

THE SAVIOR'S THIRST

NO. 3385

A SERMON
 PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 18, 1913
 DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

*“After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished,
 that the Scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst.”
 John 19:28*

THE early Christians were known to think and talk far more of our Savior than we do. Some of them were, perhaps, not quite so clear upon justification by faith as they ought to have been, but they were very clear about the merits of the precious blood, and if they did not always speak very perspicuously about the doctrines of grace, they spoke with wonderful power and savor about the “five” wounds—about the nail marks and the spear wound.

I could wish that our religion would go back somewhat more to that personal apprehension of Christ than it does. By all means let us have dogmatic teaching, setting forth those most precious truths that are our consolation, but better than all is the person of Christ Himself—the Way, the Truth, and the Life. We should do well if we oftener stood in meditation at the Cross-foot and viewed His wounds, counted the precious drops as they fall, and sought fellowship with Him in His sufferings.

Some of those early saints wrote long treatises on the solitary wounds of Jesus—many of them passed whole days in contemplation of some minute part of His passion. We cannot imitate them in this respect—we have not the leisure. I am afraid we have not the mental application they possessed. Nevertheless, let us explore the sacred mystery as best we can. At this time would we hie away to Calvary, and there stand and hear our Redeemer crying, “I thirst,” as He bears for us the guilt of sin.

Very briefly we shall regard the text, first, as *our Savior's cry, and as only such*. Secondly, we shall consider *its relationship to ourselves*. And thirdly, and sorrowfully, *its relation to ungodly men*.

First, then, we will—

I. CONSIDER THIS CRY OF OUR SAVIOR—“I thirst.”

Is it not clear proof that He was certainly man? Certain heretics sprang up in the early church who asserted that the body of our Lord was only a phantom—that as God, He was here, but as Man He only exhibited Himself to the outward sense, and did not actually exist in flesh and blood. But He thirsts.

Now, a spirit has not thirst. A spirit neither eats nor drinks—it is immaterial and knows not the wants that belong to this poor flesh and blood. We may, therefore, rest quite sure that, “the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth”

No better proof could we have of the substantiality of His manhood than the cry, “I thirst.” Herein, at all events, we can sympathize with Him. From the moment when He rose from the Communion Supper, saying, “I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom”—from that moment He had had no further refreshment, either of meat or of drink.

Yet well He needed drink, for all through that long night in Gethsemane He sweat—we know what kind of sweat—as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground. Such toil as His might well have needed refreshment. Then He was hurried away to Caiaphas and afterwards to Pilate. He had to encounter the accusations of His enemies and a strong bridle He had to put upon Himself, that, like a sheep before her shearers, He might be dumb.

There was a strain upon His system such as none of us ever have had to endure, or ever shall have—a strain such as we can never imagine—and yet not one morsel of bread, nor one drop of water crossed those blessed and parched lips. Well might He cry, “I thirst,” when, after so many hours of wrestling with the powers of darkness, He was now about to die!

You remember, also, the peculiar way in which our Lord was put to death. The piercing of the hands and the feet was sure to bring on fever. Those members, though far remote from the vital parts, are yet full of the most delicate and tender nerves, and pain soon travels along them till the whole frame becomes hot with burning fever.

Our Lord's own words in the twenty-second Psalm will occur to you—“My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.” Those of you who have been afflicted with fever far less serious than this, will recollect how it parched you like a potsherd, and dried up all the juices of your system, and all the moisture of your body like the parched fields of summer.

You had then a thirst, indeed. But your Savior had a double cause for thirst—long fasting without food or drink and then the bitter pangs of death. Sympathize with Him then, beloved, and remember that all this was for you—and for you as His enemies—for you as if there were no others in the world. Though He suffered for all His elect, yet especially for each one of His people were the nails driven, for each one did He thirst, and for each one did He take a draught of the vinegar and the gall. Come, then, and kiss those blessed lips and bow before your Savior in reverent praise!

Further, my brethren, we are quite certain that our Lord, in saying, “I thirst,” *must have felt the extreme bitterness of thirst*. He was no complainer. You never heard a word come from His lips when it might have been withheld. He must have been driven to dire extremity indeed when He thus proclaimed to friends and foes that He was thirsting for a drop of water.

Some have said that this cry, “I thirst,” coming, as it does, after the far more bitter and awful cry, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” was an evidence of a turn in the Savior's conflict—that during all the first part of our Savior's suffering He was taken up with such anxious thought, and with such internal anguish, that He could not think of the thirst, which, grievous as it was, was but a minor pain in comparison with what He felt when His Father in justice turned away His face from Him, but that now He begins to collect His thoughts for awhile and is able to fight with His own personal bodily pains.

It may be so. Possibly that cry was an indication that the battle had turned and that victory was coming to the suffering hero. But ah! brethren, however there may have come a gleam of sunshine in this cry athwart the blacker darkness, you can never dream what a thirst that was that parched the Savior's mouth and lips. You will never feel such a thirst as He felt to its direst extent. Cold, and hunger, and nakedness, and thirst may fall to your lot, but there was more of grief in His thirst than you can ever know. There was a bitterness here which my language cannot possibly bring out.

Another thought rises up to my mind—I will not mislead you here. I feel thankful to our Lord for saying, “I thirst!” Ah, brethren, sometimes when we are sore afflicted, or have some little infirmity, perhaps not anything vital or mortal, though it pains us much, we complain, or at least *we* say, “I thirst.” Now, are we wrong in so doing? Ought we to play the stoic? Ought we to be like the Indian at the stake who sings while he is roasting? Ought we to be like St. Lawrence on the gridiron? Is stoicism a part of Christianity?

Oh, no! but Jesus said, “I thirst,” and herein He gave permission to all of you who are bowed down with your griefs and your sorrows to whisper them into the ears of those who watch by the bed, and to say, “I thirst.” I daresay you have often felt ashamed of yourselves for this. You have said, “Now, if I had some huge trouble, or if the pangs I suffered were absolutely mortal, I could lean upon the Beloved's arm. But as for this ache, or this pain, it darts through my body and causes me much anguish, though it does not kill me.”

Well, but just as Jesus wept that He might let you weep on account of your sorrows and your griefs, so He says, "I thirst," that you might have permission patiently, as He did, to express your little complaints, that you might not think He sneers at you, or looks down upon you as though you were an alien, that you might know He sympathizes with you in it all.

He does not use language like that of Cassius when he laughed at Caesar because he was sick and said—

*"And when the fit was on him I did mark
How he did shake: 'tis true this god did shake:
His coward lips did from their color fly;
And that same eye whose head doth awe the world
Did lose its luster: I did hear him groan:
Ay, and that tongue of his that bade the Romans
Mark him, and write his speeches in their books,
Alas! it cried, 'Give me some drink, Titinius,'
As a sick girl."*

And why should it not? He was but a man. He was but "as a sick girl," and what is there in a sick girl to despise, after all? Jesus Christ said, "I thirst," and in this He says to every sick girl, and every sick child, and every sick one throughout the world, "The Master, who is now in heaven, but who once suffered on earth, despises not the tears of the sufferers, but has pity on them on their beds of sickness."

Jesus said, "I thirst." As our Lord used these words, may I ask you for a minute to *contemplate it with wonder*? Who was this that said, "I thirst"? Know you not that it was He who balanced the clouds and who filled the channels of the mighty deep? *He* said, "I thirst," and yet in Him was a well of water springing up unto everlasting life!

Yes, He who guided every river in its course and watered all the fields with grateful showers—He it was, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, before whom hell trembles and the earth is filled with dismay. He whom heaven adores and all eternity worships—He it was who said, "I thirst!" Matchless condescension—from the infinity of God to the weakness of a thirsting, dying man!

And this, again I must remind you, was for you. He that suffered for you was no common mortal, no ordinary man, such as you are, but the perfect and ever blessed God, high above all principalities and powers, and every name that is named. He it was who, with this condescending lowness of estate, stooped and cried, as you have done, "I thirst!"

Once more. In this cry of our Lord, "I thirst," *I think I see a trace of the atonement which He was then offering*. The pangs of Christ upon the cross are to be regarded as a substitution for the sins and sorrows of ungodly men:

*"He bore that we might never bear
His Father's righteous ire."*

Now, brethren, a part of the punishment of the wicked in hell is the deprivation of every form of comfort. Man refused to obey His Creator—the time will come when the Creator will refuse to succor man. Man refused to minister to God—the time will come when God's creatures will not minister to man. Remember those solemn words of the Master when He said that the rich man was without a drop of water to cool his tongue and was tormented in the flame? And yet the water was withheld from coming near the sinner who had died in willful rebellion against God.

Oh! my dear friends, if we had our due, we should have none of the comforts of life. The very air would refuse to yield us breath, and bread, the staff of life, to yield us nourishment. Yea, we would find the whole creation in arms against us, because we are up in arms against God. The time shall come when those who stand up against the Most High shall find no comfort left them—and no hope of comfort—everything that can make existence tolerable shall be withdrawn and everything that can make it

intolerable shall be poured upon them. For upon the wicked, God shall rain snares, of fire and brimstone, and a horrid tempest—this shall be the portion of their cup.

Behold, then, when Emmanuel stood for us and suffered in our stead, He too must thirst. He must be deprived of every comfort, stripped naked to the last rag, and hung up on the cross, as though earth rejected Him, and heaven would not receive Him. Midway between the two worlds He dies in the most abject poverty, and because of our sin He cries, “I thirst!”

Beloved, never seek for companionship with any who would ignore the miseries of the Lord, for, depend upon it, in that proportion they lessen the glory of the atonement. If it is but a light thing for the sinner to rebel against God, it was not a light thing for Christ to redeem him. It covered Christ with the greatest luster, for, after all, it stands out as one of His most resplendent works that He has redeemed us from going down into the pit, having found a ransom for us.

By so much the greater the love, by so much the greater is the salvation. Think not lightly of sin and its punishment, lest you come to think lightly of Christ and what He suffered to redeem you from your guilt. The cry, “I thirst,” is part of the substitutionary work which Christ performed when He thirsted, because, otherwise, sinners would have thirsted forever and have been denied all the pleasure, and joy, and peace of heaven.

The meditation upon this cry as proceeding from our Lord invites one more remark. Will it be straining the text too far if we say that underlying these words, “I thirst,” *there is something more than a mere thirst for drink?* Once, when He sat upon the well of Samaria, He said to the poor harlot who met Him there, “Give me a drink,” and He got a drink from her—a drink that the world knew nothing about, when she gave her heart to Him, obedient to His Gospel.

Christ is always thirsting after the salvation of precious souls and that cry on the cross that thrilled all who listened to it was the outburst of the great heart of Jesus Christ as He saw the multitude, and He cried unto His God, “I thirst.” He thirsted to redeem mankind, He thirsted to accomplish the work of our salvation. This very day He thirsts still in that respect, as He is still willing to receive those who come to Him, still resolved that such as come shall never be cast out, and still desirous that they may come.

Oh! poor souls, you do not thirst for Christ, but you little know how He thirsts for you. There is love in His heart towards those who have no love to Him. Christ would not have you die, Christ would not have you cast into hell. Give yourselves up, then, to the gentle sway of Him who for your souls' good, said, “I thirst.”

Oh! I wish that all we who love Christ knew more of this hungering and thirsting after the redemption of our fellow men. The Lord teach us to sympathize with them. If He wept for sinners, may our cheeks never be dry. He was in anguish for their souls, and we will not restrain our anguish, because they will not be saved, but ignorantly, carelessly, or resolutely despise the Gospel of Christ.

Thus much upon this point, so far as it concerns our Lord, Himself. Turn not away your eyes, but look and listen as He cries, “I thirst.”

Very briefly, now let us notice—

II. OUR RELATIONSHIP AND OUR BEARING TOWARDS THIS CRY.

I shall address myself on this head to the people of God, and the first remark is this—Brethren, because Jesus Christ said, “I thirst,” *you and I are delivered from that terrible thirst which once devoured us.* We were awakened by the Holy Spirit, some of us, years ago, to perceive our danger. We had not known before what sin was—what a destroying fever it was. We had cherished it in our bosom, but when we began to discover our desperate position, we were compelled to thirst and cry for mercy.

With some of us, our thirst was very great—we could scarcely sleep—and as for our meals, we left them untouched often in the agony of our despair. I do remember how my soul chose strangling rather than life. It did seem so hard to live under the frown of God, awakened to a sense of sin, but unable to get rid of the sin.

Now at this moment that thirst has gone, for we have received the adoption, the salvation, the forgiveness. You came to Jesus as you were with all your thirst, and you stooped down and drank of the

crystal stream. And now you rejoice with joy unspeakable, because your thirst is gone. Oh! clap your hands for very joy at the remembrance of it. Be humble that you should need His thirst to save you from thirst, but oh! be glad to think that the work is done and that you shall never thirst again as you did then, for, "he that drinketh," says Christ, "of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, for it shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life."

Your insatiable desires are stayed. The horseleech within you that cried, "Give, give," at last is satisfied. The cravings of conscience that had been awakened by the love of God are satisfied. Now, oh! joy! your sorrow is over, your peace like a river has come, and your righteousness is like the waves of the sea. Live happily, live joyously. Tell others what Christ has done for you. Eat not your morsel alone, but publish to the world that through the thirst of a dying Savior you have ceased to thirst.

And as you have done with that first thirst of bitter agony, now seek to be filled with another thirst—a *thirst after more of Christ*. Oh! that sweet wine of His love is very thirst-creating—those who have once tasted it want more of it. Thirst after a closer walk with Him, thirst to know more of Him, thirst to be more like Him, thirst to understand more the mystery of His sufferings, and to be more full of anticipation of His blessed advent:

"Nearer, my God, to Thee; nearer to Thee."

Be this your cry. Open your mouth wide, for He will fill it. Enlarge your desires, for He will satisfy them all. Be eager after more of Christ. Hunger and thirst after more of righteousness. All your desires shall be supplied you. Do not, therefore, stint yourself by narrowing them. Oh! that you could ask more at His hands, for—

***"All your capacious powers can ask,
In Christ doth richly meet."***

Were your imagination to stretch her wings and soar never so far beyond the narrow bounds of space, she must weary long before she reached the fullness of God which dwells bodily in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let me also invite you to cultivate another thirst—a thirst like that which we read our Lord thirsted with—for *the conversion of our souls*. Give us but a score of men that hunger and thirst for the conversion of others and we shall see good work done. But oh! we are so cold, and callous, and sleeping, though men are perishing every day. Behold the mass of people gathered in this Tabernacle! We can never all meet again.

Some of us will probably be in eternity before another Sabbath shall have dawned—and of those who shall have departed this life, some will, perhaps, have gone down to the pit. And yet we have no tears for them! Oh! God, strike our hearts with a rod more powerful than that of Moses and fill our eyes with sympathetic tears!

Think what it is that your own child could be lost, that your own relative should perish! Oh! wake yourselves up to passionate prayer, and to longing desire, and to constant effort—and never from this moment cease to thirst with a passionate desire, which, like that of your Lord, shall fill you and compel you practically to say, in the industrious application of a spiritual life, "I thirst."

My last point is a very heavy one. I could wish it had not to be delivered. It is addressed—

III. TO UNGODLY MEN AND WOMEN.

If the Lord Jesus Christ thirsted when He only carried the sins of others, what thirst will be upon you when God shall punish you for your own sins? Either Christ must thirst for you, or you must thirst forever, and ever, and ever. There is but one alternative—Justice must be vindicated through a substitute, or it must be glorified in your everlasting destruction. Think what it will be to have your sweet cup and your flowing bowl all put away from you, and not a drop of water to cool your tongue—

to have your dainty meat and your gay festivals forever abolished—no light for your eyes, no joy for any one of the senses of your body, and your souls made to suffer woe unutterable!

I shall not stay to picture, even in Christ's own words, the agony of lost spirits. But I bid you keep this on your minds—If Christ, who was God's Son, suffered so bitterly for sins that were not His own, how bitterly must you, who are not God's sons, but God's enemies, suffer for sins that are your own? And you must so suffer unless Christ, the Substitute, stands for you. He was no Substitute for all, but only for His own people.

You say to me, "Did He stand for me?" I can tell you if you can answer this question, "Do you trust Jesus Christ? Will you now trust Him?" If so, a simple child-like faith in Jesus will bring you salvation. Now, remember, if you believe, all your sins are laid upon Christ and therefore they can never be laid upon you. If you believe, Christ was punished in your stead and you can never be punished, because he was punished for you.

Substitution—this is the groundwork of our confidence. Because He was accursed, we cannot be accursed, for, if we believe in Him, all that He suffered was for us and we stand absolved before the judgment seat of Christ. The Lord give you this simple faith in the Redeemer this very night, and then He will see in you of the travail of His soul, and the thirst of His great heart will be satisfied. The Lord bless you. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

PSALMS 51; 32; MATTHEW 26:59-68; LUKE 23

Let us read two Psalms of penitence. Repentance and faith go hand in hand all the way to heaven. Repenting and believing make up a large measure of the Christian life.

First, let us read the 51st Psalm, penned by David, after his great sin with Bathsheba, when, by the instrumentality of Nathan, he had been led to repentance. What if we have not fallen into any gross open sin. Yet, perhaps if we could see our hearts as God sees them, we should be as much ashamed as the Psalmist was when to the music of his sighs and groans, he poured out this Psalm.

Verse 1. *Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness, according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.*

What delicious words those are! "Thy lovingkindness." I have sometimes felt glad to be a Saxon, that I should speak a language that had such delightful words in it. "Lovingkindness," "tender mercy." Now, the eye that is quickest to see the tenderness of God is the eye of repentance, for the sinner who feels condemnation in his own heart looks so keenly after everything that may make for his comfort, and his eyes light on the tender mercies and lovingkindness of God. The prayer is for pardon—nay, it is for purification, as well as pardon.

2. *Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.*

Take out this plague spot. I cannot bear it any longer. Oh! cleanse me from every trace of it, my God, I beseech You.

3. *For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.*

I tell it to You because it haunts me. It is always present to my mind. It seems painted on my eyeballs. I cannot but see it, turn whichever way I may.

4. *Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.*

He had sinned against his people, setting them an ill-example—sinned against Bathsheba and Uriah—but he sees the whole evil concentrating itself, as it were, upon his God. He felt that the virus of the whole thing was that he had done dishonor to the name of the Most High, whose servant he was.

5-7. *Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.*

“Behold,” says he, as if to go to the bottom of it, and to show that sin was not an accident with him, but that he himself was sinful. It was a grand faith—it was an Abrahamic faith—that when a man had such a sense of sin as David had, he at the same time could believe in the cleansing power of the blood.

For you who do not know what sin is, and who have never groaned beneath the burden, to talk about the pardoning blood—oh! it is easy enough and there is nothing in it. But for a soul that knows the guilt, and feels it, and is burdened by it, still to believe in the power of the atoning sacrifice—this is faith indeed. David had seen the priest take the bunch of hyssop and dip it in the warm blood of the goat or the bullock, and then sprinkle it—and he says, “Lord, do the same with me—with that richer blood of divine atonement.”—that blood which, in David’s day, was yet to be shed. “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.”

8-10. *Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. 9 Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.*

Lord, the mischief lies deep. Strike at the root of it. I would not have You to wash out a spot only, but go to my heart and renew that, that I may sin no more.

11-14. *Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee. Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.*

In that verse there is one of the surest marks of David’s sincere repentance, namely, that he calls his sin by its right name—“blood-guiltiness.” I have no doubt that he had said to himself that Uriah died by accident, and pleaded very much to excuse and extenuate his guilt. But now he outs with it. That is the word—“blood-guiltiness.”

It is no use trying to apologize and excuse yourselves before God. As long as that is done, no pardon will ever be applied to the conscience. But when the sin is seen in its true colors, then shall those colors be washed away and we shall be whiter than snow.

“Then will I teach transgressors thy ways.” He felt that if God would pardon him, he would be the man to tell of God’s way of mercy to others. And I trust, dear friends, if we have tasted that the Lord is gracious, our witness will never be silent about the goodness and the mercy of the Lord. If you have never spoken to others, begin tonight. Teach others the ways of God to you.

15-19. *O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise. For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem. Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar.*

Sure to be good times when men are under a sense of pardoned sin. None serve Him so well as those whose sins are washed away—who feel the same within.

Now, we will read the **32nd Psalm.**

Verses 1-5. *Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah. I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.*

Soon over. Once poured into JEHOVAH's ear out of a contrite heart and the transgression was gone forever. May it be so with you, dear hearer. If Your sin has never been forgiven you till tonight, may you this night obtain pardon through confession of sin.

6-7. For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him. Thou art my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah.

MATTHEW 26:59-68; LUKE 23

Verses 59-60. *Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death; but found none:*

Neither for love nor money.

60. *Yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none.*

That is, none that agreed—the lie that one man spoke was refuted by the next.

61. *At last came two false witness, and said this—*

They did not say any other word, as if they did not know any word in any language vile enough for Him. "This"—our translators have very properly put in the word fellow.

61. *Fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.*

He never said anything of the kind. It was a most wicked misrepresentation of what He had said. If men wish to find an accusation against us, they can do it without any materials.

62-64. *And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee? But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.*

He binds them over to make their appearance before Him when He becomes the Judge and they shall take the place of the criminal.

65-66. *Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy. What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death.*

He looks round upon the seventy elders of the people who were sitting there in the great council and "They answered and said, He is guilty of death." Probably Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus were not there—they were the only two friends the Lord had in the Sanhedrin.

66-68. *They answered and said, He is guilty of death. Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands, Saying, Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee?*

This ended the regular ecclesiastical trial of Christ. A little time was spent before Pilate, the judicial ruler, was ready to see Christ, but as soon as the dawn was come, they dragged Him before another tribunal.

We shall now turn to **Luke 23**.

Verse 1-2. *And the whole multitude of them arose and led him unto Pilate. And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this—*

Put in what word you like—villain—scoundrel—our translators could not find a better word than that inexpressive-expressive word, "fellow." "We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ, a King." They shift the charge, you see, now. Before, it was blasphemy, now it is sedition.

2-3. *Fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar saying that he himself is Christ a King. And Pilate asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answered him and said, Thou sayest it.*

Another of the evangelists tells us that He first asked Pilate what he meant by the question, explaining that He only claimed the kingdom in a spiritual sense.

4-5. *Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this man. And they were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place.*

When Pilate heard them say Galilee, he caught at that—he did not wish to displease the multitude.

6-7. *When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. And as soon as he knew that he belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time.*

So away the Master goes—He must be dragged through the streets again to a third tribunal. Oh! You blessed Lamb of God! Never were sheep driven to the shambles as You were driven to death!

8. *And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad; for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him.*

But the Lord never worked miracles yet to gratify idle curiosity. He who would have worked a miracle to heal the poorest beggar in the street would not work a wonder to please the king in whose power He was.

9. *Then he questioned him in many words: but he answered him nothing.*

“No,” says good Christopher Ness—“John Baptist was Christ’s voice and Herod had stopped him—there Christ would not speak—as if He would say, ‘No, no,’ you did cut off John Baptist’s head, who was My messenger, and since you have ill-treated My ambassador, I, the King of kings, will have nothing to say to you.”

10. *And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused him.*

The original word is “made nought of him”—made Him as nothing.

11-12. *And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate. And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves.*

Two dogs could well agree to hunt the same prey, and sinners who quarrel on other things will often be quite agreed to persecute the Gospel.

13-16. *And Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, Said unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people: and, behold, I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him: No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him. I will therefore chastise him, and release him.*

Ah, that word, “chastise,” slips so glibly over the tongue, but you know what it meant, when the Roman lictors laid bare the back and used the terrific scourge! “I will scourge Him,” said Pilate. Perhaps he thought that if he scourged Him, His suffering would induce the Jews to spare His life.

17-20. *(For of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast). And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas: (Who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison). Pilate, therefore, willing to release Jesus, spoke again to them.*

He seems to have gone backward and forward many times, desiring to save the life of Christ, but not having the moral courage to do it.

21-26. *But they cried, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. And he said unto them the third time, Why, what evil hath he done? I have found no cause of death in him: I will therefore chastise him, and let him go. And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed. And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required. And he*

released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired; but he delivered Jesus to their will. And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.