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A LOOK AT THE CRUCIFIED ONE.

– JUNE 12. – MATT. 27:35-50. –

"Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures." – 1 Cor. 15:3.

ALTHO the Scripture narrative of our Lord's crucifixion is told in a most simple and artless manner, and without apparent attempt at embellishment to give it tragic effect, nevertheless in its simplicity it is one of the most touching narratives of history. As no novel could present a more eventful life, so likewise none ends more tragically than did this great real drama set upon the stage by the Almighty, as an exhibition both to angels and to men of his Justice and Love combined. How strikingly depravity of fallen human nature was illustrated in those who witnessed our Lord's many wonderful works, and then his [R2316 : page 170] unresisting sacrifice for our sins, coldly – without appreciation. Nothing could illustrate this better than the account of the division of our Lord's garments and the lot cast to see who would get the seamless robe, [R2316 : page 171] which so beautifully represented his own personal perfection, and which had probably been a gift from one of the noble women mentioned as being amongst his friends. (Luke 8:3.) The climax was reached when, after finally dividing the spoils, his executioners unpityingly viewed his sufferings and death – "Sitting down they watched him there."

Moreover we are compelled to concede that while the influence of the Gospel of Christ has had a large influence upon the world of mankind, producing a civilization which certainly is to be appreciated as a great advance over more rude and barbarous conditions of the past, nevertheless, we can readily discern that under the veneer of worldly politeness and civilization there is yet a great deal of the depraved disposition in the natural heart. For are there not many to-day who, after coming to a knowledge of the facts of his case – a greater and clearer knowledge, too, than that enjoyed by the Roman soldiers – after learning of the wonderful works and of the sufferings of Christ, and that these were

on our behalf, instead of falling at his feet and exclaiming, "My Lord and my Redeemer," on the contrary do just as the Roman soldiers did – "sitting down, they watch him there?" Their hearts are not moved with pity, or at least not to a sufficiency of sympathy to control their wills and conduct, and they continue to be "the enemies of the cross of Christ;" – for as he declared, "Whoever is not for me is against me."

It was probably with irony that Pilate wrote out the inscription that was placed above our Lord's head on the cross, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." He knew that the rulers of the Jews had delivered Jesus to death because they were envious of his influence as a teacher; and since the charge that they brought against him was "He maketh himself a king," claiming, "We have no king but Caesar," and since by this hypocritical course they had forced Pilate to crucify him, on the claim that it was necessary to the protection of the throne of Caesar, therefore Pilate now retaliated and used their weapon against themselves. But little did he think, of course, that this was the true title of the wonderful man Christ Jesus, whom they caused to be put to death. Another evangelist tells us that the leading Jews objected strongly, but that Pilate refused to alter the inscription.

It was a part of the ignominy which our dear Redeemer bore and a part of the "cup" which he desired that, if possible, he might be spared drinking, that he was crucified between two thieves, and as an evildoer. The Apostle says that we should consider this from the standpoint of enduring contradiction or opposition of sinners against himself, and suggests that it will make us stronger (not in fighting with carnal words or weapons, but) in *enduring* similar though lighter opposition and afflictions and misrepresentations.

"He suffered much for me, more than I now can know,
Of bitterest agony he drained the cup of woe.
He bore, he bore it all for me. What have I borne for thee?"

It is proper in this connection to remember that it was not the pain which our Lord endured, not the agony, which constituted our ransom-

price; – it was his death. Had he died in a less violent and ignominious manner our ransom-price would have been equally well paid; but the trials, sufferings and contradictions which our Lord endured, while no part of our ransom-price, were expedient, in the Father's judgment, as being a part of his testing. The patient endurance of these proved his loyalty to the Father and to righteousness to the fullest degree: and thus proved his worthiness of the high exaltation which the Father had prepared as his reward. It was in view, not only of his humiliation to man-nature and his death for our sins, but in view also of the cup of shame and ignominy which he drained, that it is written, "*Wherefore* God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth." – Phil. 2:9,10.

How strangely the average mind, in its fallen estate, unguided by the sound principles of judgment and the Lord's word, can be swayed from one extreme to the other. This is illustrated by the fact that many of those who wagged their heads and reviled the Lord upon the cross, and taunted him with his declaration that he was the Son of God, and with his statement respecting the temple of his body, had evidently been amongst those who heard him during the three and a half years of his ministry. Some of them probably had seen his "many wonderful works," and were among those of whom it is written, they "marvelled at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth;" and who said, "When Messiah cometh can he do greater works than this man doeth?" Yet when they saw the tide turned against him, and especially when the influential of their religious teachers opposed him, they seem to have been easily swayed. We feel ashamed for the weakness of our fallen race as here shown. Yet the same thing is exemplified to-day: however pure and however luminous may be the presentations of the divine truth, if the chief priests and scribes and Pharisees of Christendom denounce it, they sway the multitude: however pure and true and honorable the lives of the Lord's servants, Satan can still suborn false witnesses, and secure honorable (?) servants to slander and reproach them. But this is what we are to expect. Did not our Master say, "It is enough for the disciple **[R2316 : page 172]** that he be as his Master,

and the servant as his Lord: if they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?" Did he not assure us also, "When they shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake, rejoice and be exceeding glad for great is your reward in heaven"? Thus is fulfilled in us the declaration of the prophets also, "The reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me."

The reproaches of the scribes and Pharisees were evidently the most cutting of all. When deriding Jesus' kingly office, and power, and faith in the heavenly Father, and his claimed relationship to him, they bantered him to manifest that power and to come down from the cross. O, how little they knew that it was necessary for the Son of Man to suffer these things to enter into his glory. How little they understood the divine plan, that Messiah could have no power to deliver Israel and the world from the hand of Satan and death, except he first of all should lay down his life as our *ransom* price. How thankful we may feel that our dear Redeemer was not controlled by passion and revenge, but by the Father's will and word, so that he endured the abuses of his tormenters in meekness and bowed his will to the will and plan of the Heavenly Father.

And similarly how the living members of the body of Christ are misunderstood; not only by the worldly, but especially by the prominent Pharisees of to-day. Verily, "as he is so are we in this world." As the world did not understand the Master's sufferings and trials, and could not see the necessity for his sacrifice, but rather considered these as marks of divine disfavor, as it is written, "We did esteem him smitten and afflicted of God," so with the Church; – the fact that God's consecrated people have his favor in spiritual and not in temporal blessings, is misunderstood by the world. They see not that the blessing of the spiritual nature and the spiritual favors which we seek are to be obtained by sacrifice of the earthly favor. But all who are of this sacrificing class, and running the race for the prize of the high calling may, with the Apostle, rejoice in the sufferings of the present time, and count its crosses but as loss and dross that they may win Christ and be found in him – members of the body of the glorified Christ.

It was not surprising that the two criminals on either hand of our Redeemer should join with the others in reviling Christ. The only little word of sympathy, however, that he received on this occasion, so far as the record goes, came later from one of these thieves. Our readers are referred to our issue of June 1, 1896, in respect to our Lord's promise to the penitent thief.

Our Lord's crucifixion took place at the sixth hour, nine o'clock in the morning – appropriately as represented in the type, for this was the hour of the morning daily sacrifice, and his death occurred six hours later, at three o'clock in the afternoon which, according to the Jewish reckoning, was the ninth hour. This also was appropriately represented in the type, for the daily evening sacrifice was offered at this hour. It was fitting also that nature should veil her glories before such a scene, and that there should be darkness. We are not, however, to suppose that it was a dense darkness, but simply darkness, as stated. Nevertheless, it must have been supernaturally dark for, as it was the full of the moon, a solar eclipse could have lasted but a few minutes at most. [Please see Pastor Russell's correction of this remark in R2489. site Editor.]

It was now that our Lord uttered those agonizing words, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" He had borne, with wonderful fortitude, the contradictions of sinners against himself, and Peter's denial, and the fact that all of his disciples fled from him, and that his last hours were spent amid the jeers of his enemies; but when the moment came that the Father's fellowship of spirit was withdrawn from him, that was more than he could bear, and it is claimed that he died of a literally broken heart, and that this was evidenced by the fact that both blood and water proceeded from the spear-wound inflicted shortly after his death.

It may be questioned by some whether or not this was a failure of our Lord's faith merely, and not an actual withdrawal of the Father's favor and communion. **[R2317 : page 172]** We hold, however, that the philosophy of the subject proves that it was the latter, and that this was a necessary part of our Lord's suffering as the sin-bearer. The penalty of Adam's

transgression was not only death, but additionally separation or alienation from him of divine favor and communion: consequently, when our Lord Jesus took Adam's place and suffered in his room and stead, the just for the unjust, that he might redeem us to God by his precious blood, – it was not only necessary that he should die on our behalf, but it was also necessary that he should experience the full cutting off and separation from the Father, which was a *part of the penalty* of Adam's transgression. He was not alienated or separated from the Father as a sinner throughout the three and a half years in which he was laying down his life; neither did he suffer the full penalty during those three and a half years; but the moment of crisis came at the cross, and for at least a brief period he must be deprived of the Father's fellowship, and must thus die – *as a sinner*, for our sins; in order that "as by a man came death, by a man also should come the resurrection of the dead."

When we consider our dear Master's experience, [R2317 : page 173] we do well not to judge much from the last words of the dying, respecting their own spiritual state. False theories may beget false hopes in some, and lead them to believe that they are "sweeping through the gates of the New Jerusalem," when really they are sweeping through the gates into the great prisonhouse of death. The most extravagant dying expressions were not made, so far as the record goes, by the Lord or his inspired Apostles. Nevertheless they had a good hope, a firm hope, a Scriptural hope, a hope which gave them strength for the battle of life and to its very close to be faithful to the Lord and to the Word of his testimony: on the contrary, many of those who die with extravagant expressions of hope on their lips were less faithful to the Lord, less faithful to his Word, and less fully consecrated to his service. Let our faith, confidence and rejoicing be as was that of the Master and the Apostles, not so much in the experience and feelings of the moment as in God's Word and its testimony, – the "more sure word of prophecy, to which we do well to take heed, as unto a light which shineth in a dark place."

Matthew does not record the words of our Lord when "he cried again with a loud voice," but we have them from Luke and from John. He said, "It is finished! Father into thy hands I commend my spirit."

Many false teachers tell us that nothing was finished, and declare that no sacrifice for sins was needed, and that none was given; but the testimony of the Scriptures is explicit on this subject that without a sacrifice, "without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins." Our Lord's sacrifice dated from the time that he reached manhood's estate, thirty years, when he came promptly to John at Jordan, and was baptized – thus outwardly symbolizing his full consecration of himself unto death, in doing the Father's will. The sacrifice there begun was faithfully continued down to his last moment. When he had endured to the very last all the ignominy, all the shame, and was finally cut off from communion with the Father – this was the last, and so our Lord indicated by the words, "It is finished." His work was finished; the redemption price was finished; the sufferings were over; he had finished the work which the Father had given him to do, so far as its shameful and ignominious features were concerned. Another part of his work remained and is yet unfinished, namely, the work of blessing all the families of the earth, bestowing upon them the gracious favor and opportunities of eternal life secured to them justly by his sacrifice for sins.

He gave up the ghost, that is the spirit. What spirit? He did not yield up his spirit body; for at this time he had no spirit body. Thirty-four years before he had laid aside spirit conditions and nature, to become partaker of a human nature, through his mother Mary – the spirit of life which belonged to him there having been transferred to human conditions. He enjoyed and exercised this spirit of life or life-power, as the animating, vivifying principle of his human body, for thirty-three and a half years; now he was surrendering it up in death – dissolution. The crucified flesh was to be his no longer, for, as the Apostle declares, he took upon him the form of a servant, *for* the suffering of death, and not *for* the keeping of that form of a servant to all eternity. The promise of the Father was that he should be glorified with himself, and even with a still higher glory than

he had with the Father before the world was, – and that was a spiritual glory, and not a human glory. He left spiritual conditions when he "was *made flesh* and dwelt amongst us;" but he trusted in the Father that when he had finished the work given him to do he should be again received up into glory – the spirit condition. Thus he said to the disciples, "What and if the Son of Man should ascend up where he was before?"

His commitment of his spirit to the Father's care implied therefore that he knew thoroughly just what death is – a cessation of being – yet had confidence in the Father that he would not be permitted to remain forever in death, but would be granted *again*, in resurrection, the spirit of life which he now laid down in harmony with the Father's will. He knew and had foretold to his disciples that he would be raised from the dead on the third day. He recognized that his spirit of life, his vitality, his being, came from the Father, originally, and was subject to the Father's power and care: and knowing that the Father had promised to give him *being again*, he here merely expresses his confidence in this promise. And his confidence was abundantly fulfilled, in that God raised him from the dead, highly exalted in nature, not only above human nature but far above angels and principalities and powers," to the very highest plane of the spirit nature, namely, to the divine nature.

And, remarkable as it may seem, this is the very same invitation that is extended to the Church of this Gospel age, that they may have fellowship with their Master's sufferings, and eventually have fellowship also with him in glory, and as "partakers of the divine nature" and its glory, honor and immortality, far above the honor and nature of angels, tho that be grand, and a little higher than perfect mankind. (2 Pet. 1:4; Rom. 2:7; Psa. 8:5.) In view of all this we may well exhort one another to "lay aside every weight, and to run with patience the race set before us in the gospel, looking unto Jesus, the author of our faith, until he shall become the finisher of it."
