

CHAPTER 27

It is a very affecting story which is recorded in this chapter concerning the sufferings and death of our Lord Jesus. Considering the thing itself, there cannot be a more tragical story told us; common humanity would melt the heart, to find an innocent and excellent person thus misused. But considering the design and fruit of Christ's sufferings, it is gospel, it is good news, that Jesus Christ was thus delivered for our offences; and there is nothing we have more reason to glory in than the cross of Christ. In this chapter, observe,

I. How he was prosecuted.

1. The delivering of him to Pilate (v. 1, 2).
2. The despair of Judas (v. 3-10).
3. The arraignment and trial of Christ before Pilate (v. 11-14).
4. The clamours of the people against him (v. 15-25).
5. Sentence passed, and the warrant signed for his execution (v. 26).

II. How he was executed.

1. He was barbarously used (v. 27-30).
2. Led to the place of execution (v. 31-33).
3. There he had all possible indignities done him, and reproaches cast upon him (v. 34-44).
4. Heaven frowned upon him (v. 45-49).
5. Many remarkable things attended his death (v. 50-56). He was buried and a watch set on his grave (v. 57-66).

~~471~~ MATTHEW 27:1-10

THE REPENTANCE OF JUDAS

We left Christ in the hands of the chief priests and elders, condemned to die, but they could only show their teeth; about two years before this the Romans had taken from the Jews the power of capital punishment; they could put no man to death, and therefore early in the morning another council is held, to consider what is to be done. And here we are told what

was done in that morning-council, after they had been for two or three hours consulting with their pillows.

I. Christ is delivered up to Pilate, that he might execute the sentence they had passed upon him. Judea having been almost one hundred years before this conquered by Pompey, had ever since been tributary to Rome, and was lately made part of the province of Syria, and subject to the government of the president of Syria, under whom there were several *procurators*, who chiefly attended the business of the *revenues*, but sometimes, as Pilate particularly, had the whole power of the president lodged in them. This was a plain evidence that *the sceptre was departed from Judah*, and that therefore now *the Shiloh must come*, according to Jacob's prophecy, ⁽¹⁴⁹⁾Genesis 49:10. Pilate is characterized by the Roman writers of that time, as a man of a rough and haughty spirit, wilful and implacable, and extremely covetous and oppressive; the Jews had a great enmity to his person, and were weary of his government, and yet they made use of him as the tool of their malice against Christ.

1. They *bound* Jesus. He was bound when he was first seized; but either they took off these bonds when he was before the council, or now they added to them. Having found him guilty, they tied his hands behind him, as they usually do with convicted criminals. He was already bound with the bonds of love to man, and of his own undertaking, else he had soon broken these bonds, as Samson did his. We were fettered with the *bond of iniquity*, held in the cords of our sins (⁽¹⁵⁰⁾Proverbs 10:22); but God had bound the *yoke of our transgressions* upon the neck of the Lord Jesus (Lamentations 50:14), that we might be loosed by his bonds, as we are *healed by his stripes*.

2. They *led him away* in a sort of triumph, led him *as a lamb to the slaughter*; so was he taken from prison and from judgment, ⁽¹⁵¹⁾Isaiah 53:7, 8. It was nearly a mile from Caiaphas's house to Pilate's. All that way they led him through the streets of Jerusalem, when in the morning they began to fill, to make him a spectacle to the world.

3. They *delivered him to Pontius Pilate*; according to that which Christ had often said, that he should be *delivered to the Gentiles*. Both Jews and Gentiles were obnoxious to the judgment of God, and *concluded under sin*, and Christ was to be the Saviour both of Jews and Gentiles; and therefore Christ was brought into the judgment both of Jews and Gentiles,

and both had a hand in his death. See how these corrupt church-rulers abused the civil magistrate, making use of him to execute their unrighteous decrees, and *inflict the grievance which they had prescribed*, ~~200~~ Isaiah 10:1. Thus have the kings of the earth been wretchedly imposed upon by the papal powers, and condemned to the drudgery of extirpating with the sword of war, as well as that of justice, those whom they have marked for heretics, right or wrong, to the great prejudice of their own interests.

II. The money which they had paid to Judas for betraying Christ, is by him delivered back to them, and Judas, in despair, hangs himself. The chief priests and elders supported themselves with *this*, in prosecuting Christ, that his own disciple betrayed him to them; but now, in the midst of the prosecution, that string failed them, and even *he* is made to them a *witness* of Christ's innocency and a monument of God's justice; which served,

1. For glory to Christ in the midst of his sufferings, and a specimen of his victory over Satan who had entered into Judas.

2. For warning to his persecutors, and to leave them the more inexcusable. If their heart had not been fully set in them to do this evil, what Judas said and did, one would think, should have stopped the prosecution.

(1.) See here how Judas *repented*: not like Peter, who repented, believed, and was pardoned: no, he repented, despaired, and was ruined. Now observe here,

[1.] What induced him to repent. It was *when he saw that he was condemned*. Judas, it is probable, expected that either Christ would have made his escape out of their hands, or would so have pleaded his own cause at their bar as to have come off, and then Christ would have had the honour, the Jews the shame, and he the money, and no harm done. This he had no reason to expect, because he had so often heard his Master say that he must be *crucified*; yet it is probable that he did expect it, and when the event did not answer his vain fancy, then he fell into this horror, when he saw the stream strong against Christ, and him yielding to it. Note, Those who measure actions by the consequences of them rather than by the divine law, will find themselves mistaken in their measures. The way of sin is down-hill; and if we cannot easily stop ourselves, much less can we stop others whom we have set a going in a sinful way. He *repented*

himself; that is, he was filled with grief, anguish, and indignation, at himself, when reflecting upon what he had done. When he was tempted to betray his Master, the thirty pieces of silver looked very fine and glittering, like the *wine, when it is red, and gives its colour in the cup*. But when the thing was done, and the money paid, the silver was become dross, it *bit like a serpent, and stung like an adder*. Now his conscience flew in his face; “What have I done! What a fool, what a wretch, am I, to sell my Master, and all my comfort and happiness in him, for such a trifle! All these abuses and indignities done him are chargeable upon me; it is owing to me, that he is bound and condemned, spit upon and buffeted. I little thought it would have come to this, when I made that wicked bargain; so foolish was I, and ignorant, and so like a beast.” Now he curses the bag he carried, the money he coveted, the priests he dealt with, and the day that he was born. The remembrance of his Master's goodness to him, which he had so basely requited, the bowels of mercy he had spurned at, and the fair warnings he had slighted, steeled his convictions, and made them the more piercing. Now he found his Master's words true; *It were better for that man, that he had never been born*. Note, Sin will soon change its taste. Though it be *rolled under the tongue as a sweet morsel*, in the bowels it will be turned into the *gall of asps* (^{<BIB>}Job 20:12-14), like John's book, ^{<BIB>}Revelation 10:9.

[2.] What were the indications of his repentance.

First, He made restitution; *He brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests*, when they were all together publicly. Now the money burned in his conscience, and he was as sick of it as ever he had been fond of it. Note, That which is ill gotten, will never do good to those that get it, ^{<BIB>}Jeremiah 13:10; ^{<BIB>}Job 20:15. If he had repented, and brought the money back before he had betrayed Christ, he might have done it with comfort, then he had *agreed while yet in the way*; but now it was too late, now he cannot do it without horror, wishing ten thousand times he had never meddled with it. See ^{<BIB>}James 5:3. He brought it again. Note, what is unjustly gotten, must not be kept; for that is a continuance in the sin by which it was got, and such an avowing of it as is not consistent with repentance. He brought it to those from whom he had it, to let them know that he repented his bargain. Note, Those who have served and hardened others in their sin, when God gives them repentance, should let them know it whose sins they have been partakers in, that it may be a means to bring them to repentance.

Secondly, He made confession (v. 4); *I have sinner, in that I have betrayed innocent blood.*

1. To the *honour of Christ*, he pronounces his blood *innocent*. If he had been guilty of any sinful practices, Judas, as his disciple, would certainly have know it, and, as his betrayer, would certainly have discovered it; but he, freely and without being urged to it, pronounces him innocent, to the face of those who had pronounced him *guilty*.

2. To *his own shame*, he confesses that he had sinned, in betraying this blood. He does not lay the blame on any one else; does not say, “You have sinned, in hiring me to do it;” but takes it all to himself; “I have sinned, in doing it.” Thus far Judas went toward his repentance, yet it was *not to salvation*. He confessed, but not to God, did not go to him, and say, *I have sinned, Father, against heaven*. He confessed the betraying of innocent blood, but did not confess that wicked love of money, which was the root of this evil. There are those who betray Christ, and yet justify themselves in it, and so come short of Judas.

(2.) See here how the chief priests and elders entertained Judas's penitential confession; they said, *What is that to us? See thou to that*. He made them his confessors, and that was the *absolution* they gave him; more like the priests of devils than like the priests of the holy living God.

[1.] See here how carelessly they speak of the betraying of Christ. Judas had told them that the blood of Christ was innocent blood; and they said, *What is that to us?* Was it nothing to them that they had thirsted after this blood, and hired Judas to betray it, and had now condemned it to be shed unjustly? Is this nothing to them? Does it give no check to the violence of their prosecution, no warning to take heed what they do to this just man? Thus do fools make a mock at sin, as if no harm were done, no hazard run, by the commission of the greatest wickedness. Thus light do many make of Christ crucified; what is it to them, that he suffered such things?

[2.] See here how carelessly they speak of the sin of Judas; he said, *I have sinned*, and they said, “*What is that to us?* What are we concerned in thy sin, that thou tellest us of it?” Note, It is folly for us to think that the sins of others are nothing to us, especially those sins that we are any way accessory to, or partakers in. Is it nothing to us, that God is dishonoured, souls wounded, Satan gratified and his interests served, and that we have aided and abetted it? If the elders of Jezreel, to please Jezebel, murder

Naboth, is that nothing to Ahab? Yes, *he has killed*, for he has *taken possession*, ^{<1219>}1 Kings 21:19. The guilt of sin is not so easily transferred as some people think it is. If there were guilt in the matter, they tell Judas that he must *look to it*, he must *bear it*. *First*, Because he had betrayed him to them. His was indeed *the greater sin* (^{<691>}John 19:11); but it did not therefore follow, that theirs was no sin. It is a common instance of the deceitfulness of our hearts, to extenuate our own sin by the aggravation of other people's sins. But the judgment of God is according to truth, not according to comparison. *Secondly*, Because he knew and believed him to be innocent. "If he be innocent, see thou to it, that is more than we know; we have adjudged him *guilty*, and therefore may justly prosecute him as such," Wicked practices are buoyed up by wicked principles, and particularly by this, That sin is sin only to those that think it to be so; that it is no harm to persecute a good man, if we take him to be a bad man; but those who thus think to mock God, will but deceive and destroy themselves.

[3.] See how carelessly they speak of the conviction, terror, and remorse, that Judas was under. They were glad to make use of him in the sin, and were then very fond of him; none more welcome to them than Judas, when he said, *What will ye give me, and I will betray him to you?* They did not say, *What is that to us?* But now that his sin had put him into a fright, now they slighted him, had nothing to say to him, but turned him over to his own terrors; why did he come to trouble them with his melancholy fancies? They had something else to do than to heed him. But why so shy? *First*, Perhaps they were in some fear lest the sparks of his conviction, brought too near, should kindle a fire in their own consciences, and lest his moans, listened to, should give an alarm to their own convictions. Note, Obstinate sinners stand upon their guard against convictions; and those that are resolutely impenitent, look with disdain upon the penitent. *Secondly*, However, they were in no concern to succour Judas; when they had brought him into the snare, they not only left him, but laughed at him. Note, Sinners, under convictions, will find their old companions in sin but miserable comforters. It is usual for those that love the treason, to hate the traitor.

(3.) Here is the utter despair that Judas was hereby driven into. If the chief priests had promised him to stay the prosecution, it would have been some comfort to him; but, seeing no hopes of that, he grew desperate, v. 5.

[1.] *He cast down the pieces of silver in the temple.* The chief priests would not take the money, for fear of taking thereby the whole guilt to themselves, which they were willing that Judas should bear the load of; Judas would not keep it, it was too hot for him to hold, he therefore threw it down in the temple, that, whether they would or no, it might fall into the hands of the chief priests. See what a *drug* money was, when the guilt of *sin* was tacked to it, or was thought to be so.

[2.] *He went, and hanged himself.* First, *He retired* — *anechorese*; he withdrew into some solitary place, like the possessed man that was drawn by the devil into the wilderness, ^{<489>}Luke 8:29. Woe to him that is in despair, and is alone. If Judas had gone to Christ, or to some of the disciples, perhaps he might have had relief, bad as the case was; but, missing of it with the chief priests, he abandoned himself to despair: and the same devil that with the help of the priests drew him to the sin, with their help drove him to despair. *Secondly*, He became his own executioner; *He hanged himself*; he was *suffocated* with grief, so Dr. Hammond: but Dr. Whitby is clear that our translation is right. Judas had a *sight* and *sense* of sin, but no apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, and so *he pined away in his iniquity*. His sin, we may suppose, was not in its own nature unpardonable: there were some of those saved, that had been Christ's betrayers and murderers; but he concluded, as Cain, that his iniquity was greater than could be forgiven, and would rather throw himself on the devil's mercy than God's. And some have said, that Judas sinned more in *despairing* of the mercy of God, than in *betraying* his Master's blood. Now the terrors of the Almighty set themselves in array against him. All the curses written in God's book now *came into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones*, as was foretold concerning him (^{<490>}Psalm 109:18, 19), and drove him to this desperate shift, for the escaping of a *hell* within him, to leap into *that* before him, which was but the perfection and perpetuity of this horror and despair. He throws himself into the fire, to avoid the flame; but miserable is the case when a man must go to hell for ease.

Now, in this story,

1. We have an instance of the wretched end of those into whom Satan enters, and particularly those that are given up to the love of money. This is the destruction in which many are drowned by it, ^{<500>}1 Timothy 6:9, 10. Remember what became of the swine into which, and of the traitor into whom, *the devil enters*; and *give not place to the devil*.

2. We have an instance of the wrath of God revealed from heaven against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, ^{<418>}Romans 1:18. As in the story of Peter we behold the goodness of God, and the triumphs of Christ's grace in the conversion of some sinners; so in the story of Judas we behold the severity of God, and the triumphs of Christ's power and justice in the confusion of other sinners. When Judas, into whom Satan entered, was thus *hung up*, Christ made an open show of the principalities and powers he undertook the *spoiling of*, ^{<505>}Colossians 2:15.

3. We have an instance of the direful effects of despair; it often ends in self-murder. *Sorrow*, even that for sin, if not *according to God, worketh death* (^{<400>}2 Corinthians 7:10), the worst kind of death; for *a wounded spirit, who can bear?* Let us think as bad as we can of sin, provided we do not think it unpardonable; let us despair of help in ourselves, but not of help in God. He that thinks to ease his conscience by destroying his life, doth, in effect, dare God Almighty to do his worst. And self-murder, though prescribed by some of the heathen moralists, is certainly a remedy worse than the disease, how bad soever the disease may be. Let us watch against the beginnings of melancholy, and pray, Lord, *lead us not into temptation*.

(4.) The disposal of the money which Judas brought back, v. 6-10. It was laid out in the purchase of a field, called *the potter's field*; because some potter had owned it, or occupied it, or lived near it, or because broken potters' vessels were thrown into it. And this field was to be a burying-place for strangers, that is, proselytes to the Jewish religion, who were of other nations, and, coming to Jerusalem to worship, happened to die there.

[1.] It looks like an instance of their humanity, that they took care for the *burying of strangers*; and it intimates that they themselves allowed (as St. Paul saith, ^{<4245>}Acts 24:15), *that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust*; for we *therefore* take care of the dead body, not only because it has been the habitation of a rational soul, but because it must be so again. But,

[2.] It was no instance of their humility that they would bury strangers in a place by themselves, as if they were not worthy to be laid in their burying-places; strangers must keep their distance, alive and dead, and that principle must go down to the grace, *Stand by thyself, come not near me, I am holier than thou*, ^{<2315>}Isaiah 65:5. The sons of Seth were better affected towards Abraham, though a stranger among them, when they offered him

the choicest of their own sepulchres, ^{<0236>}Genesis 23:6. But *the sons of the stranger, that have joined themselves to the Lord*, though buried by themselves, shall rise with all that are *dead in Christ*.

This buying of the potter's field did not take place on the day that Christ died (they were then too busy to mind any thing else but hunting him down); but it took place not long after; for Peter speaks of it soon after Christ's ascension; yet it is here recorded.

First, To show the hypocrisy of the chief priests and elders. They were maliciously persecuting the blessed Jesus, and now,

1. They scruple to put that money into the treasury, or *corban*, of the temple, with which they had hired the traitor. Though perhaps they had taken it out of the treasury, pretending it was for the public good, and though they were great sticklers for the *corban*, and laboured to draw all the wealth of the nation into it, yet they would not put that money into it, which was the price of blood. The hire of a traitor they thought parallel to the hire of a whore, and the price of a malefactor (such a one they made Christ to be) equivalent to the price of a dog, neither of which was to be *brought into the house of the Lord*, ^{<0238>}Deuteronomy 23:18. They would thus save their credit with the people, by possessing them with an opinion of their great reverence for the temple. Thus they that *swallowed a camel, strained at a gnat*.

2. They think to *atone* for what they had done, by this public good act of providing a burying-place for strangers, though not at their own charge. Thus in times of ignorance people were made to believe that building churches and endowing monasteries would make amends for immoralities.

Secondly, To signify the favour intended by the blood of Christ to *strangers*, and sinners of the Gentiles. Through the price of his blood, a resting place is provided for them after death. Thus many of the ancients apply this passage. The *grave* is the potter's field, where the bodies are thrown as despised broken vessels; but Christ by his blood *purchased* it for those who by confessing themselves *strangers* on earth seek the better country; he has altered the property of it (as a purchaser doth), so that now death is ours, the grave is ours, a bed of rest for us. The Germans, in their language, call burying-places *God's fields*; for in them God *sows* his people as a *corn of wheat*, ^{<0224>}John 12:24. See ^{<0223>}Hosea 2:23; ^{<0239>}Isaiah 26:19.

Thirdly, To perpetuate the infamy of those that bought and sold the blood of Christ. This field was commonly called *Aceldama* — *the field of blood*; not by the chief priests, they hoped in this burying-place to bury the remembrance of their own crime; but by the people; who took notice of Judas's acknowledgment that he had betrayed the innocent blood, though the chief priests made nothing of it. They fastened this name upon the field *in perpetuam rei memoriam* — *for a perpetual memorial*. Note, Divine Providence has many ways of entailing disgrace upon the wicked practices even of great men, who, though they seek to cover their shame, are *put to a perpetual reproach*.

Fourthly, That we may see how the scripture was fulfilled (v. 9, 10); *Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet*. The words quoted are found in the prophecy of Zechariah, ^{<381D>}Zechariah 11:12. How they are here said to be spoken by Jeremy is a difficult question; but the credit of Christ's doctrine does not depend upon it; for that proves itself perfectly divine, though there should appear something human as to small circumstances in the penmen of it. The Syriac version, which is ancient, reads only, *It was spoken by the prophet*, not naming any, whence some have thought that *Jeremy* was added by some scribe; some think that the whole volume of the prophets, being in one book, and the prophecy of Jeremiah put first, it might not be improper, *currente calamo* — *for a transcriber* to quote any passage out of that volume, under his name. The Jews used to say, *The spirit of Jeremiah was in Zechariah*, and so they were as one prophet. Some suggest that it was *spoken* by Jeremiah, but written by Zechariah; or that Jeremiah wrote the ninth, tenth, and eleventh chapters of Zechariah. Now this passage in the prophet is a representation of the great contempt of God, that was found among the Jews, and the poor returns they made to him for rich receivings from him. But here that is really acted, which was there but figuratively expressed. The sum of money is the same — *thirty pieces of silver*; this they *weighed for his price*, at this rate they valued him; a goodly price; and this was *cast to the potter in the house of the Lord*; which was here literally accomplished. Note, We should better understand the events of Providence, if we were better acquainted even with the language and expressions of scripture; for even those also are sometimes written upon the dispensations of Providence so plainly, that *he who runs may read them*. What David spoke figuratively (^{<390E>}Psalm 42:7), Jonah made a literal application of; *All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me*, ^{<38RB>}Jonah 3:3.

The giving of the price of him that was valued, not for him, but for the *potter's field*, bespeaks,

1. The high value that ought to be put upon Christ. The price was given, not for him; no, when it was given for him, it was soon brought back again with disdain, as infinitely below his worth; he cannot be *valued with the gold of Ophir*, nor this unspeakable Gift *brought with money*.

2. The low value that was put upon him. *They of the children of Israel* did strangely undervalue him, when his price did but reach to buy a potter's field, a pitiful sorry spot of ground, not worth looking upon. It added to the reproach of his being bought and sold, that it was at so low a rate. *Cast it to the potter*, so it is in Zechariah; a contemptible petty chapman, not the merchant that deals in things of value. And observe, *They of the children of Israel* thus *undervalued him*; they who were his own people, that should have known better what estimate to put upon him, they to whom he was first sent, whose glory he was, and whom he had valued so highly, and bought so dear. He gave kings' ransoms for them, and the richest countries (so *precious were they in his sight*, ^{<34B>}Isaiah 43:3, 4), Egypt, and Ethiopia, and Seba; but they gave a slave's ransom for him (see ^{<27C>}Exodus 21:32), and valued him but at the rate of a potter's field; so was that blood trodden under foot, which bought the kingdom of heaven for us. But all this was *as the Lord appointed*; so the prophetic vision was, which typified this event, and so the event itself, as the other instances of Christ's sufferings, was *by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God*.

<171> MATTHEW 27:11-25

CHRIST AT THE BAR OF PILATE

We have here an account of what passed in Pilate's judgment-hall, when the blessed Jesus was brought thither betimes in the morning. Though it was no court-day, Pilate immediately took his case before him. We have there,

I. The trial Christ had before Pilate.

1. His arraignment; *Jesus stood before the governor*, as the prisoner before the judge. We could not stand before God because of our sins, nor lift up

our face in his presence, if Christ had not been thus made sin for us. He was arraigned that we might be discharged. Some think that this bespeaks his courage and boldness; he stood *undaunted*, unmoved by all their rage. He thus stood in this judgment, that we might stand in God's judgment. He stood for a *spectacle*, as Naboth, when he was arraigned, was *set on high among the people*.

2. His indictment; *Art thou the king of the Jews?* The Jews were now not only under the government, but under the very jealous inspection, of the Roman powers, which they were themselves to the highest degree disaffected to, and yet now pretended a concern for, to serve this turn; accusing Jesus as an Enemy to Caesar (~~Q218~~ Luke 23:2), which they could produce no other proof of, than that he himself had newly owned he was *the Christ*. Now they thought that whoever was the Christ, must be the *king of the Jews*, and must deliver them from the Roman power, and restore to them a temporal dominion, and enable them to trample upon all their neighbours. According to this chimera of their own, they accused our Lord Jesus, as making himself king of the Jews, in opposition to the Roman yoke; whereas, though he said that he was the Christ, he meant not such a Christ as this. Note, Many oppose Christ's holy religion, upon a mistake of the nature of it; they dress it up in false colours, and then fight against it. They assuring the governor that, if he made himself Christ, he made himself king of the Jews, the governor takes it for granted, that he goes about to pervert the nation, and subvert the government. *Art thou a king?* It was plain that he was not so *de facto* — *actually*; “But dost thou lay any claim to the government, or pretend a right to rule the Jews?” Note, It has often been the hard fate of Christ's holy religion, unjustly to fall under the suspicions of the civil powers, as if it were hurtful to kings and provinces, whereas it tends mightily to the benefit of both.

3. His plea; *Jesus said unto him, “Thou sayest.* It is as thou sayest, though not as thou meanest; I am a king, but not such a king as thou dost suspect me to be.” Thus before Pilate he witnessed a good confession, and was not ashamed to own himself a king, though it looked ridiculous, nor afraid, though at this time it was dangerous.

4. The evidence (v. 12); He was *accused of the chief priests*. Pilate found *no fault in him*; whatever was said, nothing was proved, and therefore what was wanting in matter they made up in noise and violence, and followed him with repeated accusations, the same as they had given in

before; but by the repetition they thought to force a belief from the governor. They had learned, not only *calumniari* — *to calumniate*, but *fortiter calumniari* — *to calumniate stoutly*. The best men have often been accused of the worst crimes.

5. The prisoner's silence as to the prosecutors' accusations; *He answered nothing*,

(1.) Because there was no occasion; nothing was alleged but what carried its own confutation along with it.

(2.) He was now taken up with the great concern that lay between him and his Father, to whom he was offering up himself a Sacrifice, to answer the demands of his justice, which he was so intent upon, that he minded not what they said against him.

(3.) His hour was come, and he submitted to his Father's will; *Not as I will, but as thou wilt*. He knew what his Father's will was, and therefore silently *committed himself to him that judgeth righteously*. We must not thus by our silence throw away our lives, because we are not lords of our lives, as Christ was of his; nor can we know, as he did, when our hour is come. But hence we must learn, *not to render railing for railing*, ⁴⁰²³1 Peter 2:23.

Now,

[1.] Pilate pressed him to make some reply (v. 13); *Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee?* What these things were, may be gathered from ⁴²³⁸Luke 23:3, 5, and ⁴⁸⁰⁷John 19:7. Pilate, having no malice at all against him, was desirous he should clear himself, urges him to it, and believes he could do it; *Hearest thou not?* Yes, he did hear; and still he hears all that is witnessed unjustly against his truths and ways; but he keeps silence, because it is the day of his patience, and doth not answer, as he will shortly, ⁴⁸⁰⁸Psalm 50:3.

[2.] He wondered at his silence; which was not interpreted so much into a contempt of the court, as a contempt of himself. And therefore Pilate is not said to be angry at it, but to have *marvelled greatly* at it, as a thing very unusual. He believed him to be innocent, and had heard perhaps that *never man spake like him*; and therefore he thought it strange that he had not one word to say for himself. We have,

II. The outrage and violence of the people, in pressing the governor to crucify Christ. The chief priests had a great interest in the people, they called them *Rabbi, Rabbi*, made idols of them, and oracles of all they said; and they made use of this to incense them against him, and by the power of the mob gained the point which they could not otherwise carry. Now here are two instances of their outrage.

1. Their preferring Barabbas before him, and choosing to have him released rather than Jesus.

(1.) It seems it was grown into a custom with the Roman governors, for the honouring of the Jews, to grace the feast of the passover with the release of a prisoner, v. 15. This, they thought, did honour to the feast, and was agreeable to the commemoration of their deliverance; but it was an invention of their own, and no divine institution; though some think that it was ancient, and kept up by the Jewish princes, before they became a province of the empire. However, it was a bad custom, an obstruction to justice, and an encouragement to wickedness. But our gospel-passover is celebrated with the release of prisoners, by him who hath *power on earth to forgive sins*.

(2.) The prisoner put in competition with our Lord Jesus was Barabbas; he is here called a *notable* prisoner (v. 16); either because by birth and breeding he was of some note and quality, or because he had signalized himself by something remarkable in his crimes; whether he was so *notable* as to recommend himself the more to the favours of the people, and so the more likely to be interceded for, or whether so *notable* as to make himself more liable to their age, is uncertain. Some think the latter, and therefore Pilate mentioned him, as taking it for granted that they would have desired any one's release rather than his. *Treason, murder, and felony*, are the three most enormous crimes that are usually punished by the sword of justice; and Barabbas was guilty of all three, ~~4230~~ Luke 23:19; ~~4880~~ John 18:40. A *notable prisoner* indeed, whose crimes were so complicated.

(3.) The proposal was made by Pilate the governor (v. 17); *Whom will ye that I release unto you?* It is probable that the judge had the nomination of two, one of which the people were to *choose*. Pilate proposed to them to have Jesus *released*; he was convinced of his innocency, and that the prosecution was malicious; yet had not the courage to acquit him, as he ought to have done, by his own power, but would have him released by the

people's election, and so he hoped to satisfy both his own *conscience*, and the *people* too; whereas, finding no fault in him, he ought not to have *put him upon the country*, or brought him *into peril of his life*. But such little tricks and artifices as these, to trim the matter, and to keep in with conscience and the world too, are the common practice of those that seek more to please men than God. *What shall I do then*, saith Pilate, *with Jesus, who is called Christ?* He puts the people in mind of this, that this *Jesus*, whose release he proposed, was looked upon by some among them as the Messiah, and had given pregnant proofs of his being so; “Do not *reject* one of whom your nation has professed such an expectation.”

The reason why Pilate *laboured* thus to get Jesus *discharged* was because he knew that *for envy the chief priests had delivered him up* (v. 18); that it was not his *guilt*, but his goodness, that they were provoked at; and for this reason he *hoped* to bring him off by the people's act, and that they would be for his release. When David was *envied* by Saul, he was the *darling of the people*; and any one that heard the *hosannas* with which Christ was but a few days ago brought into Jerusalem, would have thought that he had been so, and that Pilate might safely have referred this matter to the commonalty, especially when so notorious a rogue was set up as a rival with him for their favours. But it proved otherwise.

(4.) While Pilate was thus labouring the matter, he was confirmed in his unwillingness to condemn Jesus, by a message sent him from his wife (v. 19), by way of caution; *Have thou nothing to do with that just man* (together with the reason), *for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him*. Probably, this message was delivered to Pilate publicly, in the hearing of all that were present, for it was intended to be a warning not to him only, but to the prosecutors. Observe,

[1.] The special providence of God, in sending this dream to Pilate's wife; it is not likely that she had heard any thing, before, concerning Christ, at least not so as to occasion her dreaming of him, but it was immediately from God: perhaps she was one of the *devout and honourable women*, and had some sense of religion; yet God revealed himself by dreams to some that had not, as to Nebuchadnezzar. She *suffered many things* in this dream; whether she dreamed of the cruel usage of an innocent person, or of the judgments that would fall upon those that had any hand in his death, or both, it seems that it was a frightful dream, and her thoughts *troubled her*, as ²⁰¹¹Daniel 2:1; 4:5. Note, The Father of spirits has many ways of

access to the spirits of men, and can *seal their instruction in a dream, or vision of the night*, ^{<8876>}Job 33:15, 16. Yet to those who have the written word, God more ordinarily speaks by conscience on a waking bed, than by dreams, when *deep sleep falls upon men*.

[2.] The tenderness and care of Pilate's wife, in sending this caution, thereupon, to her husband; *Have nothing to do with that just man*. *First*, This was an honourable testimony to our Lord Jesus, witnessing for him that he was a *just man*, even then when he was persecuted as the worst of malefactors: when his friends were afraid to appear in defence of him, God made even those that were strangers and enemies, to speak in his favour; when Peter denied him, Judas confessed him; when the chief priests pronounced him guilty of death, Pilate declared he *found no fault* in him; when the women that loved him stood afar off, Pilate's wife, who knew little of him, showed a concern for him. Note, God will not leave himself without witnesses to the truth and equity of his cause, even when it seems to be most spitefully run down by its enemies, and most shamefully deserted by its friends. *Secondly*, It was a fair warning to Pilate; *Have nothing to do with him*. Note, God has many ways of giving checks to sinners in their sinful pursuits, and it is a great mercy to have such checks from Providence, from faithful friends, and from our own consciences; it is also our great duty to hearken to them. *O do not this abominable thing which the Lord hates*, is what we may hear said to us, when we are entering into temptation, if we will but regard it. Pilate's lady sent him this warning, out of the love she had to him; she feared not a rebuke from him for meddling with that which belonged not to her; but, let him take it how he would, she would give him the caution. Note, It is an instance of true love to our friends and relations, to do what we can to keep them from sin; and the nearer any are to us, and the greater affection we have for them, the more solicitous we should be not to suffer sin to come or lie upon them, ^{<8877>}Leviticus 19:17. The best friendship is friendship to the soul. We are not told how Pilate turned this off, probably with a jest; but by his proceeding against the just man it appears that he did not regard it. Thus faithful admonitions are made light of, when they are given as warnings against sin, but will not be so easily made light of, when they shall be reflected upon as aggravations of sin.

(5.) The chief priests and the elders were busy, all this while, to influence the people in favour of Barabbas, v. 20. They *persuaded the multitude*, both by themselves and their emissaries, whom they sent abroad among

them, *that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus*; suggesting that this Jesus was a deceiver, in league with Satan, an enemy to their church and temple; that, if he were let alone, the Romans would come, and take away their place and nation; that Barabbas, though a bad man, yet, having not the interest that Jesus had, could not do so much mischief. Thus they managed the mob, who otherwise were well affected to Jesus, and, if they had not been so much at the beck of their priests, would never have done such a preposterous thing as to prefer Barabbas before Jesus. Here,

[1.] We cannot but look upon these wicked priests with indignation; by the law, in *matters of controversy between blood and blood*, the people were to be guided by the priests, and to do as they informed them, ^{<578>}Deuteronomy 17:8, 9. This great power put into their hands they wretchedly abused, and the leaders of the people caused them to err.

[2.] We cannot but look upon the deluded people with pity; *I have compassion on the multitude*, to see them hurried thus violently to so great wickedness, to see them thus priest-ridden, and falling in the ditch with their *blind leaders*.

(6.) Being thus over-ruled by the priests, at length they made their choice, v. 21. *Whether of the twain* (saith Pilate) *will ye that I release unto you?* He hoped that he had gained his point, to have Jesus released. But, to his great surprise, they said *Barabbas*; as if his *crimes* were *less*, and therefore he *less deserved to die*; or as if his *merits* were *greater*, and therefore he *better deserved to live*. The cry for Barabbas was so universal, one and all, that there was no colour to demand a poll between the candidates. *Be astonished, O heavens, at this, and, thou earth, be horribly afraid!* Were ever men that pretended to reason or religion, guilty of such prodigious madness, such horrid wickedness! This was it that Peter charged so home upon them (^{<484>}Acts 3:14); *Ye desired a murderer to be granted to you*; yet multitudes who choose the world, rather than God, for their ruler and portion, thus *choose their own delusions*.

2. Their pressing earnestly to have Jesus crucified, v. 22, 23. Pilate, being amazed at their choice of Barabbas, was willing to hope that it was rather from a fondness for him than from an enmity to Jesus; and therefore he puts it to them, “*What shall I do then with Jesus? Shall I release him likewise, for the greater honour of your feast, or will you leave it to me?*” No, *they all said, Let him be crucified*. That death they desired he might die, because it was looked upon as the most scandalous and ignominious;

and they hoped thereby to make his followers ashamed to own him, and their relation to him. It was absurd for them to prescribe to the judge what sentence he should pass; but their malice and rage made them forget all rules of order and decency, and turned a court of justice into a *riotous, tumultuous, and seditious assembly*. Now was truth fallen in the street, and equity could not enter; where one *looked for judgment, behold, oppression*, the worst kind of oppression; for righteousness, behold, a cry, the worse cry that ever was, *Crucify, crucify* the Lord of glory. Though they that cried thus, perhaps, were not the same persons that the other day cried *Hosanna*, yet see what a change was made upon the mind of the populace in a little time: when he *rode in triumph* into Jerusalem, so *general* were the *acclamations of praise*, that one would have thought he had *no enemies*; but now when he was *led in triumph* to Pilate's judgment-seat, so *general* were the *outcries of enmity*, that one would think he had *no friends*. Such revolutions are there in this changeable world, through which our way to heaven lies, as our Master's did, *by honour and dishonour, by evil report, and good report*, counter-changed (2 Corinthians 6:8); that we may not be lifted up by honour, as if, when we were applauded and caressed, we had *made our nest among the stars*, and should *die in that nest*; nor yet be dejected or discouraged by dishonour, as if, when we were trodden to the lowest hell, from which there is *no redemption*. *Bides tu istos qui te laudant; omnes aut sunt hostes, aut (quod in aequo est) esse possunt* — *You observe those who applaud you; either they are all your enemies, or, which is equivalent, they may become so.* Seneca de Vita Beat.

Now, as to this demand, we are further told,

(1.) How Pilate objected against it; *Why, what evil hath he done?* A proper question to ask before we censure any in common discourse, much more for a judge to ask before he pass a sentence of death. Note, It is much for the honour of the Lord Jesus, that, though he suffered as an evil-doer, yet neither his judge nor his prosecutors could find that he had done any evil. Had he done any evil *against God*? No, he *always did those things that pleased him*. Had he done any evil against the *civil government*? No, as he did himself, so he taught others, to *render to Caesar the things that were Caesar's*. Had he done any evil against the *public peace*? No, he did not *strive or cry*, nor did his kingdom *come with observation*. Had he done any evil to particular persons? *Whose ox had he taken, or whom had he defrauded?* No, so far from that, that he *went about doing good*. This

repeated assertion of his unspotted innocency, plainly intimates that he died to satisfy for the sins of others; for if it had not been for our transgressions that he was thus wounded, and for our offences that he was delivered up, and that upon his own voluntary undertaking to atone for them, I see not how these extraordinary sufferings of a person that had never thought, said, or done, any thing amiss, could be reconciled with the justice and equity of that providence that governs the world, and at least *permitted* this to be done in it.

(2.) How they *insisted* upon it; *They cried out the more, Let him be crucified.* They do not go about to show any evil he had done, but, right or wrong, he must be *crucified*. Quitting all pretensions to the proof of the premises, they resolve to hold the conclusion, and what was wanting in evidence to make up in clamour; this unjust judge was wearied by importunity into an unjust sentence, as he in the parable into a just one (~~☞~~ Luke 18:4, 5), and the cause carried purely by noise.

III. Here is the *devolving* of the *guilt* of Christ's blood upon the *people* and *priests*.

1. Pilate endeavours to transfer it from himself, v. 24.

(1.) He sees it *to no purpose to contend*. What he said,

[1.] Would do no good; *he could prevail nothing*; he could not convince them what an unjust unreasonable thing it was for him to condemn a man whom he believed innocent, and whom they could not prove guilty. See how strong the stream of lust and rage sometimes is; neither authority nor reason will prevail to give check to it. Nay,

[2.] It was more likely to *do hurt*; he saw that rather a *tumult was made*. This rude and brutish people fell to high words, and began to threaten Pilate what they would do if he did not gratify them; and how great a matter might this fire kindle, especially when the priests, those great incendiaries, blew the coals! Now this turbulent tumultuous temper of the Jews, by which Pilate was awed to condemn Christ against his conscience, contributed more than any thing to the ruin of that nation not long after; for their frequent insurrections provoked the Romans to destroy them, though they had reduced them, and their inveterate quarrels among themselves made them an easy prey to the common enemy. Thus their sin was their ruin.

Observe how easily we may be mistaken in the inclination of the common people; the priests were apprehensive that their endeavours to *seize* Christ would have caused an uproar, especially *on the feast day*; but it proved that Pilate's endeavour to *save* him, caused an uproar, and that on the feast day; so uncertain are the sentiments of the crowd.

(2.) This puts him into a *great strait*, betwixt the peace of his own mind, and the peace of the city; he is loth to condemn an innocent man, and yet loth to *disoblige* the people, and raise a devil that would not be soon laid. Had he steadily and resolutely adhered to the sacred laws of justice, as a judge ought to do, he had not been in any perplexity; the matter was plain and past dispute, that a man in whom was found *no faulty*, ought not to be crucified, upon any pretence whatsoever, nor must an unjust thing be done, to gratify any man or company of men in the world; the cause is soon decided; *Let justice be done, though heaven and earth come together* — *Fiat justitia, ruat coelum*. If *wickedness proceed from the wicked*, though they be priests, yet *my hand shall not be upon him*.

(3.) Pilate thinks to trim the matter, and to pacify both the people and his own conscience too, by *doing it*, and yet *disowning it*, *acting* the thing, and yet *acquitting* himself from it at the same time. Such absurdities and self-contradictions do *they* run upon, whose convictions are *strong*, but their corruptions *stronger*. *Happy is he* (saith the apostle, ^{<512>}Romans 14:22) *that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth*; or, which is all one, that *allows* not himself in that thing which he *condemns*.

Now Pilate endeavours to clear himself from the guilt,

[1.] By a *sign*; He *took water, and washed his hands before the multitude*; not as if he thought thereby to cleanse himself from any guilt contracted before God, but to acquit himself before the people, from so much as contracting any guilt in this matter; as if he had said, “If it be done, bear witness that it is none of my doing.” He *borrowed* the ceremony from that law which appointed it to be used for the clearing of the country from the guilt of an undiscovered murder (^{<516>}Deuteronomy 21:6, 7); and he used it the more to affect the people with the conviction he was under of the prisoner's innocency; and, probably, such was the noise of the rabble, that, if he had not used some such surprising sign, in the view of them all, he could not have been heard.

[2.] By a saying; in which, *First*, He clears himself; *I am innocent of the blood of this just person*. What nonsense was this, to condemn him, and yet protest that he was innocent of his blood! For men to protest against a thing, and yet to practise it, is only to proclaim that they sin against their consciences. Though Pilate professed his innocency, God charges him with guilt, ⁴⁰²⁷Acts 4:27. Some think to justify themselves, by pleading that their *hands* were not in the sin; but David kills by the sword of the children of Ammon, and Ahab by the elders of Jezreel. Pilate here thinks to justify himself, by pleading that his *heart* was not in the action; but this is an averment which will never be admitted. *Protestatio non valet contra factum* — *In vain does he protest against the deed which at the same time he perpetrates*. *Secondly*, He casts it upon the priests and people; “*See ye to it; if it must be done, I cannot help it, do you answer it before God and the world.*” Note, Sin is a brat that nobody is willing to own; and many deceive themselves with this, that they shall bear no blame if they can but find any to lay the blame upon; but it is not so easy a thing to transfer the guilt of sin as many think it is. The condition of him that is infected with the plague is not the less dangerous, either for his catching the infection from others, or his communicating the infection to others; we may be *tempted* to sin, but cannot be *forced*. The priests threw it upon Judas; *See thou to it*; and now Pilate throws it upon them; *See ye to it; for with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you*.

2. The priests and people *consented* to take the guilt *upon themselves*; they all said, “*His blood be on us, and on our children*; we are so well assured that there is neither sin nor danger in putting him to death, that we are willing to run the hazard of it;” as if the guilt would do no harm to them or theirs. They saw that it was the dread of guilt that made Pilate hesitate, and that he was getting over this difficulty by a fancy of transferring it; to prevent the return of his hesitation, and to confirm him in that fancy, they, in the heat of their rage, agreed to it, rather than lose the prey they had in their hands, and cried, *His blood be upon us*. Now,

(1.) By this they designed to indemnify Pilate, that is, to make him think himself indemnified, by becoming bound to divine justice, to save him harmless. But those that are themselves bankrupts and beggars will never be admitted security for others, nor taken as a bail for them. None could bear the sin of others, except him that had none of his own to answer for; it is a bold undertaking, and too big for any creature, to become bound for a sinner to Almighty God.

(2.) But they did really imprecate wrath and vengeance upon themselves and their posterity. What a desperate word was this, and how little did they think what as the direful import of it, or to what an abyss of misery it would bring them and theirs! Christ had lately told them, that upon them would come *all the righteous blood shed upon the earth*, from that of the righteous Abel; but as if that were too little, they here imprecate upon themselves the guilt of that blood which was more precious than all the rest, and the guilt of which would lie heavier. O the daring presumption of wilful sinners, that *run upon God, upon his neck*, and defy his justice!

~~1855~~ Job 15:25, 26. Observe,

[1.] How *cruel* they were in their *imprecation*. They imprecated the punishment of this sin, not only upon themselves, but upon *their children* too, even those that were yet unborn, without so much as limiting the entail of the curse, as God himself had been pleased to limit it, to the *third and fourth generation*. It was madness to pull it upon themselves, but the height of barbarity to entail it on their posterity. Surely they were like the ostrich; they were *hardened against their young ones*, as though they were not *theirs*. What a dreadful conveyance was this of guilt and wrath to them and their heirs for ever, and this delivered by *joint consent, nemine contradicents* — *unanimously*, as their own *act and deed*; which certainly amounted to a forfeiture and defeasance of that ancient charter, *I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed*. Their entailing the curse of the Messiah's blood upon their nation, cut off the entail of the blessings of that blood from *their families*, that, according to another promise made to Abraham, in him *all the families of the earth* might be blessed. See what enemies wicked men are to their own children and families; those that damn their own souls, care not how many they take to hell with them.

[2.] How righteous God was, in his retribution according to this imprecation; they said, *His blood be on us, and on our children*; and God said *Amen* to it, so shall thy doom be; as they *loved cursing*, so it came upon them. The wretched remains of that abandoned people feel it to this day; from the time they imprecated this blood upon them, they were followed with one judgment after another, till they were quite laid waste, and made an astonishment, a hissing, and a byword; yet on some of them, and some of theirs, this blood came, not to *condemn* them, but to *save* them; divine mercy, upon their repenting and believing, cut off this entail, and then *the promise* was again *to them, and to their children*. God is better to us and ours than we are.

4275 MATTHEW 27:26-32

CHRIST SCOURGED AND DERIDED

In these verses we have the *preparatives* for, and *prefaces* to, the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus. Here is,

I. The sentence passed, and the warrant signed for his execution; and this *immediately*, the same hour.

1. Barabbas was released, that notorious criminal: if he had not been put in competition with Christ for the favour of the people, it is probable that he had died for his crimes; but that proved the means of his escape; to intimate that Christ was condemned for this purpose, that sinners, even the chief of sinners, might be *released*; he was *delivered up*, that we might be delivered; whereas the *common instance* of divine Providence, is, that *the wicked is a ransom for the righteous, and the transgressor for the upright*, ⁴²¹⁸Proverbs 21:18; 11:18. In this *unparalleled instance* of divine grace, the *upright* is a *ransom for the transgressors*, the just for the unjust.

2. Jesus was *scourged*; this was an ignominious cruel punishment, especially as it was inflicted by the Romans, who were not under the moderation of the Jewish law, which forbade scourgings, above forty stripes; this punishment was most unreasonably inflicted on one that was sentenced to die: the *rods* were not to introduce the axes, but to supersede them. Thus the scripture was fulfilled, *The ploughers ploughed upon my back* (⁴¹⁹³Psalm 129:3), *I gave my back to the smiters* (²⁸⁰⁶Isaiah 50:6), and, *By his stripes we are healed*, ²⁶³⁵Isaiah 53:5. He was *chastised with whips*, that we might not be for ever *chastised with scorpions*.

3. He was then *delivered to be crucified*; though his chastisement was in order to our peace, yet there is no peace made but by the *blood of his cross* (⁵¹¹³Colossians 1:20); therefore the scourging is not enough, he must be *crucified*; a kind of death used only among the Romans; the manner of it is such, that it seems to be the result of wit and cruelty in combination, each putting forth itself to the utmost, to make death in the highest degree terrible and miserable. A cross was set up in the ground, to which the hands and feet were nailed, on which nails the weight of the body hung, till it died of the pain. This was the death to which Christ was condemned, that he might answer the type of the brazen serpent lifted up upon a pole.

It was a bloody death, a painful, shameful, cursed death; it was so miserable a death, that merciful princes appointed those who were condemned to it by the law, to be strangled first, and then nailed to the cross; so Julius Caesar did by some pirates, *Sueton. lib.*

I. Constantine, the first Christian emperor, by an edict abolished the use of that punishment among the Romans, *Sozomen, Hist. Lib. 1. ch. 8. Ne salutare signum subserviret ad perniciem* — *That the symbol of salvation might not be subservient to the victim's destruction.*

II. The barbarous treatment which the soldiers gave him, while things were getting ready for his execution. When he was condemned, he ought to have had some time allowed him to prepare for death. There was a law made by the Roman senate, in Tiberius's time, perhaps upon complaint of this and the like precipitation, that the execution of criminals should be deferred at least *ten days* after sentence. *Sueton in Tiber. cap. 25.* But there were scarcely allowed so many minutes to our Lord Jesus; nor had he any breathing-time during those minutes; it was a *crisis*, and there were no *lucid intervals* allowed him; *deep called unto deep*, and the storm continued without any intermission.

When he was *delivered* to be *crucified*, that was enough; they that *kill the body*, yield that there is no more that they *can do*, but Christ's enemies will *do more*, and, if it be possible, wrap up a thousand deaths in one. Though Pilate pronounced him innocent, yet his soldiers, his guards, set themselves to abuse him, being swayed more by the fury of the people *against him*, than by their master's testimony *for him*; the Jewish *rabble* infected the Roman soldiery, or perhaps it was not so much in spite to him, as to make *sport* for themselves, that they thus abused him. They understood that he *pretended to a crown*; to *taunt* him with that gave them some diversion, and an opportunity to make themselves and one another merry. Note, It is an argument of a base, servile, sordid spirit, to insult over those that are in misery, and to make the calamities of any matter of sport and merriment.

Observe,

1. *Where* this was done — in the *common hall*. The *governor's house*, which should have been a shelter to the wronged and abused, is made the theatre of this barbarity. I wonder that the governor, who was so desirous to acquit himself from the blood of this just person, would suffer this to be

done in *his* house. Perhaps he did not order it to be done, but he *connived* at it; and those in authority will be accountable, not only for the wickedness which they *do*, or *appoint*, but for that which they do not restrain, when it is in the power of their hands. Masters of families should not suffer their houses to be places of abuse to any, nor their servants to make sport with the sins, or miseries, or religion, of others.

2. *Who* were concerned in it. They gathered the *whole band*, the soldiers that were to attend the execution, would have the whole regiment (at least five hundred, some think twelve or thirteen hundred) to share in the diversion. If Christ was thus made a *spectacle*, let none of his followers think it strange to be so used, ^{<400>}1 Corinthians 4:9; ^{<303>}Hebrews 10:33.

3. What particular indignities were done him.

(1.) They *stripped him*, v. 28. The shame of nakedness came in with sin (^{<007>}Genesis 3:7); and therefore Christ, when he came to satisfy for sin, and take it away, was *made naked*, and submitted to *that shame*, that he might prepare for us *white raiment, to cover us*, ^{<688>}Revelation 3:18.

(2.) They *put on him a scarlet robe*, some old red cloak, such as the Roman soldiers wore, in imitation of the *scarlet robes* which kings and emperors wore; thus upbraiding him with his being called a *King*. This *sham* of majesty they put upon him in his dress, when nothing but meanness and misery appeared in his countenance, only to expose him to the spectators, as the more *ridiculous*; yet there was something of *mystery* in it; this was he that was *red in his apparel* (^{<261>}Isaiah 63:1, 2), that *washed his garments in wine* (^{<191>}Genesis 49:11); therefore he was dressed in a *scarlet robe*. Our sins were as *scarlet and crimson*. Christ being clad in a *scarlet robe*, signified his bearing our sins, to his shame, in his own body upon the tree; that we might wash our robes, and make them white, in the blood of the Lamb.

(3.) They *platted a crown of thorns, and put it upon his head*, v. 29. This was to carry on the humour of making him a *mock-king*; yet, had they intended it only for a *reproach*, they might have *platted a crown of straw*, or *rushes*, but they designed it to be painful to him, and to be *literally*, what crowns are said to be figuratively, lined with thorns; he that invented this abuse, it is likely, valued himself upon the wit of it; but there was a mystery in it.

[1.] Thorns came in with sin, and were part of the curse that was the product of sin, ^{<068>}Genesis 3:18. Therefore Christ, being made a *curse for us*, and dying to remove the curse from us, felt the pain and smart of those thorns, nay, and *binds them as a crown* to him (^{<836>}Job 31:36); for his sufferings for us were *his glory*.

[2.] Now he answered to the type of Abraham's ram that was *caught in the thicket*, and so offered up instead of Isaac, ^{<023>}Genesis 22:13.

[3.] Thorns signify afflictions, ^{<451>}2 Chronicles 33:11. These Christ put into a *crown*; so much did he alter the property of them to them that are his, giving them cause to *glory in tribulation*, and making it to work for them a weight of glory.

[4.] Christ was crowned with thorns, to show that *his kingdom was not of this world*, nor the glory of it worldly glory, but is attended here with bonds and afflictions, while the glory of it is *to be revealed*.

[5.] It was the custom of some heathen nations, to bring their sacrifices to the altars, crowned with garlands; these thorns were the garlands with which this great Sacrifice was crowned.

[6.] these thorns, it is likely, fetched blood from his blessed head, which trickled down his face, *like the previous ointment* (typifying the blood of Christ with which he consecrated himself) *upon the head, which ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard*, ^{<102>}Psalms 133:2. Thus, when he came to espouse to himself his love, his dove, his undefiled church, his *head was filled with dew*, and his *locks with the drops of the night*, ^{<212>}Song of Solomon 5:2.

(4.) They *put a reed in his right hand*; this was intended for a *mock-sceptre*, another of the *insignia* of the majesty they jeered him with; as if this were a sceptre good enough for such a King, as was like *a reed shaken with the wind* (^{<117>}Matthew 11:7); like sceptre, like kingdom, both weak and wavering, and withering and worthless; but they were quite mistaken, for his throne is *for ever and ever*, and the *sceptre of his kingdom is a right sceptre*, ^{<866>}Psalms 45:6.

(5.) They *bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!* Having made him a sham King, they thus make a jest of doing homage to him, thus ridiculing his pretensions to sovereignty, as Joseph's brethren (^{<058>}Genesis 37:8); *Shalt thou indeed reign over us?* But as they

were afterward compelled to do obeisance to him, and enrich his dreams, so these here bowed the knee, in scorn to him who was, soon after this, exalted to the right hand of God, that *at his name every knee might bow*, or break before him; it is ill jesting with that which, sooner or later, will come in earnest.

(6.) They *spit upon him*; thus he had been abused in the High Priest's hall, ~~4167~~ Matthew 26:67. In doing homage, the subject kissed the sovereign, in token of his allegiance; thus Samuel kissed Saul, and we are bid to *kiss the Son*: but they, in this mock-homage, instead of kissing him, spit in his face; that blessed face which outshines the sun, and before which the angels cover theirs, was thus polluted. It is strange that the sons of men should ever do such a piece of *villany*, and that the Son of God should ever *suffer* such a piece of *ignominy*.

(7.) They *took the reed, and smote him on the head*. That which they had made the *mock-ensign* of his royalty, they now make the real instrument of *their cruelty*, and *his pain*. They smote him, it is probable, upon the *crown of thorns*, and so struck them into his head, that they might wound it the deeper, which made the more sport for them, to whom his pain was the greatest pleasure. Thus was he *despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief*. All this misery and shame he underwent, that he might purchase for us everlasting life, and joy, and glory.

III. The conveying of him to the place of execution. After they had mocked and abused him, as long as they thought fit, they then *took the robe off from him*; to signify their divesting him of all the kingly authority they had invested him with, by putting it on him; and they put his own raiment on him, because that was to fall to the soldiers' share, that were employed in the execution. They took off the robe, but no mention is made of their taking off the *crown of thorns*, whence it is commonly supposed (though there is no certainty of it) that he was crucified with that on his head; for as he is a Priest upon his throne, so he was a King upon his cross. Christ was led to be crucified in *his own raiment*, because he himself was to *bear our sins in his own body upon the tree*. And here,

1. They *led him away to be crucified*; he was led *as a lamb to the slaughter*, as a sacrifice to the altar. We may well imagine how they hurried him on, and dragged him along, with all the speed possible, lest

any thing should intervene to prevent the glutting of their cruel rage with his precious blood. It is probable that they now loaded him with taunts and reproaches, and treated him as the off-scouring of all things. They led him away *out of the city*; for Christ, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, *suffered without the gate* (^{<832>}Hebrews 13:12), as if he that was the glory of them that *waited for redemption* in Jerusalem was not worthy to live among them. To this he himself had an eye, when in the parable he speaks of his being *cast out of the vineyard*, ^{<413>}Matthew 21:39.

2. They compelled Simon of Cyrene *to bear his cross*, v. 32. It seems, at first he *carried the cross* himself, as Isaac carried the wood for the burnt-offering, which was to burn him. And this was intended, as other things, both for pain and shame to him. But after a while they *took the cross* off from him, either,

(1.) In compassion to him, because they saw it was too great a load for him. We can hardly think that they had any consideration of that, yet it teaches us that God *considers the frame* of his people, and will not *suffer them to be tempted above what they are able*; he gives them some breathing-time, but they must expect that the cross will return, and the lucid intervals only give them space to prepare for the next fit. But,

(2.) Perhaps it was because he could not, with the cross on his back, go forward so fast as they would have him. Or,

(3.) They were afraid, lest he should faint away under the load of his cross, and die, and so prevent what their malice further intended to do against him: thus even the *tender mercies of the wicked* (which seem to be so) *are really cruel*. Taking the cross off from him, they *compelled* one Simon of Cyrene to bear it, pressing him to the service by the authority of the governor or the priests. It was a reproach, and none would do it but by compulsion. Some think that this Simon was a disciple of Christ, at least a well-wisher to him, and that they knew it, and therefore put this upon him. Note, All that will approve themselves disciples indeed, must follow Christ, *bearing his cross* (^{<413>}Matthew 16:24), *bearing his reproach*, ^{<833>}Hebrews 13:13. We must know the *fellowship of his sufferings for us*, and patiently submit to all the sufferings for him we are called out to; for those only shall *reign with him*, that *suffer with him*; shall sit with him in his kingdom, that drink of *his cup*, and are baptized with *his baptism*.

THE CRUCIFIXION

We have here the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus.

I. The place where our Lord Jesus was put to death.

1. They came to a place called *Golgotha*, near adjoining to Jerusalem, probably the common place of execution. If he had had a house of his own in Jerusalem, probably, for his greater disgrace, they would have crucified him before his own door. But now in the same place where criminals were sacrificed to the justice of the government, was our Lord Jesus sacrificed to the justice of God. Some think that it was called *the place of a skull*, because it was the common charnel-house, where the bones and skulls of dead men were laid together out of the way, lest people should touch them, and be defiled thereby. Here lay the trophies of death's victory over multitudes of the children of men; and when by dying Christ would destroy death, he added this circumstance of honour to his victory, that he triumphed over death upon his own dunghill.

2. There they *crucified* him (v. 35), nailed his hands and feet to the cross, and then reared it up, and him hanging on it; for so the manner of the Romans was to crucify. Let our hearts be touched with the feeling of that exquisite pain which our blessed Saviour now endured, and let us look upon him who was thus pierced, and mourn. Was ever sorrow like unto his sorrow? And when we behold what manner of death he died, let us in that behold with *what manner of love he loved us*.

II. The barbarous and abusive treatment they gave him, in which their wit and malice vied which should excel. As if death, so great a death, were not bad enough, they contrived to add to the bitterness and terror of it.

1. By the drink they provided for him before he was nailed to the cross, v. 34. It was usual to have a cup of spiced wine for those to drink of, that were to be put to death, according to Solomon's direction (^{31:6}Proverbs 31:6, 7), *Give strong drink to him that is ready to perish*; but with that cup which Christ was to drink of, they mingled *vinegar and gall*, to make it sour and bitter. This signified,

(1.) The *sin of man*, which is a *root of bitterness, bearing gall and wormwood*, ^{<69>}Deuteronomy 29:18. The sinner perhaps rolls it under his tongue as a sweet morsel, but to God it is *grapes of gall*, ^{<69>}Deuteronomy 32:32. It was so to the Lord Jesus, when he bare our sins, and sooner or later it will be so to the sinner himself, *bitterness at the latter end, more bitter than death*, ^{<20>}Ecclesiastes 7:26.

(2.) It signified the *wrath of God*, that cup which is Father *put into his hand*, a bitter cup indeed, like the *bitter water which caused the curse*, ^{<69>}Numbers 5:18. This drink they offered him, as was literally foretold, ^{<69>}Psalm 69:21. And,

[1.] He *tasted thereof*, and so had the *worst* of it, took the bitter taste into his mouth; he let no bitter cup go by him untasted, when he was making atonement for all our sinful tasting of forbidden fruit; now he was *tasting* death in its full bitterness.

[2.] He *would not drink it*, because he would not have the *best of it*; would have nothing like an opiate to lessen his sense of pain, for he would die so as to *feel himself die*, because he had so much *work to do*, as our High Priest, in his suffering work.

2. By the dividing of his garments, v. 35. When they nailed him to the cross, they *stripped* him of his garments, at least his *upper garments*; for by sin we were made naked, to our shame, and thus he purchased for us white raiment to cover us. If we be at any time stripped of our comforts for Christ, let us bear it patiently; he was stripped for us. Enemies may strip us of our *clothes*, but cannot strip us of our *best comforts*; cannot take from us the *garments of praise*. The clothes of those that are executed are the executioner's fee: four soldiers were employed in crucifying Christ, and they must each of them have a share: his upper garment, if it were divided, would be of no use to any of them, and therefore they agreed to *cast lots* for it.

(1.) Some think that the garment was so fine and rich, that it was worth contending for; but that agreed not with the poverty Christ appeared in.

(2.) Perhaps they had heard of those that had been cured by touching the hem of his garment, and they thought it valuable for some magic virtue in it. Or,

(3.) They hoped to get money of his friends for such a sacred relic. Or,

(4.) Because, in derision, they would seem to put a value upon it, as royal clothing. Or,

(5.) It was for diversion; to pass away the time while they waited for his death, they would play a game at dice for the clothes; but, whatever they designed, the word of God is herein accomplished. In that famous *psalm*, the first words of which Christ made use of upon the cross, it was said, *They parted my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture,* ~~Psalm~~ Psalm 22:18. This was never true of David, but looks *primarily* at Christ, of whom David, in spirit, spoke. Then is the offence of this part of the cross ceased; for it appears to have been by the *determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God*. Christ stripped himself of his glories, to divide them among us.

They now *sat down, and watched him*, v. 36. The chief priests were careful, no doubt, in setting this guard, lest the people, whom they still stood in awe of, should rise, and rescue him. But Providence so ordered it, that those who were appointed to *watch* him, thereby became unexceptionable witnesses for him; having the opportunity to see and hear that which extorted from them that noble confession (v. 54), *Truly this was the Son of God*.

3. By the *title* set up over his head, v. 37. It was usual for the vindicating of public justice, and putting the greater shame upon malefactors that were executed, not only by a crier to proclaim before them, but by a writing also over their heads to notify what was the crime for which they suffered; so they set up over Christ's head his accusation written, to give public notice of the charge against him; *This is Jesus the King of the Jews*. This they designed for his reproach, but God so overruled it, that even his accusation redounded to his honour. For,

(1.) Here was no crime alleged against him. It is not said that he was a pretended Saviour, or a usurping King, though they would have it thought so (~~John~~ John 19:21); but, *This is Jesus, a Saviour*; surely that was no crime; and, *This is the King of the Jews*; nor was that a crime; for they expected that the Messiah should be so: so that, his enemies themselves being judges, he *did no evil*. Nay,

(2.) Here was a very glorious truth asserted concerning him — that he is *Jesus the King of the Jews*, that King whom the Jews expected and ought to have submitted to; so that his accusation amounts to this, That he was

the true Messiah and Saviour of the world; as Balaam, when he was sent for to curse Israel, blessed them all together, and that three times (⁻⁰²⁴¹Numbers 24:10), so Pilate, instead of accusing Christ as a Criminal, proclaimed him a *King*, and that *three times*, in three inscriptions. Thus God makes men to serve *his* purposes, quite beyond *their own*.

4. By his companions with him in suffering, v. 38. There were *two thieves crucified with him* at the same time, in the same place, under the same guard; two highway-men, or robbers upon the road, as the word properly signifies. It is probable that this was appointed to be *execution-day*; and therefore they hurried the prosecution of Christ in the morning, that they might have him ready to be executed with the other criminals. Some think that Pilate ordered it thus, that this piece of necessary justice, in executing these thieves, might atone for his injustice in condemning Christ; others, that the Jews contrived it, to add to the ignominy of the sufferings of our Lord Jesus; however it was, the scripture was fulfilled in it (⁻²⁵¹²Isaiah 53:12), *He was numbered with the transgressors*.

(1.) It was a reproach to him, that he was *crucified with them*. Though, while he lived, he was *separate from sinners*, yet *in their deaths they were not divided*, but he was made to partake with the vilest malefactors in their plagues, as if he had been a partaker with them in their sins; for he was made sin for us, and took upon him the *likeness of sinful flesh*. He was, at his death, numbered among the transgressors, and had his lot with the wicked, that we, at our death, might be *numbered among the saints*, and have our *lot among the chosen*.

(2.) It was an additional reproach, that he was crucified *in the midst, between them*, as if he had been the worst of the three, the principal malefactor; for among *three* the *middle* is the place for the chief. Every circumstance was contrived to his dishonour, as if the great Saviour were of all others the *greatest sinner*. It was also intended to ruffle and discompose him, in his last moments, with the shrieks, and groans, and blasphemies, of these malefactors, who, it is likely, made a hideous outcry when they were nailed to the cross; but thus would Christ affect himself with the miseries of sinners, when he was suffering for their salvation. Some of Christ's apostles were afterwards crucified, as Peter, and Andrew, but none of them were crucified *with him*, lest it should have looked as if they had been joint undertakers with him, in satisfying for man's sin, and joint purchasers of life and glory; therefore he was crucified between two

malefactors, who could not be supposed to contribute any thing to the merit of his death; for he himself bare our sins *in his own body*.

5. By the blasphemies and revilings with which they loaded him when he was hanging upon the cross; though we read not that they cast any reflections on the thieves that were crucified with him. One would have thought that, when they had nailed him to the cross, they had done their worst, and malice itself had been exhausted: indeed if a criminal be put into the pillory, or carted, because it is a punishment less than death, it is usually attended with such expressions of abuse; but a dying man, though an infamous man, should be treated with compassion. It is an insatiable revenge indeed which will not be satisfied with death, *so great a death*. But, to complete the humiliation of the Lord Jesus, and to show that, when he was dying, he was *bearing iniquity*, he was then *loaded with reproach*, and, for aught that appears, not one of his friends, who the other day cried *Hosanna* to him, durst be seen to show him any respect.

(1.) The common *people, that passed by, reviled him*. His extreme misery and exemplary patience under it, did not mollify them, or make them to relent; but they who by their outcries brought him to this, now think to justify themselves in it by their reproaches, as if they *did well to condemn* him. They *reviled* him: *eblasphemoun* — *they blasphemed* him; and *blasphemy* it was, in the strictest sense, speaking evil of him who *thought it not robbery to be equal with God*. Observe here,

[1.] The persons that reviled him; *they that passed by*, the travellers that went along the road, and it was a great *road*, leading from Jerusalem to Gibeon; they were possessed with prejudices against him by the reports and clamours of the High Priest's creatures. It is a hard thing, and requires more application and resolution than is ordinarily met with, to keep up a good opinion of persons and things that are *every where* run down, and spoken against. Every one is apt to say as the most say, and to throw a stone at that which is put into an ill name. *Turba Remi sequitur fortunam semper et odit damnatos* — *The Roman rabble fluctuate with a man's fluctuating fortunes, and fail not to depress those that are sinking*. Juvenal.

[2.] The gesture they used, in contempt of him — *wagging their heads*; which signifies their triumph in his fall, and their insulting over him, ^{<2372>}Isaiah 37:22.; ^{<24816>}Jeremiah 18:16; ^{<21215>}Lamentations 2:15. The language of it was, *Aha, so would we have it*, ^{<1265>}Psalms 35:25. Thus they insulted

over him that was the Saviour of their country, as the Philistines did over Samson the destroyer of their country. This very gesture was prophesied of (^{<1217>}Psalm 22:7); *They shake the head at me.* And (^{<1945>}Psalm 109:25).

[3.] The taunts and jeers they uttered. These are here recorded.

First, They upbraided him with his *destroying of the temple.* Though the judges themselves were sensible that what he had said of that was misrepresented (as appears ^{<1159>}Mark 14:59), yet they industriously spread it among the people, to bring an *odium* upon him, that he had a design to destroy the temple; than which nothing would more *incense* the people against him. And this was not the only time that the enemies of Christ had laboured to *make others believe* that of religion and the people of God, which they themselves have known to be *false*, and the charge *unjust* “*Thou that destroyest the temple, that vast and strong fabric, try thy strength now in plucking up that cross, and drawing those nails, and so save thyself; if thou hast the power thou hast boasted of, this is a proper time to exert it, and give proof of it; for it is supposed that every man will do his utmost to save himself.*” This made the cross of Christ such a *stumbling-block* to the Jews, that they looked upon it to be inconsistent with the *power* of the Messiah; he was *crucified in weakness* (^{<1704>}2 Corinthians 13:4), so it seemed to them; but indeed Christ crucified is the *Power of God.*

Secondly, They upbraided him with his saying that he was *the Son of God;* If thou be so, say they, *come down from the cross.* Now they take the devil's words out of his mouth, with which he tempted him in the wilderness (^{<1003>}Matthew 4:3, 6), and renew the same assault; *If thou be the Son of God.* They think that now, or never, he must prove himself to be the *Son of God;* forgetting that he had proved it by the miracles he wrought, particularly his raising of the dead; and unwilling to wait for the complete proof of it by his own resurrection, to which he had so often referred himself and them; which, if they had observed it, would have anticipated the offence of the cross. This comes of judging things by the present aspect of them, without a due remembrance of what is *past*, and a patient expectation of *what may further be produced.*

(2.) The *chief priests and scribes*, the church rulers, and the *elders*, the state rulers, they mocked him, v. 41. They did not think it enough to invite the rabble to do it, but gave Christ the dishonour, and themselves the diversion, or reproaching him in their own proper persons. They should

have been in the temple at their devotion, for it was the first day of the feast of unleavened bread, when there was to be a *holy convocation* (^(-OR) Leviticus 23:7); but they were here at the place of execution, spitting their venom at the Lord Jesus. How much below the grandeur and gravity of their character was this! Could any thing tend more to make them *contemptible and base before the people*? One would have thought, that, though they neither feared God nor regarded man, yet common prudence should have taught them who had so great a hand in Christ's death, to keep as much as might be behind the curtain, and to play least in sight; but nothing is so mean as that malice may stick at it. Did they disparage themselves thus, to do despite to Christ, and shall we be afraid of disparaging ourselves, by joining with the multitude to *do him honour*, and not rather say, *If this be to be vile, I will be yet more vile*?

Two things the priests and elders upbraided him with.

[1.] That he could not *save himself*, v. 42. He had been before abused in his prophetic and kingly office, and now in his priestly office as a Saviour. *First*, They take it for granted that he *could not* save himself, and therefore had not the power he pretended to, when really he *would not* save himself, because he would die to *save us*. They should have argued, "He *saved others*, therefore he *could* save himself, and if he do not, it is for some good reason." But, *Secondly*, They would insinuate, that, because he did not now save himself, therefore all his pretence to save others was but sham and delusion, and was never really done; though the truth of his miracles was demonstrated beyond contradiction. *Thirdly*, They upbraided him with being *the King of Israel*. They dreamed of the external pomp and power of the Messiah, and therefore thought *the cross* altogether disagreeable to the King of Israel, and inconsistent with that character. Many people would like the *King of Israel* well enough, if he would but *come down from the cross*, if they could have his kingdom without the tribulation through which they must *enter into* it. But the matter is settled; if no cross, then no Christ, no crown. Those that would reign with him, must be willing to suffer with him, for Christ and his cross are *nailed together* in this world. *Fourthly*, They challenged him to *come down from the cross*. And what had become of us then, and the work of our redemption and salvation? If he had been provoked by these scoffs to *come down from the cross*, and so to have left his undertaking *unfinished*, we had been for ever *undone*. But his unchangeable love and resolution set him above, and fortified him against, this temptation, so that he did not

fail, nor was *discouraged*. *Fifthly*, They promised that, if he would *come down from the cross*, they would *believe him*. Let him give them that proof of his being the Messiah, and they will own him to be so. When they had formerly demanded a sign, he told them that the sign he would give them, should be not his *coming down from the cross*, but, which was a greater instance of his power, his *coming up from the grave*, which they had not patience to wait two or three days for. If he had *come down from the cross*, they might with as much reason have said that the soldiers had juggled in nailing him to it, as they said, when he was raised from the dead, that the *disciples came by night, and stole him away*. But to promise ourselves that we would believe, if we had such and such means and motives of faith as we ourselves would prescribe, when we do not improve what God has appointed, is not only a gross instance of the deceitfulness of our hearts, but the sorry *refuge*, or *subterfuge* rather, of an obstinate destroying infidelity.

[2.] That God, *his Father*, would *not save him* (v. 43); *He trusted in God*, that is, he pretended to do so; for he said, *I am the Son of God*. Those who call God *Father*, and themselves *his children*, thereby profess to put a confidence in him, ^{<3990>}Psalm 9:10. Now they suggest, that he did but deceive himself and others, when he made himself so much the *darling of heaven*; for, if he had been the Son of God (as *Job's* friends argued concerning him), he would not have been *abandoned to* all this misery, much less *abandoned in* it. This was a *sword in his bones*, as David complains of the like (^{<4920>}Psalm 42:10); and it was a *two-edged sword*, for it was intended, *First*, To *vilify* him, and to make the standers-by think him a deceiver and an impostor; as if his saying, that he was the *Son of God*, were now effectually *disproved*. *Secondly*, To *terrify* him, and drive him to distrust and despair of his Father's power and love; which some think, was the thing *he feared, religiously feared*, prayed against, and was *delivered from*, ^{<4817>}Hebrews 5:7. David complained more of the endeavours of his persecutors to *shake his faith*, and drive him from his hope in God, than of their attempts to *shake his throne*, and drive him from his kingdom; their saying, There is *no help for him in God* (^{<4928>}Psalm 3:2), and, *God has forsaken him*, ^{<4911>}Psalm 71:11. In this, as in other things, he was a type of Christ. Nay, these very words David, in that famous prophecy of Christ, mentions, as spoken by *his enemies* (^{<4928>}Psalm 22:8); *He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him*. Surely these priests and scribes had forgotten their psalter, or they would not have used

the same words, so exactly to answer the type and prophecy: but the *scriptures must be fulfilled*.

(3.) To complete the reproach, the *thieves also that were crucified with him* were not only not reviled as he was, as if they had been saints compared with him, but, though fellow-sufferers with him, joined in with his prosecutors, and *cast the same in his teeth*; that is, one of them did, who said, *If thou be the Christ, save thyself and us*, ⁽²³⁹⁾Luke 23:39. One would think that of all people this thief had *least cause*, and should have had *least mind*, to banter Christ. Partners in suffering, though for different causes, usually commiserate one another; and few, whatever they have done before, will breathe their last in revilings. But, it seems, the greatest mortifications of the body, and the most humbling rebukes of Providence, will not of themselves mortify the corruptions of the soul, nor suppress the wickedness of the wicked, without the grace of God.

Well, thus our Lord Jesus having undertaken to satisfy the justice of God for the wrong done him in his honour by sin, he did it by suffering *in his honour*; not only by divesting himself of that which was due to him as the Son of God, but by submitting to the utmost indignity that could be done to the worst of men; because he was made sin for us, he was thus made a curse for us, to make reproach easy to us, if at any time we suffer it, and have all manner of evil said against us falsely, for righteousness' sake.

III. We have here the frowns of heaven, which our Lord Jesus was under, in the midst of all these injuries and indignities from men. Concerning which, observe,

1. How this was signified — by an extraordinary and miraculous eclipse of the sun, which continued for *three hours*, v. 45. There was darkness *epi pasan ten gen* — *over all the earth*; so most interpreters understand it, though our translation confines it to *that land*. Some of the ancients appealed to the annals of the nation concerning this extraordinary eclipse at the death of Christ, as a thing well known, and which gave notice to those parts of the world of something great then in doing; as the sun's going back in Hezekiah's time did. It is reported that Dionysius, at Heliopolis in Egypt, took notice of this darkness, and said, *Aut Deus naturae patitur, aut mundi machina dissolvitur* — *Either the God of nature is suffering, or the machine of the world is tumbling into ruin*. An extraordinary light gave intelligence of the birth of Christ (⁽⁴⁰⁰⁾Matthew

2:2), and therefore it was proper that an extraordinary darkness should notify his death, for he is the *Light of the world*. The indignities done to our Lord Jesus, made the *heavens astonished*, and *horribly afraid*, and even put them into disorder and confusion; such wickedness as this the sun never saw before, and therefore withdrew, and would not see this. This surprising, amazing, darkness was designed to stop the mouths of those blasphemers, who were reviling Christ as he hung on the cross; and it should seem that, for the present, it struck such a terror upon them, that though their hearts were not changed, yet they were silent, and stood doubting what this should mean, till after *three hours* the darkness *scattered*, and then (as appears by v. 47), like Pharaoh when the plague was over, they hardened their hearts. But that which was principally intended in this darkness, was,

(1.) Christ's present *conflict* with the *powers of darkness*. Now the prince of this world, and his forces, the *rulers of the darkness of this world*, were to be cast out, to be spoiled and vanquished; and to make his victory the more illustrious, he fights them on their own ground; gives them all the advantage they could have against him by this darkness, lets them take the *wind* and *sun*, and yet baffles them, and so becomes more than a conqueror.

(2.) His present want of heavenly comforts. This darkness signified that dark cloud which the human soul of our Lord Jesus was now under. God makes his sun to shine upon the just and upon the unjust; but even the light of the sun was withheld from our Saviour, when he was *made sin for us*. *A pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun*; but because now his soul was exceeding sorrowful, and the cup of divine displeasure was filled to him without mixture, even the light of the sun was suspended. When earth denied him a drop of cold water, heaven denied him a beam of light; having to deliver us from *utter darkness*, he did himself, in the depth of his sufferings, walk in darkness, and had no light, ²⁸¹⁰ Isaiah 50:10. During the *three hours* that this darkness continued, we do not find that he said *one word*, but passed this time in a silent retirement into his own soul, which was now in agony, wrestling with the powers of darkness, and taking in the impressions of his Father's displeasure, not against himself, but the sin of man, which he was now *making his soul an offering for*. Never were there three such hours since the day that God created man upon the earth, never such a dark and awful scene; the *crisis* of that great affair of man's redemption and salvation.

2. How he complained of it (v. 46); *About the ninth hour*, when it began to clear up, after a long and silent conflict. *Jesus cried, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?* The words are related in the Syriac tongue, in which they were spoken, because worthy of double remark, and for the sake of the perverse construction which his enemies put upon them, in putting *Elias* for *Eli*. Now observe here,

(1.) Whence he borrowed this complaint — from ^{<421>}Psalm 22:1. It is not probable (as some have thought) that he repeated the whole psalm; yet hereby he intimated that the whole was to be applied to him, and that David, in spirit, there spoke of his humiliation and exaltation. This, and that other word, *Into thy hands I commit my spirit*, he fetched from David's psalms (though he could have expressed himself in his own words), to teach us of what use the word of God is to us, to direct us in prayer, and to recommend to us the use of scripture-expressions in prayer, which will *help our infirmities*.

(2.) How he uttered it — *with a loud voice*; which bespeaks the extremity of his pain and anguish, the strength of nature remaining in him, and the great earnestness of his spirit in this expostulation. Now the scripture was fulfilled (^{<205>}Joel 3:15, 16); *The sun and the moon shall be darkened. The Lord shall also roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem*. David often speaks of his *crying aloud* in prayer, ^{<487>}Psalm 55:17.

(3.) What the complaint was — *My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?* A strange complaint to come from the mouth of our Lord Jesus, who, we are sure, was *God's elect, in whom his soul delighted* (^{<301>}Isaiah 42:1), and one in whom he was always *well pleased*. The Father now loved him, nay, he knew that *therefore he loved him, because he laid down his life for the sheep*; what, and yet forsaken of him, and in the midst of his sufferings too! Surely never sorrow was like unto that sorrow which extorted such a complaint as this from one who, being perfectly free from sin, could never be a terror to himself; but the heart knows its own bitterness. No wonder that such a complaint as this made the earth to quake, and rent the rocks; for it is enough to make both the *ears of every one that hears it to tingle*, and ought to be spoken of with great reverence.

Note,

[1.] That our Lord Jesus was, in his sufferings, for a time, *forsaken by his Father*. So he saith himself, who we are sure was under no mistake

concerning his own case. Not that the union between the divine and human nature was in the least weakened or shocked; no, he was *now by the eternal Spirit offering himself*: nor as if there were any abatement of his Father's love to him, or his to his Father; we are sure that there was upon his mind no horror of God, or despair of his favour, nor any thing of the torments of hell; but his Father forsook him; that is, *First*, He delivered him up into the hands of his enemies, and did not appear to deliver him out of their hands. He let loose the powers of darkness against him, and suffered them to do their worst, worse than against Job. Now was that scripture fulfilled (¹³⁹¹Job 16:11), *God hath turned me over into the hands of the wicked*; and no angel is sent from heaven to deliver him, no friend on earth raised up to appear for him. *Secondly*, He withdrew from him the present comfortable sense of his complacency in him. When *his soul* was first *troubled*, he had a *voice from heaven* to comfort him (⁴¹²⁷John 12:27, 28); when he was in his agony in the garden, there appeared an angel from heaven strengthening him; but now he had neither the one nor the other. God hid his face from him, and for awhile withdrew his rod and staff in the darksome valley. God *forsook* him, not as he forsook Saul, leaving him to an endless despair, but as sometimes he forsook David, leaving him to a present despondency. *Thirdly*, He let out upon his soul an afflicting sense of his wrath against man for sin. Christ was made *Sin* for us, a *Curse* for us; and therefore, though God loved him as a Son, he frowned upon him as a Surety. These impressions he was pleased to *admit*, and to *waive* that *resistance* of them which he *could have made*; because he would accommodate himself to this part of his undertaking, as he had done to all the rest, when it was in his power to have avoided it.

[2.] That Christ's being *forsaken* of his Father was the most grievous of his sufferings, and that which he complained most of. Here he laid the most doleful accents; he did not say, "Why am I scourged? And why spit upon? And why nailed to the cross?" Nor did he say to his disciples, when they turned their back upon him, *Why have ye forsaken me?* But when his Father stood at a distance, he cried out thus; for this as it that *put wormwood and gall* into the affliction and misery. This brought the *waters into the soul*, ¹⁵⁹¹Psalms 69:1-3.

[3.] That our Lord Jesus, even when he was thus forsaken of his Father, kept hold of him as his God, notwithstanding; *My God, my God*; though forsaking me, yet *mine*. Christ was God's *servant* in carrying on the work

of redemption, to him he was to make satisfaction, and by him to be carried through and crowned, and upon that account he calls him *his God*; for he was now *doing his will*. See ²⁸⁴⁵Isaiah 49:5-9. This supported him, and bore him up, that even in the depth of his sufferings God was his God, and this he resolves to keep fast hold of.

(4.) See how his enemies impiously bantered and ridiculed this complaint (v. 47); *They said, This man calleth for Elias*. Some think that this was the ignorant mistake of the Roman soldiers, who had heard talk of Elias, and of the Jews' expectation of the coming of Elias, but knew not the signification of *Eli, Eli*, and so made this blundering comment upon these words of Christ, perhaps not hearing the latter part of what he said, for the noise of the people. Note, Many of the reproaches cast upon the word of God and the people of God, take rise from gross mistakes. Divine truths are often corrupted by ignorance of the language and style of the scripture. Those that hear by the halves, pervert what they hear. But others think that it was the wilful mistake of some of the Jews, who knew very well what he said, but were disposed to abuse him, and make themselves and their companions merry, and to misrepresent him as one who, being forsaken of God, was driven to trust in creatures; perhaps hinting also, that he who had pretended to be himself the Messiah, would now be glad to be beholden to Elias, who was expected to be only the harbinger and forerunner of the Messiah. Note, It is no new thing for the most pious devotions of the best men to be ridiculed and abused by profane scoffers; nor are we to think it strange if what is well said in praying and preaching be misconstrued, and turned to our reproach; Christ's words were so, though he spoke as never man spoke.

IV. The cold comfort which his enemies ministered to him in this agony, which was like all the rest.

1. Some *gave him vinegar to drink* (v. 48); instead of some cordial-water to revive and refresh him under this heavy burthen, they tantalized him with that which did not only add to the reproach they were loading him with, but did too sensibly represent that cup of trembling which his Father had *put into his hand*. *One of them ran* to fetch it, seeming to be officious to him, but really glad of an opportunity to abuse and affront him, and afraid lest any one should take it out of his hands.

2. Others, which the same purpose of disturbing and abusing him, refer him to Elias (v. 49); “*Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him. Come, let him alone, his case is desperate, neither heaven nor earth can help him; let us do nothing either to hasten his death, or to retard it; he has appealed to Elias, and to Elias let him go.*”

~~(428)~~ MATTHEW 27:50-56

THE DEATH OF CHRIST

We have here, at length, an account of the death of Christ, and several remarkable passages that attended it.

I. The *manner* how he breathed his last (v. 50); between the third and the sixth hour, that is, between nine and twelve o'clock, as we reckon, he was nailed to the cross, and soon after the ninth hour, that is, between three and four o'clock in the afternoon, he *died*. That was the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, and the time when the paschal lamb was killed; and Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us and offered himself in the evening of the world a sacrifice to God of a sweet-smelling savour. It was at that time of the day, that the angel Gabriel delivered to Daniel that glorious prediction of the Messiah, ~~(290)~~ Daniel 9:21, 24, etc. And some think that from that very time when the angel spoke it, to this time when Christ died, was just seventy weeks, that is, four hundred and ninety years to a day, to an hour; as the departure of *Israel* out of Egypt was at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, *even the self-same day*, ~~(212)~~ Exodus 12:41.

Two things are here noted concerning the manner of Christ's dying.

1. That he *cried with a loud voice*, as before, v. 46. Now,

(1.) This was a sign, that, after all his pains and fatigues, his life was *whole* in him, and nature *strong*. The voice of dying men is one of the first things that fails; with a panting breath and a faltering tongue, a few broken words are hardly spoken, and more hardly heard. But Christ, just before he expired, spoke like a man *in his full strength*, to show that his life was not forced from him, but was freely *delivered* by him into his Father's hands, as *his own act and deed*. He that had strength to cry thus when he died,

could have got loose from the arrest he was under, and have bid defiance to the powers of death; but to show that *by the eternal Spirit he offered himself*, being the Priest as well as the Sacrifice, he *cried with a loud voice*.

(2.) It was significant. This *loud voice* shows that he attacked our spiritual enemies with an undaunted courage, and such a bravery of resolution as bespeaks him hearty in the cause and daring in the encounter. He was now *spoiling principalities and powers*, and in this loud voice he did, as it were, *shout for mastery*, as one *mighty to save*, ^{<251>}Isaiah 63:1. Compare with this, ^{<251>}Isaiah 62:13, 14. He now bowed himself with all his might, as Samson did, when he said, *Let me die with the Philistines*, ^{<160>}Judges 16:30. *Animamque in vulnere ponit — And lays down his life*. His crying with a loud voice when he died, signified that his death should be published and proclaimed to all the world; all mankind being concerned in it, and obliged to take notice of it. Christ's loud cry was like a trumpet blown over the sacrifices.

2. That then he *yielded up the ghost*. This is the usual periphrasis of dying; to show that the Son of God upon the cross did truly and properly die by the violence of the pain he was put to. His *soul* was separated from his *body*, and so his body was left really and truly dead. It was certain that he *did die*, for it was requisite that he should die; *thus it was written*, both in the *close rolls* of the *divine counsels*, and in the *letters patent* of the *divine predictions*, and therefore *thus it behoved him to suffer*. Death being the penalty for the breach of the first covenant (*Thou shalt surely die*), the Mediator of the new covenant must make atonement *by means of death*, otherwise no remission, ^{<305>}Hebrews 9:15. He had undertaken to make his soul an *offering for sin*; and he did it, when he *yielded up the ghost*, and voluntarily resigned it.

II. The miracles that attended his death. So many miracles being wrought *by him* in his life, we might well expect some to be wrought concerning him at his death, for his name was called *Wonderful*. Had he been fetched away as Elijah in a *fiery chariot*, that had itself been miracle enough; but, being sent for away by an ignominious cross, it was requisite that his humiliation should be attended with some signal emanations of the divine glory.

1. *Behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain.* This relation is ushered in with *Behold*; “Turn aside, and see this great sight, and be astonished at it.” Just as our Lord Jesus expired, at the time of the offering of the evening-sacrifice, and upon a solemn day, when the priests were officiating in the temple, and might themselves be eyewitnesses of it, *the veil of the temple was rent* by an invisible power; that veil which parted between the *holy place* and the *most holy*. They had condemned him for saying, *I will destroy this temple*, understanding it literally; now by this specimen of his power he let them know that, if he had pleased, he could have made his words good. In this, as in others of Christ's miracles, there was a mystery.

(1.) It was in correspondence with the temple of Christ's body, which was now in the dissolving. This was the true temple, in which dwelt *the fulness of the Godhead*; when Christ *cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost*, and so dissolved that temple, the literal temple did, as it were, echo to that cry, and answer the stroke, by *rending its veil*. Note, Death is the rending of the veil of flesh which interposes between us and the holy of holies; the death of Christ was so, the death of true Christians is so.

(2.) It signified the revealing and unfolding of the mysteries of the Old Testament. The veil of the temple was for concealment, as was that on the face of Moses, therefore it was called the *veil of the covering*; for it was highly penal for any person to see the furniture of the most holy place, except the High-Priest, and he but once a year, with great ceremony and through a cloud of smoke; all which signified the darkness of that dispensation; ⁴⁰⁸³2 Corinthians 3:13. But now, at the death of Christ, all was laid open, the mysteries were unveiled, so that now he that runs may read the meaning of them. Now we see that the mercy-seat signified *Christ* the great *Propitiation*; the pot of *manna* signified Christ the Break of life. Thus *we all with open face behold, as in a glass* (which helps the sight, as the veil hindered it), *the glory of the Lord. Our eyes see the salvation.*

(3.) It signified the uniting of Jew and Gentile, by the removing of the partition wall between them, which was the ceremonial law, by which the Jews were distinguished from all other people (as a *garden enclosed*), were brought near to God, while others were made to *keep their distance*. Christ, in his death, repealed the ceremonial law, cancelled that *hand-writing of ordinances*, took it out of the way, nailed it to his cross, and so *broke down the middle wall of partition*; and by abolishing those

institutions *abolished the enmity, and made in himself of twain one new man* (as two rooms are made one, and that large and lightsome, by taking down the partition), so *making peace*, ^{<424>}Ephesians 2:14-16. Christ died, to rend all dividing veils, and to make all his one, ^{<672>}John 17:21.

(4.) It signified the consecrating and laying open of *a new and living way* to God. The veil kept people off from drawing near to the most holy place, where the *Shechinah* was. But the rending of it signified that Christ by his death opened a way to God,

[1.] *For himself.* This was the great *day of atonement*, when our Lord Jesus, as the great *High-Priest*, not *by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, entered once for all into the holy place*; in token of which the veil was rent, ^{<307>}Hebrews 9:7, etc. Having offered his sacrifice in the outer court, the blood of it was now to be sprinkled upon the mercy-seat within the veil; wherefore *lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; for the King of glory, the Priest of glory, shall come in.* Now was he caused to draw near, and made to approach, ^{<282>}Jeremiah 30:21. Though he did not personally ascend into the holy place not made with hands till above forty days after, yet he immediately acquired a right to enter, and had a virtual admission.

[2.] *For us in him:* so the apostle applies it, ^{<309>}Hebrews 10:19, 20. We have *boldness to enter into the holiest, by that new and living way which he has consecrated for us through the veil.* He died, to *bring us to God*, and, in order thereunto, to rend that veil of guilt and wrath which interposed between us and him, to take away the *cherubim* and *flaming sword*, and to open the way to *the tree of life.* We have free access through Christ to the throne of grace, or mercy-seat, now, and to the throne of glory hereafter, ^{<306>}Hebrews 4:16; 6:20. The rending of the veil signified (as that ancient hymn excellently expresses it), that, *when Christ had overcome the sharpness of death, he opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.* Nothing can obstruct or discourage our access to heaven, for the veil is rent; *a door is opened in heaven*, ^{<601>}Revelation 4:1.

2. The *earth did quake*; not only mount Calvary, where Christ was crucified, but the *whole land*, and the adjacent countries. This earthquake signified two things.

(1.) The *horrible* wickedness of *Christ's crucifiers.* The earth, by trembling under such a load, bore its testimony to the innocence of him

that was persecuted, and against the impiety of those that persecuted him. Never did the whole creation, before, groan under such a burthen as the Son of God crucified, and the guilty wretches that crucified him. The earth *quaked*, as if it *feared to open its mouth to receive* the blood of Christ, so much more precious than that of Abel, which it had received, and was *cursed* for it (^{<0041>}Genesis 4:11, 12); and as if it *fain would open its mouth*, to swallow up those rebels that put him to death, as it had swallowed up Dathan and Abiram for a much less crime. When the prophet would express God's great displeasure against the wickedness of the wicked, he asks, *Shall not the land tremble for this?* ^{<3088>}Amos 8:8.

(2.) The *glorious* achievements of *Christ's cross*. This *earthquake* signified the mighty shock, nay, the fatal blow, now given to the devil's kingdom. So vigorous was the assault Christ now made upon the infernal powers, that (as of old, *when he went out of Seir, when he marched through the field of Edom*) the *earth trembled*, ^{<0084>}Judges 5:4; ^{<0085>}Psalms 68:7, 8. God shakes all nations, when the Desire of all nations is to come; and there is a *yet once more*, which perhaps refers to this shaking, ^{<0086>}Haggai 2:6, 21.

3. The *rocks rent*; the hardest and firmest part of the earth was made to feel this mighty shock. Christ had said, that if the children should cease to cry *Hosanna, the stones would immediately cry out*; and now, in effect, they did so, proclaiming the glory of the suffering Jesus, and themselves more sensible of the wrong done him than the hard-hearted Jews were, who yet will shortly be glad to find a *hole in the rocks, and a cleft in the ragged rocks*, to hide them from the face of him that sitteth on the throne. See ^{<0087>}Revelation 6:16; ^{<0088>}Isaiah 2:21. But when *God's fury is poured out like fire, the rocks are thrown down by him*, Nah. 1:6. Jesus Christ is *the Rock*; and the rending of *these rocks*, signified the rending of *that rock*,

(1.) That in the clefts of it was may be *hid*, as Moses in the cleft of the rock at Horeb, that there we may *behold the glory of the Lord*, as he did, ^{<0089>}Exodus 33:22. Christ's dove is said to be *hid in the clefts of the rock* (^{<0090>}Song of Solomon 2:14), that is, as some make the allusion, sheltered in the wounds of our Lord Jesus, the Rock rent.

(2.) That from the cleft of it rivers of living water may flow, and follow us in this wilderness, as from the rock which Moses *smote* (^{<0091>}Exodus 17:6), and which God *clave* (^{<0092>}Psalms 78:15); and *that rock was Christ*, ^{<0093>}1 Corinthians 10:4. When we celebrate the memorial of Christ's death, our

hard and rocky hearts must be *rent* — the heart, and not the garments. That heart is harder than a rock, that will not *yield*, that will not *melt*, where Jesus Christ is *evidently set forth crucified*.

4. The *graves were opened*. This matter is not related so fully as our curiosity would wish; for the scripture was not intended to gratify that; it should seem, that same earthquake that rent the rocks, *opened the graves*, and many bodies of *saints which slept, arose*. Death to the saints is but the *sleep* of the body, and the *grave* the bed it *sleeps in*; they awoke by the power of the Lord Jesus, and (v. 53) *came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into Jerusalem, the holy city, and appeared unto many*. Now here,

(1.) We may raise many enquiries concerning it, which we cannot resolve: as,

[1.] *Who* these *saints* were, that *did arise*. Some think, the *ancient patriarchs*, that were in such care to be buried in the land of Canaan, perhaps in the believing foresight of the advantage of this early resurrection. Christ had lately proved the doctrine of the resurrection from the instance of the patriarchs (⁴²²Matthew 22:32), and here was a speedy confirmation of his argument. Others think, these that arose were *modern saints*, such as had been Christ in the flesh, but died before him; as his father Joseph, Zecharias, Simeon, John Baptist, and others, that had been known to the disciples, while they lived, and therefore were the fitter to be witnesses to them in an *apparition* after. What if we should suppose that they were the *martyrs*, who in the Old-Testament times had sealed the truths of God with their blood, that were thus *dignified* and *distinguished*? Christ particularly points at them as his forerunners, (⁴²⁵Matthew 23:35). And we find (⁴²⁴Revelation 20:4, 5), that those who were *beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, arose before the rest of the dead*. Sufferers with Christ shall *first* reign with him.

[2.] It is uncertain whether (as some think) they arose to life, now at the death of Christ, and disposed of themselves elsewhere, but did not *go into the city* till after his resurrection; or whether (as others think), though *their sepulchres* (which the *Pharisees* had *built* and *varnished*, ⁴²⁹Matthew 23:29), and so made remarkable, were shattered now by the earthquake (so little did God regard that hypocritical respect), yet they did not *revive* and *rise* till after the resurrection; only, for brevity-sake, it is mentioned here,

upon the mention of the *opening of the graves*, which seems more probable.

[3.] Some think that they arose only to bear witness of Christ's resurrection to those to whom they appeared, and, having finished their testimony, retired to their graves again. But it is more agreeable, both to Christ's honour and theirs, to *suppose*, though we cannot *prove*, that they arose as Christ did, to *die no more*, and therefore ascended with him to glory. Surely on them who did partake of his first resurrection, a *second* death had no power.

[4.] To whom they appeared (not *to all the people* it is certain, but to *many*), whether enemies or friends, in what manner they appeared, how often, what they said and did, and how they disappeared, are secret things which belong not to us; we must not covet to be *wise above what is written*. The relating of this matter so briefly, is a plain intimation to us, that we must not look that way for a confirmation of our faith; we have a more sure word of prophecy. See ~~☞~~ Luke 16:31.

(2.) Yet we may learn many good lessons from it.

[1.] That even those who lived and died before the death and resurrection of Christ, had saving benefit thereby, as well as those who have lived since; for he *was* the same *yesterday* that he is *to-day*, and will be *for ever*, ~~☞~~ Hebrews 13:8.

[2.] That Jesus Christ, by dying, conquered, disarmed, and disabled, death. These saints that arose, were the present trophies of the victory of Christ's cross over the powers of *death*, which he thus *made a show of openly*. Having by death destroyed him that had the power of death, he thus *led captivity captive*, and gloried in these *re-taken prizes*, in them fulfilling that scripture, *I will ransom them from the power of the grave*.

[3.] That, in virtue of Christ's resurrection, the bodies of all the saints shall, in the fulness of time, *rise again*. This was an earnest of the general resurrection at the last day, when *all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God*. And perhaps Jerusalem is *therefore* called here the *holy city*, because the saints, at the general resurrection, shall enter into the *new Jerusalem*; which will be indeed what the other was in name and type only, the *holy city*, ~~☞~~ Revelation 21:2.

[4.] That all the saints do, by the influence of Christ's death, and in conformity to it, rise from the *death of sin* to the *life of righteousness*. They are *raised up with him* to a divine and spiritual life; they go *into the holy city*, become *citizens* of it, have their conversation in it, and *appear to many*, as persons not of this world.

III. The conviction of his enemies that were employed in the execution (v. 54), which some make no less than another miracle, all things considered. Observe,

1. The persons convinced; *the centurion, and they that were with him watching Jesus*; a captain and his company, that were set on the guard on this occasion.

(1.) They were *soldiers*, whose profession is commonly hardening, and whose breasts are commonly not so susceptible as some others of the impressions either of fear or pity. But there is no spirit too big, too bold, for the power of Christ to break and humble.

(2.) They were *Romans, Gentiles*, who knew not the scriptures which were now fulfilled; yet they only were convinced. A sad presage of the *blindness* that should *happen to Israel*, when the gospel should be sent to the Gentiles, to open their eyes. Here were the Gentiles *softened*, and the Jews *hardened*.

(3.) They were the persecutors of Christ, and those that but just before had reviled him, as appears ²²³⁶ Luke 23:36. How soon can God, by the power he has over men's consciences, alter their language, and fetch confessions of his truths, to his own glory, out of the mouths of those that have *breathed* nothing but *threatenings, and slaughter*, and blasphemies!

2. The means of their conviction; they perceived *the earthquake*, which frightened them, and saw the other *things that were done*. These were designed to assert the honour of Christ in his sufferings, and had their end on these soldiers, whatever they had on others. Note, The dreadful appearances of God in his providence sometimes work strangely for the conviction and awakening of sinners.

3. The expressions of this conviction, in two things.

(1.) The *terror* that was *struck* upon them; they *feared greatly*; feared lest they should have been buried in the darkness, or swallowed up in the

earthquake. Note, God can easily frighten the most daring of his adversaries, and make them know themselves to be but men. Guilt puts men into fear. He that, when iniquity abounds, doth not *fear always*, with a fear of *caution*, when judgments are abroad, cannot but *fear greatly*, with a fear of *amazement*; whereas there are those who will not fear, *though the earth be removed*, ^{<416>}Psalm 46:1, 2.

(2.) The *testimony* that was *extorted* from them; they said, *Truly this was the Son of God*; a noble confession; Peter was blessed for it, ^{<416>}Matthew 16:16, 17. It was the great matter now in dispute, the point upon which he and his enemies had *joined issue*, ^{<416>}Matthew 26:63, 64. His disciples believed it, but at this time durst not confess it; our Saviour himself was tempted to question it, when he said, *Why hast thou forsaken me?* The Jews, now that he was dying upon the cross, looked upon it as plainly determined against him, that he was not the Son of God, because he did not come down from the cross. And yet now this centurion and the soldiers make this voluntary confession of the Christian faith, *Truly this was the Son of God*. The best of his disciples could not have said more at any time, and at this time they had not faith and courage enough to say thus much. Note, God can maintain and assert the honour of a truth then when it seems to be crushed, and run down; for *great is the truth, and will prevail*.

IV. The attendance of his friends, that were witnesses of his death, v. 55, 56. Observe,

1. Who they were; *many women who followed him from Galilee*. Not his apostles (only elsewhere we find John by the cross, ^{<416>}John 19:26), their hearts failed them, they durst not appear, for fear of coming under the same condemnation. But here were a company of women, some would have called them *silly* women, that *boldly* stuck to Christ, when the rest of his disciples had basely deserted him. Note, Even those of the weaker sex are often, by the grace of God, made strong in faith, that Christ's strength may be made perfect in weakness. There have been women martyrs, famous for courage and resolution in Christ's cause. Now of these women it is said,

(1.) That they had *followed Jesus from Galilee*, out of the great love they had to him, and a desire to hear him preach; otherwise, the males only were obliged to come up, to worship at the feast. Now having followed

him such a long journey as from Galilee to Jerusalem, eighty or a hundred miles, they resolved not to forsake him now. Note, Our former services and sufferings for Christ should be an argument with us, faithfully to persevere to the end in our attendance on him. Have we followed him *so far* and so long, done so much, and laid out so much for him, and shall we forsake him now? ^{<400>}Galatians 3:3, 4.

(2.) That they *ministered to him* of their substance, for his necessary subsistence. How gladly would they have ministered to him now, if they might have been admitted! But, being forbidden that, they resolved to *follow him*. Note, When we are restrained from doing what we *would*, we must do what we can, in the service of Christ. Now that he is *in heaven*, though he is out of the reach of our *ministration*, he is not out of the reach of our *believing views*.

(3.) Some of them are particularly named; for God will *honour* those that *honour* Christ. They were such as we have several times met with *before*, and it was their praise, that we meet with them *to the last*.

2. What they did; they were *beholding afar off*.

(1.) They stood *afar off*. Whether their own fear or their enemies' fury kept them at a distance, is not certain; however, it was an aggravation of the sufferings of Christ, that his *lovers and friends stood aloof from his sore*, ^{<400>}Psalms 38:11; ^{<400>}Job 19:13. Perhaps they might have come nearer, if they would; but good people, when they are in sufferings, must not think it strange, if some of their best friends be shy of them. When Paul's danger was imminent, *no man stood by him*, ^{<500>}2 Timothy 4:16. If we be thus looked strangely upon, remember, our Master was so before us.

(2.) They were there *beholding*, in which they showed a concern and kindness for Christ; when they were debarred from doing any other office of love to him, they looked a look of love toward him.

[1.] It was a *sorrowful* look; they looked unto him who was now pierced, and *mourned*; and no doubt, were *in bitterness* for him. We may well imagine how it cut them to the heart, to see him in this torment; and what floods of tears it fetched from their eyes. Let us with an eye of faith behold Christ and him crucified, and be affected with that great love wherewith he loved us. But,

[2.] It was no more than a look; they beheld him, but they could not *help him*. Note, When Christ was in his sufferings, the best of his friends were but spectators and lookers on, even the *angelic guards stood trembling by*, saith Mr. Norris, for he *trod the wine-press alone*, and of the people there was none with him; so *his own arm wrought salvation*.

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THE BURIAL OF CHRIST

We have here an account of Christ's *burial*, and the manner and circumstances of it, concerning which observe,

1. The *kindness* and *good will* of his friends that *laid him in the grave*.
2. The *malice* and *ill will* of his enemies that were very solicitous to keep him there.

I. His friends gave him a *decent burial*. Observe,

1. In general, that Jesus Christ was *buried*; when his precious soul was gone to paradise, his blessed body was deposited in the chambers of the grave, that he might answer the type of Jonas, and fulfil the prophecy of Isaias; he *made his grave with the wicked*. Thus in all things he must be made *like unto his brethren*, sin only excepted, and, like us, unto dust *he must return*. He was buried, to make his death the more certain, and his resurrection the more illustrious. Pilate would not deliver his body to be buried, till he was well assured that he was really dead; while the witnesses lay *unburied*, there were some hopes concerning them, ~~418~~ Revelation 11:8. But Christ, the great Witness, is as one *free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave*. He was *buried*, that he might take off the terror of the grave, and make it easy to us, might warm and perfume that cold noisome bed for us, and that we might be *buried with him*.

2. The particular circumstances of his burial here related.

(1.) The time *when* he was buried; *when the evening was come*; the same evening that he died, before sun-set, as is usual in burying malefactors. It was not deferred till the next day, because it was *the sabbath*; for burying

the dead is not proper work either for a day of rest or for a day of rejoicing, as the sabbath is.

(2.) The person that took care of the funeral was Joseph of Arimathea. The apostles had all fled, and none of them appeared to show this respect to their Master, which the disciples of John *showed* to him after he was beheaded, who *took up his body, and buried it,* ~~(414)~~ Matthew 14:12. The women that followed him durst not move in it; then did God stir up this good man to do it; for what work God has to do, he will find out instruments to do it. Joseph was a fit man, for,

[1.] He had wherewithal to do it, being a *rich man*. Most of Christ's disciples were poor men, such were most fit to go about the country to preach the gospel; but here was one that was a *rich man*, ready to be employed in a piece of service which required *a man of estate*. Note, Worldly wealth, though it is to many an objection in religion's way, yet, in some services to be done for Christ, it is an advantage and an opportunity, and it is well for those who have it, if withal they have a heart to use it for God's glory.

[2.] He was well affected to our Lord Jesus, for he was himself *his disciple*, believed in him, though he did not openly profess it. Note, Christ has more secret disciples than we are aware of; seven thousand in Israel, ~~(511)~~ Romans 11:4.

(3.) The grant of the dead body procured from Pilate, v. 58. Joseph *went to* Pilate, the proper person to be applied to on this occasion, who had the disposal of the body; for in things wherein the power of the magistrate is concerned, due regard must be had to that power, and nothing done to break in upon it. What we do that is good, must be done peaceably, and not tumultuously. Pilate was willing to give the body to one that would inter it decently, that he might do something towards atoning for the guilt his conscience charged him with in condemning an innocent person. In Joseph's petition, and Pilate's ready grant of it, *honour* was done to Christ, and a testimony borne to his *integrity*.

(4.) The dressing of the body in its grave-clothes (v. 59); though he was an honourable counsellor, yet he himself *took the body*, as it should seem, into his own arms, from the infamous and accursed tree (~~(413)~~ Acts 13:29); for where there is true love to Christ, no service will be thought too mean to stoop to for him. Having taken it, he wrapped it in a *clean linen cloth*;

for burying in linen was then the common usage, which Joseph complied with. Note, Care is to be taken of the dead bodies of good men, for there is a glory intended for them at the resurrection, which we must hereby testify our belief of, and wind up the dead body as designed for a better place. This common act of humanity, if done after a *godly sort*, may be made an acceptable piece of Christianity.

(5.) The depositing of it in the sepulchre, v. 60. Here there was nothing of that pomp and solemnity with which the grandees of the world are *brought to the grave, and laid in the tomb*, ^{<1813>} Job 21:32. A private funeral did best befit him whose kingdom came not with observation.

[1.] He was laid in a *borrowed* tomb, in Joseph's burying place; as he had not a house of his own, wherein to *lay his head* while he lived, so he had not a grave of his own, wherein to *lay his body* when he was dead, which was an instance of his poverty; yet in this there might be somewhat of a mystery. The grave is the peculiar heritage of a *sinner*, ^{<1819>} Job 24:19. There is nothing we can truly call our own but our sins and our graves; he *returneth to his earth*, ^{<1810>} Psalm 146:4. When we go to the grave, we go to our own place; but our Lord Jesus, who had no sin of his own, had no grave of his own; dying under imputed sin, it was fit that he should be buried in a *borrowed* grave; the Jews designed that he should have *made his grave with the wicked*, should have been buried with the thieves with whom he was crucified, but God over-ruled it, so as that he should make it *with the rich in his death*, ^{<2510>} Isaiah 53:9.

[2.] He was laid in a *new tomb*, which Joseph, it is likely, designed *for himself*; it would, however, be *never the worse* for *his* lying in it, who was to rise so quickly, but a *great deal the better* for *his* lying in it, who has altered the property of the grave, and made it *anew* indeed, by turning it into a *bed of rest*, nay into a *bed of spices*, for all the saints.

[3.] In a tomb that was *hewn out of a rock*; the ground about Jerusalem was generally rocky. Shebna had his sepulchre hewn out thereabouts *in a rock*, ^{<2916>} Isaiah 22:16. Providence ordered it that Christ's sepulchre should be in a solid entire rock, that no room might be left to suspect his disciples had access to it by some underground passage, or broke through the back wall of it, to steal the body; for there was no access to it but by the door, which was watched.

[4.] A *great stone was rolled to the door of his sepulchre*; this also was according to the custom of the Jews in burying their dead, as appears by the description of the grave of Lazarus (²⁰¹⁸John 11:38), signifying that those who are dead, are *separated and cut off from all the living*; if the grave were his prison, now was the prison-door locked and bolted. The rolling of the stone to the grave's mouth, was with them as filling up the grave is with us, it completed the funeral. Having thus in silence and sorrow deposited the previous body of our Lord Jesus in the grave, the house *appointed for all living*, they *departed* without any further ceremony. It is the most melancholy circumstance in the funerals of our Christian friends, when we have laid their bodies in the dark and silent grave, to go home, and leave them behind; but alas, it is not we that *go home*, and *leave them behind*, no, it is they that are gone to the better home, and have left us behind.

(6.) The company that attended the funeral; and that was very *small and mean*. Here were none of the relations in mourning, to follow the corpse, no formalities to grace the solemnity, but some good women that were true mourners — *Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary*, v. 56. These, as they had attended him *to the cross*, so they followed him *to the grave*; as if they composed themselves to sorrow, they *sat over against the sepulchre*, not so much to fill their eyes with the sight of what was done, as to empty them in rivers of tears. Note, True love to Christ will carry us through, to the utmost, in following him. Death itself cannot quench that divine fire, ²⁰¹⁸Song of Solomon 8:6, 7.

II. His enemies did what they could to prevent his resurrection; what they did herein was *the next day that followed the day of the preparation*, v. 62. That was the seventh day of the week, the Jewish *sabbath*, yet not expressly called so, but described by this periphrasis, because it was now shortly to give way to the Christian sabbath, which began the day after. Now,

1. All that day, Christ lay dead in the grave; having for six days laboured and done all his work, on the seventh day he *rested*, and was *refreshed*.

2. On that day, the *chief priests and Pharisees*, when they should have been at their devotions, asking pardon for the sins of the week past, were dealing with Pilate about securing the sepulchre, and so *adding rebellion to their sin*. They that had so often quarrelled with Christ for works of the

greatest mercy on that day, were themselves busied in a work of the greatest malice. Observe here,

(1.) Their address to *Pilate*; they were vexed that the body was given to one that would bury it decently; but, since it must be so, they desire a guard may be set on the sepulchre.

[1.] Their petition sets forth, that *that deceiver* (so they call him who is truth itself) *had said, After three days I will rise again.* He had said so, and his disciples *remembered* those very words for the confirmation of their faith, but his persecutors remember them for the provocation of their rage and malice. Thus the same word of Christ to the one was a savour of life unto life, to the other of death unto death. See how they compliment Pilate with the title of *Sir*, while they reproach Christ with the title of *Deceiver*. Thus the most malicious slanderers of *good men* are commonly the most sordid flatterers of *great men*.

[2.] It further sets forth their jealousy; *lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say, He is risen.*

First, That which *really* they were afraid of, was, his *resurrection*; that which is most Christ's honour and his people's joy, is most the terror of his enemies. That which exasperated Joseph's brethren against him, was the presage of his rise, and of his having dominion over them (^{GEN}Genesis 37:8); and all they aimed at, in what they did against him, was, to prevent that. Come, say they, let us *slay him*, and see *what will become of his dreams*. So the chief priests and Pharisees laboured to defeat the predictions of Christ's resurrection, saying, as David's enemies of him (^{PSALM}Psalm 41:8), *Now that he lieth, he shall rise up no more*; if he should rise, that would break all their measures. Note, Christ's enemies, even when they have gained their point, are still in fear of losing it again. Perhaps the priests were surprised at the respect shown to Christ's dead body by Joseph and Nicodemus, two honourable counsellors, and looked upon it as an ill presage; nor can they forget his raising Lazarus from *the dead*, which so confounded them.

Secondly, That which they took on them to be afraid of, was, lest *his disciples should come by night, and steal him away*, which was a very improbable thing; for,

1. They had not the courage to own him while he lived, when they might have done him and themselves real service; and it was not likely that his death should put courage into such cowards.

2. What could they promise themselves by stealing away his body, and making people believe he was risen; when, if he should not rise, and so prove himself a deceiver, his disciples, who had left all for him in this world, in dependence upon a recompence in the other world, would of all others suffer most by the imposture, and would have had reason to throw the first stone at his name? What good would it do them, to carry on a cheat upon themselves, to steal away his body, and say, *He is risen*; when, if he were not risen, their faith was vain, and they were *of all men the most miserable*? The chief priests apprehend that if the doctrine of Christ's resurrection be once preached and believed, the *last error will be worse than the first*; a proverbial expression, intimating no more than this, that we shall all be routed, all undone. They think it was *their error*, that they had so long connived at his preaching and miracles, which *error* they thought they had *rectified* by putting him to death; but if people should be persuaded of his resurrection, that would *spoil all* again, his interest would revive with him, and theirs must needs sink, who had so barbarously murdered him. Note, Those that opposed Christ and his kingdom, will see not only their attempts baffled, but themselves miserably *plunged* and *embarrassed*, their errors each worse than other, and the last worst of all, ~~☞~~ Psalm 2:4, 5.

[3.] In consideration hereof, they humbly move to have a guard set upon the sepulchre till the third day; *Command that the sepulchre be made sure*. Pilate must still be their drudge, his civil and military power must both be engaged to serve their malice; one would think that death's prisoners needed no other guard, and that the grave were *security* enough to itself; but what will not those fear, who are conscious to themselves both of *guilt* and *impotency*, in opposing the Lord and his anointed?

(2.) Pilate's answer to this address (v. 65); *He have a watch, make it sure, as sure as you can*. He was ready to gratify Christ's friends, in allowing them the body, and his enemies, in setting a guard upon it, being desirous to please all sides, while perhaps he laughed in his sleeve at both for making such ado, *pro* and *con*, about the dead body of a man, looking upon the hopes of one side and the fears of the other to be alike ridiculous.

Ye have a watch; he means the constant guard that was kept in the tower of Antonia, out of which they allow them to detach as many as they pleased for that purpose, but, as if ashamed to be himself seen in such a thing, he leaves the management of it wholly to them. Methinks that word, *Make it as sure as you can*, looks like a banter, either,

[1.] Of their *fears*; “Be sure to set a strong guard upon the dead man;” or rather,

[2.] Of their *hopes*; “Do your worst, try your wit and strength to the utmost; but if he be of God, he will rise, in spite of you and all your guards.” I am apt to think, that by this time Pilate had had some talk with the centurion, his own officer, of whom he would be apt to enquire how that *just man* died, whom he had condemned with such reluctance; and that he gave him such an account of those things as made him conclude that *truly he was the Son of God*; and Pilate would give more credit to him than to a thousand of those spiteful priests that called him a *Deceiver*; and if so, no marvel that he tacitly derides their project, in thinking to secure the sepulchre upon him who had so lately rent the rocks, and made the earth to quake. Tertullion, speaking of Pilate, saith, *Ipse jam pro suf conscientif Christianus — In his conscience he was a Christian*; and it is possible that he might be under such convictions at this time, upon the centurion's report, and yet never be thoroughly persuaded, any more than Agrippa or Felix was, to be a Christian.

(3.) The wonderful care they took, hereupon, to secure the sepulchre (v. 66); *They sealed the stone*; probably with the great seal of their *sanhedrim*, whereby they interposed their authority, for who durst break the public seal? But not trusting too much to that, withal they *set a watch*, to keep *his disciples* from coming to *steal him away*, and, if possible, to hinder *him* from coming out of the grave. So they intended, but God brought this good out of it, that they who were set to *oppose* his resurrection, thereby had an opportunity to observe it, and did so, and told the chief priests what they observed, who were thereby rendered the more inexcusable. Here was all the power of earth and hell combined to keep Christ a prisoner, but all in vain, when his hour was come; death, and all those sons and heirs of death, could then no longer hold him, no longer have dominion over him. To guard the sepulchre against the poor weak disciples, was folly, because *needless*; but to think to guard it against the power of God was folly,

because *fruitless* and to no purpose; and yet they thought they had *dealt wisely*.