

2,70.66

THE PLACE WHICH IS CALLED CALVARY

Text: Luke 23.33. "And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left."

The subject that I had this morning referred to a *place* that was called Gethsemane, and in the verse that I have read this evening is a *place* which is called Calvary, for there they crucified Him. I am deeply conscious of my unworthiness and unfitness to speak of deep things like these for my poor sinful lips are not in that sense fitted or suited to give expression to these profound mysteries, and I do hope I may be forgiven if I should darken counsel by words without knowledge.

You may remember that I spoke a little this morning about a place called Gethsemane, and of certain things that transpired there in that secret secluded spot ; of that deep grief and sorrow and anguish that the Lord Jesus suffered there ; of how He prayed and what His prayer was, which appears to have been repeated

three times, when He said, "O my Father if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not as I will, but thou wilt"; of those poor sleeping disciples, and other things about this sacred spot that was named Gethsemane. Following upon that, in very close and intimate connection, we have another *place* here referred to that is called Calvary. We cannot actually separate these two places, although the sufferings of the Redeemer in Gethsemane preceded those of Calvary, for there He was in great agony under the weight of imputed guilt, among those olive trees in that memorable garden, in full view of His approaching crucifixion, knowing perfectly what was awaiting Him, and the fact that He was shortly to be put to a cruel and painful death, though His decease was not the primary cause of His grief and sorrow. The occasion of His sorrow was the burden that was upon Him pressing Him down, producing those great drops of blood as it were oozing through the pores of His holy body. I have read that this is very rare in a human body, and that where it does occur it is invariably preceding death. In the case of the Holy Redeemer it reveals to us the tremendous weight of imputed guilt that was laid upon Him, so that as we sometimes sing in the hymn, "He had strength enough and none to spare". You may also remember that speaking of it in this aspect, and of what was involved in Gethsemane as relating to the Lord Jesus Christ, I mentioned the hymn we have in our book on Gethsemane, in connection with that dreadful load of imputed guilt, that it was our sins which occasioned this inconceivable anguish, that this provides a hiding place for poor guilty sinners and that to feel a hope in this should cause deep repentance for our sins, and also praise to Him for all that He so freely and willingly endured.

There are a number of things that could be mentioned before the holy Sufferer came to Calvary, of which we have a record; we read of His apprehension in the garden, also of that demonstration of His deity when He said, "I am He" and they fell backward; Judas' treachery and betrayal; Peter's threefold denial of His Lord; the mocking, scourging and buffeting that He endured, the reproaches that were cast upon Him; of Simon of Cyrene bearing His Cross to the place of execution, and that when they were come to the place which is called Calvary there they crucified Him. I would like for a little while this evening to notice a few things about Calvary, what it meant to the great Redeemer, and what it means to us *if we are His*.

This *place* is as I have read in Matthew called Golgotha, that is a place of a skull, Calvary. This appears to be a place where criminals were put to death, where many of such characters had been crucified, and we are informed that their skeletons or skulls lay scattered in all directions. This is the *place* they called Calvary, or Golgotha, a place of a skull. As we consider this aspect even, apart from a number of other features recorded of Calvary, we cannot fail to see on the part of the Holy Sufferer the greatest

dishonour and humiliation. Think of this as the place where murderers were crucified ; and this as you know was the case even when the dear Redeemer Himself was crucified, as indicated in the prophecy by Isaiah, chapter 53, that the Scriptures might be fulfilled, "He was numbered with the transgressors". It was a feature of His deep estate of humiliation that on this particular occasion two thieves were crucified with Him on either side, one on the right hand and the other on the left, and (wonderful to say!) you know how that one of these poor suffering thieves proved to be a vessel of mercy ; for before he died he prayed saying, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into they kingdom", and the Lord did remember him. I was thinking this afternoon about this particular point, that it is said there was the one on the right hand and the other on the left. May not this set forth the sovereignty of God, one taken, the other left, "Two women shall be grinding at the mill ; the one shall be taken, and and the other left. Then shall two be in the field ; the one shall be taken, and the other left." I would also carry your minds in contemplation to that great day that lies ahead, of which we read in this same Gospel that, "Before Him shall be gathered all nations : and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats : And He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left." This will be a solemn display of divine sovereignty. Reverting to the two thieves, I do not know that it is recorded or that we have any concrete evidence so to conclude but I did wonder whether the thief that proved to be a chosen vessel of mercy was the thief that was crucified on the *right* of Christ.

Contemplate also how the Holy Sufferer was there suspended in that terrible physical pain and agony, how they reviled, mocked and blasphemed Him, saying, "If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross" and other blasphemous things wagging their heads, and yet it was all borne with a holy patience. "If Thou be the King of the Jews," they said, "save thyself". This has struck me as illustrating the terrible enmity of the human mind against Christ and His precious Gospel. All the people could say and answer to Pilate, "His blood be on us and on our children", for they were determined, using every possible effort, to secure His crucifixion. Subsequent history has proved that His blood *was* upon them and their children, for so it is today, they are a scattered people over the face of the earth, and though these are quieter days with them, evidently no race or nation of people have been so persecuted, massacred and cruelly treated as the Jews have been.

We will now pass on to another aspect of the *place* which is called Calvary, namely "The mystery and the mercy of *substitution*". He was made sin for us Who knew no sin ; He was numbered with the transgressors ; He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. It was at the place called

Calvary where He came to pay the ransom price of redemption by yielding up His own life, by shedding His most precious blood, fulfilling the prophecy of Holy Scripture in relation to the piercing of His side, following His sufferings and death. In all this we see the great mystery of substitution which is the great and grand theme of the blessed and glorious Gospel. "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous". All this at the place which is called Calvary. Here He was, in the midst of all this mockery and cruelty which it would seem almost impossible for even fallen humanity to impose. Another feature as we contemplate Calvary, and as we have been singing this evening, is the *awfulness of sin*. Gethsemane and Calvary are a revelation of the awfulness of sin in a sense in which nothing else can be. These were not His own sins, but the great point beloved friends is whether they were yours and mine. This is the point that has rather absorbed me. If it was our sins that were the cause of His terrible sufferings there and we really felt it, we should be like Peter who went out and wept bitterly, and this would be good; it would be a mercy indeed, for the sweetest repentance a poor guilty wretch can know is to grieve for grieving Him.

"'Tis not the fear of hell alone,
For that may prove extreme;
Repenting saints the Saviour own
And grieve for grieving Him."

This is repentance. O I wonder how many of us in this congregation have been there. O that we had grace enough to weep because of sin. Alas for me that my stony heart is often far removed from this. To this place called Calvary His poor repenting people look by faith upon Him and mourn as we read in the prophecy, "they shall mourn for Him as one mourneth for his only son". I believe I can say that I have seen a glory in substitution. I have had a little worship here as the great mystery and mercy of divine substitution has absorbed me. Dear Gadsby felt something of this when he said,

"Behold a scene of matchless grace,
'Tis Jesus in the sinner's place."

O to come to that spot, to come in faith to Gethsemane, to come in faith to Calvary and view that wounded, bleeding, dying Man, a Substitute standing in the place of His poor people, bearing their sins away for ever, suffering the penalty Himself of a broken law. This is another feature of Calvary; there we see the *law honoured and its curse removed*. O to have a right view of this, to see the holy Sufferer bearing the curse away by enduring it in His own body on the tree. I wish I had grace enough to bring this home upon your heart so that there was not a dry eye in this congregation in the pulpit or the pew. What a hardening, separat-

ing, deadening thing is sin, and though we may feel a hope in the mercy of God, and some consolation in a token or evidence that we shall be eternally saved, yet O what a far distance we live from Calvary, alas at least to speak for myself ; but here is the *place* which is called Calvary. May this particular feature be impressed upon us then that the Holy Redeemer did endure in full the curse of a broken law, a law which must be honoured to the full satisfaction of justice.

“ Many hands were raised to wound Him,
None would interpose to save,
But the awful stroke that found Him,
Was the stroke that justice gave.”

This is the place called Calvary. There was also a painful darkness that came upon the earth for the space of three hours from the sixth to the ninth hour. This was a terrible darkness, not just literally, but evidently this was a darkness that came upon the soul of the Lamb of God when for a space of time He felt the pain and sorrow of desertion. This is a mystery indeed, but we know as we have it recorded plainly enough, there was this space of darkness from the sixth hour to the ninth hour and about the ninth hour was that bitter cry, “ My God, my God why hast Thou forsaken me?” We may assume that one of the bitterest ingredients in the cup given Him was that sense, that painful consciousness of being forsaken of God, saying with a loud voice, “ My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” This was a cry of agony under the painful consciousness of that desertion, and the darkness that surrounded and enveloped the Holy Sufferer, the Lamb of God.

When Jesus was thus suspended upon the cross and yielding up the ghost, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom ; the earth did quake and the rocks rent, the graves were opened and many bodies of the saints which slept arose. May not this represent the fact that the death of the dear Redeemer has shaken the whole earth from that day to this, and will to the end of time. Nothing we may conclude has actually caused such a *shaking* figuratively of this earth upon which we live as the crucifixion, with all that was and is involved therein, of the dear Redeemer. Here we see hell vanquished, justice appeased, full atonement made for sin, and God satisfied and pleased.

I have then considered very briefly what Calvary meant as relating to the Lord Jesus Christ. May we not now briefly consider what it all means to us and what by faith we may see there. One of the things that faith sees at Calvary is the *everlasting love of God*. We read in the Scripture that “ He spared not His Own Son but delivered Him up for us”, and all this He did in love to His poor lost and ruined people who were eternally chosen in Christ, and were delivered from the curse of a broken law and divine punishment, consequent upon sin, through His mediation.

It is recorded that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son". In the Epistle of John also it is clearly indicated that it was in love that God the Father did this, "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him". Not only is it the love of the Father that faith sees in this place called Calvary, but the love of the dear Redeemer Himself, the love that He bare to His people. We see this divine perfection shining with a heavenly lustre all through His life, and particularly in the sufferings involved in His substitution.

"And why, dear Saviour, tell me why,
Thou thus wouldst suffer, bleed, and die;
What mighty motive could thee move?
The motive's plain; 'twas all for love."

Was that love, suffering and death for the best of people? The choicest of characters? Was it for those who have the sweetest dispositions and temperaments so they might assume that they have some qualifications or prelation above others? No,

"For love of whom? Of sinners base,
A hardened herd, a rebel race;
That mocked and trampled on thy blood,
And wantoned with the wounds of God."

Gadsby 152 (2nd part)

However commendable a person may be as to his or her natural character, when we are convinced of sin and shown ourselves in the sight of a just and holy God we are as a "hardened herd, a rebel race". In the wounds and blood of Calvary His convicted people see the removing of the curse of sin, the fulfilling of the divine law, the deliverance of His ransomed people from its curse in a full and complete atonement made for sin. The ransom price was paid which the law required: therefore justice will never smite again: "payment God cannot twice demand"; in that He died, He died unto sin once", indicating the complete satisfaction of His humiliation, sacrifice and death. Though the sword of justice did necessarily smite Him, yet that sword in smiting Him smote Him so that it could not fall upon us if we are His. O what a mystery is this; here is full and complete satisfaction. The great Redeemer expiring said, "It is finished", gave up the ghost, and the veil of the temple was rent in twain from top to bottom. This veil I understand was very thick, so that the rending of it was a miracle, which must have a deep significance. The Apostle Paul writing the epistle to the Hebrews says this, "By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh". This rent veil indicates that the Old Testament dispensation had now ceased, a way thereby being opened into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, giving poor sinners liberty to approach the mercy seat in prayer to plead

what He has done. What a mercy it is to see for a moment even, in our lives, a way from hell to heaven through all that the Saviour suffered at these two places, these two solemn and sacred places, Gethsemane and Calvary. Calvary was the consummation of redemption, the final scene. Here was heard the last sigh, here was felt the last pain, here the full payment of the price claimed by unflinching justice was paid to the last mite, here the debt was cancelled, here His precious blood was shed which was the ransom price as you know. When the soldiers came, finding that He was dead already they brake not His legs, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side and there flowed forth therefrom blood and water. This is that mystery of godliness. Here is a believer's justification, being justified by His blood; here is deliverance from the curse of sin which must otherwise fall upon our heads for ever in the punishment of hell. Here is a believer's sanctification from the pollution and defilement of sin whereby he is washed and cleansed, as dear Cowper says in his wonderful hymn:

“ There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins,
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.

Dear dying Lamb! thy precious blood,
Shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransomed church of God
Be saved to sin no more.”

May the Holy Spirit solemnly impress us with the subjects of this day, and work in us that true compunction, though we are not worthy in ourselves of the least consideration. Just contemplate for a moment the reproach, contempt, ignominy and shame that were cast upon Him. In the olden days as you know criminals were taken from Newgate prison, paraded up through Oxford Street and hanged in public, but the political offenders and those of the nobility were beheaded at the Tower. It would have been a far greater humiliation to those of noble birth to have been hanged at Tyburn, but our Blessed Redeemer had no such consideration from this point of view. He was crucified where the skulls and skeletons of criminals lay about, therefore called the *place of a skull*. If we reflect upon these things when we get to our beds tonight it will be a mercy; and I believe it will bring us to this prayer, “God be merciful to me a sinner”. How often does our mind go to this place called Calvary? What do we feel of sin as a burden upon our conscience making us sigh and mourn before the Lord? May the Lord in mercy awaken us to our sad condition, and bring us under this gracious and vital teaching, solemnize our minds and bring us in faith to Gethsemane and Calvary to behold a bleeding Jesus, an able and all sufficient Saviour, “able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him”. Amen.