

SERMON UPON JOHN XIX. 34-37.

But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came thereout blood and water. And he that saw it bear record, and his record is true; and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, a bone of him shall not be broken. And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced.—JOHN XIX. 34-37.

I HAVE taken occasion upon these opportunities to go over the story of Christ's passion by several paragraphs. This paragraph treateth of the things which happened between the death and burial of Christ: and the main thing offered therein is that notable circumstance that happened immediately after Christ's death, the flowing of water and blood out of Christ's side.

In the words you have—

1. The occasion of this circumstance, ver. 31-33, 'The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross upon the sabbath-day (for that sabbath-day was an high day), besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and they might be taken away. Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other that was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs.'

2. The circumstance itself, 'But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came thereout blood and water.'

3. A solemn attestation of it, ver. 36, 'For these things were done that the scriptures should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken.'

4. The ends of God's providence, which are two—the fulfilling of the prophecies of scripture, confirmed by the citations of many places.

[1.] That Christ should die without breaking of a bone, ver. 36, 'A bone of him shall not be broken.'

[2.] That yet his body should be pierced with a spear, ver. 37, 'Again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they have pierced.'

I shall go over these circumstances in my accustomed method, with brief observations or hints of meditation.

First, The occasion of the words, which was the niceness and scrupulosity of the Jews, that the dead bodies might not hang upon the

cross upon the sabbath-day, especially that high sabbath of the passover. Therefore they go to Pilate to hasten the death of the malefactors by breaking their legs; which is readily granted, and accordingly executed upon the two thieves, but not upon Christ, because he was dead already. I shall not stay on the occasion, only observe—

1. That superstition is fuller of ceremony than mercy. We find the Jews very tender in the lesser points of the law. They made no conscience of spilling innocent blood, yet by no means would put the price of blood into the treasury. They made no conscience of bringing Christ to the cross, but are zealous not to have him hang there on the great sabbath of the passover; as if God would accept their eating the typical lamb, when they had slain the Shepherd of the flock and of the church.

2. That the worst of men are usually very solicitous about external worship. The wicked Jews, that crucified the Lord of life, would not have the passover profaned with an unseemly spectacle. Every man must have somewhat of religion, or else conscience will not be quiet; and externals are very easy. We find it in our carnal people, that with much reverence observe the externals of the sacraments; though they altogether neglect the obligation of them. They are as zealous for the supper as the Jews for the decency of the passover, and yet are false and faithless in their allegiance to Christ; like madmen, tear the bond, and yet prize the seal.

3. From their going to ask leave of Pilate for the additional punishment, we learn that malefactors are not to be taken out of the hands of justice. Every degree of punishment and torment is left to the magistrate, and not to the malice of the executioner or the fury of the multitude: Deut. xxv. 2, 3, 'And it shall be, if the wicked man be worthy to be beaten, that the judge shall cause him to lie down, and to be beaten before his face, according to his fault, by a certain number. Forty stripes he may give him, and not exceed: lest if he should exceed, and beat him above these with many stripes, then thy brother should seem vile unto thee.' Therefore the judge was to be present when the malefactor was beaten, that they might not receive more or less stripes than the law awarded.

4. From Pilate's grant observe, that when once a man giveth up himself to please men, there is no end of compliance. Pilate, by the importunity of the Jews, is first drawn to scourge Christ, and then to crucify him, and now to sign an order for breaking his legs, a torment unusual, and contrary to the custom of the Romans. When we are tempted to serve men, we have need consider the issue. The first temptations are modest and plausible, but afterwards more servile and odious. It is good to break off at first, unless we mean to keep time and pace with every lust of men.

5. From Christ's being dead already, before the others crucified with him, we learn his willingness to die for us. His love made quick despatch. He could have retained his life longer, but he was willing to let it go, that everything might be finished that was necessary for our comfort and restoration.

6. We learn also from hence, the voluntariness of his death. If his legs had been broken, his death would have seemed an effect of violence

rather than willing resignation. He had said, John x. 18, 'No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself: I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.' It is meant of his divine power, and to notify that there was no force put upon Christ, but he would undertake it, and appear in this circumstance. In this oblation Christ would be the priest; his legs were not broken, but he gave up the ghost. Thus I have opened the occasion.

Secondly, The circumstance itself, in the 34th verse, 'But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came thereout water and blood.' They brake not his legs, but to make an experiment whether he were truly dead, and had any sense and feeling left, and to put some scorn upon his body, one of the soldiers, out of malice, and beyond his commission, pierced his side with a spear; and the heart being pierced, together with the bag of water that encircleth the heart, and Christ's body not being cool, there followed a flux of water and blood.

I shall look upon this circumstance under a threefold consideration—

1. As an act of Christ's love and condescension, that he would expose his body to the malice and violence of wicked men. He might have withered and dried up the soldier's arm, as he did Jeroboam's when he stretched it out to reach the prophet; but by this stroke Christ would have his heart and bowels opened to us, to show how full of love he was to sinners. Look, as at the beginning Adam's side was opened, and Eve was taken out of Adam's side, so is the church out of Christ's side. He suffered his side to be opened that he might open to us the gate of life. Some of the ancients compared this wound in Christ's side to the door in the side of the ark, by which all the creatures that were not to perish in the flood found entrance. By this door we have entrance into the heart of Christ, and by Christ presented to God the Father. *Patet arca cordis per foramina corporis*, saith Bernard. By the hole of his side we may espy the secret of his heart. He opened his side, that we might see his heart. He would have sinners know that he had not a drop of blood which he accounted too good for us. He would now let out the residue, that he might not keep a drop. His heart was first pierced with love, and then with a spear. It had never been pierced with a spear if it had not been first pierced with love. Christ saith, Cant. iv. 9, 'Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse.' First wounded with love to the church, and that brought him to the cross, and there he was wounded and pierced with the malice of men. Other members were wounded before, and now his heart. His hands and feet were pierced with nails, and his life-blood dropped out by degrees; but now his side is pierced, and through his side his heart, which caused the flux of water and blood.

This circumstance is useful to beget hope and thankfulness.

[1.] Hope for all wounded sinners. It is said of those converts, Acts ii. 37, 'That they were pricked in their hearts.' This is the usual case of all the saints in pangs of the new birth; they are pricked, and wounded in heart with a sense of their sin and rebellion and unkindness to God. Now this is some ground of comfort; Christ's own heart was wounded. The bowels of mercy were now set open by a spear, and

to penitent sinners they shall never be shut more. Therefore when you are wounded, think of the wounds of Christ. These are the clefts of the rock in which a poor guilty creature may lie hid when wrath maketh inquisition for sinners. When God caused his glory to pass by, he put Moses in a cleft of the rock, Exod. xxxiii. 22; and the spouse is described to lie hid in 'the clefts of the rock, and the secret places of the stairs,' Cant. ii. 14; which certainly is meant of some secret hiding-place in time of danger, wherein God is wont to protect his people. Your hiding-place is the wounds of Christ. Here you may run for shelter. Oh, it is sweet to be found in him, by his side to get into his heart, and there to lie hid till the pursuit of wrath be over. Everything that was executed upon the person of Christ should be some advantage to faith, for it maketh up a part of his merit. The wounds of Christ are the best cure for the wounds of a sinner. The prophet saith, 'By his stripes we are healed,' Isa. liii. 5.

[2.] It yieldeth matter of thankfulness that Christ would expose his body to so many violences and indignities for man's sake. It is mangled with whips, because one prophet speaketh of stripes. It is nailed to the cross, because it is said in another, 'They pierced my hands and my feet,' Ps. xxii. 16. Wounded with a spear, because it is said again, 'They shall look upon him whom they have pierced,' Zech. xii. 10. Christ's body, though it were excellently tempered, seemeth to be assumed for no other purpose but to be harassed with sorrows and extremities. How should this increase our thankfulness! Soldiers, to endear themselves to their country, are wont to show their wounds and scars received in public service. Christ hath wounds and marks to show: as he said to Thomas, John xx. 27, 'Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless, but believing.' In the sacrament these things are represented to faith. Christ doth, as it were, show you his marks and his wounds. Remember Christ retaineth them in his glorious body as tokens of his sufferings and combats, and this body you are to look upon by faith. Remember it, and cry out, O my dear Lord, and my God! with Thomas; a vehement, abrupt speech, noting an admiration of Christ's mercy. Twice in that chapter we read that he showed his wounds, ver. 20 and 27. Christ loveth to show his wounds. *Quanto vilior pro nobis factus est, tanto charior esse debet.* By how much the cheaper he was made for us, so much the dearer he ought to be to us.

Let all this endear him to your souls. When you take the cup of blessing, remember that cup was filled out of the side of Christ. When thou art drinking, thou art spiritually drinking his blood, that thou mayest indeed bless God.

2. I look upon this circumstance as a certain pledge of Christ's death. The flowing of water and blood showeth the pericardium was pierced, a bag which keepeth water about the heart. The place in which the heart is enfolded is full of a waterish matter, which by this stroke was let out; so that it did not appear by the former passages that Christ was dead, but this was a certain evidence which made it manifest; his heart being pierced, which is certainly mortal, if he had been living before. Now his enemies could not say he was half dead, and that his

resurrection was but a reviving out of a swoon. And this is one reason St John is so earnest in his attestation of this circumstance, because all our faith and hope is built on the truth and certainty of Christ's death. Beyond death there can be no more required. They that are thirsty of revenge can never be quiet till the party be dead. God's justice was thirsty of satisfaction, but now Christ is dead all is finished. What would you have more? The flux of water and blood is a certain seal and confirmation. Divine justice pursued Christ, and the affronts and injuries of men are not ended till the bag about the heart be pierced, and there issue out water and blood, so that all the world should have a visible testimony that Christ was really dead.

From this circumstance I shall a little speak of the certainty and the necessity of Christ's death, and the comfort thereon depending, a matter weighty and of great importance in religion: 1 Cor. xv. 3, 'I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scripture.' There was a real expiration and delivery up of his soul to God, which was now showed openly and truly, and not done in show and fiction. To confirm the truth his heart is pierced, and he remained three days in the grave, under the power and dominion of it. However, Christ died, yet not whole Christ died, but only according to his human nature. Though he yielded up the ghost, that is, the natural human life, yet the hypostatical union was not dissolved. There was a separation of the soul from the body, yet both remained united with the divine nature. So that here was no dissolving of the person of Christ; and therefore he is said to raise himself. His human body, though it lay in the grave, was still a part of his person.

3. The necessity of Christ's death. I shall instance but in a double relation to the covenant—

(1.) As a surety; and (2.) As a testator. Christ was to die—

[1.] As a surety. We had deserved death, but our surety was to pay our debt. The sentence under which man lay was a sentence of death; therefore his life was laid down to redeem ours. As Paul undertook for Onesimus, Philem. 18, 'If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account;' so Christ for us: 'He suffered for our sin, the just for the unjust,' 1 Peter iii. 18. He died in our room and stead: 1 Tim. ii. 6, 'He gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.' He died not by any weakness of nature, but by voluntary consent. Christ had to do with several parties, and so died under several relations. He had to do with the devil and his agents, so he died as conqueror; with the Jews, and so he died as a martyr; he had to do with his Father, so he died as a surety; and as a person in covenant with the elect, so he died as a sacrifice. The devil was his enemy, God his judge, and himself his own priest. The Father issued out a process, and Christ offered up himself to be killed by the Jews.

[2.] As a testator or maker of the new testament. We could never have had the great blessings of the covenant if Christ had not died: Heb. ix. 16, 'For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.' Till then the testament is not in force. Christ promised to make a new testament, therefore to die, or else he

could not make good his word. Christ is lifted up to the cross as upon his deathbed, and there he dieth of love, and leaveth great legacies to the church—pardon, grace, and glory; disposeth of heaven, and all things conducing thereunto. This testament is engrossed, and a formal instrument made of it in the gospel, sacraments, seals. The apostles were the notaries to witness from heaven in a glorious way by miracles on earth, by the Spirit, water, and blood, 1 John v. 6-8. Christ, because of the duplicity of his nature, may be allowed to be a witness to his own will. The Spirit descending like a dove, appearing in cloven tongues of fire. And there are three which confirm this truth in the hearts of believers—the Spirit, the water, and blood. Ease in conscience by the blood of Christ, the work of holiness in the heart, and the certioration of the Spirit.

Use 1. Oh, let us make use of this great comfort, Christ is dead! The apostle beginneth his triumph thence: Rom. viii. 34, 'Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died.' He died in our name and stead, whereby we are absolved; as the ram was taken, and Isaac let go: Job xxxiii. 24, 'I have found a ransom.' God will not exact the debt twice. Believers do not live as if they had a surety to die for them, or a testator to make them such great and rich legacies. If we would meditate on the death of Christ with comfort and profit, we must consider these things; for still we must consider with respect to the covenant and the transactions of God with men.

1. The horrible deserving of sin, and the hatefulness of it to God. We must have a redeemer, or be all lost. This redeemer must make full satisfaction, both in respect of the infinite value of his person, which was not the blood of an angel, but the blood of God, and the extremity of his sufferings. The great almighty God, the author of life, must come and die himself: Isa. xliii. 24, 'Thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, and hast wearied me with thine iniquities.' Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, must come and be put upon an harsh service. Life itself must assume death. The Lord Almighty, filling the whole world with his glory, hung dying upon the cross.

2. The great love of God, that, when we wanted a ransom, God gave it us out of his own treasury. Among all the treasures of heaven nothing more precious and excellent than Jesus Christ. Christ must pay for the rest. He sendeth his own Son to endure the shameful death of the cross; the natural Son for the adopted sons: 1 John iv. 9, 10, 'In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins;' Rom. v. 8, 'God commendeth his love to us, that while we were sinners Christ died for us.' This was a circumstance to set out love.

3. The unspeakable love of Jesus Christ, his meekness and patience. How may we admire the ready mind of Christ! Heb. x. 5-7, 'Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offerings thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared me. In burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure; then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God.' If nothing but the shameful death of the cross will do,

yet it was readily agreed to. If any had cause to love his life, Christ had; it dwelt with God in a personal union.

4. The sufficiency of this sacrifice: Heb. x. 14, 'By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.' Christ hath no more work to do, but only to look for the travail of his soul. He hath paid the full price, made a full purchase. The vessels of honour cannot be dashed. No satisfaction remains to be paid by ourselves; there needeth nothing by way of satisfaction.

Use 2. Let us not be quiet till we feel Christ is dead. Great reports without experience beget atheism: Rom. vi. 5, 'If we have been planted together in the likeness of his death;' Gal. ii. 20, 'Who hath loved me, and gave himself for me.' Is the heart of our corruptions wounded? is Christ incarnate? is Christ formed in us? is Christ dying, and we feel nothing? It availeth us nothing.

Thirdly, I look upon it as a symbol and type of his mediatory office. Christ was in every part furnished: 1 John v. 6, 'This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ: not by water only, but by water and blood.' Now this water and blood are two of the witnesses: ver. 10, 'Hath this testimony within himself.' It setteth forth the double benefit of Christ's death. He came to satisfy and to sanctify; by water noting the force of grace upon the heart, and by blood noting peace and ease of conscience. These flowed so distinctly as they might be discerned. *Aqua quæ diluat, sanguis qui redimat*—Ambrose. Water to wash, blood to redeem: an allusion to the ancient Jewish rites. There were under the law ablutions and oblations; there was a purification by water to take away the filth of sin, and an expiation by blood to take away the guilt. Now water and blood, that issued from Christ's side, prefigured both these. He came not only to justify, but to sanctify. By a double symbol Christ would teach us that he is the true expiation and laver, *λουτρον καὶ λυτρον*. So suitably there are two ordinances in the gospel—baptism and the Lord's supper. Out of Christ's side, saith St Austin, came the two sacraments. Christ came not only to disannul guilt and the curse, but to destroy sin; to cleanse from inward corruption, as well as procure their reconciliation with God. Of the first, the legal washings were a type; of the second, the sacrifices.

Use 1. To rejoice in Jesus Christ, because we are complete in him.

1. There is 'a fountain open for sin and for uncleanness,' Zech. xii. 1, and it is a fountain ever springing and overflowing. When Christ was pierced upon the cross, like a full vessel he sent out water and blood; water to purify the church, and blood to feed it. From the same source there flows a double fountain—*De eadem origine, aqua et sanguis emanant*. Let us draw water hence with the buckets of faith, and do it with joy: Isa. xii. 3, 'Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.' The Jews in the feast of tabernacles, they were to go to Siloam and draw water. He that brought the water did it that it might be poured out before the Lord upon the altar with wine. They did it with trumpets and hymns, and hosannas often repeated. Thence Christ saith, John vii. 37, 'And in the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.' With great

variety of melody they went to fetch water from Siloam to the temple in golden vessels. Oh, consider here is a double stream say, as it is Isa. xlv. 24, 'Surely shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength.' Enough to justify, enough to sanctify. Oh, come again and again to this fountain!

2. To teach us what to expect from Christ. Come for this double benefit. It is sad to have Christ in one quality of a mediator and not in another. Say, Lord, out of this side of thine there flowed not blood alone, but water and blood; as they flowed together out of thy pierced side, so let them ever flow together into my wounded soul, justification and sanctification: those things which thou hast joined let me not ever put asunder. Consider it is dishonourable to Christ when these two are severed. Celsus and others reproached the church as a common sanctuary for villains and profligate persons. No; it is a school of discipline, an hospital to cure them, not shelter them in sin. Both go together. It was convenient that, before he sanctified man in himself, he should justify him before God; first reconciled, and then receive privileges of grace; and after reconciled, it is again convenient they should be sanctified, lest Christ should have an ulcerous body. When Esther was chosen to be queen, she had garments given her out of Ahasuerus' wardrobe, and she was to accomplish the months of her purification.

3. Whenever we beg pardon, there is always a serious study of sanctification; they are inseparably joined in God's dispensation: 1 Cor. i. 30, 'But of him ye are in Jesus Christ, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption;' 1 Cor. vi. 11, 'And such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.' Whosoever truly repenteth of sin doth not only seek the judicial abolition of it, but the real. A serious aim at the glory of God doth carry the soul more against the corruption of sin than the guilt of it. The abolishing of the guilt doth directly respect our profit, but the abolishing of corruption doth profit the glory of God, that we may not offend him.
