

Exhortation 15 – Christ Crucified Golgotha

Charles Herle (1598-1659)

Matthew 26:2 and 27:33-34

I. The Text Opened

A. Christ Crucified at Golgotha

1. “And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull, they gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink,” (Matt. 27:33-34).

a) When all the filters of modern Christianity are removed and we behold the earthly ministry of our Lord through the eyes of truth, the words of Paul in Philippians 2:7 confirm what we see.

(1) Speaking of Christ, he explains, “He made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant.”

b) Consistent with that description, Jesus died among thieves on a hill of putrid refuse known as Golgotha, among rotting, graveless bones of infamous malefactors.

(1) His birth was without a cradle, his life without a place to lay his head (Matt. 8:20), and his burial without coverings or a grave of his own.

(2) Not only that, his bitter suffering and death were on display right outside Jerusalem, the theater of the world (especially at this time of the Passover), to further proliferate the disgrace and shame he endured.

II. The Doctrine from the Text

A. Doctrine: Christ died as a sin offering.

1. Job’s misery atop a dunghill, (as shared in the Old Testament book by the same name), was lamentable by comparison, as he sat scraping his sores with a potsherd, (Job 2:8), while the worms gnawed his flesh.

a) But Christ was not allowed the opportunity to sit as Job did, for he hangs on the cross, while his strength is dried up like a potsherd, (Psa. 22:15).

b) All the while, the worst of worms – our vile sins – eat through to his very soul. Finally, he is crucified outside the gates of the city (Deut. 16:5-6); not on the ground but aloft in the air for all to see, to demonstrate the merit of his death upon all kinds of people.

(1) Breathing his last breath atop this dunghill of Golgotha confirms the raw, brute ugliness of his passion and suffering, (Psa. 105:18).

2. If we are to share in this sin offering, we must also go outside the camp, (Deut. 16:7).

a) “Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach,” (Heb. 13:13), offering up ourselves as living sacrifices to him, (Rom. 12:1).

b) For though he offered up himself once for all, (Heb. 7:27), our self-sacrifices of service and worship, thanksgiving and praise should be continually burning as sweet-smelling incense unto him inspires us with his own breath, revives us with his own blood, nourishes us with his own flesh, redeems us with his own death, and secures us in his own wounds.

3. He is not only the blessed Lord, not only the Savior in his death, but also Mediator in his life.

- a) Christ rejoices over his people as the father rejoiced over his prodigal son, or the shepherd his lost sheep that he so long sought in the wilderness, or the lost coin that was found on sweeping the house.
- b) He does not think any place too far, any pains too much, any conditions too low to seek his people out to save them.
 - (1) *Christian, then, are to seek and see him everywhere.*
 - (2) *In the mountain where he prayed, in the garden where he sweated and bled, in the wilderness where he fasted, but especially here in Golgotha, where he suffered and died, (Matt. 27).*
 - (3) *For it was on Golgotha that he stretched widest his arms of mercy and pierced deepest his heart of compassion.*
- c) If the first Adam turned Paradise into a Golgotha of death and of sin, how graciously have he, the second Adam, turned Golgotha into a Paradise of life and of grace.
 - (1) *Here grows that tree of life, which is to say, his cross.*
 - (2) *Here flows that river that nourishes the garden of his church, which is to say, his blood.*
- d) For Christians, he will raise them out of the grave of sin.
 - (1) *Seeing he poured out his blood and breathed out his soul among these dead, dry stinking bones, he makes Christians a sacrifice of the sweetest savor to the Father; and since for Christians he embraced so much shame, so much pain, so much poverty to die on Golgotha, a loathsome dunghill, he will never let them seek merely ease, glory, or profit, but count all things no better than loss and dung, (Phil. 3:8), that they may win him in all his wonders.*

B. Christ Crucified During the Feast of the Passover

1. “Ye know that after two days is the feast of the Passover, and the Son of Man is betrayed to be crucified,” (Matt. 26:2).
 - a) God executes everything perfectly according to his divine plan and eternal timetable.
 - b) So, it is no mystery that the events of Christ’s suffering and death coincided seamlessly with the annual Jewish celebration of Passover, as he is the spotless Lamb of God whose blood rescues us from the bondage of sin and death, (John 1:29).
 - c) But that only scratches the surface of this richly meaningful confluence of events.
 - (1) *Going deeper, the significance of Passover is that it commemorates Israel’s freedom from slavery and exodus from Egypt under Moses’ leadership.*
 - (2) *It is called Passover because when God’s Angel of Death swept through Egypt that night executing the final plague (slaying the firstborn male of every household that did not have the blood applied), God’s people were spared this destruction by applying the sacrificial lamb’s blood to the door posts of their homes.*
 - d) Scripture is wrought with typologies and representations.
 - (1) *Just like children must first learn the alphabet before they can read, it was necessary for God to teach significant truths to his children by way of pictures and examples before he would expect them to understand such concepts as sin, sacrifice, and salvation.*
 - e) To that end, God’s chosen people are typified in respect to the combat against the flesh, and to the slavery of sin, a picture found in Egyptian slavery.
 - (1) *So when God instructed Moses to tell his people to sacrifice their most pristine lamb and apply that innocent’s blood to their door post if they would be saved from destruction and death, he was demonstrating the necessity of applying the blood of Christ, our spotless sacrificial Lamb, to the door post of our hearts by faith if we are to avoid eternal death.*

(2) *And as it was with the Israelites, once we obey God's instruction, he frees us from the bondage of Egypt (i.e., our slavery to sin is broken by Christ our Passover).*

III. The Text Applied

A. Passover and Christ

1. Because of what Passover represents, it is easy to understand why it was a most celebrated holy day.
 - a) And yet, at this particular Passover, during the time of Christ's passion and death, while celebrating the feast in memory of the deliverance from Egypt, (Exodus 12), they delivered their Savior into the hands of his enemies.
 - b) Still yet, because of Christ's sacrifice, living waters of grace and mercy flow forth to us out of this hard rock of their malice.
 - c) For as Paul plainly states in 1 Cor. 5:7, "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us."
2. He is the blessed Lord and Savior, in his hands alone are the times and seasons which man may not determine but must attend.
 - a) When we now observe and contemplate the events of that most significant of Passovers, the sacrifice of your spotless Lamb on the cross, we are amazed anew at his awesome power, infinite love, and ceaseless mercy.
 - b) He is, indeed, King of kings and Lord of lords, and our soul ought to praise him!
3. He is that true Lamb of God (1 Cor. 5:7) which still makes the destroying angel of his Father's wrath to pass by the doors of our soul without slaughter.
 - a) And yet, he also stands at the door himself and knocks for entrance into our heart (Rev. 3:20).
 - b) As he is our Passover, he ought to be our guest as well.
 - c) We beckon him not to pass us without knocking, without entering, that we may commune with him, and he with us.
 - d) It was at a feast, that he loses himself in sacrifice for us.
 - e) Let us never forget what he gave up that we might live and help us desire more every day to sacrifice our own selfishness to his service and glory.