

here, and that they think and speak charitably of you. "All the churches shall know, (saith the Lord) that I am he that searcheth the heart and reins, and will give to every man as his work shall be," Rev. ii. 23. In heaven we shall meet many that we never thought to meet there, and miss many we were confident we should see there.

*Corollary 12.* Lastly, Did Judas, one of the twelve, a man so obliged, raised and honoured by Christ, do this? *Cease then from man*, be not too confident, but beware of men. "Trust ye not in a friend, put no confidence in a guide, keep the door of thy lips from her that lieth in thy bosom," Mic. vii. 5. Not that there is no sincerity in any man, but because there is so much hypocrisy in many men, and so much corruption in the best of men, that we may not be too confident, nor lay too great a stress upon any man. Peter's modest expression of Sylvanus is a pattern for us; "Sylvanus; a faithful brother unto you (as I suppose)" 1 Pet. v. 12. The time shall come, saith Christ, that "brother shall betray brother to death," Mat. x. 11. Your charity for others may be your duty, but your too great confidence may be your snare. Fear what others may do, but fear thyself more.

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## SERMON XXIV.

The second and third Preparatives for the Death of CHRIST,  
by his illegal Trial and Condemnation.

LUKE xxiii. 23, 24.

*And they were instant with loud voices requiring that he might be crucified; and the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed. And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required.*

**J**UDAS has made good his promise to the high-priest, and delivered Jesus a prisoner into their hands. These wolves of the evening, no sooner seize the Lamb of God, but they thirst and long to be sucking his precious innocent blood; their revenge and malice admit no delay, as fearing a rescue by the people.

When Herod had taken Peter, he committed him to prison, "intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people\*," Acts

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\* In so great a mixed multitude it was easy to raise a tumult, if the people had thought so great a prophet was murdered, contrary to all law and justice. *Par. in Matth. xxvi. 5.*

xii. 4. But these men cannot sleep till they have his blood, and therefore the preparation of the passover being come, they resolve in all haste to destroy him; yet lest it should look like a downright murder, it shall be formalized with a trial. This his *trial* and *condemnation* are the two last acts by which they prepared for his death, and are both contained in this context; in which we may observe, 1. The *indictment*. 2. The *sentence* to which the judge proceeded.

1. The *indictment* drawn up against Christ, wherein they accuse him of many things, but can prove nothing. They charge him with sedition and blasphemy, but falter shamefully in the proof. However, what is wanting in evidence, shall be supplied with clamour and importunity. For saith the text, "They were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified; and their voices prevailed:" When they can neither prove the sedition and blasphemy they charged him with, then, Crucify him, Crucify him, must serve the turn, instead of all witnesses and proofs.

The *sentence* pronounced upon him; *Pilate gave sentence, that it should be as they required*: i. e. he sentenced Christ to be nailed to the cross, and there to hang till he was dead. From both these we may observe these two doctrinal conclusions.

Doct. 1. *That the trial of Christ for his life, was managed most maliciously, and illegally against him, by his unrighteous judges.*

Doct. 2. *Though nothing could be proved against our Lord Jesus Christ worthy of death, or of bonds; yet he was condemned to be nailed to the cross, and there to hang till he died.*

I shall handle these two points distinctly in their order, beginning with the first, namely,

Doct. 1. *That the trial of Christ for his life, was managed most maliciously and illegally against him, by his unrighteous judges.*

Reader, here thou mayest see the Judge of all the world standing himself to be judged; he that shall judge the world in righteousness, judged most unrighteously; he that shall one day come to the throne of judgment, attended with thousands, and ten thousands of angels and saints, standing as a prisoner at man's bar, and there denied the common right which a thief or murderer might claim, and is commonly given them.

To manifest the illegality of Christ's trial, let the following particulars be heedfully weighed.

1. That he was inhumanly abused, both in words and actions, before the court met, or any examination was taken of the fact: for as soon as they had taken him, they forthwith bound him, and led him away to the High-priest's house, Luke xxii. 54. And there they that held him, mocked him, smote him, blind-folded him, struck him on the face, and bid him prophesy who smote him; and many other things blasphemously spake they against him, ver. 63, 64, 65. How illegal and barbarous a thing was this? When they were but binding Paul with thongs, he thought himself abused contrary to law, and asked the centurion that stood by, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and undemned?" q. d. Is this legal! What, punish a man first, and judge him afterwards! But Christ was not only bound, but horribly abused by them all that night, dealing with him as the lords of the Philistines did with Samson, to whom it was sport to abuse him. No rest had Jesus that night; no more sleep for him now in this world: O it was a sad night to him: and this under Caiaphas's own roof.

2. As he was inhumanly abused before he was tried, so he was examined and judged by a court that had no authority to try him. Luke xxii. 66. "As soon as it was day, the elders of the people, and the chief priests, and the scribes came together and led him into their council." This was the *ecclesiastical court*, the great *Sanhedrim*, which, according to its first constitution, should consist of seventy grave, honourable, and learned men; to whom were to be referred all doubtful matters, too hard for inferior courts to decide. And these were to judge impartially and uprightly for God, as men in whom was the Spirit of God, according to God's counsel to Moses, Numbers xi. 16, &c. In this court the righteous and innocent might expect relief and protection. And that is conceived to be the meaning of Christ's words, Luke xiii. 33. "It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem;" that is, there righteousness and innocency may expect protection. But now, contrary to the first constitution, it consisted of a pack of malicious Scribes and Pharisees, men full of revenge, malice, and all unrighteousness: and over these Caiaphas (a head fit for such a body) at this time presided. And though there was still some face of a court among them, yet their power was so abridged by the Romans, that they could not hear and determine, judge and condemn in capital matters, as formerly. For as \* Josephus their own historian informs us, Herod in the beginning of his reign took away this power from them; and that scripture seems to confirm

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\* Antiq. lib. 14. cap. 205.

it, John xviii. 31. "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death;" and therefore they bring him to Pilate's bar. He also understood him to be a Galilean; and Herod being Tetrarch of Galilee, and at that time in Jerusalem, he is sent to him, and by him remitted to Pilate.

3. As he was at first heard and judged by a court that had no authority to judge him; so when he stood at Pilate's bar, he was accused of perverting the nation, and denying tribute to Cæsar, than which nothing was more notoriously false. For as all his doctrine was pure and heavenly, and malice itself could not find a flaw in it; so he was always observant of the laws under which he lived, and scrupulous of giving the least just offence to the civil powers. Yea, he not only paid the tribute himself though he might have pleaded exemption, but charged it upon others as their duty so to do, Mat. xxii. 24. "Give unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's." And yet with such palpable untruths is Christ charged.

4. Yea, and what is more abominable and unparalleled; to compass their malicious designs, they industriously labour to suborn false witnesses to take away his life, not sticking at the grossest perjury, and manifest injustice, so they might destroy him. So you read, Mat. xxvi. 59. "Now the chief priests and elders, and all the council, sought false witnesses against Jesus to put him to death." Abominable wickedness! for such men, and so many, to complot to shed the blood of the innocent, by known and studied perjury! What will not malice against Christ transport men to?

5. Moreover, the carriage of the court was most insolent and base towards him during the trial: for whilst he stood before them as a prisoner, yet uncondemned, sometimes they are angry at him for his silence! and when he speaks, and that pertinently to the point, they smite him on the mouth for speaking, and scoff at what he speaks\*. "To some of their light, frivolous and ensnaring questions, he is silent, not for want of an answer, but because he heard nothing worthy of one." And to fulfil what the prophet Isaiah had long before predicted of him; "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth," Isa. liii. 7. As also to leave us a precedent when to speak, and when to be silent, when we for his name sake shall be brought before governors: for such reasons as these he sometimes answers not a word,

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\* *Quia indignam responso judicat manifestam falsitatem; non defensione destitutus, sed ut impleretur prophetæ oraculum. Par.*

and then they are ready to condemn him for a mute. "Answerest thou nothing? (saith the high-priest) what is it that these witness against thee?" Mat. xxvi. 62. "Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee?" saith Pilate, Mat. xxvii. 13.

And when he makes his defence in words of truth and soberness, they smite him for speaking, John xviii. 22. "And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by, struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, answerest thou the high-priest so?" And what had he spoken to exasperate them? Had he spoken impertinently? Not at all; what he said was but this, when they would have had him ensnare himself with his own lips: "Jesus answered, I spake openly in the world, I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort, and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me? Ask them that heard me, behold they know what I said;" q. d. I am not obliged to accuse and ensnare myself, but you ought to proceed *secundum allegata et probata*, according to what is alleged and proved. Did he deserve a blow on his mouth for this? O who but himself could have so patiently digested such abuses! Under all this he stands in perfect innocency and patience, making no other return to that wretch that smote him, but this, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?"

6. Lastly, To instance in no more: he is condemned to die by that very mouth which had once and again professed he found no fault in him. He had heard all that could be alleged against him, and saw it was a perfect piece of malice and envy. When they urge Pilate to proceed to sentence him; "Why, saith he, what evil hath he done?" Mat. xxvii. 23. Nay, in the preface to the very sentence itself, he acknowledges him to be a just person, Mat. xxvii. 24. "When Pilate saw he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, and said, I am innocent of the blood of this just person, see ye to it." Here the innocency of Christ brake out like the sun wading out of a cloud, convincing the conscience of his judge that he was just; and yet he must give sentence on him, for all that, to please the people.

*Inference* 1. Was Christ thus used when he stood before the great council, the scribes and elders of Israel? Then surely "great men are not always wise, neither do the aged understand judgment," Job xxxii. 9. Here were many great men, many aged men, many politic men in council; but not one wise or good man among them. In this council were men of parts and learning, men of great abilities, and by so much the more pernicious,

and able to do mischief. Wickedness in a great or learned man, is like poison given in wine, the more operative and deadly. Christ's greatest enemies were such as these. Heathen Pilate had more pity for him than *superstitious* Caiaphas. Luther tells us, that his greatest adversaries did not rise out of the ale-houses or brothel-houses, but out of *monasteries, convents, and religious houses.*

*Inf. 2.* Hence also we learn, *That though we are not obliged to answer every captious, idle, or ensnaring question, yet we are bound faithfully to own and confess the truth, when we are solemnly called thereto.*

It is true, Christ was sometimes silent, and as a deaf man that heard not; but when the question was solemnly put, "Art thou the Christ, the Son of the blessed? Jesus said, I am," Mat. xiv. 61, 62. He knew that answer would cost his life, and yet he durst not deny it. On this account the apostle saith, "he witnessed a good confession before Pontius Pilate," 1 Tim. vi. 13. Herein Christ hath ruled out the way of our duty, and by his own example, as well as precept, obliged us to a sincere confession of him, and his truth, when we are required lawfully so to do, i. e. when we are before a lawful magistrate, and the questions are not curious or captious; when we cannot hold our peace, but our silence will be interpretatively a denying of the truth; finally, when the glory of God, honour of his truth, and edification of others, are more attainable by our open confession, than they can be by our silence; then must we with Christ, give direct, plain, sincere answers.

It was the old Priscillian error, to allow men to deny or dissemble their profession, when an open confession would infer danger. But you know what Christ hath said, Mat. x. 33. "Who-soever shall deny me before men, him will I deny before my Father which is in heaven." Christ will repay him in his own coin. It was a noble saying of courageous\* Zuinglius, "What deaths would I not chuse? What punishment would I not undergo? Yea, into what vault of hell would I not rather chuse to be thrown, than to witness against my conscience? Truth can never be bought too dear, nor sold cheap. The Lord Jesus, you see, owns truth with the imminent and instant hazard of his life. The whole Cloud of witnesses have followed him therein, Rev. xiv. 1. We ourselves once openly owned the ways of sin; and shall we not do as much for Christ, as we then did for the devil? Did we then glory in our shame, and shall we now be ashamed of our glory? Do not we hope Christ will own us at the great day?"

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\* *Quas non oportet mortes præligere? Quod non supplicium potius ferre? Imo in quam profundam inferni abyssum non intrare, quam contra conscientiam attestare?* Zuing.

Why, if we confess him, he also will confess us. O think on the reasonableness of this duty.

*Inf. 3.* Once more, hence it follows, *That to bear the revilings, contradictions, and abuses of men, with a meek, composed, and even spirit, is excellent and Christ-like.* He stood before them as a lamb; he rendered not railing for railing? he endured the contradictions of sinners against himself. Imitate Christ in his meekness. He calls you so to do, Mat. xi. 28. This will be convincing to your enemies, comfortable to yourselves, and honourable to religion: and as for your innocency, God will clear it up as Christ's was.

You have heard the illegal trial of Christ, how insolently it was managed against him; well, right or wrong, innocent or guilty, his blood is resolved upon; it is bought and sold before-hand; and if nothing else will do it, menaces and clamours shall constrain Pilate to condemn him. Whence our second note was,

*Doct. 2. That though nothing could be proved against our Lord Jesus Christ worthy of death or of bonds; yet was he condemned to be nailed to the cross, and there to hang till he died.*

For the explication of this, I shall open the following particulars. *First,* Who gave the sentence. *Secondly,* Upon whom it was given. *Thirdly,* What sentence it was that was given. *Fourthly,* In what manner Christ received it.

*First,* Who, and what was he, that durst attempt such a thing as this? Why, this was Pilate, who succeeded Valerius Gratus in the presidentship of Judea, (as \* Josephus tells us) in which trust he continued about ten years. This cruel, cursed act of his against Christ was in the eighth year of his government. Two years after, he was removed from his place and office by Vitellius, president of Syria, for his inhuman murdering of the innocent Samaritans. This necessitated him to go to Rome to clear himself before Cæsar; but before he came to Rome, Tiberius was dead, and Caius in his room. Under him, saith † Eusebius, Pilate killed himself. ‡ “He was a man not very friendly or benevolent to the Jewish nation, but still suspicious of their rebellions and insurrections; this jealous humour the priests and scribes observed, and wrought upon it to compass their design against Christ.” Therefore they tell him so often of Christ's sedition, and stirring up the people; and that if he let him go, he is none of Cæsar's

\* Josephus, lib. 18. Ant. Judææ, quarto ad cap. 7.

† Euseb. Hist. Eccles. lib. 2. cap. 7.

‡ Non admodum amicus Judæorum genti, propterea quod eam suspectam haberet animo erga Cæsarem; hunc putant sacerdotes commodum fore ipsorum proposito, &c. Bucer. in Mat. xxvii.

friends; which very consideration prevailed with him to do what he did. But how durst he attempt such a wickedness as this, though he had stood ill in the opinion of Cæsar? What! give judgment against the Son of God? for it is evident, by many circumstances in this trial, that he had many inward fears and convictions upon him, that he was the Son of God\*: By these he was scared, and sought to release him, John xix. 8, 12, the fear of a Deity fell upon him; his mind was greatly perplexed, and dubious about this prisoner whether he was a God or a man. And yet the fear of Cæsar prevailed more than the fear of a Deity; he proceeds to give sentence.

O Pilate! thou wast not afraid to judge and sentence an innocent, a known innocent, and one whom thou thyself suspectest at least to be more than man! But see in this predominancy of self-interest, what man will attempt, and perpetrate, to secure and accommodate self.

*Secondly*, Against whom doth Pilate give sentence? against a malefactor? No, his own mouth once and again acknowledged him innocent. Against a common prisoner? No, but one whose fame no doubt had often reached Pilate's ears, even the wonderful things wrought by him, which none but God could do: one that stood before him as the picture, or rather as the body, of innocency and meekness. Ye have condemned and killed the just, and he resisteth you not, Jam. v. 6. Now was that word made good, Psal. xciv. 21. "They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood."

*Thirdly*, But what was the sentence that Pilate gave? We have it not in the form in which it was delivered: but the sum of it was, that it should be as they required. Now what did they require? why, crucify him, crucify him. So that in what formalities soever it was delivered, this was the substance and effect of it, *I adjudge Jesus of Nazareth to be nailed to the cross, and there to hang till he be dead.* Which sentence against Christ was,

1. *A most unjust and unrighteous sentence*: the greatest perversion of judgment and equity that was ever known to the civilized world, since seats of judicature were first set up. What! to condemn him before one accusation was proved against him? And if what they accused him of (that he said he was the Son of God) had been proved, it had been no crime, for he really was so; and therefore no blasphemy in him to say he was. Pilate should rather have come down from his seat of judgment, and adored him, than sat

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\* Having heard the name of the Son of God, his mind was smitten with a religious awe; and being struck with the fear of a Deity, he was perplexed and in suspense, thinking himself in present danger, as at the brink of a pit. *Marlot. in loc.*

there to judge him. O it was the highest piece of injustice that ever our ears heard of!

2. As it was an unrighteous, so it was a *cruel sentence*, delivering up Christ to their wills. This was that misery which David so earnestly deprecated, Psal. xxvii. 12. "O deliver me not over to the will of mine enemies." But Pilate delivers Christ over to the will of his enemies, men full of enmity, rage, and malice, whose greatest pleasure it was to glut themselves with his blood, and to satiate their revengeful hearts with such a spectacle of misery. For lo, as soon as these wolves had gripped their prey, they were not satisfied with that cursed, cruel, and ignominious death of the cross, to which Pilate had adjudged him, but they are resolved he shall die over and over; they will contrive many deaths in one; now they say as a tyrant did once, *moriatur, ut sentiat se mori*; "let him die, so as he may feel himself to die." To this end they presently strip him naked; scourge him cruelly; array him in scarlet, and mock him; crown him with a bush of plaited thorns; fasten that crown upon his head by a blow with a cane, which set them deep into his sacred temples; sceptered him with a reed, spat in his face, stript off his mock-ropes again; put the cross upon his back, and compelled him to bear it. All this, and much more, they express their cruelty by, as soon as they had him delivered over to their will. So that this was a cruel sentence.

3. As it was a cruel, so it was a *rash* and hasty sentence. The Jews are all in haste; consulting all night, and early up by the break of day in the morning, to get him to his trial. They spur on Pilate, with all arguments they can to give sentence. His trial took up but one morning, and a great part of that was spent in sending him from Caiaphas to Pilate, and from Pilate to Herod, and then back again to Pilate; so that it was a hasty and headlong sentence that Pilate gave. He did not sift and examine the matter, but handles it very slightly. The trial of many a mean man hath taken up ten times more debates and time than was spent about Christ. " \* They that look but slightly into the cause, easily pronounce and give sentence." But that which was then done in haste, they have had time enough to repent for since.

4. As it was a rash and hasty, so it was an *extorted, forced sentence* †. They squeeze it out of Pilate by mere clamour, importunity, and suggestions of danger. In courts of judicature, such arguments should signify but little; not importunity, but proof, should carry it: but timorous Pilate bends like a willow at this

\* *Qui id pauca respiciant, facile pronunciant.*

† By menaces they extort from him the condemnation of Christ. *Calvin.*

breath of the people: he had neither such a sense of justice, nor spirit of courage, as to withstand it.

5. As it was an extorted, so it was an *hypocritical* sentence, masking horrid murder under a pretence and formality of law. It must look like a legal procedure to palliate the business. Loth he was to condemn him lest innocent blood should clamour in his conscience; but since he must do it, he will transfer the guilt upon them, and they take it; "his blood be on us, and on our children for ever," say they. Pilate calls for water, washes his hands before them, and tells them, "I am free from the blood of this just person." But stay; free from his blood, and yet condemn a known innocent person? Free from his blood, because he washed his hands in water? No, no, he could never be free, except his soul had been washed in that blood he shed. O the hypocrisy of Pilate! Such juggling as this will not serve his turn, when he shall stand as a prisoner before him, who now stood arraigned at his bar.

6. And lastly, As it was an hypocritical, so it was an *unrevoked* sentence: it admitted not of a reprieve, no, not for a day; nor doth Christ appeal to any other judicature, or once desire the least delay; but away he is hurried in haste to the execution. Blush, O ye heavens! and tremble, O earth! at such a sentence as this! Now is Christ dead in law; now he knows whether he must be carried, and that presently. His soul and body must feel that, the very sight of which put him into an agony but the night before.

*Fourthly*, and lastly, In what manner did Christ receive this cruel and unrighteous sentence? He received it like himself, with admirable meekness and patience. He doth as it were wrap himself up in his own innocency, and obedience to his Father's will, and stands at the bar with invincible patience, and meek submission. He doth not at once desire the judge to defer the sentence, much less fall down and beg for his life, as other prisoners use to do at such times. No, but as a sheep he goes to the slaughter, not opening his mouth. Some apply that expression to Christ, Jam. v. 6. "Ye have condemned and killed the Just, and he resisteth you not." From the time that Pilate gave sentence, till he was nailed to the cross, we do not read that ever he said any thing, save only to the women that followed him out of the city to Golgotha: and what he said there, rather manifesting his pity to them, than any discontent at what was now come upon him; "Daughters of Jerusalem, (saith he) weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children," Luke xxiii. 28, &c. O the perfect patience and meekness of Christ. The inferences from hence are.

*Inference 1.* Do you see what was here done against Christ, under

pretence of law? *What cause have we to pray for good laws, and righteous executioners of them?*

O! It is a singular mercy to live under good laws, which protect the innocent from injury. Laws are hedges about our lives, liberties, estates, and all the comforts we enjoy in this world. Times will be evil enough, when iniquity is not *discountenanced* and punished by law; but how evil are those times like to prove when iniquity is *established by law!* As the Psalmist complains, Psal. xciv. 20. "It was the complaint of Pliny to Trajan, that whereas crimes were wont to be the burden of the age, now laws were so; and that he feared the commonwealth which was established, would be subverted by laws\*." It is not likely that virtue will much flourish, when "judgment springs up as hemlock in the furrows of the field," Hos. x. 4. How much therefore is it our concernment to pray, that "judgment may run down as a mighty stream?" Amos v. 24. "That our officers may be peace, and our exactors righteousness?" Isa. lx. 17. It was not therefore without great reason, that the apostle exhorted, that "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men; for kings, and all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty," 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2. Great is the interest of the church of God in them; they are instruments of much good or much evil.

*Inf. 2.* Was Christ condemned in a court of judicature? *How evident then is it, that there is a judgment to come after this life?* Surely things will not be always carried as they are in this world. When you see Jesus condemned, and Barabbas released, conclude, that a time will come when innocency shall be vindicated, and wickedness shamed. On this very ground, Solomon concludes, and very rationally, that God will call over things hereafter at a more righteous tribunal: "And moreover, I saw under the sun the place of judgment, that wickedness was there; and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there. I said in my heart, God shall judge the righteous, and the wicked: for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work," Eccles. iii. 16, 17. Some indeed, on this ground, have denied the divine providence; but Solomon draws a quite contrary conclusion, *God shall judge:* Surely, he will take the matter into his own hand, he will bring forth the righteousness of his people as the light, and their just dealing as the noon-day. It is a mercy, if we be wronged in one court, that we can appeal to another where we shall be sure to be relieved by a just impartial Judge. "Be patient therefore, my

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\* *Olim criminibus, jam legibus laboratur; et metuendum est, ne respublica fundata, sit legibus eversa.* Plin. ad Trajan.

“brethren (saith the apostle) until the coming of the Lord,” James v. 6, 7, 8.

*Inf. 3.* Again, *here you see how conscience may be over-borne and run down by a fleshly interest:* Pilate’s conscience bid him beware, and forbear: his interest bid him act; his fear of Cæsar was more than the fear of God. But O! what a dreadful thing is it for conscience to be ensnared by the fear of man? Prov. xxix. 25. To guard thy soul, reader, against this mischief, let such considerations as these be ever with thee.

1. Consider how dear those profits, or pleasures cost, which are purchased with the loss of inward peace! There is nothing in this world good enough to recompense such a loss, or balance the misery of a tormenting conscience. If you violate it, and prostitute it for a fleshly lust, it will *remember* the injury you did it many years after; Gen. xlii. 21. Job xiii. 26. It will not only retain the memory of what you did, but it will *accuse* you for it: Mat. xxvii. 4. It will not fear to tell you that plainly, which others dare not whisper. It will not only accuse, but it will also *condemn* you for what you have done. This condemning voice of conscience is a very terrible voice.

You may see the horror of it in Cain, the vigour of it in Judas, the doleful *effects* of it in Spira. It will, from all these its offices, produce *shame, fear, and despair*, if God give not repentance to life. The *shame* it works will so confound you, that you will not be able to look up; Job xxxi. 14. Psal. i. 5. The *fear* it works will make you wish for a hole in the rock to hide you; Isa. ii. 9, 10, 15, 19. And its *despair* is a death-pang. The cutting off of hope, is the greatest cut in the world. O! who can stand under such a load as this? Prov. xvii. 14.

2. Consider the nature of your present actions; they are seed sown for eternity, and will spring up again in suitable effects, rewards, and punishments, when you that did them are turned to dust. Gal. vi. 7. “What a man sows, that shall he reap:” And as sure as the harvest follows the seed time, so sure shall shame, fear, and horror, follow sin, Dan. xii. 2. What Zeuxis, the famous limner, said of his work, may much more truly be said of ours, *æternitati pingo*, I paint for eternity, said he, when one asked him why he was so curious in his work. Ah! how bitter will those things be in the account and reckoning, which were pleasant in the acting and committing? It is true, our actions, physically considered, are transient; how soon is a word or action spoken or done, and there is an end of it? But *morally* considered, they are permanent, being put upon God’s book of account. O! therefore take heed what you do: so speak, and so act, as they that must give an account.

3. Consider, how by these things men do but prepare for their own torment in a dying hour. There is bitterness enough in death, you need not add more gall and wormwood to increase the bitterness of it. What is the violencing and wounding of conscience now, but the sticking so many pins or needles in your death-bed, against you come to lie down on it? This makes death bitter indeed. How many have wished in a dying hour, they had rather lived poor and low all their days, than to have strained their consciences for the world? Ah! how is the face and aspect of things altered in such an hour.

No such considerations as these had any place in Pilate's heart; for if so, he would never have been courted, or scared in such an act as this.

*Inf.* 4. Did Christ stand arraigned and condemned at Pilate's bar? *Then the believer shall never be arraigned and condemned at God's bar.* This sentence that Pilate pronounced on Christ gives evidence that God will never pronounce sentence against such: for had he intended to have arraigned them, he would never have suffered Christ, their surety, to be arraigned and condemned for them. Christ stood at this time before a higher judge than Pilate; he stood at God's bar as well as his. Pilate did but that which God's own hand and counsel had before determined to be done, and what God himself, at the same time, did; though God did it justly and holily, dealing with Christ as a creditor with a surety; Pilate most wickedly and basely, dealing with Christ as a corrupt judge, that shed the blood of a known innocent to pacify the people. But certain it is, that out of his condemnation flows our justification: and had not sentence been given against him, it must have been given against us:

O what a melting consideration is this! that out of his agony comes our victory; out of his condemnation, our justification; out of his pain, our ease; out of his stripes, our healing: out of his gall and vinegar, our honey; out of his curse, our blessing; out of his crown of thorns, our crown of glory; out of his death, our life: if he could not be released, it was that you might. If Pilate gave sentence against him, it was that the great God might never give sentence against you. If he yielded that it should be with Christ as they required, it was that it might be with our souls as well as we can desire. And therefore,

*Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift.*