

Exhortation 8: Christ Crowned

Charles Herle (1598-1659)

Matthew 27:29

I. The Text Opened

A. Matthew 27:29

1. “And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!” (Matt. 27:29).

a) How slippery is the nature of popular affection?

b) The crowd now demanding that Jesus be crucified had just a few days earlier lined the dirt path through Jerusalem with their garments and choice olive branches for the donkey to walk on that carried the Lord.

(1) They had gone before and behind him in procession, crying, “hosanna,” and, “blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord!”

(2) But now those olive branches have been replaced with a platted crown of thorns that they beat down on his head, piercing into his temples.

(3) And their cries of blessing have been replaced with mocking rants of, “Hail, King of the Jews!”

c) Such is the collective heart of the multitude.

II. The Doctrine from the Text

A. Doctrine: How foolish is the man that seeks to support himself on the pillars of this shifting sand, desiring to be identified with the crowd; for he soon finds his green olive branches turning into entangling snares of thorns.

1. How much wiser to answer the personal call of God to follow Christ and receive the crown of life.

a) This choice is not a collective community decision, but a very individual and intimate one.

b) The first chapter of the gospel of John shares how Andrew, the first disciple of Christ, came to follow him.

c) Andrew heard John’s testimony of the Lord and the miraculous events that occurred when he baptized Christ.

(1) Andrew believed, even then.

d) But the next day Jesus himself came to the place where John, Andrew, and another disciple of John stood.

e) And when John saw Jesus coming toward them, he said, “Behold, the Lamb of God!”

(1) Andrew’s faith was evidenced outwardly at that moment, as he immediately turned and followed the Lord.

(2) And not only did he follow, but he hurried to find his own brother, Simon Peter, to tell him, “We have found the Messiah!”

2. The Messiah – this spotless lily among the cursed thorns of earth, (Song 2:2, Gen 3:17), endured the vicious crowd, the mocking robe, the thorny crown, and the scepter of reeds for a time in order that he might one day be enthroned on a white cloud wearing a golden crown and wielding a sharp sickle over his eternal kingdom, (Rev. 14:14).

a) For it was in the heart of God from the beginning of time that he would provide the heirs of his kingdom with the blessing of exchanging our cursed thorns for the crown of life that only he can give, (Heb. 2:9, Rev. 2:10).

b) He is the blessed God, the Lord and Savior, bearing a crown of triumph (Rev. 3:11), a garland of delight, to teach his people to willingly endure the trials and chastenings he ordains for them as he did the cross with its shame that was set before him.

(1) For if disciples will simply look to him, the Author and Finisher of their faith, they know that anything they suffer here in following him will be duly rewarded with glory in the hereafter, (Heb. 12:1-11).

c) Can his people glory in anything but his cross by which the world is crucified to them, and they to the world? (Gal. 6:14).

(1) When he willingly chose to wear the cursed and thorny crown for his people, how can they seek any more worthy a crown than bearing his cross? (Matt. 16:24-26).

d) They well deserve a life of thorns as a sinner, the thorns of shame and remorse for sin.

(1) But they plead with him to remove from their heart the curse of these thorns that would choke the growth of the word (Luke 8:7) and soak their hearts instead with the water of true repentance, so that they may bring forth fruit in due season (Psa. 1), and that they would even of thorns gather grapes of joy and gladness.

3. When Adam and Eve fell to the temptation of the serpent, the curse of sin and death infiltrated their world.

a) But the curse did not stop with them.

b) The beautiful earth that God created for man to inhabit also suffered.

(1) As God told Adam in Genesis 3:17-18, “cursed is the ground for your sake; in sorrow shall you eat of it all the days of your life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth.”

(2) Thorns, therefore, are representative of the curse of sin on the earth.

c) Further, under the Mosaic Law, those who were hanged on a tree were cursed.

(1) For most capital offenses covered by Jewish Law, stoning was the form of punishment.

(2) But sometimes the dead body would be hung from a tree for all to see as a deterrent to further crime.

(3) However, the law made it illegal to leave the body hanging overnight, (Deut. 21:23).

d) In Galatians 3:13, Paul references this law in relation to Jesus and his death on the cross, “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us. For it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree.’”

(1) The cross of Christ is sometimes also referred to in Scripture as a, “tree,” as in Acts 5:30, “The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you killed and hanged on a tree.” (See also Acts 10:39).

e) In his passion and death, Christ bore both curses for his people.

(1) First, he wore the mocking shame of the crown of thorns on his head.

(2) And then he actually became a sin offering for his people and bore the curse of sin as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world in his body on that tree.

(a) As 2 Corinthians 5:21 plainly states, “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

4. No curse remains, therefore, to haunt those redeemed by his blood.
- a) For the throne of Christ's passion was the cross, and his crown, the thorns.
 - b) He carried both with him into his death, that he may triumph over all those powers of darkness, sin, death, and hell, (Col. 2:15), at his resurrection.
 - c) To be cursed is to be condemned, and Paul makes it clear in Romans 8:1 that, "there is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."
 - (1) *And why is that? Because Christ erased the curse for his people when he satisfied the debt payment to God for our sin.*
 - (2) *But not only was Christ made a curse but for us; he bore that curse of sin willingly. As Hebrews 12:2 says, he endured the cross and the shame of the curse, "for the joy that was set before him."*
 - d) In the Song of Solomon 2:2, Christ is depicted as a *rosa inter spinas*, Latin for, "a rose among the thorns."
 - (1) *It is impossible to pick a rose without encountering thorns.*
 - (2) *And it is in this way with the beauty and excellency of Christ.*
 - (3) *He makes it clear that to be his follower, we must be willing to take up his cross, (Matt. 16:24), for without conflict there is no conquest.*
 - (4) *And without conquest, there is no triumph.*
 - (5) *He that does not triumph over sin here in this world of thorns shall never triumph over Satan hereafter in a crown of glory.*

III. The Text Applied

A. You are to consider that you are not alone in this cursed world of thorns and crosses.

1. Not only has Christ tread that path before us, so he is thoroughly acquainted with our pain and grief, (Isa. 53:3), but he has also triumphed over all and now offers us rest among the thorns in the refuge of his heart, until he brings us to himself in glory.
 - a) So, we are to be assisted in sitting and resting and finding shelter in him right now by the Spirit's influences in our life, (Psalm 124:6).
2. In all our delight and mirth let us ever cling to that thorny crown that he willingly wore for us.
 - a) Temptations are well tempered with the weight of the price he paid for us to enjoy him and to enjoy life so full of grace and blessing.
 - b) For we know that in the world to come, we will be in his presence where there is fullness of joy.
 - c) We will be standing at his right hand, where there are pleasures for evermore, (Psa. 16:11).