drink, v. 28, 29. Observe,

1. How much respect Christ showed to the scripture (v. 28): *Knowing that all things hitherto were accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled*, which spoke of his drinking in his sufferings, *he saith, I thirst*, that is, he called for drink.

(1.) It was not at all strange that he was thirsty; we find him *thirsty* in a journey (⁴⁰⁶John 4:6, 7), and now thirsty when he was just at his journey's end. Well might he thirst after all the toil and hurry which he had undergone, and being now in the agonies of death, ready to expire purely by the loss of blood and extremity of pain. The torments of hell are represented by a violent thirst in the complaint of the rich man that begged for a *drop of water to cool his tongue*. To that everlasting thirst we had been condemned, had not Christ suffered for us.

(2.) But the reason of his complaining of it is somewhat surprising; it is the only word he spoke that looked like complaint of his outward sufferings. When they scourged him, and crowned him with thorns, he did not cry, O my head! or, My back! But now he cried, *I thirst*. For,

[1.] He would thus express *the travail of his soul*, ²⁵¹Isaiah 53:11. He thirsted after the glorifying of God, and the accomplishment of the work of our redemption, and the happy issue of his undertaking.

[2.] He would thus take care to see the scripture fulfilled. Hitherto, all had been accomplished, and he knew it, for this was the thing he had carefully observed all along; and now he called to mind one thing more, which this was the proper season for the performance of. By this it appears that he was the Messiah, in that not only the scripture was punctually fulfilled in him, but it was strictly eyed by him. By this it appears *that God was with*

him of a truth — that in all he did he went exactly according to the word of God, taking care *not to destroy, but to fulfil, the law and the prophets*. Now, *First*, The scripture had foretold his thirst, and therefore he himself related it, because it could not otherwise be known, saying, *I thirst*; it was foretold that his tongue should cleave to his jaws, ^{<1215>}Psalm 22:15. Samson, an eminent type of Christ, when he was laying *the Philistines heaps upon heaps*, was himself *sore athirst* (^{<1758>}Judges 15:18); so was Christ, when he was upon the cross, *spoiling principalities and powers*. *Secondly*, The scripture had foretold that in his thirst he should have vinegar given him to drink, ^{<1621>}Psalm 69:21. They had given him vinegar to drink before they crucified him (^{<1734>}Matthew 27:34), but the prophecy was not exactly fulfilled in that, because that was not in his thirst; therefore now he said, *I thirst*, and called for it again: then he would not drink, but now he received it Christ would rather court an affront than see any prophecy unfulfilled. This should satisfy us under all our trials, that the will of God is done, and the word of God accomplished.

2. See how little respect his persecutors showed to him (v. 29): *There was set a vessel full of vinegar*, probably according to the custom at all executions of this nature; or, as others think, it was now set designedly for an abuse to Christ, instead of the cup of wine which they used to give to *those that were ready to perish*; with this *they filled a sponge*, for they would not allow him a cup, *and they put it upon hyssop*, a hyssop-stalk, and with this heaved it to his mouth; *hyssopo perithentes* — *they stuck it round with hyssop*; so it may be taken; or, as others, they mingled it with hyssop-water, and this they gave him to drink when he was thirsty; a drop of water would have cooled his tongue better than a draught of vinegar: yet this he submitted to for us. *We had taken the sour grapes*, and *thus his teeth were set on edge*; we had forfeited all comforts and refreshments, and therefore they were withheld from him. When heaven denied him a beam of light earth denied him a drop of water, and put vinegar in the room of it.

V. The dying word wherewith he breathed out his soul (v. 30): *When he had received the vinegar*, as much of it as he thought fit, *he said, It is finished*; and, with that, *bowed his head, and gave up the ghost*. Observe,

1. What he said, and we may suppose him to say it with triumph and exultation, *Tetelestai* — *It is finished*, a comprehensive word, and a comfortable one.

(1.) *It is finished*, that is, the malice and enmity of his persecutors had now done their worst; *when he had received* that last indignity in *the vinegar they gave him*, he said, “This is the last; I am now going out of their reach, *where the wicked cease from troubling.*”

(2.) *It is finished*, that is, the counsel and commandment of his Father concerning his sufferings were now fulfilled; it was a *determinate counsel*, and he took care to see every iota and tittle of it exactly answered, ^{<472>}Acts 2:23. He had said, when he entered upon his sufferings, *Father, thy will be done*; and now he saith with pleasure, *It is done*. It was *his meat and drink to finish his work* (^{<493>}John 4:34), and the meat and drink refreshed him, when they gave him gall and vinegar.

(3.) *It is finished*, that is, all the types and prophecies of the Old Testament, which pointed at the sufferings of the Messiah, were accomplished and answered. He speaks as if, now that *they had given him the vinegar*, he could not bethink himself of any word in the Old Testament that was to be fulfilled between him and his death but it had its accomplishment; such as, his being *sold for thirty pieces of silver, his hands and feet being pierced, his garments divided, etc.*; and now that this is done. *It is finished.*

(4.) *It is finished*, that is, the ceremonial law is abolished, and a period put to the obligation of it. The substance is now come, and all the shadows are done away. Just now *the veil is rent, the wall of partition is taken down*, even *the law of commandments contained in ordinances*, ^{<474>}Ephesians 2:14, 15. The Mosaic economy is dissolved, *to make way for a better hope.*

(5.) *It is finished*, that is, sin is finished, and an end made of transgression, *by the bringing in of an everlasting righteousness*. It seems to refer to ^{<495>}Daniel 9:24. *The Lamb of God was sacrificed to take away the sin of the world*, and it is done, ^{<395>}Hebrews 9:26.

(6.) *It is finished*, that is, his sufferings were now finished, both those of his soul and those of his body. The storm is over, the worst is past; all his pains and agonies are at an end, and he is just going to paradise, entering upon *the joy set before him*. Let all that *suffer for Christ*, and with Christ, comfort themselves with this, *that yet a little while* and they also shall say, *It is finished.*

(7.) *It is finished*, that is, his life was now finished, he was just ready to breathe his last, and *now he is no more in this world*, ^{<471>}John 17:11. This is like that of blessed Paul (^{<541>}2 Timothy 4:7), *I have finished my course, my race is run, my glass is out, mene, mene — numbered and finished*. This we must all come to shortly.

(8.) *It is finished*, that is, the work of man's redemption and salvation is now completed, at least the hardest part of the undertaking is over; a full satisfaction is made to the justice of God, a fatal blow given to the power of Satan, a fountain of grace opened that shall ever flow, a foundation of peace and happiness laid that shall never fail. Christ had now gone through with his work, and *finished it*, ^{<474>}John 17:4. For, *as for God, his work is perfect; when I begin, saith he, I will also make an end*. And, as in the purchase, so in the application of the redemption, *he that has begun a good work will perform it*; the mystery of God shall be finished.

2. What he did: *He bowed his head, and gave up the ghost*. He was voluntary in dying; for he was not only the sacrifice, but the priest and the offerer; and the *animus offerentis — the mind of the offerer*, was all in all in the sacrifice. Christ showed his will in his sufferings, *by which will we are sanctified*.

(1.) *He gave up the ghost*. His life was not forcibly extorted from him, but freely resigned. He had said, *Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit*, thereby expressing the intention of this act. I give up myself as a *ransom for many*; and, accordingly, he did give up his spirit, paid down the price of pardon and life at his Father's hands. *Father, glorify thy name*.

(2.) *He bowed his head*. Those that were crucified, in dying stretched up their heads to gasp for breath, and did not drop their heads till they had breathed their last; but Christ, to show himself active in dying, *bowed his head* first, composing himself, as it were, to fall asleep. *God had laid upon him the iniquity of us all*, putting it upon the head of this great sacrifice; and some think that by this bowing of his head he would intimate his sense of the weight upon him. See ^{<480>}Psalm 38:4; 40:12. The bowing of his head shows his submission to his Father's will, and his obedience to death. He accommodated himself to his dying work, as Jacob, *who gathered up his feet into the bed, and then yielded up the ghost*.

JOHN 19:31-37

THE CRUCIFIXION

This passage concerning the piercing of Christ's side after his death is recorded only by this evangelist.

I. Observe the superstition of the Jews, which occasioned it (v. 31): *Because it was the preparation for the sabbath, and that sabbath day, because it fell in the passover-week, was a high day, that they might show a veneration for the sabbath, they would not have the dead bodies to remain on the crosses on the sabbath-day, but besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, which would be a certain, but cruel dispatch, and that then they might be buried out of sight.* Note here,

1. The esteem they would be thought to have for the approaching sabbath, because it was one of the days of unleavened bread, and (some reckon) the day of the offering of the first-fruits. Every sabbath day is a holy day, and a good day, but this was a high day, *megale hemera* — a great day. Passover sabbaths are high days; sacrament-days, supper-days, communion-days are high days, and there ought to be more than ordinary preparation for them, that these may be high days indeed to us, *as the days of heaven*.

2. The reproach which they reckoned it would be to that day if the dead bodies should be left hanging on the crosses. Dead bodies were not to be left at any time (⁵²³Deuteronomy 21:23); yet, in this case, the Jews would have left the Roman custom to take place, had it not been an extraordinary day; and, many strangers from all parts being then at Jerusalem, it would have been an offence to them; nor could they well bear the sight of Christ's crucified body, for, unless their consciences were quite seared, when the heat of their rage was a little over, they would upbraid them.

3. Their petition to Pilate, that their bodies, now as good as dead, might be dispatched; not by strangling or beheading them, which would have been a compassionate hastening of them out of their misery, like the *coup de grace* (as the French call it) to those that are broken upon the wheel, *the stroke of mercy*, but by the breaking of their legs, which would carry them off in the most exquisite pain. Note,

(1.) *The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.*

(2.) The pretended sanctity of hypocrites is abominable. These Jews would be thought to bear a great regard for the sabbath, and yet had not regard to justice and righteousness; they made no conscience of bringing an innocent and excellent person to the cross, and yet scrupled letting a dead body hang upon the cross.

II. The dispatching of *the two thieves that were crucified with him*, v. 32. Pilate was still gratifying the Jews, and gave orders as they desired; *and the soldiers came*, hardened against all impressions of pity, *and broke the legs of the two thieves*, which, no doubt, extorted from them hideous outcries, and made them die according to the bloody disposition of Nero, so as to feel themselves die. One of these thieves was a penitent, and had received from Christ an assurance that he should shortly be with him in paradise, and yet died in the same pain and misery that the other thief did; *for all things come alike to all*. Many go to heaven that *have bands in their death*, and *die in the bitterness of their soul*. The extremity of dying agonies is no obstruction to the living comforts that wait for holy souls on the other side death. Christ died, and went to paradise, but appointed a guard to convey him thither. This is the order of going to heaven — *Christ, the first-fruits and forerunner, afterwards those that are Christ's*.

III. The trial that was made whether Christ was dead or no, and the putting of it out of doubt.

1. They supposed him to be dead, and therefore *did not break his legs*, v. 33. Observe here,

(1.) That Jesus died in less time than persons crucified ordinarily did. The structure of his body, perhaps, being extraordinarily fine and tender, was the sooner broken by pain; or, rather, it was to show that he laid down his life of himself, and could die when he pleased, though his hands were nailed. Though he yielded to death, yet he was not conquered.

(2.) That his enemies were satisfied he was really dead. The Jews, who stood by to see the execution effectually done, would not have omitted this piece of cruelty, if they had not been sure he was got out of the reach of it.

(3.) *Whatever devices are in men's hearts, the counsel of the Lord shall stand*. It was fully designed to break his legs, but, God's counsel being otherwise, see how it was prevented.

2. Because they would be sure he was dead they made such an experiment as would put it past dispute. *One of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, aiming at his heart, and forthwith came thereout blood and water, v. 34.*

(1.) The soldier hereby designed to decide the question whether he was dead or no, and by this honourable wound in his side to supersede the ignominious method of dispatch they took with the other two. Tradition says that this soldier's name was *Longinus*, and that, having some distemper in his eyes, he was immediately cured of it, by some drops of blood that flowed out of Christ's side falling on them: significant enough, if we had any good authority for the story.

(2.) But God had a further design herein, which was,

[1.] To give an evidence of the truth of his death, in order to the proof of his resurrection. If he was only in a trance or swoon, his resurrection was a sham; but, by this experiment, he was certainly dead, for this spear broke up the very fountains of life, and, according to all the law and course of nature, it was impossible a human body should survive such a wound as this in the vitals, and such an evacuation thence.

[2.] To give an illustration of the design of his death. There was much of mystery in it, and its being solemnly attested (v. 35) intimates there was something miraculous in it, that *the blood and water* should come out distinct and separate from the same wound; at least it was very significant; this same apostle refers to it as a very considerable thing, ~~618~~1 John 5:6, 8.

First, the opening of his side was significant. When we would protest our sincerity, we wish there were a window in our hearts, that the thoughts and intents of them might be visible to all. Through this window, opened in Christ's side, you may look into his heart, and see love flaming there, love strong as death; see our names written there. Some make it an allusion to the opening of Adam's side in innocency. When Christ, the second Adam, was fallen into a deep sleep upon the cross, then was his side opened, and out of it was his church taken, which he espoused to himself. See ~~450~~Ephesians 5:30, 32. Our devout poet, Mr. George Herbert, in his poem called *The Bag*, very affectingly brings in our Saviour, when his side was pierced, thus speaking to his disciples: —

*If ye have any thing to send, or write
(I have no bag, but here is room),
Unto my Father's hands and sight
(Believe me) it shall safely come.*

*That I shall mind what you impart,
Look, you may put it very near my heart;
Or, if hereafter any of my friends
Will use me in this kind, the door*

*Shall still be open; what he sends
I will present, and somewhat more,
Not to his hurt. Sighs will convey
Any thing to me. Hark, Despair, away.*

Secondly, *The blood and water* that flowed out of it were significant.

1. They signified the two great benefits which all believers partake of through Christ — justification and sanctification; blood for remission, water for regeneration; blood for atonement, water for purification. Blood and water were used very much under the law. Guilt contracted must be expiated by blood; stains contracted must be done away by *the water of purification*. These two must always go together. *You are sanctified, you are justified,* ^{<411>}1 Corinthians 6:11. Christ has joined them together, and we must not think to put them asunder. They both flowed from the pierced side of our Redeemer. To Christ crucified we owe both merit for our justification, and Spirit and grace for our sanctification; and we have as much need of the latter as of the former, ^{<413>}1 Corinthians 1:30.

2. They signified the two great ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper, by which those benefits are represented, sealed, and applied, to believers; they both owe their institution and efficacy to Christ. It is not the water in the font that will be to us *the washing of regeneration*, but the water out of the side of Christ; not the blood of the grape that will pacify the conscience and refresh the soul, but the blood out of the side of Christ. Now was the rock smitten (^{<410>}1 Corinthians 10:4), now was the fountain opened (^{<381>}Zechariah 13:1), now were the wells of salvation digged, ^{<383>}Isaiah 12:3. *Here is the river, the streams whereof make glad the city of our God.*

IV. The attestation of the truth of this by an eye-witness (v. 35), the evangelist himself. Observe,

1. What a competent witness he was of the matters of fact.

(1.) What he bore record of he saw; he had it not by hearsay, nor was it only his own conjecture, but he was an eyewitness of it; it is *what we have seen and looked upon* (⁴⁰¹1 John 1:1; ⁴⁰⁶2 Peter 1:16), and *had perfect understanding of*, ⁴⁰⁸Luke 1:3.

(2.) What he saw he faithfully bore record of; as a faithful witness, he told not only the truth, but the whole truth; and did not only attest it by word of mouth, but left it upon record in writing, *in perpetuam rei memoriam* — *for a perpetual memorial*.

(3.) *His record is undoubtedly true*; for he wrote not only from his own personal knowledge and observation, but from the dictates of the Spirit of truth, that leads into all truth.

(4.) He had himself a full assurance of the truth of what he wrote, and did not persuade others to believe that which he did not believe himself: *He knows that he saith true*.

(5.) He *therefore* witnessed these things, *that we might believe*; he did not record them merely for his own satisfaction or the private use of his friends, but made them public to the world; not to please the curious nor entertain the ingenious, but to draw men to believe the gospel in order to their eternal welfare.

2. What care he showed in this particular instance. That we may be well assured of the truth of Christ's death, he saw his heart's blood, his life's blood, let out; and also of the benefits that flow to us from his death, signified by the blood and water which came out of his side. Let this silence the fears of weak Christians, and encourage their hopes, *iniquity shall not be their ruin*, for there came both water and blood out of Christ's pierced side, both to justify and sanctify them; and if you ask, How can we be sure of this? You may be sure, for *he that saw it bore record*.

V. The accomplishment of the scripture in all this (v. 36): *That the scripture might be fulfilled*, and so both the honour of the Old Testament preserved and the truth of the New Testament confirmed. Here are two instances of it together: —

1. The scripture was fulfilled in the preserving of his legs from being broken; therein that word was fulfilled, *A bone of him shall not be broken*.

(1.) There was a promise of this made indeed to all *the righteous*, but principally pointing at *Jesus Christ the righteous* (^{<1840>}Psalm 34:20): *He keepeth all his bones, not one of them is broken*. And David, in spirit, says, *All my bones shall say, Lord, who is like unto thee?* ^{<1850>}Psalm 35:10.

(2.) There was a type of this in the paschal lamb, which seems to be specially referred to here (^{<1726>}Exodus 12:46): *Neither shall you break a bone thereof*; and it is repeated (^{<1802>}Numbers 9:12), *You shall not break any bone of it*; for which law the will of the law-maker is the reason, but the antitype must answer the type. *Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us*, ^{<1807>}1 Corinthians 5:7. He is *the Lamb of God* (ch. 1:29), and, as the true passover, his bones were kept unbroken. This commandment was given concerning his bones, when dead, as of Joseph's, ^{<1812>}Hebrews 11:22.

(3.) There was a significancy in it; the strength of the body is in the bones. The Hebrew word for the bones signifies the strength, and therefore *not a bone of Christ must be broken*, to show that though *he be crucified in weakness* his strength to save is not at all broken. Sin breaks our bones, as it broke David's (^{<1818>}Psalm 51:8); but it did not break Christ's bones; he stood firm under the burden, mighty to save.

2. *The scripture was fulfilled in the piercing of his side* (v. 37): *They shall look on me whom they had pierced*; so it is written, ^{<1820>}Zechariah 12:10. And there the same that pours out the Spirit of grace, and can be no less than the God of the holy prophets, says, *They shall look upon me*, which is here applied to Christ, *They shall look upon him*.

(1.) It is here implied that the Messiah shall be pierced; and here it had a more full accomplishment than in *the piercing of his hands and feet*; he was pierced by *the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, wounded in the house of his friends*, as it follows, ^{<1836>}Zechariah 13:6.

(2.) It is promised that *when the Spirit is poured out they shall look on him and mourn*. This was in part fulfilled when many of those that were his betrayers and murderers *were pricked to the heart*, and brought to believe in him; it will be further fulfilled, in mercy, *when all Israel shall be saved*; and, in wrath, when those who persisted in their infidelity shall *see him whom they have pierced, and wail because of him*, ^{<1841>}Revelation 1:7. But it is applicable to us all. We have all been guilty of piercing the Lord Jesus, and are all concerned with suitable affections to look on him.

THE BURIAL OF CHRIST

We have here an account of the burial of the blessed body of our Lord Jesus. The solemn funerals of great men are usually looked at with curiosity; the mournful funerals of dear friends are attended with concern. Come and see an extraordinary funeral; never was the like! Come and see a burial that conquered the grave, and buried it, a burial that beautified the grave and softened it for all believers. *Let us turn aside now, and see this great sight.* Here is,

I. The body begged, v. 38. This was done by the interest of *Joseph of Ramah*, or *Arimathea*, of whom no mention is made in all the New-Testament story, but only in the narrative which each of the evangelists gives us of Christ's burial, wherein he was chiefly concerned. Observe,

1. The character of this Joseph. He was a disciple of Christ *incognito* — *in secret*, a better friend to Christ than he would willingly be known to be. It was his honour that he was a disciple of Christ; and some such there are, that are themselves great men, and unavoidably linked with bad men. But it was his weakness that he was so secretly, when he should have confessed Christ before men, yea, though he had lost his preferment by it. Disciples should openly own themselves, yet Christ may have many that are his disciples sincerely, though secretly; better secretly than not at all, especially if, like Joseph here, they grow stronger and stronger. Some who in less trials have been timorous, yet in greater have been very courageous; so Joseph here. He concealed his affection to Christ *for fear of the Jews*, lest they should put him out of the synagogue, at least out of the sanhedrim, which was all they could do. To Pilate the governor he *went boldly*, and yet *feared the Jews*. The impotent malice of those that can but censure, and revile, and clamour, is sometimes more formidable even to wise and good men than one would think.

2. The part he bore in this affair. He, having by his place access to Pilate, desired leave of him to dispose of the body. His mother and dear relations had neither spirit nor interest to attempt such a thing. His disciples were gone; if nobody appeared, the Jews or soldiers would bury him with the thieves; therefore God raised up this gentleman to interpose in it, that the

scripture might be fulfilled, and the decorum owing to his approaching resurrection maintained. Note, When God has work to do he can find out such as are proper to do it, and embolden them for it. Observe it as an instance of the humiliation of Christ, that his dead body lay at the mercy of a heathen judge, and must be begged before it could be buried, and also that Joseph would not take the body of Christ till he had asked and obtained leave of the governor; for in those things wherein the power of the magistrate is concerned we must ever pay a deference to that power, and peaceably submit to it.

II. The embalming prepared, v. 39. This was done by Nicodemus, another person of quality, and in a public post. He brought a *mixture of myrrh and aloes*, which some think were bitter ingredients, to preserve the body, others fragrant ones, to perfume it. Here is.

1. The character of Nicodemus, which is much the same with that of Joseph; he was a secret friend to Christ, though not his constant follower. He at first *came to Jesus by night*, but now owned him publicly, as before, ~~<BIB>~~John 7:50, 51. That grace which at first is like a bruised reed may afterwards become like a strong cedar, and the trembling lamb *bold as a lion*. See ~~<BIB>~~Romans 14:4. It is a wonder that Joseph and Nicodemus, men of such interest, did not appear sooner, and solicit Pilate not to condemn Christ, especially seeing him so loth to do it. Begging his life would have been a nobler piece of service than begging his body. But Christ would have none of his friends to endeavour to prevent his death when his hour was come. While his persecutors were forwarding the accomplishment of the scriptures, his followers must not obstruct it.

2. The kindness of Nicodemus, which was considerable, though of a different nature. Joseph served Christ with his interest, Nicodemus with his purse. Probably, they agreed it between them, that, while one was procuring the grant, the other should be preparing the spices; and this for expedition, because they were straitened in time. But why did they make this ado about Christ's dead body?

(1.) Some think we may see in it the weakness of their faith. A firm belief of the resurrection of Christ on the third day would have saved them this care and cost, and have been more acceptable than all spices. Those bodies indeed to whom the grave is a long home need to be clad accordingly; but

what need of such furniture of the grave for one that, like a way-faring man, did but turn aside into it, to *tarry for a night or two*?

(2.) However, we may plainly see in it the strength of their love. Hereby they showed the value they had for his person and doctrine, and that it was not lessened by the reproach of the cross. Those that had been so industrious to profane his crown, and lay his honour in the dust, might already see that they had imagined a vain thing; for, as God had done him honour in his sufferings, so did men too, even great men. They showed not only the charitable respect of committing his body to the earth, but the honourable respect shown to great men. This they might do, and yet believe and look for his resurrection; nay, this they might do in the belief and expectation of it. Since God designed honour for this body, they would put honour upon it. However, we must do our duty according as the present day and opportunity are, and leave it to God to fulfil his promises in his own way and time.

III. The body got ready, v. 40. They *took it* into some house adjoining, and, having washed it from blood and dust, *wound it in linen clothes* very decently, with the spices melted down, it is likely, into an ointment, as *the manner of the Jews is to bury*, or to *embalm* (so Dr. Hammond), as we see dead bodies.

1. Here was care taken of Christ's body: It was *wound in linen clothes*. Among clothing that belongs to us, Christ put on even the grave-clothes, to make them easy to us, and to enable us to call them our wedding-clothes. They wound the body *with the spices*, for *all his garments*, his grave-clothes not excepted, *smell of myrrh and aloes* (the spices here mentioned) *out of the ivory palaces* (~~Psalm~~ Psalm 45:8), and an ivory palace the sepulchre hewn out of a rock was to Christ. Dead bodies and graves are noisome and offensive; hence sin is compared to a *body of death* and an *open sepulchre*; but Christ's sacrifice, being to God as a sweet-smelling savour, hath taken away our pollution. No ointment or perfume can rejoice the heart so as the grave of our Redeemer does, where there is faith to perceive the fragrant odours of it.

2. In conformity to this example, we ought to have regard to the dead bodies of Christians; not to enshrine and adore their relics, no, not those of the most eminent saints and martyrs (nothing like that was done to the dead body of Christ himself), but carefully to deposit them, the dust in the

dust, as those who believe that the dead bodies of the saints are still united to Christ and designed for glory and immortality at the last day. The resurrection of the saints will be in virtue of Christ's resurrection, and therefore in burying them we should have an eye to Christ's burial, for he, being dead, thus speaketh. *Thy dead men shall live*, ~~238~~ Isaiah 26:19. In burying our dead it is not necessary that in all circumstances we imitate the burial of Christ, as if we must be buried in linen, and in a garden, and be embalmed as he was; but his being buried after *the manner of the Jews* teaches us that in things of this nature we should conform to the usages of the country where we live, except in those that are superstitious.

IV. The grave pitched upon, in a garden which belonged to Joseph of Arimathea, very near the place where he was crucified. There was a sepulchre, or vault, prepared for the first occasion, but not yet used. Observe,

1. That Christ was buried without the city, for thus the manner of the Jews was to bury, not in their cities, much less in their synagogues, which some have thought better than our way of burying: yet there was then a peculiar reason for it, which does not hold now, because the touching of a grave contracted a ceremonial pollution: but now that the resurrection of Christ has altered the property of the grave, and done away its pollution for all believers, we need not keep at such a distance from it; nor is it incapable of a good improvement, to have the congregation of the dead in the church-yard, encompassing the congregation of the living in the church, since they also are dying, and in *the midst of life we are in death*. Those that would not superstitiously, but by faith, visit the holy sepulchre, must go forth out of the noise of this world.

2. That Christ was buried in a garden. Observe,

(1.) That Joseph had his sepulchre in his garden; so he contrived it, that it might be a memento,

[1.] To himself while living; when he was taking the pleasure of his garden, and reaping the products of it, let him think of dying, and be quickened to prepare for it. The garden is a proper place for meditation, and a sepulchre there may furnish us with a proper subject for meditation, and such a one as we are loth to admit in the midst of our pleasures.

[2.] To his heirs and successors when he was gone. It is good to acquaint ourselves with the *place of our fathers' sepulchres*; and perhaps we might make our own less formidable if we made theirs more familiar.

(2.) That in a sepulchre in a garden Christ's body was laid. In the garden of Eden death and the grave first received their power, and now in a garden they are conquered, disarmed, and triumphed over. In a garden Christ began his passion, and from a garden he would rise, and begin his exaltation. Christ fell to the ground *as a corn of wheat* (^{<4824>}John 12:24), and therefore was sown in a garden among the seeds, for *his dew is as the dew of herbs*, (^{<339>}Isaiah 26:19. He is the *fountain of gardens*, ^{<2115>}Song of Solomon 4:15.

3. That he was buried in a new sepulchre. This was so ordered

(1.) For the honour of Christ; he was not a common person, and therefore must not mix with common dust. He that was born from a virgin-womb must rise from a virgin-tomb.

(2.) For the confirming of the truth of his resurrection, that it might not be suggested that it was not he, but some other that rose now, when many bodies of saints arose; or, that he rose by the power of some other, as the man that was raised by the touch of Elisha's bones, and not by his own power. He that has *made all things new* has new-made the grave for us.

V. The funeral solemnized (v. 42): *There laid they Jesus*, that is, the dead body of Jesus. Some think the calling of this *Jesus* intimates the inseparable union between the divine and human nature. Even this dead body was *Jesus* — *a Saviour*, for his death is our life; Jesus is still the same, (^{<308>}Hebrews 13:8. There they laid him because it was the preparation day.

1. Observe here the deference which the Jews paid to the sabbath, and to the day of preparation. Before the passover-sabbath they had a solemn day of preparation. This day had been ill kept by the chief priests, who called themselves the church, but was well kept by the disciples of Christ, who were branded as dangerous to the church; and it is often so.

(1.) They would not put off the funeral till the sabbath day, because the sabbath is to be a day of holy rest and joy, with which the business and sorrow of a funeral do not well agree.

(2.) They would not drive it too late on the day of preparation for the sabbath. What is to be done the evening before the sabbath should be so contrived that it may neither intrench upon sabbath time, nor indispose us for sabbath work.

2. Observe the convenience they took of an adjoining sepulchre; the sepulchre they made use of was *nigh at hand*. Perhaps, if they had had time, they would have carried him to Bethany, and buried him among his friends there. And I am sure he had more right to have been buried in the chief of the sepulchres of the sons of David than any of the kings of Judah had; but it was so ordered that he should be laid in a sepulchre nigh at hand,

(1.) Because he was to lie there but awhile, as in an inn, and therefore he took the first that offered itself.

(2.) Because this was a new sepulchre. Those that prepared it little thought who should handsel it; but the wisdom of God has reaches infinitely beyond ours, and he makes what use he pleases of us and all we have.

(3.) We are hereby taught not to be over-curious in the place of our burial. Where the tree falls, why should it not lie? For Christ was buried in the sepulchre that was next at hand. It was faith in the promise of Canaan that directed the Patriarch's desires to be carried thither for a burying-place; but now, since that promise is superseded by a better, that care is over.

Thus without pomp or solemnity is the body of Jesus laid in the cold and silent grave. Here lies our surety under arrest for our debts, so that if he be released his discharge will be ours. Here is the Sun of righteousness set for awhile, to rise again in greater glory, and set no more. Here lies a seeming captive to death, but a real conqueror over death; for here lies death itself slain, and the grave conquered. *Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory.*