

CHAPTER 26

The narrative of the death and sufferings of Christ is more particularly and fully recorded by all the four evangelists than any part of his history; for what should be determine, and desire to know, but Christ, and him crucified? And this chapter begins that memorable narrative. The year of the redeemed was now come, the seventy weeks determined were now accomplished, when transgression must be finished, reconciliation made, and an everlasting righteousness brought in, by the cutting off of Messiah the Prince, ~~2024~~ Daniel 9:24, 26. That awful scene is here introduced, to be read with reverence and holy fear. In this chapter, we have,

I. The preliminaries, or prefaces, to Christ's sufferings.

- 1.** The previous notice given by him to his disciples (v. 1, 2).
- 2.** The rulers' conspiracy against him (v. 3-5).
- 3.** The anointing of his head at a supper in Bethany (v. 6-13).
- 4.** Judas's bargain with the priests to betray him (v. 14-16).
- 5.** Christ eating the passover with his disciples (v. 17-25).
- 6.** His instituting the Lord's supper, and his discourse with his disciples after it (v. 26-35).

II. His entrance upon them, and some of the particulars of them.

- 1.** His agony in the garden (v. 36-46).
- 2.** The seizing of him by the officers, with Judas's help (v. 47-56).
- 3.** His arraignment before the chief priest, and his condemnation in his court (v. 57-68).
- 4.** Peter's denying him (v. 69-75).

~~2024~~ MATTHEW 26:1-5

THE PLOT OF THE CHIEF PRIESTS

Here is,

1. The notice Christ gave his disciples of the near approach of his sufferings, v. 1, 2. While his enemies were preparing trouble for him, he was preparing himself and his followers for it. He had often told them of his sufferings at a distance, now he speaks of them as at the door; *after two days*, Note, After many former notices of trouble we still have need of fresh ones. Observe,

(1.) The *time* when he gave this alarm; *when he had finished all these sayings*.

[1.] Not till he had finished all he had to say. Note, Christ's witnesses die not till they have finished their testimony. When Christ had gone through his undertaking as a prophet, he entered upon the execution of his office as a priest.

[2.] After he had finished these sayings, which go immediately before; he had bid his disciples to expect sad times, bonds and afflictions, and then tells them, *The Son of man is betrayed*; to intimate that they should fare no worse than he should, and that his sufferings should take the sting out of theirs. Note, Thoughts of a suffering Christ are great supports to a suffering Christian, suffering with him and for him.

(2.) The thing itself he gave them notice of; *The Son of man is betrayed*. The thing was not only so sure, but so near, that it was as good as done. Note, It is good to make sufferings that are yet to come, as present to us. *He is betrayed*, for Judas was then contriving and designing to betray him.

2. The plot of the chief priests, and scribes, and elders of the people, against the life of our Lord Jesus, 5:3-5. Many consultations had been held against the life of Christ but this plot was laid deeper than any yet, for the grandees were all engaged in it. The chief priests, who presided in ecclesiastical affairs; the elders, who were judges in civil matters, and the scribes, who, as doctors of the law, were directors to both — these composed the sanhedrim, or great council that governed the nation, and these were confederate against Christ. Observe

(1.) The *place* where they met; *in the palace of the high priest*, who was the centre of their unity in this wicked project.

(2.) The plot itself; to *take Jesus by subtlety, and kill him*; nothing less than his blood, his life-blood, would serve their turn. So cruel and bloody have been the designs of Christ's and his church's enemies.

(3.) The policy of the plotters; *Not on the feast-day*. Why not? Was it in regard to the holiness of the time, or because they would not be disturbed in the religious services of the day? No, but *lest there should be an uproar among the people*. They knew Christ had a great interest in the common people, of whom there was a great concourse on the feast-day, and they would be in danger of taking up arms against their rulers, if they should offer to lay violent hands on Christ, whom all held for a prophet. They were awed, not by the fear of God, but by the fear of the people; all their concern was for their own safety, not God's honour. They would have it done at the feast; for it was a tradition of the Jews, that malefactors should be put to death at one of the three feasts, especially rebels and impostors, that *all Israel might see and fear*; but *not on the feast-day*.

486 MATTHEW 26:6-13

CHRIST ANOINTED AT BETHANY

In this passage of story, we have,

I. The singular kindness of a good woman to our Lord Jesus in anointing his head, v. 6, 7. It was *in Bethany*, a village hard by Jerusalem, and *in the house of Simon the leper*. Probably, he was one who had been miraculously cleansed from his leprosy by our Lord Jesus, and he would express his gratitude to Christ by entertaining him; nor did Christ disdain to converse with him, to come in to him, and sup with him. Though he was cleansed, yet he was called *Simon the leper*. Those who are guilty of scandalous sins, will find that, though the sin be pardoned, the reproach will cleave to them, and will hardly be wiped away. The woman that did this, is supposed to have been Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus. And Dr. Lightfoot thinks it was the same that was called *Mary Magdalene*. She had a *box of ointment very precious*, which she *poured upon the head of Christ* as he sat at meat. This, among us, would be a strange sort of compliment. But it was then accounted the highest piece of respect; for the smell was very grateful, and the ointment itself refreshing to the head. David had his *head anointed*, 4275 Psalm 23:5; 476 Luke 7:46. Now this may be looked upon,

1. As an act of faith in our Lord Jesus, the Christ, the Messiah, the anointed. To signify that she believed in him as God's anointed, whom he

had set king, she anointed him, and made him her king. They shall *appoint themselves one head*, ^{<3011>}Hosea 1:11. This is *kissing the Son*.

2. As an act of love and respect to him. Some think that this was he who *loved much* at first, and *washed Christ's feet with her tears* (^{<478>}Luke 7:38, 47); and that she had not left her first love, but was now as affectionate in the devotions of a grown Christian as she was in those of a young beginner. Note, Where there is true love in the heart to Jesus Christ, nothing will be thought too good, no, nor good enough, to bestow upon him.

II. The offence which the disciples took at this. They *had indignation* (v. 8, 9), were vexed to see this ointment thus spent, which they thought might have been better bestowed.

1. See how they expressed their offence at it. They said, *To what purpose is this waste?* Now this bespeaks,

(1.) Want of tenderness toward this good woman, in interpreting her over-kindness (suppose it was so) to be wastefulness. Charity teaches us to put the best construction upon every thing that it will bear, especially upon the words and actions of those that are *zealously affected in doing a good thing*, though we may think them not altogether so discreet in it as they might be. It is true, there may be over-doing in well-doing; but thence we must learn to be cautious ourselves, lest we run into extremes, but not to be censorious of others; because that which we may impute to the want of prudence, God may accept as an instance of abundant love. We must not say, Those do too much in religion, that do more than we do, but rather aim to do as much as they.

(2.) Want of respect to their Master. The best we can make of it, is, that they knew their Master was perfectly dead to all the delights of sense; he that was so much *grieved for the affliction of Joseph*, cared not for being *anointed with the chief ointments*, ^{<3066>}Amos 6:6. And therefore they thought such pleasures ill bestowed upon one who took so little pleasure in them. But supposing that, it did not become them to call it *waste*, when they perceived that he admitted and accepted it as a token of his friend's love. Note, We must take heed of thinking any thing waste, which is bestowed upon the Lord Jesus, either by others or by ourselves. We must not think that time waste, that is spent in the service of Christ, or that money waste, which is laid out in any work of piety; for, though it seem to

be cast upon the waters, to be thrown down the river, we shall *find it again*, to advantage, *after many days*, ^{<2111>}Ecclesiastes 11:1.

2. See how they excused their offence at it, and what pretence they made for it; *This ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor*. Note, It is no new thing for bad affections to shelter themselves under specious covers; for people to shift off works of piety under colour of works of charity.

III. The reproof Christ gave to his disciples for the offence at this good woman (v. 10, 11); *Why trouble ye the woman?* Note, It is a great trouble to good people to have their good works censured and misconstrued; and it is a thing that Jesus Christ takes very ill. He here took part with a good, honest, zealous, well-meaning woman, against all his disciples, though they seemed to have so much reason on their side; so heartily does he espouse the cause of the *offended little ones*, ^{<180>}Matthew 18:10.

Observe his reason; *You have the poor always with you*. Note,

1. There are some opportunities of doing and getting good which are constant, and which we must give constant attendance to the improvement of. Bibles we have always with us, sabbaths always with us, and so *the poor, we have always with us*. Note, Those who have a heart to do good, never need complain for want of opportunity. The poor never ceased even out of the land of Israel, ^{<651>}Deuteronomy 15:11. We cannot but see some in this world, who call for our charitable assistance, who are as God's receivers, some poor members of Christ, to whom he will have kindness shown as to himself.

2. There are other opportunities of doing and getting good, which come but seldom, which are short and uncertain, and require more peculiar diligence in the improvement of them, and which ought to be preferred before the other; "*Me ye have not always, therefore use me while ye have me.*" Note,

(1.) Christ's constant *bodily* presence was not to be expected here in this world; it was expedient that he should go away; his *real* presence in the eucharist is a fond and groundless conceit, and contradicts what he here said, *Me ye have not always*.

(2.) Sometimes special works of piety and devotion should take place of common works of charity. The poor must not rob Christ; we must do good to all, but *especially to the household of faith*.

IV. Christ's approbation and commendation of the kindness of this good woman. The more his servants and their services are cavilled at by men, the more he manifests his acceptance of them. He calls it a *good work* (v. 10), and says more in praise of it than could have been imagined; particularly,

1. That the meaning of it was mystical (v. 12); *She did it for my burial*.

(1.) Some think that she *intended* it so, and that the woman better understood Christ's frequent predictions of his death and sufferings than the apostles did; for which they were recompensed with the honour of being the first witnesses of his resurrection.

(2.) However, Christ interpreted it so; and he is always willing to make the best, to make the most of his people's well-meant words and actions. This was as it were the embalming of his body; because the doing of that after his death would be prevented by his resurrection, it was therefore done before; for it was fit that it should be done some time, to show that he was still the Messiah, even when he seemed to be triumphed over by death. The disciples thought the ointment wasted, which was poured upon his head. "But," saith he, "If so much ointment were poured upon a dead body, according to the custom of your country, you would not grudge it, or think it waste. Now this is, in effect, so; the body she anoints is as good as dead, and her kindness is very seasonable for that purpose; therefore rather than call it waste, put it upon that score."

2. That the memorial of it should be honourable (v. 13); *This shall be told for a memorial*. This act of faith and love was so remarkable, that the preachers of Christ crucified, and the inspired writers of the history of his passion, could not choose but take notice of this passage, proclaim the notice of it, and perpetuate the memorial of it. And being once enrolled in these records, it was *graven as with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever*, and could not possibly be forgotten. None of all the trumpets of fame sound so loud and so long as the everlasting gospel. Note,

(1.) The story of the death of Christ, though a tragical one, is gospel, glad-tidings, because he died for us.

(2.) The gospel was to be preached in the whole world; not in Judea only, but in every nation, to every creature. Let the disciples take notice of this, for their encouragement, that their sound should go to the ends of the earth.

(3.) Though the honour of Christ is principally designed in the gospel, yet the honour of his saints and servants is not altogether overlooked. The memorial of this woman was to be preserved, not by dedicating a church to her, or keeping an annual feast in honour of her, or preserving a piece of her broken box for a sacred relic; but by mentioning her faith and piety in the preaching of the gospel, for example to others, ~~<382>~~ Hebrews 6:12. Hereby honour redounds to Christ himself, who in this world, as well as in that to come, will be *glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe*.

~~<274>~~ MATTHEW 26:14-16

JUDAS PLOTS TO BETRAY CHRIST

Immediately after an instance of the greatness kindness done to Christ, follows an instance of the greatest unkindness; such mixture is there of good and bad among the followers of Christ; he hath some faithful friends, and some false and feigned ones. What could be more base than this agreement which Judas here made with the chief priests, to betray Christ to them?

I. The traitor was Judas Iscariot; he is said to be *one of the twelve*, as an aggravation of his villany. When the *number of the disciples was multiplied* (~~<406>~~ Acts 6:1), no marvel if there were some among them that were a shame and trouble to them; but when there were but twelve, and one of them was *a devil*, surely we must never expect any society perfectly pure on this side heaven. The twelve were Christ's chosen friends, that had the privilege of his special favour; they were his constant followers, that had the benefit of his most intimate converse, that upon all accounts had reason to love him and be true to him; and yet one of them betrayed him. Note, No bonds of duty or gratitude will hold those that have a devil, ~~<408>~~ Mark 5:3, 4.

II. Here is the proffer which he made to the chief priests; he *went to them, and said, said, What will ye give me?* v. 15. They did not send for him, nor make the proposal to him; they could not have thought that one of Christ's own disciples should be false to him. Note, There are those, even among Christ's followers, that are worse than any one can imagine them to be, and want nothing but opportunity to show it.

Observe,

1. What Judas promised; "*I will deliver him unto you; I will let you know where he is, and undertake to bring you to him, at such a convenient time and place that you may seize him without noise, or danger of an uproar.*" In their conspiracy against Christ, this was it they were at a loss about, v. 4, 5. They durst not meddle with him in public, and knew not where to find him in private. Here the matter rested, and the difficulty was insuperable; till Judas came, and offered them his service. Note, Those that give up themselves to be led by the devil, find him readier than they imagine to help them at a dead lift, as Judas did the chief priests. Though the rulers, by their power and interest, could kill him when they had him in their hands, yet none but a disciple could betray him. Note, The greater profession men make of religion, and the more they are employed in the study and service of it, the greater opportunity they have of doing mischief, if their hearts be not right with God. If Judas had not been an apostle, he could not have been a traitor; if men had known the way of righteousness, they could not have abused it.

I will deliver him unto you. He did not offer himself, nor did they tamper with him, to be a witness against Christ, though they wanted evidence, v. 59. And if there had been any thing to be alleged against him, which had but the colour of proof that he was an impostor, Judas was the likeliest person to have attested it; but this is an evidence of the innocency of our Lord Jesus, that his own disciple, who knew so well his doctrine and manner of life, and was false to him, could not charge him with any thing criminal, though it would have served to justify his treachery.

2. What he asked in consideration of this undertaking; *What will ye give me?* This was the only thing that made Judas betray his Master; he hoped to get money by it: his Master had not given him any provocation, though he knew from the first that he *had a devil*; yet, for aught that appears, he showed the same kindness to him that he did to the rest, and put no mark

of disgrace upon him that might disoblige him; he had placed him in a post that pleased him, had made him purse-bearer, and though he had embezzled the common stock (for he is called *a thief*, ⁴⁸¹⁶John 12:6), yet we do not find he was in any danger of being called to account for it; nor does it appear that he had any suspicion that the gospel was a cheat: no, it was not the hatred of his Master, nor any quarrel with him, but purely the love of money; that, and nothing else, made Judas a traitor.

What will ye give me? Why, what did he want? Neither bread to eat, nor raiment to put on; neither necessaries nor conveniences. Was not he welcome, wherever his Master was? Did he not fare as he fared? Had he not been but just now nobly entertained at a supper in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, and a little before at another, where no less a person than Martha herself waited at table? And yet this covetous wretch could not be content, but comes basely cringing to the priests with, *What will ye give me?* Note, It is not the *lack* of money, but the *love* of money, that is the root of all evil, and particularly of apostasy from Christ; witness Demas, ⁵⁸¹⁰2 Timothy 4:10. Satan tempted our Saviour with this bait, *All these things will I give thee* (⁴⁰⁴⁹Matthew 4:9); but Judas offered himself to be tempted with it; he asks, *What will ye give me?* as if his Master was a commodity that stuck on his hands.

III. Here is the bargain which the chief priests made with him; *they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver*; thirty shekels, which in our money is about three pounds eight shillings, so some; three pounds fifteen shillings, so others. It should seem, Judas referred himself to them, and was willing to take what they were willing to give; he catches at the first offer, lest the next should be worse. Judas had not been wont to trade high, and therefore a little money went a great way with him. By the law (⁴²⁷³Exodus 21:32), thirty pieces of silver was the price of a slave — a goodly price, at which Christ was valued! ³⁸¹³Zechariah 11:13. No wonder that Zion's sons, though comparable to fine gold, are esteemed as earthen pitchers, when Zion's King himself was thus undervalued. They *covenanted with him; estesan — appenderunt — they paid it down*, so some; gave him his wages in hand, to secure him and to encourage him.

IV. Here is the industry of Judas, in pursuance of his bargain (v. 16); *he sought opportunity to betray him*, his head was still working to find out how he might do it effectually. Note,

1. It is a very wicked thing to seek opportunity to sin, and to devise mischief; for it argues the heart fully set in men to do evil, and a malice prepense.

2. Those that are *in*, think they must *on*, though the matter be ever so bad. After he had made that wicked bargain, he had time to repent, and to revoke it; but now by his covenant the devil has one hank more upon him than he had, and tells him that he must be true to his word, though ever so false to his Master, as Herod must behead John *for his oath's sake*.

⌄ MATTHEW 26:17-25

THE TREACHERY OF JUDAS FORETOLD

We have here an account of Christ's keeping the passover. Being made under the law, he submitted to all the ordinances of it, and to this among the rest; it was kept in remembrance of Israel's deliverance out of Egypt, the birth-day of that people; it was a tradition of the Jews, that in the days of the Messiah they should be redeemed on the very day of their coming out of Egypt; and it was exactly fulfilled, for Christ died the day after the passover, in which day they began their march.

I. The time when Christ ate the passover, was the usual time appointed by God, and observed by the Jews (v. 17); *the first day of the feast of unleavened bread*, which that year happened on the fifth day of the week, which is our Thursday. Some have advanced a suggestion, that our Lord Jesus celebrated the passover at this time of day sooner than other people did; but the learned Dr. Whitby has largely disproved it.

II. The place where, was particularly appointed by himself to the disciples, upon their enquiry (v. 17); they asked, *Where wilt thou that we prepare the passover?* Perhaps Judas was one of those that asked this question (where he would eat the passover,) that he might know the better how to lay his train; but the rest of the disciples asked it as usual, that they might do their duty.

1. They took it for granted that their Master would eat the passover, though he was at this time persecuted by the chief priests, and his life sought; they knew that he would not be put by his duty, either by

frightenings without or fears within. Those do not follow Christ's example who make it an excuse for their not attending on the Lord's supper, our gospel passover, that they have many troubles and many enemies, are full of care and fear; for, if so, they have the more need of that ordinance, to help to silence their fears, and comfort them under their troubles, to help them in forgiving their enemies, and casting all their cares on God.

2. They knew very well that there must be preparation made for it, and that it was their business, as his servants, to make preparation; *Where wilt thou that we prepare?* Note, Before solemn ordinances there must be solemn preparation.

3. They knew that he had no house of his own wherein to eat the passover; in this, as in other things, *for our sakes he became poor*. Among all Zion's palaces there was none for Zion's King; but his kingdom was not of this world. See ^{<R11>}John 1:11.

4. They would not pitch upon a place without direction from him, and from him they had direction; he sent them to *such a man* (v. 18), who probably was a friend and follower of his, and to his house he invited himself and his disciples.

(1.) Tell him, *My time is at hand*; he means the time of his death, elsewhere called *his hour* (^{<R11>}John 8:20; 13:1); the time, the hour, fixed in the counsel of God, which his heart was upon, and which he had so often spoken of. He knew when it was at hand, and was busy accordingly; we *know not our time* (^{<R12>}Ecclesiastes 9:12), and therefore must never be off our watch; *our time is always ready* (^{<R16>}John 7:6), and therefore we must be always ready. Observe, Because his *time was at hand*, he would *keep the passover* Note, The consideration of the near approach of death should quicken us to a diligent improvement of all our opportunities for our souls. Is our time at hand, and an eternity just before us? *Let us then keep the feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity*. Observe, When our Lord Jesus invited himself to this good man's house, he sent him this intelligence, that his time was at hand. Note, Christ's secret is with them that entertain him in their hearts. Compare ^{<R12>}John 14:21 with ^{<R13>}Revelation 3:20.

(2.) Tell him, *I will keep the passover at thy house*. This was an instance of his authority, as *the Master*, which it is likely this man acknowledged; he did not beg, but command, the use of his house for this purpose. Thus,

when Christ by his Spirit comes into the heart, he demands admission, as one whose own the heart is and cannot be denied, and he gains admission as one who has all power in the heart and cannot be resisted; if he saith, "I will keep a feast in such a soul," he will do it; for he works, and none can hinder; his people shall be willing, for he makes them so. *I will keep the passover with my disciples.* Note, Wherever Christ is welcome, he expects that his disciples should be welcome too. When we take God for our God, we take his people for our people.

III. The preparation was made by the disciples (v. 19); *They did as Jesus had appointed.* Note, Those who would have Christ's presence with them in the gospel passover, must strictly observe his instructions, and do as he directs; *They made ready the passover;* they got the lamb killed in the court of the temple, got it roasted, the bitter herbs provided, bread and wine, the cloth laid, and every thing set in readiness for such a sacred solemn feast.

IV. They ate the passover according to the law (v. 20); *He sat down*, in the usual table-gesture, not lying on one side, for it was not easy to eat, nor possible to drink, in that posture, but sitting upright, though perhaps sitting low. It is the same word that is used for his posture at other meals, ^{<100>}Matthew 9:10; ^{<107>}Luke 7:37; ^{<107>}Matthew 26:7. It was only the first passover in Egypt, as most think, that was eaten with *their loins girded, shoes on their feet, and staff in their hand*, though all that might be in a sitting posture. His sitting down, denotes the composedness of his mind, when he addressed himself to this solemnity; *He sat down with the twelve*, Judas not excepted. By the law, they were to *take a lamb for a household* (^{<112>}Exodus 12:3, 4), which were to be not less than ten, nor more than twenty; Christ's disciples were his household. Note, They whom God has charged with families, must have their houses with them in serving the Lord.

V. We have here Christ's discourse with his disciples at the passover-supper. The usual subject of discourse at that ordinance, was the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt (^{<125>}Exodus 12:26, 27); but the great Passover is now ready to be offered, and the discourse of that swallows up all talk of the other, (^{<214>}Jeremiah 16:14, 15). Here is,

1. The general notice Christ gives his disciples of the treachery that should be among them (v. 21); *One of you shall betray me.* Observe,

(1.) Christ knew it. We know not what troubles will befall us, nor whence they will arise: but Christ knew all his, which, as it proves his omniscience, so it magnifies his love, that he knew all things that should befall him, and yet did not draw back. He foresaw the treachery and baseness of a disciple of his own, and yet went on; took care of those that were given him, though he knew there was a Judas among them; would pay the price of our redemption, though he foresaw some would *deny the Lord that bought them*; and shed his blood, though he knew it would be *trodden under foot as an unholy thing*.

(2.) When there was occasion, he let those about him know it. He had often told them that the Son of man should be betrayed; now he tells them that one of them should do it, that when they saw it, they might not only be the less surprised, but have their faith in him confirmed, ^{<1183>}John 13:19; 14:29.

2. The disciples' feelings on this occasion, v. 22. How did they take it?

(1.) *They were exceeding sorrowful.*

[1.] It troubled them much to hear that their Master should be betrayed. When Peter was first told of it, he said, *Be it far from thee*; and therefore it must needs be a great trouble to him and the rest of them, to hear that it was very *near* to him.

[2.] It troubled them more to hear that one of them should do it. It would be a reproach to the fraternity, for an apostle to prove a traitor, and this grieved them; gracious souls grieve for the sins of others, especially of those that have made a more than ordinary profession of religion. ^{<1183>}2 Corinthians 11:29.

[3.] It troubled them most of all, that they were left at uncertainty which of them it was, and each of them was afraid for himself, lest, as Hazael speaks (^{<1183>}2 Kings 8:13), he was the *dog* that should *do this great thing*. Those that know the strength and subtlety of the tempter, and their own weakness and folly, cannot but be in pain for themselves, when they hear that *the love of many will wax cold*.

(2.) *They began every one of them to say, Lord, is it I?*

[1.] They were not apt to suspect Judas. Though he was *a thief*, yet, it seems, he had carried it so plausibly, that those who were intimate with

him, were not jealous of him: none of them so much as looked upon him, much less said, *Lord, is it Judas?* Note, It is possible for a hypocrite to go through the world, not only undiscovered, but unsuspected; like bad money so ingeniously counterfeited that nobody questions it.

[2.] They were apt to suspect themselves; *Lord, is it I?* Though they were not conscious to themselves of any inclination that way (no such thought had ever entered into their mind), yet they feared the worst, and asked Him who knows us better than we know ourselves, *Lord, is it I?* Note, It well becomes the disciples of Christ always to be jealous over themselves with a godly jealousy, especially in trying times. We know not how strongly we may be tempted, nor how far God may leave us to ourselves, and therefore have reason, *not to be high-minded, but fear.* It is observable that our Lord Jesus, just before he instituted the Lord's supper, put his disciples upon this trial and suspicion of themselves, to teach us to examine and *judge ourselves, and so to eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.*

3. Further information given them concerning this matter (v. 23, 24), where Christ tells them,

(1.) That the traitor was a familiar friend; *He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish,* that is, One of you that are now with me at the table. He mentions this, to make the treachery appear the more exceeding sinful. Note, External communion with Christ in holy ordinances is a great aggravation of our falseness to him. It is base ingratitude to dip with Christ in the dish, and yet betray him.

(2.) That this was according to the scripture, which would take off the offence at it. Was Christ betrayed by a disciple? So it was written (Psalm 61:9); *He that did eat bread with me, hath lifted up his heel against me.* The more we see of the fulfilling of the scripture in our troubles, the better we may bear them.

(3.) That it would prove a very dear bargain to the traitor; *Woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed.* This he said, not only to awaken the conscience of Judas, and bring him to repent, and revoke his bargain, but for warning to all others to take heed of sinning like Judas; though God can serve his own purposes by the sins of men, that doth not make the sinner's condition the less woeful; *It had been good for that man, if he had not been born.* Note, The ruin that attends those who betray Christ, is so

great, that it were more eligible by far not be at all than to be thus miserable.

4. The conviction of Judas, v. 25.

(1.) He asked, *Is it I?* to avoid coming under the suspicion of guilt by his silence. He knew very well that it was he, and yet wished to appear a stranger to such a plot. Note, Many whose consciences condemn them are very industrious to justify themselves before men, and put a good face on it, with, *Lord, is it I?* He could not but know that Christ knew, and yet trusted so much to his courtesy, because he had hitherto concealed it, that he had the impudence to challenge him to tell: or, perhaps, he was so much under the power of infidelity, that he imagined Christ did not know it, as those who said, *The Lord shall not see* (~~1907~~ Psalm 94:7), and asked, *Can he judge through the dark clouds?*

(2.) Christ soon answered this question; *Thou hast said*, that is, It is as thou hast said. This is not spoken out so plainly as Nathan's *Thou art the man*; but it was enough to convict him, and, if his heart had not been wretchedly hardened, to have broken the neck of his plot, when he saw it discovered to his Master, and discovered by him. Note, They who are contriving to betray Christ, will, some time or other, betray themselves, and *their own tongues will fall upon them*.

~~4135~~ MATTHEW 26:26-30

INSTITUTION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

We have here the institution of the great gospel ordinance of the Lord's supper, which was received of the Lord. Observe,

I. The time when it was instituted — *as they were eating*. At the latter end of the passover-supper, before the table was drawn, because, as a feast upon a sacrifice, it was to come in the room of that ordinance. Christ is to us the Passover-sacrifice by which atonement is made (~~4887~~ 1 Corinthians 5:7); *Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us*. This ordinance is to us the passover-supper, by which application is made, and commemoration celebrated, of a much greater deliverance than that of Israel out of Egypt. All the legal sacrifices of propitiation being summed up in the death of

Christ, and so abolished, all the legal feasts of rejoicing were summed up in this sacrament, and so abolished.

II. The institution itself. A sacrament must be instituted; it is no part of moral worship, nor is it dictated by natural light, but has both its being and significancy from the institution, from a divine institution; it is his prerogative who established the covenant, to appoint the seals of it. Hence the apostle (^{<412>}1 Corinthians 11:23, etc), in that discourse of his concerning this ordinance, all along calls Jesus Christ *the Lord*, because, as *Lord*, as Lord of the covenant, Lord of the church, he appointed this ordinance. In which,

1. The body of Christ is signified and represented by bread; he had said formerly (^{<465>}John 6:35), *I am the bread of life*, upon which metaphor this sacrament is built; as the life of the body is supported by bread, which is therefore put for all bodily nourishment (^{<404>}Matthew 4:4; 6:11), so the life of the soul is supported and maintained by Christ's mediation.

(1.) *He took bread, estesan — the loaf*; some loaf that lay ready to hand, fit for the purpose; it was, probably, unleavened bread; but, that circumstance not being taken notice of, we are not to bind ourselves to that, as some of the Greek churches do. His taking the bread was a solemn action, and was, probably, done in such a manner as to be observed by them that sat with him, that they might expect something more than ordinary to be done with it. Thus was the Lord Jesus set apart in the counsels of divine love for the working out of our redemption.

(2.) *He blessed it*; set it apart for this use by prayer and thanksgiving. We do not find any set form of words used by him upon this occasion; but what he said, no doubt, was accommodated to the business in hand, that new testament which by this ordinance was to be sealed and ratified. This was like God's *blessing the seventh day* (^{<003>}Genesis 2:3), by which it was separated to God's honour, and made to all that duly observe it, a blessed day: Christ could command the blessing, and we, in his name, are emboldened to beg the blessing.

(3.) *He brake it*; which denotes,

[1.] The breaking of Christ's body for us, that it might be fitted for our use; *He was bruised for our iniquities, as bread-corn is bruised* (^{<203>}Isaiah 28:28); though *a bone of him was not broken* (for all his breaking did not

weaken him), yet his flesh was *broken with breach upon breach*, and his wounds were multiplied (^{<3817>}Job 9:17; 16:14), and that pained him. God complains that he is broken with the *whorish heart* of sinners (^{<2169>}Ezekiel 6:9); his law broken, our covenants with him broken; now justice requires *breach for breach* (^{<624>}Leviticus 24:20), and Christ was broken, to satisfy that demand.

[2.] The breaking of Christ's body to us, as the father of the family breaks the bread to the children. The breaking of Christ to us, is to facilitate the application; every thing is made ready for us by the grants of God's word and the operations of his grace.

(4.) *He gave it to his disciples*, as the Master of the family, and the Master of this feast; it is not said, He gave it *to the apostles*, though they were so, and had been often called so before this, but *to the disciples*, because all the disciples of Christ have a right to this ordinance; and those shall have the benefit of it who are his disciples indeed; yet he gave it to them as he did the multiplied loaves, by them to be handed to all his other followers.

(5.) *He said, Take, eat; this is my body*, v. 26. He here tells them,

[1.] What they should do with it; “*Take, eat; accept of Christ as he is offered to you, receive the atonement, approve of it, consent to it, come up to the terms on which the benefit of it is proposed to you; submit to his grace and to his government.*” Believing on Christ is expressed by *receiving him* (^{<412>}John 1:12), and *feeding upon him*, ^{<467>}John 6:57, 58. Meat looked upon, or the dish ever so well garnished, will not nourish us; it must be fed upon: so must the doctrine of Christ.

[2.] What they should have with it; *This is my body*, not *outos* — *this bread*, but *touto* — *this eating and drinking*. Believing carries all the efficacy of Christ's death to our souls. *This is my body*, spiritually and sacramentally; this signifies and represents my body. He employs sacramental language, like that, ^{<921>}Exodus 12:11. *It is the Lord's passover*. Upon a carnal and much-mistaken sense of these words, the church of Rome builds the monstrous doctrine of Transubstantiation, which makes the bread to be changed into the substance of Christ's body, only the accidents of bread remaining; which affronts Christ, destroys the nature of a sacrament, and gives the lie to our senses. We partake of the sun, not by having the bulk and body of the sun put into our hands, but the beams of it

darted down upon us; so we partake of Christ by partaking of his grace, and the blessed fruits of the breaking of his body.

2. The blood of Christ is signified and represented by the wine; to make it a complete feast, here is not only bread to strengthen, but wine to *make glad the heart* (v. 27, 28); *He took the cup*, the grace-cup, which was set ready to be drank, after thanks returned, according to the custom of the Jews at the passover; this Christ took, and made the sacramental-cup, and so altered the property. It was intended for a *cup of blessing* (so the Jews called it), and therefore St. Paul studiously distinguished between the cup of blessing which *we* bless, and that which *they* bless. *He gave thanks*, to teach us, not only in every ordinance, but in every part of the ordinance, to have our eyes up to God.

This cup he gave to the disciples,

(1.) With a command; *Drink ye all of it*. Thus he welcomes his guests to his table, obliges them all to drink of his cup. Why should he so expressly command them all to drink, and to see that none let it pass them, and press that more expressly in this than in the other part of the ordinance? Surely it was because he foresaw how in after-ages this ordinance would be dismembered by the prohibition of the cup to the laity, with an express *non obstante* — *notwithstanding* to the command.

(2.) With an explication; *For this is my blood of the New Testament*. Therefore drink it with appetite, delight, because it is so rich a cordial. Hitherto the blood of Christ had been represented by the blood of beasts, real blood: but, after it was actually shed, it was represented by the blood of grapes, metaphorical blood; so wine is called in an Old-Testament prophecy of Christ, ⁽¹⁴⁹⁾Genesis 49:10, 11.

Now observe what Christ saith of his blood represented in the sacrament.

[1.] *It is my blood of the New Testament*. The Old Testament was confirmed by the *blood of bulls and goats* (⁽³⁰⁹⁾Hebrews 9:19, 20; ⁽¹²⁴⁸⁾Exodus 24:8); but the New Testament with the blood of Christ, which is here distinguished from that; *It is my blood of the New Testament*. The covenant God is pleased to make with us, and all the benefits and privileges of it, are owing to the merits of Christ's death.

[2.] *It is shed*; it was not shed till next day, but it was now upon the point of being shed, it is as good as done. "Before you come to repeat this

ordinance yourselves, it will be shed.” He was *now ready to be offered*, and his blood to be poured out, as the blood of the sacrifices which made atonement.

[3.] *It is shed for many.* Christ came to confirm *a covenant with many* (²⁰²⁷Daniel 9:27), and the intent of his death agreed. The blood of the Old Testament was shed for a few: it confirmed a covenant, which (saith Moses) the Lord has *made with you*, (¹²⁴⁸Exodus 24:8). The atonement was made *only for the children of Israel* (¹⁸⁵⁴Leviticus 16:34): but Jesus Christ is a propitiation *for the sins of the whole world*, (⁴¹¹1 John 2:2).

[4.] *It is shed for the remission of sins*, that is, to purchase remission of sins for us. The redemption which we have through his blood, is *the remission of sins*, (⁴¹¹Ephesians 1:7). The new covenant which is procured and ratified by the blood of Christ, is a charter of pardon, an act of indemnity, in order to a reconciliation between God and man; for sin was the only thing that made the quarrel, and *without shedding of blood is no remission*, (³¹²²Hebrews 9:22). The pardon of sin is that great blessing which is, in the Lord's supper, conferred upon all true believers; it is the foundation of all other blessings, and the spring of everlasting comfort, ch. 9:2, 3. A farewell is now bidden to the fruit of the vine, v. 29. Christ and his disciples had now feasted together with a deal of comfort, in both an Old Testament and a New Testament festival, *fibula utriusque Testamenti* — *the connecting tie of both Testaments*. How amiable were these tabernacles! How good to be here! Never such a heaven upon earth as was at this table; but it was not intended for a perpetuity; he now told them (⁴⁹⁶⁶John 16:16), that *yet a little while and they should not see him: and again a little while and they should see him*, which explains this here.

First, He takes leave of such communion; *I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine*, that is, now that I am no more in the world (⁴⁸⁷¹John 17:11); I have had enough of it, and am glad to think of leaving it, glad to think that this is the last meal. *Farewell this fruit of the vine*, this passover-cup, this sacramental wine. Dying saints take their leave of sacraments, and the other ordinances of communion which they enjoy in this world, with comfort, for the joy and glory they enter into supersede them all; when the sun rises, farewell the candles.

Secondly, He assures them of a happy meeting again at last. It is a long, but not an everlasting, farewell; *until that day when I drink it new with you*.

1. Some understand it of the interviews he had with them after his resurrection, which was the first step of his exaltation *into the kingdom of his Father*; and though during those forty days he did not converse with them so constantly as he had done, yet he *did eat and drink with them* (~~400~~ Acts 10:41), which, as it confirmed their faith, so doubtless it greatly comforted their hearts, for they were overjoyed at it, ~~248~~ Luke 24:41.

2. Others understand it of the joys and glories of the future state, which the saints shall partake of in everlasting communion with the Lord Jesus, represented here by the pleasures of *a banquet of wine*. That will be the kingdom of his Father, for unto him shall the kingdom be then delivered up; *the wine of consolation* (~~248~~ Jeremiah 16:7) will there be always new, never flat or sour, as wine with long keeping; never nauseous or unpleasant, as wine to those that have drank much; but ever fresh. Christ will himself partake of those pleasures; it was *the joy set before him*, which he had in his eye, and all his faithful friends and followers shall partake with him.

Lastly, Here is the close of the solemnity with a hymn (v. 30); *They sang a hymn* or psalm; whether the psalms which the Jews usually sang at the close of the passover-supper, which they called *the great hallel*, that is, Psalm 113 and the five that follow it, or whether some new hymn more closely adapted to the occasion, is uncertain; I rather think the former; had it been new, John would not have omitted to record it. Note,

1. Singing of psalms is a gospel-ordinance. Christ's removing the hymn from the close of the passover to the close of the Lord's supper, plainly intimates that he intended that ordinance should continue in his church, that, as it had not its birth with the ceremonial law, so it should not die with it.

2. It is very proper after the Lord's supper, as an expression of our joy in God through Jesus Christ, and a thankful acknowledgment of that great love wherewith God has loved us in him.

3. It is not unseasonable, no, not in times of sorrow and suffering; the disciples were in sorrow, and Christ was entering upon his sufferings, and yet they could sing a hymn together. Our spiritual joy should not be interrupted by outward afflictions.

When this was done, they *went out into the mount of Olives*. He would not stay in the house to be apprehended, lest he should bring the master of the house into trouble; nor would he stay in the city, lest it should occasion an uproar; but he retired into the adjacent country, the mount of Olives, the same mount that David in his distress went *up the ascent of, weeping,* ¹⁶⁰2 Samuel 15:30. They had the benefit of moon-light for this walk, for the passover was always at the full moon. Note, After we have received the Lord's supper, it is good for us to retire for prayer and meditation, and to be alone with God.

¹⁶⁰MATTHEW 26:31-35

THE APOSTLES' COWARDICE FORETOLD

We have here Christ's discourse with his disciples upon the way, as they were going to the mount of Olives. Observe,

I. A prediction of the trial which both he and his disciples were now to go through. He here foretels,

1. A dismal scattering storm just arising, v. 31.

(1.) That they should *all be offended because of Christ that very night*; that is, they would all be so frightened with the sufferings, that they would not have the courage to cleave to him in them, but would all basely desert him; *Because of me this night, en emoi en te nykti taute* — *because of me, even because of this night*; so it might be read; that is, because of what happens to me this night. Note,

[1.] Offences will come among the disciples of Christ in an hour of trial and temptation; it cannot be but they should, for they are weak; Satan is busy; God permits offences; even they whose hearts are upright may sometimes be overtaken with an offence.

[2.] There are some temptations and offences, the effects of which are general and universal among Christ's disciples; *All you shall be offended*. Christ had lately discovered to them the treachery of Judas; but let not the rest be secure; though there will be but one traitor, they will be all deserters. This he saith, to alarm them all, that they might all watch.

[3.] We have need to prepare for sudden trials, which may come to extremity in a very little time. Christ and his disciples had eaten their supper well together in peace and quietness; yet that very night proved such a night of offence. How soon may a storm arise! We know not what a day, or a night, may bring forth, nor what great event may be in the teeming womb of a little time, ^{<301>}Proverbs 27:1.

[4.] The cross of Christ is the great stumbling-block to many that pass for his disciples; both the cross he bore for us (^{<402>}1 Corinthians 1:23), and that which we are called out to bear for him, ^{<404>}Matthew 16:24.

(2.) That herein the scripture would be fulfilled; *I will smite the Shepherd*. It is quoted from ^{<303>}Zechariah 13:7.

[1.] Here is the smiting of the Shepherd in the sufferings of Christ. God awakens the sword of his wrath against the Son of his love, and he is smitten.

[2.] The scattering of the sheep, thereupon, in the flight of the disciples. When Christ fell into the hands of his enemies, his disciples ran, one one way and another another; it was each one's care to shift for himself, and happy he that could get furthest from the cross.

2. He gives them the prospect of a comfortable gathering together again after this storm (v. 32); *“After I am risen again, I will go before you. Though you will forsake me, I will not forsake you; though you fall, I will take care you shall not fall finally: we shall have a meeting again in Galilee, I will go before you, as the shepherd before the sheep.”* Some make the last words of that prophecy (^{<303>}Zechariah 13:7), a promise equivalent to this here; *and I will bring my hand again to the little ones*. There is no bringing them back but by bringing his hand to them. Note, The captain of our salvation knows how to rally his troops, when, through their cowardice, they have been put into disorder.

II. The presumption of Peter, that he should keep his integrity, whatever happened (v. 33); *Though all men be offended, yet will I never be offended*. Peter had a great stock of confidence, and was upon all occasions forward to speak, especially to speak for himself; sometimes it did him a kindness, but at other times it betrayed him, as it did here. Where observe,

1. How he bound himself with a promise, that he would never be offended in Christ; not only not this night, but at no time. If this promise had been made in a humble dependence upon the grace of Christ, it had been an excellent word. Before the Lord's supper, Christ's discourse led his disciples to *examine* themselves with, *Lord, is it I?* For that is our preparatory duty; after the ordinance, his discourse leads them to an *engaging* of themselves to close walking, for that is the subsequent duty.

2. How he fancied himself better armed against temptation than any one else, and this was his weakness and folly; *Though all men shall be offended yet will not I.* This was worse than Hazael's, *What! is thy servant a dog?* For he supposed the thing to be so bad, that no man would do it. But Peter supposes it possible that *some*, nay that *all*, might be offended, and yet he escape better than any. Note, It argues a great degree of self-conceit and self-confidence, to think ourselves either safe from the temptations, or free from the corruptions, that are common to men. We should rather say, If it be possible that others may be offended, there is danger that I may be so. But it is common for those who think too well of themselves, easily to admit suspicions of others. See ^{<801>}Galatians 6:1.

III. The particular warning Christ gave Peter of what he would do, v. 34. He imagined that in the hour of temptation he should come off better than any of them, and Christ tells him that he should come off worse. The warning is introduced with a solemn asseveration; "*Verily, I say unto thee; take my word for it, who know thee better than thou knowest thyself.*" He tells him,

1. That he should deny him. Peter promised that he would not be so much as offended in him, not desert him; but Christ tells him that he will go further, he will disown him. He said, "Though all men, yet not I;" and he did it sooner than any.

2. How quickly he should do it; *this night*, before to-morrow, nay, *before cock-crowing*. Satan's temptations are compared to *darts* (^{<406>}Ephesians 6:16), which wound ere we are aware; *suddenly doth he shoot*. As we know not how near we may be to trouble, so we know not how near we may be to sin; if God leave us to ourselves, we are always in danger.

3. How often he should do it; *thrice*. He thought that he should never once do such a thing; but Christ tells him that he would do it again and again;

for, when once our feet begin to slip, it is hard to recover our standing again. *The beginnings of sin are as the letting forth of water.*

IV. Peter's repeated assurances of his fidelity (v. 35); *Though I should die with thee.* He supposed the temptation strong, when he said, *Though all men do it, yet will not I.* But here he supposeth it stronger, when he puts it to the peril of life; *Though I should die with thee.* He knew what he *should* do — rather die with Christ than deny him, it was the condition of discipleship (⁴¹⁴⁶Luke 14:26); and he thought what he *would* do — never be false to his Master whatever it cost him; yet, it proved, he was. It is easy to talk boldly and carelessly of death at a distance; “I will rather die than do such a thing:” but it is not so soon done as said, when it comes to the setting-to, and death shows itself in its own colours.

What Peter said the rest subscribed to; *likewise also said all the disciples.*
Note,

1. There is a proneness in good men to be over-confident of their own strength and stability. We are ready to think ourselves able to grapple with the strongest temptations, to go through the hardest and most hazardous services, and to bear the greatest afflictions for Christ; but it is because we do not know ourselves.

2. Those often fall soonest and foulest that are most confident of themselves. Those are least safe that are most secure. Satan is most active to seduce such; they are most off their guard, and God leaves them to themselves, to humble them. See ⁴¹¹²1 Corinthians 10:12.

⁴¹⁵⁶MATTHEW 26:36-46

THE AGONY IN THE GARDEN

Hitherto, we have seen the preparatives for Christ's sufferings; now, we enter upon the bloody scene. In these verses we have the story of his agony in the garden. This was the beginning of sorrows to our Lord Jesus. Now the *sword of the Lord* began to awake against *the man that was his Fellow; and how should it be quiet when the Lord had given it a charge?* The clouds had been gathering a good while, and looked black. He had said, some days before, *Now is my soul troubled,* ⁴¹²⁷John 12:27. But now

the storm began in good earnest. He put himself into this agony, before his enemies gave him any trouble, to show that he was a Freewill offering; that his life was not forced from him, but he *laid it down of himself*.

Ⓢ John 10:18. Observe,

I. The place where he underwent this mighty agony; it was *in a place called Gethsemane*. The name signifies, *torculus olei* — *an olive-mill*, a press for olives, like a wine-press, where they *trod the olives*, Ⓢ Micah 6:15. And this was the proper place for such a thing, at the foot of the mount of Olives. There our Lord Jesus began his passion; there it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and crush him, that fresh oil might flow to all believers from him, that we might partake of the root and fatness of that *good Olive*. There he trod the wine-press of his Father's wrath, and trod it alone.

II. The company he had with him, when he was in this agony.

1. He took all the twelve disciples with him to the garden, except Judas, who was at this time otherwise employed. Though it was late in the night, near bed-time, yet they kept with him, and took this walk by moonlight with him, as Elisha, who, when he was told that his master should shortly be taken from his head, declared that he *would not leave him*, though he *led him about*; so these follow the Lamb, wheresoever he goes.

2. He took only Peter, and James, and John, with him into that corner of the garden where he suffered his agony. He left the rest at some distance, perhaps at the garden door, with this charge, *Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder*; like that of Abraham to his *young men* (Ⓢ Genesis 22:5), *Abide ye here, and I will go yonder and worship*.

(1.) Christ went to pray alone, though he had lately prayed with his disciples, Ⓢ John 17:1. Note, Our prayers with our families must not excuse us from our secret devotions.

(2.) He ordered them to sit here. Note, We must take heed of giving any disturbance or interruption to those who retire for secret communion with God. He took these three with him, because they had been the witnesses of his glory in his transfiguration (Ⓢ John 17:1, 2), and that would prepare them to be the witnesses of his agony. Note, Those are best prepared to suffer with Christ, that have by faith beheld his glory, and have conversed with the glorified saints upon the holy mount. *If we suffer with Christ, we*

shall reign with him; and if we hope to reign with him, why should we not expect to suffer with him?

III. The agony itself that he was in; *He began to be sorrowful, and very heavy.* It is called an agony (^{<024>}Luke 22:44), a conflict. It was not any bodily pain or torment that he was in, nothing occurred to hurt him; but, whatever it was, it was from within; he troubled himself, ^{<013>}John 11:33. The words here used are very emphatical; he began *en emoi en te nykti taute* — *to be sorrowful, and in a consternation.* The latter word signifies such a sorrow as makes a man neither fit for company nor desirous of it. He had like a weight of lead upon his spirits. Physicians use a word near akin to it, to signify the disorder a man is in in a fit of an ague, or beginning of a fever. Now was fulfilled, ^{<024>}Psalms 22:14, *I am poured out like water, my heart is like wax, it is melted;* and all those passages in the Psalms where David complains of the sorrows of his soul, ^{<004>}Psalms 18:4, 5; 42:7; 55:4, 5; 69:1-3; 88:3; 116:3, and Jonah's complaint, ^{<004>}Jonah 2:4, 5.

But what was the cause of all this? What was it that put him into his agony? *Why art thou cast down, blessed Jesus, and why disquieted?* Certainly, it was nothing of despair or distrust of his Father, much less any conflict or struggle with him. As the Father loved him because he laid down his life for the sheep, so he was entirely subject to his Father's will in it. But,

1. He engaged in an encounter with the powers of darkness; so he intimates (^{<025>}Luke 22:53); *This is your hour, and the power of darkness:* and he spoke of it just before (^{<040>}John 14:30, 31); “*The prince of this world cometh. I see him rallying his forces, and preparing for a general assault; but he has nothing in me, no garrisons in his interest, none that secretly hold correspondence with him; and therefore his attempts, though fierce, will be fruitless: but as the Father gave me commandment, so I do; however it be, I must have a struggle with him, the field must be fairly fought; and therefore arise, let us go hence, let us hasten to the field of battle, and meet the enemy.*” Now is the close engagement in single combat between Michael and the dragon, hand to hand; *now is the judgment of this world;* the great cause is now to be determined, and the decisive battle fought, in which the *prince of this world,* will certainly be beaten and *cast out,* ^{<023>}John 12:31. Christ, when he works salvation, is described like a champion taking the field, ^{<056>}Isaiah 59:16-18. Now the

serpent makes his fiercest onset on the seed of the woman, and directs his sting, the sting of death, to his very heart; *animamque in vulnere ponit — and the wound is mortal.*

2. He was now *bearing the iniquities* which the Father laid upon him, and, by his sorrow and amazement, he accommodated himself to his undertaking. The sufferings he was entering upon were for our sins; they were all made to meet upon him, and he knew it. As we are obliged to be sorry for our particular sins, so was he grieved for the sins of us all. So Bishop Pearson, p. 191. Now, *in the valley of Jehoshaphat*, where Christ now was, God *gathered all nations, and pleaded with them in his Son*, ~~AND~~ Joel 3:2, 12. He knew the malignity of the sins that were laid upon him, how provoking to God, how ruining to man; and these being all set in order before him, and charged upon him, he was *sorrowful and very heavy*. Now it was that *iniquities took hold on him*; so that he was *not able to look up*, as was foretold concerning him, ~~AND~~ Psalm 40:7, 12.

3. He had a full and clear prospect of all the sufferings that were before him. He foresaw the treachery of Judas, the unkindness of Peter, the malice of the Jews, and their base ingratitude. He knew that he should now in a few hours be scourged, spit upon, crowned with thorns, nailed to the cross; death in its most dreadful appearances, death in pomp, attended with all its terrors, looked him in the face; and this made him sorrowful, especially because it was the wages of our sin, which he had undertaken to satisfy for. It is true, the martyrs that have suffered for Christ, have entertained the greatest torments, and the most terrible deaths, without any such sorrow and consternation; have called their prisons their delectable orchards, and a bed of flames a bed of roses: but then,

(1.) Christ was now denied the supports and comforts which they had; that is, he denied them to himself, and *his soul refused to be comforted*, not in passion, but in justice to his undertaking. Their cheerfulness under the cross was owing to the divine favour, which, for the present, was suspended from the Lord Jesus.

(2.) His sufferings were of another nature from theirs. St. Paul, when he is to be offered upon the sacrifice and service of the saints' faith, can *joy and rejoice with them all*; but to be offered a sacrifice, to make atonement for sin, is quite a different case. On the saints' cross there is a blessing pronounced, which enables them to rejoice under it (~~AND~~ Matthew 5:10, 12); but to Christ's cross there was a curse annexed, which made him sorrowful

and very heavy under it. And his sorrow under the cross was the foundation of their joy under it.

IV. His complaint of this agony. Finding himself under the arrest of his passion, he goes to his disciples (v. 38), and,

1. He acquaints them with his condition; *My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death.* It gives some little ease to a troubled spirit, to have a friend ready to unbosom itself to, and give vent to its sorrows. Christ here tells them,

(1.) What was the seat of his sorrow; it was his soul that was now in an agony. This proves that Christ had a true human soul; for he suffered, not only in his body, but in his soul. We had sinned both against our own bodies, and against our souls; both had been used in sin, and both had been wronged by it; and therefore Christ suffered in soul as well as in body.

(2.) What was the degree of his sorrow. He was *exceedingly sorrowful, perilypos* — *compassed about with sorrow on all hands.* It was sorrow in the highest degree, even unto death; it was a killing sorrow, such sorrow as no mortal man could bear and live. He was ready to die for grief; they were sorrows of death.

(3.) The duration of it; it will continue even unto death. “My soul will be sorrowful as long as it is in this body; I see no outlet but death.” He now *began* to be sorrowful, and never ceased to be so till he said, *It is finished;* that grief is now finished, which began in the garden. It was prophesied of Christ, that he should be *a Man of sorrows* (^{<251B>}Isaiah 53:3); he was so all along, we never read that he laughed; but all his sorrows hitherto were nothing to this.

2. He bespeaks their company and attendance; *Tarry ye here, and watch with me.* Surely he was destitute indeed of help, when he entreated theirs, who, he knew, would be but miserable comforters; but he would hereby teach us the benefit of the communion of saints. It is good to have, and therefore good to seek, the assistance of our brethren, when at any time we are in an agony; *for two are better than one.* What he said to them, he saith to all, *Watch,* ^{<4157>}Mark 13:37. Not only watch for him, in expectation of his future coming, but watch with him, in application to our present work.

V. What passed between him and his Father when he was in this agony; *Being in an agony, he prayed.* Prayer is never out of season, but it is especially seasonable in an agony.

Observe,

1. The place where he prayed; *He went a little further*, withdrew from them, that the scripture might be fulfilled, *I have trod the wine-press alone*; he retired for prayer; a troubled soul finds most ease when it is alone with God, who understands the broken language of sighs and groans. Calvin's devout remark upon this is worth transcribing, *Utile est seorsim orare, tunc enim magis familiariter sese denudat fidelis animus, et simplicius sua vota, gemitus, curas, pavores, spes, et gaudia in Dei sinum exonerat* — *It is useful to pray apart; for then the faithful soul develops itself more familiarly, and with greater simplicity pours forth its petitions, groans, cares, fears, hopes and joys, into the bosom of God.* Christ has hereby taught us that secret prayer must be made secretly. Yet some think that even the disciples whom he left at the garden door, overheard him; for it is said (^{381E} Hebrews 5:7), they were *strong cries*.

2. His posture in prayer; *He fell on his face*; his lying prostrate denotes,

(1.) The agony he was in, and the extremity of his sorrow. Job, in great grief, *fell on the ground*; and great anguish is expressed by *rolling in the dust*, ^{381E} Micah 1:10.

(2.) His humility in prayer. This posture was an expression of his, *eulabeia* — *his reverential fear* (spoken of ^{381E} Hebrews 5:7), with which he offered up these prayers: and it was *in the days of his flesh*, in his estate of humiliation, to which hereby he accommodated himself.

3. The prayer itself; wherein we may observe three things.

(1.) The title he gives to God; *O my Father*. Thick as the cloud was, he could see God as a Father through it. Note, In all our addresses to God we should eye him as a Father, as our Father; and it is in a special manner comfortable to do so, when we are in an agony. It is a pleasing string to harp upon at such a time, *My Father*; whither should the child go, when any thing grieves him, but to his father?

(2.) The favour he begs; *If it be possible, let this cup pass from me*. He calls his sufferings a *cup*; not a river, not a sea, but a cup, which we shall

soon see the bottom of. When we are under troubles, we should make the best, the least, of them, and not aggravate them. His sufferings might be called a *cup*, because allotted him, as at feasts a cup was set to every mess. He begs that this cup might *pass from him*, that is, that he might avoid the sufferings now at hand; or, at least, that they might be shortened. This intimates no more than that he was really and truly Man, and as a Man he could not but be averse to pain and suffering. This is the first and simple act of man's will — to start back from that which is sensibly grievous to us, and to desire the prevention and removal of it. The law of self-preservation is impressed upon the innocent nature of man, and rules there till overruled by some other law; therefore Christ admitted and expressed a reluctance to suffer, to show that he was *taken from among men* (^{<SKE>}Hebrews 5:1), was touched with *the feeling of our infirmities* (^{<SHE>}Hebrews 4:15), and *tempted as we are; yet without sin*. Note, A prayer of faith against an affliction, may very well consist with the patience of hope under affliction. When David had said, *I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it*; his very next words were, *Remove thy stroke away from me*, (^{<SHE>}Psalm 39:9, 10. But observe the proviso; *If it be possible*. If God may be glorified, man saved, and the ends of his undertaking answered, without his drinking of this bitter cup, he desires to be excused; otherwise not. What we cannot do with the securing of our great end, we must reckon to be in effect impossible; Christ did so. *Id possumus quod jure possumus* — *We can do that which we can do lawfully*. We can do nothing, not only we may do nothing, against the truth.

(3.) His entire submission to, and acquiescence in, the will of God; *Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt*. Not that the human will of Christ was adverse or averse to the divine will; it was only, in its first act, diverse from it; to which, in the second act of the will, which compares and chooses, he freely submits himself. Note,

[1.] Our Lord Jesus, though he had a quick sense of the extreme bitterness of the sufferings he was to undergo, yet was freely willing to submit to them for our redemption and salvation, and *offered himself, and gave himself, for us*.

[2.] The reason of Christ's submission to his sufferings, was, his Father's will; *as thou wilt*, v. 39. He grounds his own willingness upon the Father's will, and resolves the matter wholly into that; *therefore* he did what he did,

and did it with delight, because it was the will of God, ^{<308>}Psalm 40:8. This he had often referred to, as that which put him upon, and carried him through, his whole undertaking; *This is the Father's will*, ^{<465>}John 6:39, 40. This he sought (^{<450>}John 5:30); it was his *meat and drink* to do it, ^{<464>}John 4:34.

[3.] In conformity to this example of Christ, we must drink of the bitter cup which God puts into our hands, be it ever so bitter; though nature struggle, grace must submit. We then are disposed as Christ was, when our wills are in every thing melted into the will of God, though ever so displeasing to flesh and blood; *The will of the Lord be done*, ^{<4214>}Acts 21:14.

4. The repetition of the prayer; *He went away again the second time, and prayed* (v. 42), and again the third time (v. 44), and all to the same purport; only, as it is related here, he did not, in the second and third prayer, expressly ask that the cup might pass from him, as he had done in the first. Note, Though we may pray to God to prevent and remove an affliction, yet our chief errand, and that which we should most insist upon, must be, that he will give us grace to bear it well. It should be more our care to get our troubles sanctified, and our hearts satisfied under them, than to get them taken away. *He prayed, saying, Thy will be done*. Note, Prayer is the offering up, not only of our desires, but of our resignations, to God. It amounts to an acceptable prayer, when at any time we are in distress, to refer ourselves to God, and to commit our way and work to him; *Thy will be done*. The third time he *said the same words*, *eulabeia* — *the same word*, that is the same matter or argument; he spoke to the same purport. We have reason to think that this was not all he said, for it should seem by v. 40 that he continued *an hour* in his agony and prayer; but, whatever more he said, it was to this effect, deprecating his approaching sufferings, and yet resigning himself to God's will in them, in the expressions of which we may be sure he was not straitened.

But what answer had he to this prayer? Certainly it was not made in vain; he that heard him *always*, did not deny him *now*. It is true, the cup did not pass from him, for he withdrew that petition, and did not insist upon it (if he had, for aught I know, the cup had passed away); but he had an answer to his prayer; for,

(1.) *He was strengthened with strength in his soul*, in the day when he cried (^{<1108>}Psalm 138:3); and that was a real answer, ^{<228>}Luke 22:43.

(2.) He was delivered from that which he feared, which was, lest by impatience and distrust he should offend his Father, and so disable himself to go on with his undertaking, ^{<3817>} Hebrews 5:7. In answer to his prayer, God provided that he should not fail or be discouraged.

VI. What passed between him and his three disciples at this time; and here we may observe,

1. The fault they were guilty of; that when he was in his agony, sorrowful and heavy, sweating and wrestling and praying, they were so little concerned, that they could not keep awake; he comes, and *finds them asleep*, v. 40. The strangeness of the thing should have roused their spirits to *turn aside now, and see this great sight — the bush burning, and yet not consumed*; much more should their love to their Master, and their care concerning him, have obliged them to a more close and vigilant attendance on him; yet they were so dull, that they could not keep their eyes open. What had become of us, if Christ had been now as sleepy as his disciples were? It is well for us that our salvation is in the hand of one who *neither slumbers nor sleeps*. Christ engaged them to watch with him, as if he expected some succour from them, and yet they slept; surely it was the unkindest thing that could be. When David wept at this mount of Olives, all his followers wept with him (^{<4151>}2 Samuel 15:30); but when the Son of David was here in tears, his followers were asleep. His enemies, who watched for him, were wakeful enough (^{<4143>}Mark 14:43); but his disciples, who should have watched with him, were asleep. Lord, what is man! What are the best of men, when God leaves them to themselves! Note, Carelessness and carnal security, especially when Christ is in his agony, are great faults in any, but especially in those who profess to be nearest in relation to him. The church of Christ, which is his body, is often in an agony, fightings without and fears within; and shall we be asleep then, like Gallio, that *cared for none of these things*; or those (^{<3116>}Amos 6:6) that *lay at ease, and were not grieved for the affliction of Joseph*?

2. Christ's favour to them, notwithstanding. Persons in sorrow are too apt to be cross and peevish with those about them, and to lay it grievously to heart, if they but seem to neglect them; but Christ in his agony is as meek as ever, and carries it as patiently toward his followers as toward his Father, and is not apt to take things ill.

When Christ's disciples put this slight upon him,

(1.) *He came to them*, as if he expected to receive some comfort from them; and if they had put him in mind of what they had heard from him concerning his resurrection and glory perhaps it might have been some help to him; but, instead of that, they added grief to his sorrow; and yet he came to them, more careful for them than they were for themselves; when he was most engaged, yet he came to look after them; for those that were given him, were upon his heart, living and dying.

(2.) He gave them a gentle reproof, for as many as he loves he rebukes; he directed it to Peter, who used to *speak* for them; let him now *hear* for them. The reproof was very melting; *What! could ye not watch with me one hour?* He speaks as one amazed to see them so stupid; every word, when closely considered, shows the aggravated nature of the case. Consider,

[1.] Who *they* were; “Could not *ye* watch — ye, my disciples and followers? No wonder if others neglect me, if *the earth sit still, and be at rest* (^{<3011>}Zechariah 1:11); but from you I expected better things.”

[2.] Who *he* was; “Watch with *me*. If one of yourselves were ill and in an agony, it would be very unkind not to watch with him; but it is undutiful not to watch with your Master, who has long watched over you for good, has led you, and fed you, and taught you, borne you, and borne with you; do ye thus requite him?” He awoke out of his sleep, to help them when they were in distress (^{<4083>}Matthew 8:36); and could not they keep awake, at least to show their good-will to him, especially considering that he was now suffering *for them*, in an agony *for them*? *Jam tua res agiture — I am suffering in your cause.*

[3.] How small a thing it was that he expected from them — only to *watch with him*. If he had bid them do some great thing, had bid them be in an agony with him, or die with him, they thought they could have done it; and yet they could not do it, when he only desired them to *watch with him*, ^{<153>}2 Kings 5:13.

[4.] How short a time it was that he expected it — but *one hour*; they were not set upon the guard whole nights, as the prophet was (^{<2018>}Isaiah 21:8), only *one hour*. Sometimes he *continued all night in prayer to God*, but did not then expect that his disciples should watch with him; only now, when he had but one hour to spend in prayer.

(3.) He gave them good counsel; *Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation*, v. 41.

[1.] There was an hour of temptation drawing on, and very near; the troubles of Christ were temptations to his followers to disbelieve and distrust him, to deny and desert him, and renounce all relation to him.

[2.] There was danger of their entering into the temptation, as into a snare or trap; of their entering into a parley with it, or a good opinion of it, of their being influenced by it, and inclining to comply with it; which is the first step toward being overcome by it.

[3.] He therefore exhorts them to watch and pray; *Watch with me, and pray with me*. While they were sleeping, they lost the benefit of joining in Christ's prayer. "Watch yourselves, and pray yourselves. Watch and pray against this present temptation to drowsiness and security; *pray* that you may *watch*; beg of God by his grace to keep you awake, now that there is occasion." When we are drowsy in the worship of God, we should pray, as a good Christian once did, "The Lord deliver me from this sleepy devil!" *Lord, quicken thou me in thy way*, Or, "Watch and pray against the further temptation you may be assaulted with; *watch and pray* lest this sin prove the inlet of many more." Note, When we find ourselves entering into temptation, we have need to watch and pray.

(4.) He kindly excused for them; *The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak*. We do not read of one word they had to say for themselves (the sense of their own weakness stopped their mouth); but then he had a tender word to say on their behalf, for it is his office to be an Advocate; in this he sets us an example of the love *which covers a multitude of sins*. He considered their frame, and did not chide them, for he remembered that they were but flesh; *and the flesh is weak, though the spirit be willing*, ~~PS~~ Psalm 78:38, 39. Note,

[1.] Christ's disciples, as long as they are here in this world, have bodies as well as souls, and a principle of remaining corruption as well as of reigning grace, like Jacob and Esau in the same womb, *Canaanites* and *Israelites* in the same land, ~~GA~~ Galatians 5:17, 24.

[2.] It is the unhappiness and burthen of Christ's disciples, that their bodies cannot keep pace with their souls in works of piety and devotion, but are many a time a cloud and clog to them; that, when the spirit is free and

disposed to that which is good, the flesh is averse and indisposed. This St. Paul laments (^{<4125>}Romans 7:25); *With my mind I serve the law of God, but with my flesh the law of sin.* Our impotency in the service of God is the great iniquity and infidelity of our nature, and it arises from these sad remainders of corruption, which are the constant grief and burthen of God's people.

[3.] Yet it is our comfort, that our Master graciously considers this, and accepts the willingness of the spirit, and pities and pardons the weakness and infirmity of the flesh; for *we are under grace, and not under the law.*

(5.) Though they continued dull and sleepy, he did not any further rebuke them for it; for, though we daily offend, yet he will not always chide.

[1.] When he came to them the second time, we do not find that he said any thing to them (v. 43); *he findeth them asleep again.* One would have thought that he had said enough to them to keep them awake; but it is hard to recover from a spirit of slumber. Carnal security, when once it prevails, is not easily shaken off. *Their eyes were heavy,* which intimates that they strove against it as much as they could, but were overcome by it, like the spouse; *I sleep, but my heart waketh* (^{<2182>}Song of Solomon 5:2); and therefore their Master looked upon them with compassion.

[2.] When he came the third time, he left them to be alarmed with the approaching danger (v. 45, 46); *Sleep on now, and take your rest.* This is spoken ironically; "Now sleep if you can, sleep if you dare; I would not disturb you if Judas and his band of men would not." See here how Christ deals with those that suffer themselves to be overcome by security, and will not be awakened out of it. *First,* Sometimes he gives them up to the power of it; *Sleep on now.* He that will sleep, let him sleep still. The curse of spiritual slumber is the just punishment of the sin of it, (^{<6118>}Romans 11:8; ^{<30417>}Hosea 4:17. *Secondly,* Many times he sends some startling judgment, to awaken those that would not be wrought upon by the word; and those who will not be alarmed by reasons and arguments, had better be alarmed by swords and spears than left to perish in their security. Let those that would not believe, be made to feel.

As to the disciples here,

1. Their Master gave them notice of the near approach of his enemies, who, it is likely, were now within sight or hearing, for they came with

candles and torches, and, it is likely, made a great noise; *The Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners*. And again, *He is at hand that doth betray me*. Note, Christ's sufferings were no surprise to him; he knew what, and when, he was to suffer. By this time the extremity of his agony was pretty well over, or, at least, diverted; while with an undaunted courage he addresses himself to the next encounter, as a champion to the combat.

2. He called them to rise, and be going: not, "Rise, and let us flee from the danger;" but, "Rise, and let us go meet it;" before he had prayed, he feared his sufferings, but now he had got over his fears. But, **3.** He intimates to them their folly, in sleeping away the time which they should have spent in preparation; now the event found them unready, and was a terror to them.

~~426~~ MATTHEW 26:47-56

CHRIST BETRAYED BY JUDAS

We are here told how the blessed Jesus was seized, and taken into custody; this followed immediately upon his agony, *while he yet spake*; for from the beginning to the close of his passion he had not the least intermission or breathing-time, but *deep called unto deep*. His trouble hitherto was raised within himself; but now the scene is changed, now the Philistines are upon thee, thou blessed Samson; *the Breath of our nostrils, the Anointed of the Lord is taken in their pits*, ~~200~~ Lamentations 4:20.

Now concerning the apprehension of the Lord Jesus, observe,

I. Who the persons were, that were employed in it.

1. Here was *Judas, one of the twelve*, at the head of this infamous guard: *he was guide to them that took Jesus* (~~406~~ Acts 1:16); without his help they could not have found him in this retirement. Behold, and wonder; the first that appears with his enemies, is one of his own disciples, who an hour or two ago was eating bread with him!

2. Here was *with him a great multitude*; that the scripture might be fulfilled, *Lord, how are they increased that trouble me!* ~~381~~ Psalm 3:1. This multitude was made up partly of a detachment out of the guards, that were posted in the tower of Antonia by the Roman governor; these were

Gentiles, *sinner*s, as Christ calls them, v. 45. The rest were the servants and officers of the High Priest, and they were Jews; they that were at variance with each other, agreed against Christ.

II. How they were armed for this enterprise.

1. What weapons they were armed with; They came *with swords and staves*. The Roman soldiers, no doubt, had swords; the servants of the priests, those of them that had not swords, brought staves or clubs. *Furor arma ministrat* — *Their rage supplied their arms*. They were not regular troops, but a tumultuous rabble. But wherefore is this ado? If they had been ten times as many, they could not have taken him had he not yielded; and, his hour being come for him to give up himself, all this force was needless. When a butcher goes into the field to take out a lamb for the slaughter, does he raise the militia, and come armed? No, he needs not; yet is there all this force used to seize the Lamb of God.

2. What warrant they were armed with; *They came from the chief priests, and elders of the people*; this armed multitude was sent by them upon this errand. He was taken up by a warrant from the great sanhedrim, as a person obnoxious to them. Pilate, the Roman governor, gave them no warrant to search for him, he had no jealousy of him; but they were men who pretended to religion, and presided in the affairs of the church, that were active in this prosecution, and were the most spiteful enemies Christ had. It was a sign that he was supported by a divine power, for by all earthly powers he was not only deserted, but opposed; Pilate upbraided him with it; *Thine own nation and the chief priests delivered thee to me*, ~~John~~ John 18:35.

III. The manner how it was done, and what passed at that time.

1. How Judas betrayed him; he did his business effectually, and his resolution in this wickedness may shame us who fail in that which is good. Observe,

(1.) The instructions he gave to the soldiers (v. 48); *He gave them a sign*; as commander of the party in this action, he gives the word or signal. He *gave them a sign*, lest by mistake they should seize one of the disciples instead of him, the disciples having so lately said, in Judas's hearing, that they would be willing to die for him. What abundance of caution was here, not to miss him — *That same is he*; and when they had him in their hands,

not to lose him — *Hold him fast*; for he had sometimes escaped from those who thought to secure him; as ^{<460>}Luke 6:30. Though the Jews, who frequented the temple, could not but know him, yet the Roman soldiers perhaps had never seen him, and the sign was to direct them; and Judas by his kiss intended not only to distinguish him, but to detain him, while they came behind him, and laid hands on him.

(2.) The dissembling compliment he gave his Master. He came close up to Jesus; surely now, if ever, his wicked heart will relent; surely when he comes to look him in the face, he will either be awed by its majesty, or charmed by its beauty. Dares he to come into his very sight and presence, to betray him? Peter denied Christ, but when *the Lord turned and looked* upon him, he relented presently; but Judas comes up to his Master's face, and betrays him. *Me mihi (perfide) prodis? me mihi prodis? — Perfidious man, betrayest thou me to thyself?* He said, *Hail, Master; and kissed him.* It should seem, our Lord Jesus had been wont to admit his disciples to such a degree of familiarity with him, as to give them his cheek to kiss after they had been any while absent, which Judas villainously used to facilitate this treason. A kiss is a token of allegiance and friendship, ^{<462>}Psalms 2:12. But Judas, when he broke all the laws of love and duty, profaned this sacred sign to serve his purpose. Note, There are many that betray Christ with *a kiss*, and *Hail, Master*; who, under pretence of doing him honour, betray and undermine the interests of his kingdom. *Mel in ore, fel in corde — Honey in the mouth, gall in the heart. Kataphilein ouk esti philein. To embrace is one thing, to love is another. Philo Judaeus.* Job's kiss and Judas's were much alike.

(3.) The entertainment his Master gave him, v. 50.

[1.] He calls him *friend*. If he had called him *villain*, and *traitor*, *raca*, *thou fool*, and *child of the devil*, he had not *mis-called* him; but he would teach us under the greatest provocation to forbear bitterness and evil-speaking, and to show all meekness. *Friend*, for a friend he had been, and should have been, and seemed to be. Thus he upbraids him, as Abraham, when he called the rich man in hell, *son*. He calls him *friend*, because he furthered his sufferings, and so *befriended* him; whereas, he called Peter *Satan* for attempting to hinder them.

[2.] He asks him, “*Wherefore art thou come?* Is it peace, Judas? Explain thyself; if thou come as an enemy, what means this kiss? If as a friend, what mean these swords and staves? *Wherefore art thou come?* What

harm have I done thee? Wherein have I wearied thee? *eph' ho parei* — *Wherefore art thou present?* Why hadst thou not so much shame left thee, as to keep out of sight, which thou mightest have done, and yet have given the officer notice where I was?" This was an instance of great impudence, for him to be so forward and barefaced in this wicked transaction. But it is usual for apostates from religion to be the most bitter enemies to it; witness Julian. Thus Judas did his part.

2. How the officers and soldiers secured him; *Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him;* they made him their prisoner. *How were they not afraid to stretch forth their hands against the Lord's Anointed?* We may well imagine what rude and cruel hands they were, which this barbarous multitude laid on Christ; and how, it is probable, they handled him the more roughly for their being so often disappointed when they sought to lay hands on him. They could not have taken him, if he had not surrendered himself, and been *delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God,* ^{<4023>}Acts 2:23. He who said concerning his anointed servants, *Touch them not, and do them no harm* (^{<4034>}Psalm 105:14, 15), *spared not his anointed Son, but delivered him up for us all;* and again, *gave his strength into captivity, his glory into the enemies' hands,* ^{<4061>}Psalm 78:61. See what was the complaint of Job (^{<4061>}Job 16:11), *God hath delivered me to the ungodly,* and apply that and other passages in that book of Job as a type of Christ.

Our Lord Jesus was made a prisoner, because he would in all things be treated as a malefactor, punished for our crime, and as a surety under arrest for our debt. The yoke of our transgressions was bound by the Father's hand upon the neck of the Lord Jesus, ^{<2014>}Lamentations 1:14. He became a prisoner, that he might set us at liberty; for he said, *If ye seek me, let these go their way* (^{<4038>}John 18:8); and those are free indeed, whom he makes so.

3. How Peter fought for Christ, and was checked for his pains. It is here only said to be *one of them that were with Jesus in the garden;* but ^{<4030>}John 18:10, we are told that it was Peter who signalized himself upon this occasion. Observe,

(1.) Peter's rashness (v. 51); He *drew his sword.* They had but two swords among them all (^{<4028>}Luke 22:38), and one of them, it seems, fell to Peter's share; and now he thought it was time to draw it, and he laid about him as if he would have done some great matter; but all the execution he did was

the cutting off an ear from a servant of the High Priest; designing, it is likely, to cleave him down the head, because he saw him more forward than the rest in laying hands on Christ, he missed his blow. But if he would be striking, in my mind he should rather have aimed at Judas, and have marked him for a rogue. Peter had talked much of what he would do for his Master, he would *lay down his life for him*; yea, that he would; and now he would be as good as his word, and venture his life to rescue his Master: and thus far was commendable, that he had a great *zeal* for Christ, and his honour and safety; but it was not *according to knowledge*, nor guided by discretion; for

[1.] He did it without warrant; some of the disciples asked indeed, *Shall we smite with the sword?* (~~424~~ Luke 22:49) But Peter struck before they had an answer. We must see not only our cause good, but our call clear, before we draw the sword; we must show by what authority we do it, and who gave us that authority.

[2.] He indiscreetly exposed himself and his fellow-disciples to the rage of the multitude; for what could they with two swords do against a band of men?

(2.) The rebuke which our Lord Jesus gave him (v. 52); *Put up again thy sword into its place*. He does not command the officers and soldiers to put up their swords that were drawn against him, he left them to the judgment of God, who judges them that are without; but he commands Peter to put up his sword, does not chide him indeed for what he had done, because done out of good will, but stops the progress of his arms, and provides that it should not be drawn into a precedent. Christ's errand into the world was to make peace. Note, *The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but spiritual*; and Christ's ministers, though they are his soldiers, do not *war after the flesh*, (~~408~~ 2 Corinthians 10:3, 4. Not that the law of Christ overthrows either the law of nature or the law of nations, as far as those warrant subjects to stand up in defence of their civil rights and liberties, and their religion, when it is incorporated with them; but it provides for the preservation of public peace and order, by forbidding private persons, *qua tales* — *as such*, to resist the powers that are; nay, we have a general precept that we *resist not evil* (~~405~~ Matthew 5:39), nor will Christ have his ministers propagate his religion by force of arms, *Religio cogi non potest; et defendenda non occidendo, sed moriendo* — *Religion cannot be forced; and it should be defended, not by killing, but by dying*. Lactantii Institut.

As Christ forbade his disciples the sword of justice (⁴⁷¹⁵Matthew 20:25, 26), so here the sword of war. Christ bade Peter put up his sword, and never bade him draw it again; yet that which Peter is here blamed for is his doing it unseasonably; the hour was come for Christ to suffer and die, he knew Peter knew it, *the sword of the Lord was drawn against him* (³³¹⁷Zechariah 13:7), and for Peter to draw his sword for him, was like, *Master, spare thyself*.

Three reasons Christ give to Peter for this rebuke:

[1.] His drawing the sword would be dangerous to himself and to his fellow-disciples; *They that take the sword, shall perish with the sword*; they that use violence, fall by violence; and men hasten and increase their own troubles by blustering bloody methods of self-defence. They that take the sword before it is given them, that use it without warrant or call, expose themselves to the sword of war, or public justice. Had it not been for the special care and providence of the Lord Jesus, Peter and the rest of them had, for aught I know, been cut in pieces immediately. Grotius gives another, and a probable sense of this blow, making those that take the sword to be, not Peter, but the officers and soldiers that come with swords *to take Christ*; *They shall perish with the sword*. “Peter, thou needest not draw they sword to punish them. God will certainly, shortly, and severely, reckon with them.” They took the Roman sword to seize Christ with, and by the Roman sword, not long after, they and their place and nation were destroyed. *Therefore* we must not *avenge ourselves*, because *God will repay* (⁴²⁹³Romans 12:19); and therefore we must suffer with faith and patience, because persecutors will be paid in their own coin. See ⁶³⁰Revelation 13:10.

[2.] It was needless for him to draw his sword in defence of his Master, how, if he pleased, could summon into his service all the hosts of heaven (v. 53); “*Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall send from heaven effectual succours?* Peter, if I would put by these sufferings, I could easily do it without thy hand or thy sword.” Note, God has no need of us, of our services, much less of our sins, to bring about his purposes; and it argues our distrust and disbelief of the power of Christ, when we go out of the way of our duty to serve his interests. God can do his work without us; if we look into the heavens, and see how he is attended there, we may easily infer, that, *though we be righteous*, he is not beholden to us, (³³¹⁵Job 35:5, 7. Though Christ was crucified through

weakness, it was a voluntary weakness; he submitted to death, not because he could not, but because he would not contend with it. This takes off the offence of the cross, and proves Christ crucified the power of God; even now in the depth of his sufferings he could call in the aid of legions of angels. *Now, arti* — yet; “Though the business is so far gone, I could yet with a word speaking turn the scale.” Christ here lets us know,

First, What a great interest he had in his Father; *I can pray to my Father, and he will send me help from the sanctuary*. I can *parakalesai* — demand of my Father these succours. Christ prayer as one having authority. Note, It is a great comfort to God's people, when they are surrounded with enemies on all hands, that they have a way open heavenward; if they can do nothing else, they can pray to him that can do every thing. And they who are much in prayer at other times, have most comfort in praying when troublesome times come. Observe, Christ saith, not only that God could send him such a number of angels, but that, if he insisted upon it, he would do it. Though he had undertaken the work of our redemption, yet, if he had desired to be released, it should seem by this that the Father would not have held him to it. He might yet have gone out free from the service, but he loved it, and would not; so that it was only with the cords of his own love that he was bound to the altar.

Secondly, What a great interest he had in the heavenly hosts; *He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels*, amounting to above seventy-two thousand. Observe here,

1. There is an *innumerable company of angels*, ~~STB~~ Hebrews 12:2. A detachment of more than twelve legions might be spared for our service, and yet there would be no miss of them about the throne. See ~~STB~~ Daniel 7:10. They are marshalled in exact order, like the well-disciplined legions; not a confused multitude, but regular troops; all know their post, and observe the word of command.
2. This innumerable company of angels are all at the disposal of our heavenly Father, and do his pleasure, ~~STB~~ Psalm 103:20, 21.
3. These angelic hosts were ready to come in to the assistance of our Lord Jesus in his sufferings, if he had needed or desired it. See ~~STB~~ Hebrews 1:6, 14. They would have been to him as they were to Elisha, *chariots of fire, and horses of fire*, not only to secure him, but to consume those that set upon him.

4. Our heavenly Father is to be eyed and acknowledged in all the services of the heavenly hosts; *He shall give them me*: therefore angels are not to be prayed to, but the Lord of the angels, ^{<9111>}Psalm 91:11.

5. It is matter of comfort to all that wish well to the kingdom of Christ, that there is a world of angels always at the service of the Lord Jesus, that can do wonders. He that has the armies of heaven at his beck, can do what he pleases among the *inhabitants of the earth*; He shall *presently* give them me. See how ready his Father was to hear his prayer, and how ready the angels were to observe his orders; they are willing servants, winged messengers, they *fly swiftly*. This is very encouraging to those that have the honour of Christ, and the welfare of his church, much at heart. Think they that they have more care and concern for Christ and his church, than God and the holy angels have?

[3.] It was no time to make any defence at all, or to offer to put by the stroke; *For how then shall the scripture be fulfilled, that thus it must be?* v. 54. It was written, that Christ should be *led as a lamb to the slaughter*, ^{<2511>}Isaiah 53:7. Should he summon the angels to his assistance, he would not be led to the slaughter at all; should he permit his disciples to fight, he would not be led as a lamb quietly and without resistance; therefore he and his disciples must yield to the accomplishment of the predictions. Note, In all difficult cases, the word of God must be conclusive against our own counsels, and nothing must be done, nothing attempted, against the fulfilling of the scripture. If the easing of our pains, the breaking of our bonds, the saving of our lives, will not consist with the fulfilling of the scripture, we ought to say, "Let God's word and will take place, let his law be magnified and made honourable, whatever becomes of us." Thus Christ checked Peter, when he set up for his champion, and captain of his life-guard.

4. We are next told how Christ argued the case with them that came to take him (v. 55); though he did not resist them, yet he did reason with them. Note, It will consist with Christian patience under our sufferings, calmly to expostulate with our enemies and persecutors, as David with Saul, ^{<02114>}1 Samuel 24:14; 26:18. *Are ye come out,*

(1.) With rage and enmity, *as against a thief*, as if I were an enemy to the public safety, and deservedly suffered this? Thieves draw upon themselves the common odium; every one will lend a hand to stop a thief: and thus they fell upon Christ as the offscouring of all things. If he had been the

plague of his country, he could not have been prosecuted with more heat and violence.

(2.) With all this power and force, as against the worst of thieves, that dare the law, bid defiance to public justice, and add rebellion to their sin? You are come out as against a thief, with swords and staves, as if there were danger of resistance; whereas ye have *killed the just One, and he doth not resist you,* ^{5:6} James 5:6. If he had not been willing to suffer, it was folly to *come with swords and staves, for they could not conquer him;* had he been minded to resist, he would have esteemed their iron as straw, and their swords and staves would have been as briars before a consuming fire; but, being willing to suffer, it was folly to come thus armed, for he would not contend with them.

He further expostulates with them, by reminding them how he had behaved himself hitherto toward them, and they toward him.

[1.] Of his public appearance; *I sat daily with you in the temple teaching.*
And,

[2.] Of their public connivance; *Ye laid no hold on me.* How comes then this change? They were very unreasonable, in treating him as they did. *First,* He had given them no occasion to look upon him as a thief, for he had taught in the temple. And such were the matter, and such the manner of his teaching, that he was manifested in the consciences of all that heard him, not to be a bad man. Such gracious words as came from his mouth, were not the words of a thief, nor of one that had a devil. *Secondly,* Nor had he given them occasion to look upon him as one that absconded, or fled from justice, that they should come in the night to seize him; if they had any thing to say to him, they might find him every day in the temple, ready to answer all challenges, all charges, and there they might do as they pleased with him; for the chief priests had the custody of the temple, and the command of the guards about it; but to come upon him thus clandestinely, in the place of his retirement, was base and cowardly. Thus the greatest hero may be villainously assassinated in a corner, by one that in open field would tremble to look him in the face.

But all this was done (so it follows, v. 56) *that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled.* It is hard to say, whether these are the words of the sacred historian, as a comment upon this story, and a direction to the Christian reader to compare it with the scriptures of the Old Testament,

which pointed at it; or, whether they are the words of Christ himself, as a reason why, though he could not but resent this base treatment, he yet submitted to it, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled, to which he had just now referred himself, v. 54. Note, The scripture are in the fulfilling every day; and all those scriptures which speak of the Messiah, had their full accomplishment in our Lord Jesus.

5. How he was, in the midst of this distress, shamefully deserted by his disciples; *They all forsook him, and fled*, v. 56.

(1.) This was their sin; and it was a great sin for them who had left all to follow him, now to leave him for they knew not what. There was unkindness in it, considering the relation they stood in to him, the favours they had received from him, and the melancholy circumstances he was now in. There was unfaithfulness in it, for they had solemnly promised to adhere to him, and never to forsake him. He had indented for their safe conduct (~~488B~~ John 18:8); yet they could not rely upon that, but shifted for themselves by an inglorious flight. What folly was this, for fear of death to flee from him whom they themselves knew and had acknowledged to be the *Fountain of life*? ~~486B~~ John 6:67, 68. *Lord, what is man!*

(2.) It was a part of Christ's suffering, it added affliction to his bonds, to be thus deserted, as it did to Job (~~883B~~ Job 19:13), *He hath put my brethren far from me*; and to David (~~498B~~ Psalm 38:11), *Lovers and friends stand aloof from my sore*. They should have staid with him, to minister to him, to countenance him, and, if need were, to be witnesses for him at his trial; but they treacherously deserted him, as, at St. Paul's *first answer*, *no man stood with him*. But there was a mystery in this.

[1.] Christ, as a sacrifice for sins, stood thus abandoned. The deer that by the keeper's arrow is marked out to be hunted and run down, is immediately deserted by the whole herd. In this he was made a curse for us, being left as one separated to evil.

[2.] Christ, as the Saviour of souls, stood thus alone; as he needed not, so he had not the assistance of any other in working out our salvation; he bore all, and did all himself. *He trod the wine-press alone*, and when there was *none to uphold*, then *his own arm wrought salvation*, ~~267B~~ Isaiah 63:3, 5. *So the Lord alone did lead his Israel*, and they *stand still*, and only see *this great salvation*, ~~652B~~ Deuteronomy 32:12.

425 MATTHEW 26:57-68

CHRIST IN THE HIGH PRIEST'S PALACE

We have here the arraignment of our Lord Jesus in the ecclesiastical court, before the great sanhedrim. Observe,

I. The sitting of the court; the scribes and the elders were assembled, though it was in the dead time of the night, when other people were fast asleep in their beds; yet, to gratify their malice against Christ, they denied themselves that natural rest, and sat up all night, to be ready to fall upon the prey which Judas and his men, they hoped, would *seize*.

See,

1. Who they were, that were assembled; the *scribes*, the principal teachers, and *elders*, the principal rulers, of the Jewish church: these were the most bitter enemies to Christ our great teacher and ruler, on whom therefore they had a jealous eye, as one that eclipsed them; perhaps some of these scribes and elders were not so malicious at Christ as some others of them were; yet, in concurrence with the rest, they made themselves guilty. Now the scripture was fulfilled (426 Psalm 22:16); *The assembly of the wicked have enclosed me*. Jeremiah complains of an assembly of treacherous men; and David of his enemies *gathering themselves together against him*, 425 Psalm 35:15.

2. Where they were assembled; *in the palace of Caiaphas the High Priest*; there they assembled two days before, to lay the plot (v. 3), and there they now convened again, to prosecute it. The *High Priest* was *Ab-beth-din* — *the father of the house of judgment*, but he is now the patron of wickedness; his house should have been the sanctuary of oppressed innocency, but it is become the throne of iniquity; and no wonder, when even God's house of prayer was made a den of thieves.

II. The setting of the prisoner to the bar; they that had *laid hold on Jesus*, *led him away*, hurried him, no doubt, with violence, led him as a trophy of their victory, led him as a victim to the altar; he was brought into Jerusalem through that which was called the *sheep-gate*, for that was the way into town from the mount of Olives; and it was so called because the sheep appointed for sacrifice were brought that way to the temple; very

fitly therefore is Christ led that way, who is the Lamb of God, that takes away the sin of the world. Christ was led first to the High Priest, for by the law all sacrifices were to be first *presented to the priest, and delivered into his hand,* ^{CR16} Leviticus 17:5.

III. The cowardice and faint-heartedness of Peter (v. 58); *But Peter followed afar off.* This comes in here, with an eye to the following story of his denying him. He forsook him as the rest did, when he was seized, and what is here said of his following him is easily reconcilable with his forsaking him; such following was no better than forsaking him; for,

1. He followed him, but it was *afar off.* Some sparks of love and concern for his Master there were in his breast, and therefore he followed him; but fear and concern for his own safety prevailed, and therefore he followed afar off. Note, It looks ill, and bodes worse, when those that are willing to be Christ's disciples, are not willing to be known to be so. Here began Peter's denying him; for to follow him afar off, is by little and little to go back from him. There is danger in drawing back, nay, in looking back.

2. He followed him, but he *went in, and sat with the servants.* He should have gone up to the court, and attended on his Master, and appeared for him; but he went in where there was a good fire, and sat with the servants, not to silence their reproaches, but to screen himself. It was presumption in Peter thus to thrust himself into temptation; he that does so, throws himself out of God's protection. Christ had told Peter that he could not follow him now, and had particularly warned him of his danger *this night;* and yet he would venture into the midst of this wicked crew. It helped David to walk in his integrity, that he *hated the congregation of evil doers, and would not sit with the wicked.*

3. He followed him, but it was only *to see the end,* led more by his curiosity than by his conscience; he attended as an idle spectator rather than as a disciple, a person concerned. He should have gone in, to do Christ some service, or to get some wisdom and grace to himself, by observing Christ's behaviour under his sufferings: but he went in, only to look about him; it is not unlikely that Peter went in, expecting that Christ would have made his escape miraculously out of the hands of his persecutors; that, having so lately struck them down, who came to seize him, he would now have struck them dead, who sat to judge him; and this he had a mind to see: if so, it was folly for him to think of seeing any other

end than what Christ had foretold, that he should be put to death. Note, It is more our concern to prepare for the end, whatever it may be, than curiously to enquire what the end will be. The event is God's, but the duty is ours.

IV. The trial of our Lord Jesus in this court.

1. They examined witnesses against him, though they were resolved, right or wrong, to condemn him; yet, to put the better colour upon it, they would produce evidence against him. The crimes properly cognizable in their court, were, false doctrine and blasphemy; these they endeavoured to prove upon him. And observe here,

(1.) Their search for proof; *They sought false witness against him*; they had seized him, bound him, abused him, and after all have to seek for something to lay to his charge, and can show no cause for his commitment. They tried if any of them could allege seemingly from their own knowledge any thing against him; and suggested one calumny and then another, which, if true, might touch his life. Thus *evil men dig up mischief*, ²¹⁶⁷Proverbs 16:27. Here they trod in the steps of their predecessors, who *devised devices against Jeremiah*, ²¹⁸⁸Jeremiah 18:18; 20:10. They made p[roclamation, that, if any one could give information against the prisoner at the bar, they were ready to receive it, and presently many bore false witness against him (v. 60); for is *a ruler hearken to lies, all his servants are wicked*, and will carry false stories to him, ²¹⁹²Proverbs 29:12. This is an evil often seen under the sun, ²¹⁰⁵Ecclesiastes 10:5. If Naboth must be taken off, there are sons of Belial to swear against him.

(2.) Their success in this search; in several attempts they were baffled, they sought false testimonies among themselves, others came in to help them, and yet they found none; they could make nothing of it, could not take the evidence together, or give it any colour of truth or consistency with itself, no, not they themselves being judges. The matters alleged were such palpable lies, as carried their own confutation along with them. This redounded much to the honour of Christ now, when they were loading him with disgrace.

But at last they met with *two* witnesses, who, it seems, agreed in their evidence, and therefore were hearkened to, in hopes that now the point was gained. The words they swore against him, were, that he should say, *I*

am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days, v. 61. Now by this they designed to accuse him,

[1.] As an enemy to the temple, and one that sought for the destruction of it, which they could not bear to hear of; for they valued themselves by *the temple of the Lord* (^{<2006>}Jeremiah 7:4), and, when they abandoned other idols, made a perfect idol of that. Stephen was accused for *speaking against this holy place*, ^{<4463>}Acts 6:13, 14.

[2.] As one that dealt in witchcraft, or some such unlawful arts, by the help of which he could rear such a building in three days: they had often suggested that he was in league with Beelzebub. Now, as to this, *First*, The words were mis-recited; he said, *Destroy ye this temple* (^{<4029>}John 2:19), plainly intimating that he spoke of a temple which his enemies would seek to destroy; they come, and swear that he said, *I am able to destroy this temple*, as if the design against it were his. He said, *In Three days I will raise it up* — *egero auton*, a word properly used of a living temple; *I will raise it to life*. They come, and swear that he said, *I am able, oikodomesai* — *to build it*; which is properly used of a house temple. *Secondly*, The words were misunderstood; *he spoke of the temple of his body* (^{<4021>}John 2:21), and perhaps when he said, *this temple*, pointed to, or laid his hand upon, his own body; but they swore that he said the *temple of God*, meaning this holy place. Note, There have been, and still are, such as *wrest the sayings of Christ to their own destruction*, ^{<6186>}2 Peter 3:16. *Thirdly*, Make the worst they could of it, it was no capital crime, even by their own law; if it had been, no question but he had been prosecuted for it, when he spoke the words in a public discourse some years ago; nay, the words were capable of a laudable construction, and such as bespoke a kindness for the temple; if it were destroyed, he would exert himself to the utmost to rebuild it. But any thing that looked criminal, would serve to give colour to their malicious prosecution. Now the scriptures were fulfilled, which said, *False witnesses are risen up against me* (^{<1072>}Psalms 27:12); and see ^{<6511>}Psalms 35:11. *Though I have redeemed them, yet they have spoken lies against me*, ^{<3073>}Hosea 7:13. We stand justly accused, the law *accuseth us*, ^{<6275>}Deuteronomy 27:26; ^{<4155>}John 5:45. Satan and our own consciences accuse us, ^{<6181>}1 John 3:20. The creatures cry out against us. Now, to discharge us from all these just accusations, our Lord Jesus submitted to this, to be unjustly and falsely accused, that in the virtue of his sufferings we may be enabled to triumph over all challenges; *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?* ^{<4833>}Romans 8:33, 34. He

was accused, that he might not be condemned; and if at any time we suffer thus, have all manner of evil, not only said, but *sworn, against us falsely*, let us remember that we cannot expect to fare better than our Master.

(3.) Christ's silence under all these accusations, to the amazement of the court, v. 62. The High Priest, the judge of the court, arose in some heat, and said, "*Answerest thou nothing? Come, you the prisoner at the bar; you hear what is sworn against you, what have you now to say for yourself? What defence can you make? Or what please have you to offer in answer to this charge?*" *But Jesus held his peace* (v. 63), not as one sullen, or as one self-condemned, or as one astonished and in confusion; not because he wanted something to say, or knew not how to say it, but that the scripture might be fulfilled (^{<251P>}Isaiah 53:7); *As the sheep is dumb before the shearer, and before the butcher, so he opened not his mouth*; and that he might be the Son of David, who, when his enemies spoke mischievous things against him, was *as a deaf man that heard not*, ^{<1812>}Psalm 38:12-14. He was silent, because *his hour was come*; he would not deny the charge, because he was willing to submit to the sentence; otherwise, he could as easily have put them to silence and shame now, as he had done many a time before. If God had entered into judgment with us, we had been *speechless* (^{<1012>}Matthew 22:12), not able to *answer for one of a thousand*, ^{<1303>}Job 9:3. Therefore, when Christ was *made sin for us*, he was silent, and left it to his blood to speak, ^{<1214>}Hebrews 12:24. He stood mute at this bar, that we might have something to say at God's bar.

Well, this way will not do; *alif aggrendum est vif — recourse must be had to some other expedient.*

2. They examined our Lord Jesus himself upon an oath like that *ex officio*; and, since they could not accuse him, they will try, contrary to the law of equity, to make him accuse himself.

(1.) Here is the interrogatory put to him by the High Priest.


Observe,

[1.] The question itself; *Whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God?* That is, Whether thou pretend to be so? For they will by no means admit it into consideration, whether he be really so or no; though the Messiah was to *be the Consolation of Israel*, and glorious things were spoken concerning him in the Old Testament, yet so strangely besotted were they with a jealousy

of any thing that threatened their exorbitant power and grandeur, that they would never enter into the examination of the matter, whether Jesus was the Messiah or no; never once put the case, suppose he should be so; they only wished him to confess that he called himself so, that they might on that indict him as a deceiver. What will not pride and malice carry men to?

[2.] The solemnity of the proposal of it; *I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us*. Not that he had any regard to the living God, but took his name in vain; only thus he hoped to gain his point with our Lord Jesus; “If thou hast any value for the blessed name of God, and reverence for his Majesty, tell us this.” If he should refuse to answer when he was thus adjured, they would charge him with contempt of the blessed name of God. Thus the persecutors of good men often take advantage against them by their consciences, as Daniel’s enemies did against him in the matter of his God.

(2.) Christ’s answer to this interrogatory (v. 64), in which,

[1.] He owns himself to be *The Christ the Son of God. Thou hast said*; that is, “It is as thou hast said;” for in St. Mark it is, *I am*. Hitherto, he seldom professed himself expressly to be the Christ, the Son of God; the tenour of his doctrine bespoke it, and his miracles proved it: but now he would not omit to make a confession of it, *First*, Because that would have looked like a disowning of that truth which he came into the world to bear witness to. *Secondly*, It would have looked like declining his sufferings, when he knew the acknowledgment of this would give his enemies all the advantage they desired against him. He thus confessed himself, for example and encouragement to his followers, when they are called to it, to *confess him before men*, whatever hazards they run by it. And according to this pattern the martyrs readily confessed themselves Christians, though they knew they must die for it, as the martyrs at Thebais, *Euseb. Hist.* 50.8, 100.9. That Christ answered out of a regard to the adjuration which Caiaphas had profanely used by the *living God*, I cannot think, any more than that he had any regard to the like adjuration in the devil’s mouth,  Mark 5:7.

[2.] He refers himself, for the proof of this, to his second coming, and indeed to his whole estate of exaltation. It is probable that they looked upon him with a scornful disdainful smile, when he said, “*I am*;” “A likely fellow,” thought they, “to be the Messiah, who is expected to come in so much pomp and power;” and to that this *nevertheless* refers.

“Though now you see me in this low and abject state, and think it a ridiculous thing for me to call myself the Messiah, *nevertheless* the day is coming when I shall appear otherwise.” *Hereafter, ap' arti* — ... *modo* — *shortly*; for his exaltation began in a few days; now shortly his kingdom began to be set up; and *hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, to judge the world*; of which his coming shortly to judge and destroy the Jewish nation would be a type and earnest. Note, The terrors of the judgment-day will be a sensible conviction to the most obstinate infidelity, not in order to conversion (that will be then too late), but in order to an eternal confusion. Observe, *First*, Whom they should see; *the Son of man*. Having owned himself the Son of God, even now in his estate of humiliation, he speaks of himself as the Son of man, even in his estate of exaltation; for he had these two distinct natures in one person. The incarnation of Christ has made him Son of God and Son of man; for he is *Immanuel*, God with us. *Secondly*, In what posture they should see him; 1. *Sitting on the right hand of power*, according to the prophecy of the Messiah (³⁸⁰Psalm 110:1); *Sit thou at my right hand*; which denotes both the dignity and the dominion he is exalted to. Though now he stood at the bar, they should shortly see him sit on the throne.

2. *Coming in the clouds of heaven*; this refers to another prophecy concerning the *Son of man* (²⁰⁷³Daniel 7:13, 14), which is applied to Christ (⁴¹³³Luke 1:33), when he came to destroy Jerusalem; so terrible was the judgment, and so sensible the indications of the wrath of the Lamb in it, that it might be called *a visible appearance of Christ*; but doubtless it has reference to the general judgment; to this day he appeals, and summons them to an appearance, then and there to answer for what they are now doing. He had spoken of this day to his disciples, awhile ago, for their comfort, and had bid them *lift up their heads* for joy in the prospect of it, (⁴²²⁷Luke 21:27, 28. Now he speaks of it to his enemies, for their terror; for nothing is more comfortable to the righteous, nor more terrible to the wicked, than Christ's judging the world at the last day.

V. His conviction upon this trial; *The High Priest rent his clothes*, according to the custom of the Jews, when they heard or saw any thing done or said, which they looked upon to be a reproach to God; as (²³⁵²Isaiah 36:22; 37:1; ⁴¹⁴⁴Acts 14:14. Caiaphas would be thought extremely tender of the glory of God (*Come, see his zeal for the Lord of hosts*); but, while he pretended an abhorrence of blasphemy, he was himself the greatest

blasphemer; he now forgot the law which forbade the High Priest in any case to rend his clothes, unless we will suppose this an excepted case.

Observe,

1. The crime he was found guilty of; *blasphemy*. *He hath spoken blasphemy*; that is, he hath spoken reproachfully of the living God; that is the notion we have of blasphemy; because we by sin had reproached the Lord, therefore Christ, when *he was made Sin for us*, was condemned as a blasphemer for the truth he told them.

2. The evidence upon which they found him guilty; *Ye have heard the blasphemy*; why should we trouble ourselves to examine *witnesses* any further? He owned the fact, that he did profess himself the *Son of God*; and then they made blasphemy of it, and convicted him upon his confession. The High Priest triumphs in the success of the snare he had laid; “Now I think I have done his business for him.” *Aha, so would we have it*. Thus was he *judged out of his own mouth* at their bar, because we were liable to be so judged at God's bar. There is no need of witnesses against us; our own consciences are against us instead of a thousand witnesses.

VI. His sentence passed, upon this conviction, v. 66.

Here is,

1. Caiaphas's appeal to the bench; *What think ye?* See his base hypocrisy and partiality; when he had already prejudged the cause, and pronounced him a blasphemer, then, as if he were willing to be advised, he asks the judgment of his brethren; but hide malice ever so cunningly under the robe of justice, some way or other it will break out. If he would have dealt fairly, he should have collected the votes of the bench *seriatim* — *in order*, and begun with the junior, and delivered his own opinion last; but he knew that by the authority of his place he could sway the rest, and therefore declares his judgment, and presumes they are all of his mind; he takes the crime, with regard to Christ, *pro confesso* — *as a crime confessed*; and the judgment, with regard to the court, *pro concessio* — *as a judgment agreed to*.

2. Their concurrence with him; they said, *He is guilty of death*; perhaps they did not all concur: it is certain that Joseph of Arimathea, if he was present, dissented (☞ Luke 23:51); so did Nicodemus, and, it is likely,

others with them; however, the majority carried it that way; but, perhaps, this being an extraordinary council, or cabal rather, none had notice to be present but such as they knew would concur, and so it might be voted *nemine contradicente* — *unanimously*. The judgment was, “*He is guilty of death; by the law he deserves to die.*” Though they had not power now to put any man to death, yet by such a judgment as this they made a man an *outlaw* among his people (*qui caput gerit lupinum* — *he carries a wolf's head*; so our old law describes an outlaw), and so exposed him to the fury either of a popular tumult, as Stephen was, or to be clamoured against before the governor, as Christ was. Thus was the Lord of life condemned to die, that through him there may be *no condemnation to us*.

VII. The abuses and indignities done to him after sentence passed (v. 67, 68); *Then*, when he was found guilty, they *spat in his face*. Because they had not power to put him to death, and could not be sure that they should prevail with the governor to be their executioner, they would do him all the mischief they could, now that they had him in their hands. Condemned prisoners are taken under the special protection of the law, which they are to make satisfaction to, and by all civilized nations have been treated with tenderness; sufficient is this punishment. But when they had passed sentence upon our Lord Jesus, he was treated as if hell had broken loose upon him, as if he were not only *worthy of death*, but as if that were too good for him, and he were unworthy of the compassion shown to the worst malefactors. Thus *he was made a curse for us*. But who were they that were thus barbarous? It should seem, the very same that had passed sentence upon him. *They said, He is guilty of death, and then did they spit in his face*. The priests began, and then no wonder if the servants, who would do any thing to make sport to themselves, and curry favour with their wicked masters, carried on the humour. See how they abused him.

1. *They spat in his face*. Thus the scripture was fulfilled (²⁸⁰⁶Isaiah 50:6), *He hid not his face from shame and spitting*. Job complained of this indignity done to him, and herein was a type of Christ (⁸³¹⁰Job 31:10); *They spare not to spit in my face*. It is an expression of the greatest contempt and indignation possible; looking upon him as more despicable than the very ground they spit upon. When Miriam was under the leprosy, it was looked upon as a disgrace to her, like that of *her father spitting in her face*, (⁰⁴²⁴Numbers 12:14. He that refused to raise up seed to his brother, was to undergo this dishonour, (⁰²⁰⁹Deuteronomy 25:9. Yet Christ, when he was repairing the decays of the great family of mankind,

submitted to it. That face which was *fairer than the children of men*, which was *white and ruddy*, and which angels reverence, was thus filthily abused by the basest and vilest of the children of men. Thus was confusion poured upon his face, that ours might not be filled with everlasting shame and contempt. They who now profane his blessed name, abuse his word, and hate his image in his sanctified ones; what do they better than spit in his face? They would do that, if it were in their reach.

2. *They buffeted him, and smote him with the palms of their hands.* This added pain to the shame, for both came in with sin. Now the scripture was fulfilled (²⁸⁰⁶Isaiah 50:6), *I gave my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; and* (²⁸⁰⁸Lamentations 3:30), *He giveth his cheek to him that smiteth him; he is filled with reproach, and yet keepeth silence* (v. 28); and (³⁸⁰¹Micah 5:1), *They shall smite the Judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek; here the margin reads it, They smote him with rods; for so *errapisan* signifies, and this he submitted to.*

3. They challenged him to tell who struck him, having first blindfolded him; *Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, who is he that smote thee?*

(1.) They made sport of him, as the Philistines did with Samson; it is grievous to those that are in misery, for people to make merry *about* them, but much more to make merry *with* them and their misery. Here was an instance of the greatest depravity and degeneracy of the human nature that could be, to show that there was need of a religion that should recover men to humanity.


(2.) They made sport with his prophetic office. They had heard him called a *prophet*, and that he was famed for wonderful discoveries; this they upbraided him with, and pretended to make a trial of; as if the divine omniscience must stoop to a piece of children's play. *They put a like affront upon Christ, who profanely jest with the scripture, and make themselves merry with holy things; like Belshazzar's revels in the temple bowls.*

MATTHEW 26:69-75

CHRIST DENIED BY PETER

We have here the story of Peter's denying his Master, and it comes in as a part of Christ's sufferings. Our Lord Jesus was now in the High Priest's hall, not to be tried, but baited rather; and then it would have been some comfort to him to see his friends near him. But we do not find any friend he had about the court, save Peter only, and it would have been better if he had been at a distance. Observe how he fell, and how he got up again by repentance.

I. His sin, which is here impartially related, to the honour of the penmen of scripture, who dealt faithfully. Observe,

1. The immediate occasion of Peter's sin. He sat without in the palace, among the servants of the High Priest. Note, Bad company is to many an occasion of sin; and those who needlessly thrust themselves into it, go upon the devil's ground, venture into his crowds, and may expect either to be tempted and ensnared, as Peter was, or to be ridiculed and abused, as his Master was; they scarcely can come out of such company, without guilt or grief, or both. He that would keep God's commandments and his own covenant, must say to evil-doers, *Depart from me*,  Psalm 119:115. Peter spoke from his own experience, when he warned his new converts to *save themselves from that untoward generation*; for he had like to have ruined himself by but going once among them.

2. The temptation to it. He was challenged as a retainer to Jesus of Galilee. First one maid, and then another, and then the rest of the servants, charged it upon him; *Thou also wert with Jesus of Galilee*, v. 69. And again, *This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth*, v. 71. And again (v. 73), *Thou also art one of them, for thy speech betrayeth thee* to be a Galilean; whose dialect and pronunciation differed from that of the other Jews. Happy he whose speech betrays him to be a disciple of Christ, by the holiness and seriousness of whose discourse it appears that he has been with Jesus! Observe how scornfully they speak of Christ — *Jesus of Galilee*, and of *Nazareth*, upbraiding him with the country he was of: and how disdainfully they speak of Peter — *This fellow*; as if they thought it a reproach to them to have such a man in their company, and he was well

enough served for coming among them; yet they had nothing to accuse him of, but that he was with Jesus, which, they thought, was enough to render him both a scandalous and a suspected person.

3. The sin itself. When he was charged as one of Christ's disciples, he denied it, was ashamed and afraid to own himself so, and would have all about him to believe that he had no knowledge of him, nor any kindness or concern for him.

(1.) Upon the first mention of it, he said, *I know not what thou sayest*. This was a shuffling answer; he pretended that he did not understand the charge, that he knew not whom she meant by *Jesus of Galilee*, or what she meant by being *with* him; so making strange of that which his heart was now as full of as it could be.

[1.] It is a fault thus to misrepresent our own apprehensions, thoughts, and affections, to serve a turn; to pretend that we do not understand, or did not think of, or remember, that which yet we do apprehend, and did think of, and remember; this is a species of lying which we are more prone to than any other, because in this a man is not easily disproved; for *who knows the spirit of a man, save himself?* But God knows it, and we must be restrained from this wickedness by a fear of him, ~~1812~~ Proverbs 24:12.

[2.] It is yet a greater fault to be shy of Christ, to dissemble our knowledge of him, and to shift off a confession of him, when we are called to it; it is, in effect, to *deny* him.

(2.) Upon the next attack, he said, flat and plain, *I know not the man*, and backed it with an oath, v. 72. This was, in effect, to say, I will not own him, I am no Christian; for Christianity is the knowledge of Christ. Why, Peter? Canst thou look upon yonder Prisoner at the bar, and say thou dost not know him? Didst not thou quit all to follow him? And hast thou not been the man of his counsel? Hast thou not known him better than any one else? Didst thou not confess him to be the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? Hast thou forgotten all the kind and tender looks thou hast had from him, and all the intimate fellowship thou hast had with him? Canst thou look him in the face, and say that thou dost not know him?

(3.) Upon the third assault, *he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man*, v. 74. This was worst of all, for the way of sin is down-hill. He cursed and swore,

[1.] To back what he said, and to gain credit to it, that they might not any more call it in question; he did not only *say* it, but *swear* it; and yet what he said, was false. Note, We have reason to suspect the truth of that which is backed with rash oaths and imprecations. None but the devil's sayings need the devil's proofs. He that will not be restrained by the third commandment from mocking his God, will not be kept by the ninth from deceiving his brother.

[2.] He designed it to be an evidence for him, that he was none of Christ's disciples, for this was none of their language. Cursing and swearing suffice to prove a man no disciple of Christ; for it is the language of his enemies thus to *take his name in vain*.

This is written for warning to us, that we sin not after the similitude of Peter's transgression; that we never, either directly or indirectly, deny Christ the Lord that bought us, by rejecting his offers, resisting his Spirit, dissembling our knowledge of him, and being ashamed of him and his words, or afraid of suffering for him and with his suffering people.

4. The aggravations of this sin, which it may be of use to take notice of, that we may observe the like transgressions in our own sins. Consider,

(1.) Who he was: an apostle, one of the first three, that had been upon all occasions the most forward to speak to the honour of Christ. The greater profession we make of religion, the greater is our sin if in any thing we walk unworthily.

(2.) What fair warning his Master had given him of his danger; if he had regarded this as he ought to have done, he would not have run himself into the temptation.

(3.) How solemnly he had promised to adhere to Christ in this night of trial; he had said again and again, "*I will never deny thee*; no, I will die with thee first;" yet he broke these bonds in sunder, and his word was yea and nay.

(4.) How soon he fell into this sin after the Lord's supper. There to receive such an inestimable pledge of redeeming love, and yet the same night, before morning, to disown his Redeemer, was indeed *turning aside quickly*.

(5.) How weak comparatively the temptation was; it was not the judge, nor any of the officers of the court, that charged him with being a disciple of Jesus, but a silly maid or two, that probably designed him no hurt, nor would have done him any if he had owned it. This was but *running with the footmen*, ^{<415>}Jeremiah 12:5.

(6.) How often he repeated it; even after the cock had crowed once he continued in the temptation, and a second and third time relapsed into the sin. Is this Peter? *How art thou fallen!*

Thus was his sin aggravated; but on the other hand there is this to extenuate it, that, what he said he said *in his haste*, ^{<411>}Psalm 116:11. He fell into the sin by surprise, not as Judas, with design; his heart was against it; he spoke very ill, but it was unadvisedly, and before he was aware.

II. Peter's repentance for this sin, v. 75. The former is written for our admonition, that we may not sin; but, if at any time we be overtaken, this is written for our imitation, that we may make haste to repent. Now observe,

1. What it was, that brought Peter to repentance.

(1.) *The cock crew* (v. 74); a common contingency; but, Christ having mentioned the crowing of *the cock* in the warning he gave him, that made it a means of bringing him to himself. The word of Christ can put a significancy upon whatever sign he shall please to choose, and by virtue of that word he can make it very beneficial to the souls of his people. The crowing of a cock is to Peter instead of a John Baptist, the voice of one calling to repentance. Conscience should be to us as the crowing of the cock, to put us in mind of what we had forgotten. When *David's heart smote him* the cock crew. Where there is a living principle of grace in the soul, though for the present overpowered by temptation, a little hint will serve, only for a memorandum, when God sets in with it, to recover it from a by-path. Here was the crowing of a cock made a happy occasion of the conversion of a soul. Christ comes sometimes in mercy *at cock-crowing*.

(2.) *He remembered the words of the Lord*; this was it that brought him to himself, and melted him into tears of godly sorrow; a sense of his ingratitude to Christ, and the slight regard he had had to the gracious warning Christ had given him. Note, A serious reflection upon the words

of the Lord Jesus will be a powerful inducement to repentance, and will help to break the heart for sin. Nothing grieves a penitent more than that he has sinned against the grace of the Lord Jesus and the tokens of his love.

2. How his repentance was expressed; *He went out, and wept bitterly.*

(1.) His sorrow was secret; he went out, out of the High Priest's hall, vexed at himself that ever he came into it, now that he found what a snare he was in, and got out of it as fast as he could. He went out into the porch before (v. 71); and if he had gone quite off then, his second and third denial had been prevented; but then he came in again, now he went out and came in no more. He went out to some place of solitude and retirement, where he might *bemoan* himself, *like the doves of the valleys*, ^{<3076>}Ezekiel 7:16; ^{<2991>}Jeremiah 9:1, 2. He went out, that he might not be disturbed in his devotions on this sad occasion. We may *then* be most free in our communion with God, when we are most free from the converse and business of this world. In mourning for sin, we find *the families apart, and their wives apart*, ^{<3021>}Zechariah 12:11, 12.

(2.) His sorrow was serious; *He wept bitterly.* Sorrow for sin must not be slight, but great and deep, like that for an only son. Those that have sinned sweetly, must weep bitterly; for, sooner or later, sin will be bitterness. This deep sorrow is requisite, not to satisfy divine justice (a sea of tears would not do that), but to evidence that there is a real change of mind, which is the essence of repentance, to make the pardon the more welcome, and sin for the future the more loathsome. Peter, who wept so bitterly for denying Christ, never denied him again, but *confessed* him often and openly, and in the mouth of danger; so far from ever saying, *I know not the man*, that he made all the house of *Israel know assuredly that this same Jesus was Lord and Christ.* True repentance for any sin will be best evidenced by our abounding in the contrary grace and duty; that is a sign of our weeping, not only bitterly, but sincerely. Some of the ancients say, that as long as Peter lived, he never heard a cock crow but it set him a weeping. Those that have truly sorrowed for sin, will sorrow upon every remembrance of it; yet not so as to hinder, but rather to increase, their joy in God and in his mercy and grace.