

Mt 27:11-26

Christ Condemned Before Pilate

Introduction: Isa 53.7, 9; 1Pet 2.19-25.

1. How pitiful is the condition of an unprincipled great man

- a. As Judas's bosom sin was love of money, so Pilate's was love of man. He was given a choice, and he chose to send a righteous man to his death rather than displease his subjects. "He cared little how much he sinned against God and conscience, so long as he had the praise of man. Though willing to save our Lord's life, he was afraid to do it if it offended the Jews; and so, after a feeble attempt to divert the fury of the people from Jesus to Barabbas – and a feebler attempt to satisfy his own conscience, by washing his hands publicly before the people – he at last condemned One whom he himself called 'a just man.'" Lk 23.4, 14-15, 22; Prov 29.25-26.
- b. "We see in this miserable man a lively emblem of many a ruler of this world! How many there are, who know well that their public acts are wrong, and yet have not the courage to act up to their knowledge. They fear the people; they dread being laughed at: they cannot bear being unpopular! Like dead fish, they float with the tide. The praise of man is the idol before which they bow down, and to that idol they sacrifice conscience, inward peace, and an immortal soul." Prov 28.15-16
- c. We must not cease praying for them, seeking both their salvation and our peace in the land. 1Tim 2.1-2; Jer 29.7.
- d. Ryle, "Whatever our position in life may be, let us seek to be guided by principle and not by expediency. The praise of man is a poor, feeble, uncertain thing: it is here today, and gone tomorrow. Let us strive to please God, and then we may care little who else is pleased; let us fear God, and then there is none else of whom we need be afraid." Ps 27.1.

2. The desperate wickedness of human nature

- a. Pilate's protests, feeble though they were, gave the chief priests and elders a chance to think twice about what they were doing. But no; they had determined to put Jesus to death no matter what it took.
- b. They were asking for the death of the *only* truly righteous Man who ever lived. If we don't even consider the fact that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, that they put the God-Man to death; if we just consider the sin in itself, Prov 6.16-19 shows us how much of an abomination this is.
- c. "What *had* our Lord done, that the Jews should hate him so?... They hated him, because he told them the truth; they hated him, because he testified of their works that they were evil (Jn 7.7): they hated the light, because it made their own darkness visible. In a word, they hated Christ, because he was righteous and they were wicked, because he was holy and they were unholy – because he testified against sin, and they were determined to keep their sins and not let them go." Jn 3.20; 8.43-45.
- d. "There are few things so little believed and realized as the corruption of human nature.... Men fancy that if they saw a perfect person, they would love and admire him.... They flatter themselves that it is the inconsistency of professing Christians which they dislike, and not their religion.... They forget that when a [truly] perfect man was on earth, in the person of the Son of God, he was hated and put to death.... That single fact goes far to prove the truth of an old saying, that 'unconverted men would kill God, if they could get at him. There is nothing which the heart of man is not capable of conceiving, or the hand of man of doing.'"
- e. Finally, Ryle calls us to examine our own hearts, which is where we should always end up – removing the log from our own eye before we point out the speck in our neighbor's eye. "As long as we live, let us mistrust our *own* hearts: even when renewed by the Spirit, they are still 'deceitful above all things, and desperately sick' (Jer 17.9)."

Matthew 27:27-44

Christ's Sufferings in the Hands of the Soldiers, and His Crucifixion

1. The extent and reality of our Lord's sufferings

- a. "Our Lord, we must remember, had already (1) passed a night without sleep, and (2) endured excessive fatigue; (3) he had been taken from Gethsemane to the Jewish council, and (4) from the council to Pilate's judgment hall; (5) he had been twice placed on his trial, and (6) twice unjustly condemned; (7) he had been already scourged and (8) beaten cruelly with rods: and now, after all this suffering, (9) he was delivered up to the Roman soldiers, a body of men no doubt expert in cruelty, and of all people, least likely to behave with delicacy or compassion. These hard men at once proceeded to work their will. (10) 'They gathered the whole battalion' [~600 men]; (11) they stripped our Lord of his raiment, and (12) put on him, in mockery, a scarlet robe; (13) they twisted together a crown of thorns, and, in derision placed it on his head. (14) They then bowed the knee before him in mockery, as nothing better than a pretended king; (15) they 'spit on him;' (16) they 'struck him on the head:' and finally, having put his own robe on him, (17) they led him out of the city to a place called Golgotha, and (18) there crucified him (19) between two thieves."
- b. But what was a crucifixion? ...

2. All our Lord Jesus Christ's sufferings were vicarious.

- a. Vicarious: acting or done for another. The origin is Latin, *vicarius*, "substitute."
- b. 1Pet 2.24; 3.18; 2Cor 5.21; Gal 3.13; Heb 9.28; Isa 53.5-6. "These texts are among the foundation stones of the gospel."
- c. "But we must not be content with a *vague general* belief, that Christ's sufferings on the cross were vicarious. We are intended to see this truth in *every part* of his passion. We may follow him *all through*, from the bar of Pilate, to the minute of his death, and see him at every step as our mighty Substitute, our Representative, our Head, our Surety, our Proxy – the divine Friend who undertook to stand *in our stead*, and by the priceless merit of his sufferings, to purchase our redemption. Was he *scourged*? It was that 'through his stripes we might be *healed*' (Isa 53.5). Was he *condemned*, though innocent? It was that we might be *acquitted*, though guilty. Did he wear a crown of *thorns*? It was that we might wear the crown of *glory*. Was he *stripped* of his raiment? It was that we might be *clothed* in everlasting righteousness. Was he *mocked and reviled*? It was that we might be *honored and blessed*. Was he reckoned a *malefactor*, and numbered among *transgressors*? It was that we might be reckoned *innocent*, and *justified* from all sin. Was he declared unable to save *himself*? It was that he might be able to save *others* to the uttermost. Did he *die* at last, and that the most *painful and disgraceful* of deaths? It was that we might *live* for evermore, and be exalted to the *highest glory*."
- d. Ps 8.4; Isa 41.18.
- e. We have nowhere to go but to deep, eternal gratitude and the highest doxology! Ryle, "Our sins are *many* and *great*: but a great atonement has been made for him. There was an *infinite* merit in all Christ's sufferings: they were the sufferings of One who was God as well as man. Surely it is meet, right, and our bounden duty, to praise God daily because Christ has died." Rom 11.32-36.