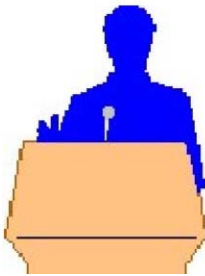




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The Lord Jesus Mocked, Maltreated and Murdered



“And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him,” Mark 15:20.

The synopsis of a sermon preached in Kilskeery Free Presbyterian Church by Rev. Ivan Foster.

Whatever concerns men may have in the sufferings of humanity, and let it be said that such an interest is right, there has never been much interest, if any at all, shown by the world, in the sufferings of Christ. The exclamation of the prophet with regards to the plight of Jerusalem following the Lord's judgment upon it, and the lack of sympathy shown by the surrounding nations, was prophetic of the sufferings of the Saviour on the cross. “Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the LORD hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger,” Lamentations 1:12. Calvary was the greatest crime of all time, yet who has expressed the least interest in it or the injustice done to the Lord of Glory, except the tiny remnant of those whose eyes were opened to “behold the Lamb of God”? I wish to consider the sufferings of Christ and the wickedness of man's cruelty to the Saviour and how that cruelty continues today.

I. THE TREATMENT CHRIST RECEIVED IS A GREAT STAIN UPON HUMANITY

Whatever good men may have done in the name of humanity, it is more than cancelled by the outrage of Calvary and its antecedents. It is like what was said of Naaman. “Now Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honourable, because by him the LORD had given deliverance unto Syria: he was also a mighty man in valour, but he was a leper,” 2 Kings 5:1. The leprosy of Naaman more than cancelled out his many honours. It was a dark stain that robbed his achievements in battlefield and court of their lustre. So it is with the achievements of mankind. What are they when set beside the wickedness done to Christ?

1. By any standard, Christ was cruelly treated. There was not the least evidence of justice in the procedures and actions of His accusers and judges.

He was arrested as a result of a jealous conspiracy. “For ... the chief priests had delivered him for envy,” Mark 15:10.

Liars had to be employed as witnesses. “And there arose certain, and bare false witness against him, saying, We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands. But neither so did their witness agree together,” Mark 14:57-59.

He was condemned by a judge who believed Him innocent. “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,” Luke 23:14.

He was executed as an act of appeasement. “And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be cruci-



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fied," Mark 15:15.

2. His treatment was all the more wicked considering the mercy and love He had shown toward His rejectors. The healing of bodies and the delivering of souls in the land over the three years of the Saviour's ministry testified to the Saviour's righteousness. Time and again, the people gave witness to the exceptional scenes the land of Israel enjoyed, during the Saviour's brief ministry. "And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake: and the multitudes marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel," Matthew 9:33. Peter, when he preached in the home of Cornelius, the Roman soldier, told of the glorious ministry of the Saviour. "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him," Acts 10:38.

3. The treatment of Christ reveals man's depravity. Such cruelty displays an enmity. "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be," Romans 8:7. The treatment of Christ was contrary to every moral standard and every rule of decency. To reward such good with such evil will be acknowledged by all as inexplicable except by the explanation offered in the Bible that man is by nature a hater of God! All the differences that exist between men are submerged and forgotten when they encounter Christ. In the face of this common "foe," the Pilates and the Herods of this world, they who were erstwhile enemies, will become friends. "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," Luke 23:11-12. Have we not seen "unionist" and "republican" make common cause against Christ and His people?

II. THE CHIEF CRUELTY OF MEN WAS THEIR MOCKING OF HIS CLAIMS

1. They mocked His claims by condemning Him for making them. "But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What need we any further witnesses? Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death," Mark 14:61-64. What the Saviour had affirmed in these verses was the truth about Himself. He was the Christ. But He was mocked at for making such a claim. What cruelty there is in the creature sneering at the Creator for daring to claim His rightful office!

2. They mocked His claims and His person by sham worship. "And the soldiers led him away into the hall, called Praetorium; and they call together the whole band. And they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his head, And began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews! And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and bowing their knees worshipped him," Mark 15:16-19. The purple robe, the crown of thorns, the reed, the bowing of the knee — this was a calculated and cruel mockery and affront to the person of Christ. Their true heart was seen in the smiting, piercing, and the spitting. That was their real attitude. The worship was a sham.

3. They mocked Him in the man they preferred. What and whom men prefer before



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the Lord Jesus speak volumes of their estimate of Him. "And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified," Mark 15:15. May I ask what it is you prefer before Christ? Many a person has rejected Christ in preference for a cigarette, a pint of beer or the friendship of evil companions. What cruelty is involved in such a mindless choice!

4. They mocked Him in their taunts as He died. "And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, Save thyself, and come down from the cross," Mark 15:29-30. It would be deemed inhuman to mock the most depraved wretch as he died under the stroke of a much deserved justice. What cries there would be from those organisations and groups, whose self-appointed task it is to monitor the administration of justice to those who lived only to deny justice to their victims, if they observed such mocking as that directed at the sinless, crimeless Son of God!

III. AGAINST THIS DARK BACKGROUND, CHRIST'S GRACE WAS SET FORTH

In the midst of this cruel mocking, Christ continued His gracious work. Never once did the wickedness of men toward Him provoke His retaliation. "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed," 1 Peter 2:21-24. During His arrest, His mockery of a trial, His cruel scourging, His actual crucifixion and the time on the cross, He did not act or speak in any manner other than in mercy and love. How marvellous this is!

1. He warned the traitor. "And as they sat and did eat, Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, One of you which eateth with me shall betray me. And they began to be sorrowful, and to say unto him one by one, Is it I? and another said, Is it I? And he answered and said unto them, It is one of the twelve, that dippeth with me in the dish," Mark 14:18-21. Throughout eternity, Judas will remember that last faithful warning and sink lower in misery under such a memory. How many times has Christ warned you, of what your rejection of Him will result in for you? Heed the warning while yet there is time.

2. He healed the wounded enemy. "And one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear. And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And he touched his ear, and healed him," Luke 22:50-51. What kindness you, Christ-rejector, have enjoyed even as you turned your back upon the Redeemer and dismissed Him from your life! You have continued to breathe and enjoy good health, good health which you have employed to oppose further the Son of God.

3. He taught the ignorant. "Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that



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is of the truth heareth my voice," John 18:36-37. Paul said of the Saviour's talks with Pilate that He "witnessed a good confession," 1 Timothy 6:13. Pilate, the unjust judge, had the truth taught to him by the plaintiff toward Whom Pilate would act so dishonourably.

4. He prayed for His enemies. In the midst of the afflictions that man heaped upon Him, Christ had thoughts only for the sinner. "Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do," Luke 23:34.

5. He saved the sinner. As the sinner did his best to kill the Lord of Glory, He employed His mercy and love to save a wicked sinner. Please read the story of the thief's conversion in Luke 23:39-43. What a record of grace it is! It provides a basis of hope for the worst of offenders. No matter what your sin may be, you do not match the man in these verses. He looks into the face, the cruelly marred face of the Son of God and reviles Him. Yet within moments he is the newest recruit to the army of the King of Kings and is enjoying the blessed assurance of sins forgiven. This is the mercy of the Lord Jesus.

The mockery of the Lord Jesus Christ continues today. His word is denied; His claims are denied; His name is denied; His person is mocked. Above all, many bow the knee to Him in ritualistic mockery. How many, even this day and in this house, have opened their mouth to utter words of praise in the hymns that we have been singing. You have bowed in prayer. You have shown outward reverence toward the Saviour's name and Word. And yet you will turn your back upon and refuse His mercy as the meeting ends. Wherein do you differ from those whose actions we have examined tonight? Is there any real difference, except in degree, between the attitude you display and that of those around the cross of Christ? I think not. Consider yourself tonight in the light of the cross and the Saviour's compassion and love and recognise the wrong you do the One Who will one day pronounce eternal sentence upon you.