

The Shameful Sufferer

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon's sermon 'The Shameful Sufferer' reflects on the profound shame and suffering of Christ, emphasizing His love and sacrifice for humanity.

Duration: 53:18

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Matthew 27:31, Romans 14:8, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Galatians 6:14, Philippians 1:21, Hebrews 12:2

Topics: "The Cross", "Selfless Love"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the shame and suffering that Jesus endured on the cross. He vividly describes the physical torment Jesus experienced, from being flung onto the rough wood of the cross to having his flesh torn by the iron nails. The preacher emphasizes the shame Jesus endured, being naked and exposed to the gaze of onlookers while hanging on the cross. Despite being in excruciating pain and facing humiliation, Jesus willingly endured it all for the joy that was set before him. The preacher encourages the audience to reflect on this shameful suffering and to see Jesus as an admirable example of selfless love and sacrifice.

Transcript

The Prince of Preachers Charles Haddon Spurgeon has been called England's greatest contribution to the spread of the gospel in the 19th century. One of his contemporaries said that the chief secret of Spurgeon's attractiveness was the fact that in every sermon, no matter what the text or the occasion, he explained the way of salvation in simple terms. Spurgeon's messages remain one of the great treasure houses of Christian literature, still bringing the light of the gospel and the comfort of the scriptures to hungry souls long after the preacher has passed into glory.

This is Charles Kelsch inviting you to listen to a message from the Prince of Preachers. Ch. Spurgeon preached this message on January 30th, 1859 at the Music Hall of the Royal Surrey Gardens.

It is entitled, The Shameful Sufferer. The text is found in Hebrews chapter 12 and verse 2. Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of the throne of God? O what shall I do, my Saviour, to praise? Where shall language be found which shall describe his matchless, his unparalleled love towards the children of men? Upon any ordinary subject one may find liberty of speech and fullness of utterance, but this subject lies out of the line of all oratory, and eloquence cannot attain unto it. This is one of the unutterable things, unutterable because it surpasses thought and defies the power of words.

How then can we deal with that which is unutterable? I am conscious that all I can say concerning the sufferings of Jesus this morning will be but as a drop of the bucket. None of us knows the half of the agony which he endured. None of us has ever fully comprehended the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.

Philosophers have probed the earth to its very center, threaded the spheres, measured the skies, weighed the hills, nay, weighed the world itself. But this is one of those vast, boundless things which to measure doth surpass all but the infinite itself. As the swallow but skimmeth the water and diveth not into its depths, so all the descriptions of the preacher but skim the surface, while depths immeasurable must lie far beneath our observation.

Well might a poet say, O love, thou fathomless abyss! For this love of Christ is indeed measureless and fathomless. None of us can attain unto it. In speaking thereof we feel our own weakness.

We cast ourselves upon the strength of the Spirit. But even then we feel that we can never attain unto the majesty of this subject. Before we can ever get a right idea of the love of Jesus, we must understand His previous glory in its height of majesty and His incarnation upon the earth in all its depths of shame.

Now, who can tell us the majesty of Christ? When He was enthroned in the highest heavens, He was very God of very God. By Him were the heavens made and all the hosts thereof. By His power He hanged the earth upon nothing.

His own almighty arm upheld the spheres. The pillars of the heavens rested upon Him. The praises of angels, archangels, cherubim and seraphim perpetually surrounded Him.

The full chorus of the hallelujahs of the universe unceasingly flowed to the foot of His throne. He reigned supreme above all His creatures. God over all, blessed forever.

Who can tell His height then? And yet this must be attained before we can measure the length of that mighty stoop which He took when He came to earth to redeem our souls. And who, on the other hand, can tell how low He descended? To be a man was something. But to be a man of sorrows was far more.

To bleed, die and suffer, these were much for Him who was the Son of God. But to suffer as He did, such unparalleled agony. To endure as He did a death of shame and a death of desertion of His God.

This is a lower depth of condescending love which the most inspired mind must utterly fail to fathom. And yet we must first understand infinite height and then infinite depth. We must measure, in fact, the whole infinite that is between heaven and hell before we can understand the love of Jesus Christ.

Yet because we cannot understand, shall we therefore neglect? And because we cannot measure, shall we therefore despise? Ah no! Let us go to Calvary this morning and see this great sight. Jesus Christ, for the joy that was set before Him, enduring the cross, despising the shame, I shall endeavor to show you first the shameful sufferer. Secondly, we shall endeavor to dwell upon His glorious motive.

And then, in the third place, we shall offer Him to you as an admirable example. First, beloved, I wish to show you the shameful sufferer. The text speaks of shame.

And therefore, before entering upon suffering, I shall endeavor to say a word or two upon the shame. Perhaps there is nothing which men so much abhor as shame. We find that death itself has often been preferable in the minds of men to shame.

And even the most wicked and callous-hearted have dreaded the shame and contempt of their fellow creatures far more than any tortures to which they could have been exposed. We find Abimelech, a man who murdered his own brethren without compunction, we find even him overcome by shame. When a certain woman cast a piece of the millstone upon Abimelech's head and all to break his skull, then he called hastily unto the young man, his armor-bearer, and said unto him, Draw thy sword and slay me, that men say not of me a woman slew him.

And his young man thrust him through, and he died. Shame was too much for him. He would far rather meet the suicide's death, for such it was, than he should be convicted of the shame of being slain by a woman.

So was it with Saul also, a man who was not ashamed of breaking his oath and of hunting his own son-in-law like a partridge upon the mountains. Even he fell upon his own sword, rather than it should be said of him that he fell by the Philistines. And we read of an ancient king, Zedekiah, that albeit he seemed reckless enough, he was afraid to fall into the hands of the Chaldeans, lest the Jews who had fallen away to Nebuchadnezzar should make a mock of him.

These instances are but a few of many. It is well known that criminals and manufacturers have often had a greater fear of public contempt than of aught else. Nothing can so break down the human spirit as to be subject continually to contempt, the visible and manifest contempt of one's fellows.

In fact, to go further, shame is so frightful to man that it is one of the ingredients of hell itself. It is one of the bitterest drops in that awful cup of misery. The shame of everlasting contempt to which wicked men awake in the day of their resurrection, to be despised of men, despised of angels, despised of God, is one of the depths of hell.

Shame, then, is a terrible thing to endure, and many of the proudest natures have been subdued when once they have been subjected to it. In the Saviour's case, shame would be peculiarly shameful. The nobler a man's nature, the more readily does he perceive the slightest contempt, and the more acutely does he feel it.

That contempt which an ordinary man might bear without a suffering, he who has been bred to be obeyed, and who has all his life long been honoured, would feel most bitterly. Beggared princes and despised monarchs are among the most miserable of men. But here was our glorious Redeemer, in whose face was the nobility of Godhead itself despised and spit upon and mocked.

Ye may therefore think how such a noble nature as his had to endure. The mere kite can bear to be mewed, but the eagle cannot bear to be hoodwinked and blindfolded. He hath a nobler spirit than that.

The eye that hath faced the sun cannot endure darkness without a tear. But Christ, who was more than noble, matchlessly noble, something more than of a royal race, for him to be shamed and mocked must have been dreadful indeed. Besides, some minds are of such delicate and sensitive disposition that they feel things far more than others.

There are some of us who do not so readily perceive an affront, for when we do perceive it, are totally indifferent to it. But there are others of a loving and tender heart. They have so long wept for others' woes that their hearts have become tender, and they therefore feel the slightest brush of ingratitude from those they love.

And if those for whom they are willing to suffer should utter words of blasphemy and rebuke against them, their souls would be pierced to the very quick. A man in armor would walk through thorns and briars without feeling, but a man who is naked feels the smallest of the thorns. Now Christ was, so to speak, a naked spirit.

He had stripped himself of all for manhood. He had said, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. He stripped himself of everything that could make him callous, for he loved with all his soul.

His strong, passionate heart was fixed upon the welfare of the human race. He loved them even unto the death. And to be mocked by those for whom he died, to be spit upon by the creatures whom he came to save, to come unto his own, to find that his own received him not, but actually cast him out, this was pain indeed.

Ye tender hearts that can weep for others' woes, and ye that love with a love as strong as death, and with a jealousy as cruel as the grave, ye can guess, but only you what the Saviour must have endured when all did mock him, did scorn him, and he found none to pity, none to take his part. To go back to the point with which we started, shame is peculiarly abhorrent to manhood, and far more to such a manhood as that which Christ carried about with him, a noble, sensitive, loving nature, such as no other manhood had ever possessed. And now come, and let us behold the pitiful spectacle of Jesus put to shame.

He was put to shame in three ways, by shameful accusation, shameful mockery, and shameful crucifixion. And first, behold the Saviour's shame in his shameful accusation. He in whom was no sin, and who had done no ill, was charged with sin of the blackest kind.

He was first arraigned before the Sanhedrin on no lesser charge than that of blasphemy. And could he blaspheme? He who said, It is my meat and my drink to do the will of him that sent me, could he blaspheme? He who in the depth of his agony, when he sweat as it were great drops of blood, at last cried, My father, not my will, but thine, be done, could he blaspheme? No. And it is just because it was so contrary to his character that he felt the accusation.

To charge some of you here present with having blasphemed God would not startle you, for ye have done it, and have done it so often as almost to forget that God abhors blasphemers, and that he will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. But for one who loved as Jesus loved, and obeyed as he obeyed, for him to be charged with blasphemy, the accusation must have caused him peculiar suffering. We wonder that he did not fall to the ground, even as his betrayers did when they came to lay hold upon him.

Such an accusation as that might blight an angel's spirit, such a calumny might wither the courage of a cherub. Marvel not, then, that Jesus felt the shame of being accused of such a crime as this. Nor did this content them, having charged him with breaking the first table, they then charged him with violating the second.

They said he was guilty of sedition. They declared that he was a traitor to the government of Caesar, that he stirred up the people, declaring that he himself was a king. And could he commit treason? He who said, My kingdom is not of this world, else would my servants fight.

He who, when they would have taken him by force to make him a king, withdrew himself into the wilderness and prayed. Could he commit treason? It were impossible. Did he not pay tribute and send to the fish when his poverty had not wherewith to pay the tax? Could he commit treason? He could not sin against Caesar, for he was Caesar's lord, he was king of kings and lord of lords.

If he had chosen, he could have taken the purple from the shoulders of Caesar, and at a word have given Caesar to be a prey to the worms. He commit treason! It was far enough from Jesus, the gentle and the mild, to stir up sedition or set man against man. Oh no, he was a lover of his country and a lover of his race.

He would never provoke a civil war. And yet this charge was brought against him. What would you good citizens and good Christians, if you were charged with such a crime as this, with the clamors of your own people behind you, crying out against you as so execrable an offender that you must die to death, would not that abash you? Ah, but your master had to endure this as well as the other.

He despised the shameful indictments and was numbered with the transgressors. But next, Christ not only endured shameful accusation, but he endured shameful mocking. When Christ was taken away to Herod, Herod set him at knots.

The original word signifies made nothing of him. It is an amazing thing to find that man should make nothing of the Son of God, who is all in all. He had made himself nothing.

He had declared that he was a worm and no man. But what a sin was that, and what a shame was that when Herod made him nothing. He had but to look Herod in the face, and he could have withered him with but one glance of his fire-darting eyes.

But yet Herod may mock him, and Jesus will not speak. Men of arms may come about him and break their cruel jest upon his tender heart. But not a word has he to say, but is led as a lamb to the slaughter, and like a sheep before her shearers is dumb.

You will observe that in Christ's mocking, from Herod's own hall on to the time when he was taken from Pilate's hall of judgment to his crucifixion, then onward to his death, the mockers were of many kinds. In the first place, they mocked the Savior's person. One of those things about which we may say but little, but of which we often ought to think, is the fact that our Savior was stripped in the midst of a ribald soldiery of all the garments that He had.

It is a shame even for us to speak of this which was done by our own flesh and blood toward Him who was our Redeemer. Those holy limbs which were the casket of the precious jewel of His soul were exposed to the shame and open contempt of men, coarse-minded men, who were utterly destitute of every particle of delicacy. The person of Christ was stripped twice, and although our painters, for obvious reasons, cover Christ upon the cross, there He hung, the naked Savior of a naked race.

He who clothed the lilies had not wherewith to clothe Himself, not so much as a rag to conceal His nakedness from a staring, gazing, mocking, hard-hearted crowd. He who had made goats of skins for Adam and Eve when they were naked in the garden. He had taken from them those poor fig leaves wherewith they sought to hide their nakedness, and given them something wherewith they might wrap themselves from the cold.

But now they part His garments among them, and for His vesture do they cast lots, while He Himself, exposed to the pitiless storm of contempt, hath no cloak with which to cover His shame. They mocked His person. Jesus Christ declared Himself to be the Son of God.

They mocked His divine person as well as His human when He hung upon the cross. They said, If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross, and we will believe on thee. Frequently they challenged Him to prove His divinity by turning aside from the work which He had undertaken.

They asked Him to do the very thing which would have disproved His divinity, in order that they might then, as they declared, acknowledge and confess that He was the Son of God. And now, can you think of it? Christ was mocked as a man. We can conceive Him as yielding to this.

But to be mocked as God, a challenge thrown to manhood, manhood would easily take up and fight the duel. Christian manhood would allow the gauntlet to lie there or tread it beneath its foot in contempt, bearing all things and enduring all things for Christ's sake. But can you think of God being challenged by His creature, the eternal Jehovah, provoked by the creature which His own hand hath made, the infinite despised by the finite, He who fills all things, by whom all things exist, laughed at, mocked, despised by the creature of an hour who is crushed before the moth? This was contempt indeed, a contempt of His complex person, of His manhood, and of His divinity.

But note next, they mocked all His offices as well as His person. Christ was a king, and never such a king as He. He is Israel's David.

All the hearts of His people are knit unto Him. He is Israel's Solomon. He shall reign from sea to sea and from the river even to the ends of the earth.

He was one of royal race. We have some called kings on earth, children of Nimrod. These are called kings, but kings they are not.

They borrow their dignity of Him who is King of kings and Lord of lords. But here was one of the true blood, one of the right royal race, who had lost His way and was mingled with the common herd of men. What did they do? Did they bring crowns with which to honor Him? And did the nobility of earth cast their robes beneath His feet to carpet His footsteps? See what they do! He is delivered up to rough and brutal soldiery.

They find for Him a mimic throne, and having put Him on it, they strip Him of His own robes, find some old soldier's cloak of scarlet or of purple, and put it about His loins. They plate a crown of thorns and put it upon His brow, a brow that was of old bedight with stars. Then they fix in His hand, a hand that will not resent an insult, a scepter of reed, and then, bowing the knee, they pay their mimic homage before Him, making Him a mayday king.

Now, perhaps there is nothing so heart-rending as royalty despised. You have read the story of an English king who was taken out by his cruel enemies to a ditch. They seated him on an anthill, telling him that was his throne, and then they washed his face in the filthiest puddle they could find.

And the tears running down his cheeks, he said he should yet be washed in clean water, though he was bitterly mistaken. But think of the King of kings and Lord of lords having for His adoration the spittle of guilty mouths, for homage the smittings of filthy hands, for tribute the jests of brutal tongues. Was ever shame like Thine, Thou King of kings, Thou Emperor of all worlds, flouted by the soldiery and smitten by

their menial hands? O earth, how couldst Thou endure this iniquity? O ye heavens, why didst Thou not fall in very indignation to crush the man who thus blasphemed Your Maker? Here was a shame indeed, the king mocked by his own subjects.

He was a prophet too, as we all know. And what did they that they might mock him as a prophet? Why they blindfolded him, shut out the light of heaven from his eyes, and then they smote him, and did buffet him with their hands, and they said, Prophecy unto us who it is that smote thee. The prophet must make a prophecy to those who taunted him to tell him who it was that smote him.

We love prophets. It is but the nature of mankind that if we believe in a prophet we should love him. We believe that Jesus was the first and the last of prophets.

By him all others are sent. We bow before him with reverential adoration. We count it to be our highest honor to sit at his feet like Mary.

We only wish that we might have the comfort to wash his feet with our tears and wipe them with the hairs of our head. We feel that like John the Baptist, his shoe latched we are not worthy to unloose. And can we therefore bear the spectacle of Jesus the prophet blindfolded and buffeted with insults and blows? But they also mocked his priesthood.

Jesus Christ had come into the world to be a priest to offer sacrifice, and his priesthood must be mocked too. All salvation lay in the hands of the priests. And now they say unto him, If thou be the Christ, save thyself and us.

Ah, he saved others. Himself he could not save. But oh, what mystery of scorn is here! What unutterable depths of shame that the great high priest of our profession, he who is himself the paschal lamb, the altar, the priest, the sacrifice, that he, the Son of God incarnate, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world, should thus be despised and thus be mocked.

He was mocked still further in his sufferings. I cannot venture to describe the sufferings of our Savior under the lash of the scourge. St. Bernard and many of the early fathers of the church give such a picture of Christ's scourging that I cannot endure to tell it over again.

Whether they had sufficient data for what they say, I do not know. But this much I know. He was wounded for our transgressions.

He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed. I know it must have been a terrible scourging to be called wounding, bruising, chastisement, and stripes.

And remember that every time the lash fell on His shoulders, the laugh of Him who used the lash was mingled with the stripe, and every time the blood poured out afresh and the flesh was torn off His bones, there was a jest and a jeer to make His pain yet more poignant and terrible. And when He came at last to His cross and they nailed Him upon it, how they continued the mockery of His sufferings! We are told that the high priest and the scribes stood and at length sat and watched Him there. When they saw His head fall upon His breast, they would no doubt make some bitter remark about it and say, Ah, He will never lift His head again among the multitude.

And when they saw His hands bleeding, they would say, Ha, ha, these were the hands that touched the lepers and that raised the dead. They will never do this again. And when they saw His feet, they would say, Ah, those feet will never tread this land again and journey on His pilgrimages of mercy.

Then some coarse, some villainous, some brutal, perhaps some beastly jest would be made concerning every part of His thrice adorable person. They mocked Him, and at last He called for drink and they gave Him vinegar, mocking His thirst while they pretended to allay it. But worst of all, I have one more thing to notice.

They mocked His prayers. Did you ever read in all the annals of executions or of murders that ever men mocked their fellow creatures' prayers? I have read stories of some dastardly villains who have sought to slay their enemies, and seeing their death approaching, the victims have said, Give me a moment or two for prayer. And rare has been the cases when this has been disallowed.

But I never read of a case in which when the prayer was uttered it has been laughed at and made the object of a jest. But here hangs the Savior, and every word He speaks becomes the object of a pun, the motto of a jest. When at last He utters the most thrilling death shriek that ever startled earth and hell, Aeli, Aeli, Lama Sabachthani, even then they must pun upon it and say, He calleth for Elias.

Let us see whether Elias will come and take Him down. He was mocked even in His prayer. O Jesus, never was love like Thine, never patience that could be compared with Thy endurance when Thou didst endure the cross, despising the shame.

I feel that in thus describing the Savior's mockeries, I have not been able to set it before You in the fullness of the shame through which He passed, and shall have to attempt it yet again in another moment, when I come to describe His shameful death, taking the words which preceded the ones I have already enlarged upon. He endured the cross, just as He did despise the shame, the cross, the cross. When you hear that word, it wakens in your hearts no thoughts of shame.

There are other forms of capital punishment in the present day, far more disgraceful than the cross. Connected with the guillotine, there is much of ignominy. With the block, as much.

With the gallows, most of all. But remember, that although to speak of the gallows is to utter a word of ignominy, yet there is nothing of shame in the term gallows, compared with the shame of the cross, as it was understood in the days of Christ. We are told that crucifixion was a punishment to which none could be put but a slave, and even then, the crime must have been one of the most frightful character, such as betrayal of a master, the plotting of his death, or murdering him.

Only such offenses would have brought crucifixion, even upon a slave. It was looked upon as the most terrible and frightful of all punishments. All the deaths in the world are preferable to this.

They have all some slight alleviating circumstance, either their rapidity or their glory. But this is the death of a villain, of a murderer, of an assassin, a death painfully protracted, one which cannot be equaled in all the inventions of human cruelty for suffering and ignominy. Christ himself endured this.

The cross, I say, is in this day no theme of shame. It has been the crest of many a monarch, the banner of many a conqueror. To some it is an object of adoration.

The finest engravings, the most wonderful paintings, have been dedicated to this subject. Now the cross engraven on many a gem has become a right royal and noble thing. And we are unable at this day, I believe, fully to understand the shame of the cross.

But the Jew knew it. The Roman knew it. And Christ knew what a frightful thing, what a shameful thing it was to be put to the death of crucifixion.

Remember, too, that in the Savior's case there were special aggravations of this shame. He had to carry his own cross. He was crucified, too, at the common place of execution, Calvary, analogous to our ancient Tiber or our present Old Bailey.

He was put to death, too, at a time when Jerusalem was full of people. It was at the feast of the Passover when the crowd would greatly increase and when the representatives of all nations would be present to behold the spectacle. Parthians and Medes and Elamites and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, in Greece, Versailles, and perhaps far off Tarshish and the islands of the sea, all were there to unite in this scoffing and to increase the shame.

And he was crucified between two thieves as if to teach that he was viler than they. Was ever shame like this? Let me conduct you to the cross. The cross.

The cross. Oh, tears begin to flow at the very thoughts of it. The rough wood is laid upon the ground.

Christ is flung upon his back. Four soldiers seize his hands and feet. His blessed flesh is rent with the accursed iron.

He begins to bleed. He is lifted into mid-air. The cross is dashed into the place prepared for it.

Every limb is dislocated. Every bone put out of joint by that terrific jerk. He hangs there, naked to his shame, gazed upon by all beholders.

The sun shines hot upon him. Fever begins to burn. The tongue is dried up like a potsherd.

It cleaveth to the roof of his mouth. He hath not wherewith to nourish nature with moisture. His body has been long emaciated by fasting.

He has been brought near the brink of death by flagellation in the hall of Pilate. There he hangs, the tenderest part of his body. His hands and his feet are pierced.

Where the nerves are most numerous and tender, there is the iron rending and tearing its fearful way. The weight of his body drags the iron up his foot. When his knees are so weary that they cannot hold him, then the iron begins to drag through his hands.

Terrible spectacle, indeed! But you have seen only the outward. There was an inward. You cannot see that, if you could see.

Although your eyes were like the angels, you would be smitten with eternal blindness. Then there was the soul, the soul dying. Can you guess what must be the pangs of a soul dying? A soul never died on earth yet.

Hell is the place of dying souls, where they die everlastingly the second death. And there was within the ribs of Christ's body hell itself poured out. Christ's soul was enduring the conflict with all the powers of hell, whose malice was aggravated by the fact that it was the last battle they should ever be able to fight with him.

Nay, worse than that! He had lost that which is the martyr's strength and shield. He had lost the presence of his God. God himself was putting his hand upon him.

It pleased the Father to bruise him. He hath put him to grief. He hath made his soul a sacrifice for sin.

God, in whose countenance Christ had everlastingly seen himself, basking in delight, concealed his face. And there was Jesus, forsaken of God and man, left alone to tread the winepress, nay, to be trodden in the winepress, and dip his vesture in his own blood. Oh, was there ever grief like this? No love can picture it.

If I had a thought in my heart concerning the sufferings of Christ, it should excoriate my lips ere I uttered it. The agonies of Jesus were like the furnace of Nebuchadnezzar heated seven times hotter than ever human suffering was heated before. Every vein was a road for the hot feet of pain to travel in, every nerve a string in a harp of agony that thrilled with a discordant wail of hell.

All the agonies that the damned themselves can endure were thrust into the soul of Christ. He was a target for the arrows of the Almighty, arrows dipped in the poison of our sin. All the billows of the Eternal dashed upon this rock of our salvation.

He must be bruised, trodden, crushed, destroyed. His soul must be exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. But I must pause.

I cannot describe it. I can weep over it, and you can too. The rocks rent when Jesus died.

Our hearts must be made of harder marble than rocks themselves if they do not feel. The temple rent its gorgeous veil of tapestry, and will not ye be mourners too? The sun itself had one big tear in its own burning eye which quenched its light. And shall not we weep, we for whom the Savior died? Shall not we feel an agony of heart that He should thus have endured for us? Mark, my friends, that all the shame that came on Christ, He despised.

He counted it so light compared with the joy which was set before Him that He is said to have despised it. As for His sufferings, He could not despise them. That word could not be used in connection with the cross, for the cross was too awful for even Christ Himself to despise.

That He endured. The shame He could cast off, but the cross He must carry, and to it He must be nailed. He endured the cross, despising the shame.

And now His glorious motive. What was that which made Jesus speak like this for the joy that was set before Him? Beloved, what was the joy? O, tis a thought that must knelt a rock and make a heart of iron move, that the joy which was set before Jesus was principally joy of saving you and me. I know it was the joy of fulfilling His Father's will, of sitting down on His Father's throne, of being made perfect through suffering.

But still I know that this is the grand, great motive of the Savior's suffering, the joy of saving us. Do you know what the joy is of doing good to others? If you do not know, I pity you. For of all the joys which God has left in this poor wilderness, this is one of the sweetest.

Have you seen the hungry when they have wanted bread for many an hour? Have you seen them come to your house almost naked, their clothes having been thrust away, that they might get money upon them to find bread? Have you heard the woman's story of the griefs of her husband? Have you listened when you have heard the tale of imprisonment, of sickness, of cold, of hunger, of thirst? And have you never said, I will clothe you, I will feed you? Have you never felt that joy divine when your gold has been given to the poor and your silver has been dedicated to the Lord when you bestowed it upon the hungry and you have gone aside and said, God forbid that I should be self-righteous. But I do feel it is worth living for to feed the hungry and clothe the naked and to do good for my poor suffering fellow creatures. Now this is the joy which Christ felt.

It was the joy of feeding us with the bread of heaven, the joy of clothing poor naked sinners in his own righteousness, the joy of finding mansions in heaven for homeless souls, of delivering us from the prison of hell and giving us the eternal enjoyments of heaven. But why should Christ look on us? Why should he choose to do this to us? Oh, my friends, we never deserved anything at his hands. As a good old writer says, when I look at the crucifixion of Christ, I recollect that my sins put him to death.

I see not Pilate, but I see myself in Pilate's place, bartering Christ for honor. I hear not the cry of the Jews, but I hear my sins yelling out, crucify him, crucify him. I see not iron nails, but I see my own iniquities fastening him to the cross.

I see no spear, but I behold my unbelief piercing his poor wounded side. For you, my sins, my cruel sins, his chief tormentors were. Each of my sins became a nail, and unbelief the spear.

It is the opinion of the Romanists that the very man who pierced Christ's side was afterwards converted and became a follower of Jesus. I do not know whether that is the fact, but I know it is the case spiritually. I know that we have pierced the Savior.

I know that we have crucified him. And yet, strange to say, the blood which we fetched from those holy veins has washed us from our sins and hath made us accepted in the Beloved. Can you understand this? Here is manhood mocking the Savior, parading him through the streets, nailing him to a cross, and then sitting down to mock at his agonies.

And yet, what is there in the heart of Jesus but love to them? He is weeping all this while that they should crucify him, not so much because he felt the suffering, though that was much, but because he could not bear the thought that men whom he loved could nail him to the tree. That was the unkindest stab of all. You remember that remarkable story of Julius Caesar when he was struck by his friend, Brutus.

When the noble Caesar saw him stab, in gratitude, more strong than traitor's arms, quite vanquished him. Then burst his mighty heart. Now Jesus had to endure the stab in his inmost bowels, and to know that his elect did it, that his redeemed did it, that his own church was his murderer, that his own people nailed him to the tree.

Can you think, beloved, how strong must have been the love that made him submit even to this? Picture yourself today going home from this hall. You have an enemy who has all his life long been your enemy.

His father was your enemy, and he is your enemy too.

There is never a day passes but you try to win his friendship. But he spits upon your kindness and curses your name. He does injury to your friends.

There is not a stone he leaves unturned to do you damage. As you are going home today, you see a house on fire. The flames are raging, and the smoke is ascending up in one black column to heaven.

Crowds gather in the street, and you are told that there is a man in the upper chamber who must be burnt to death. No one can save him. You say, Why, that is my enemy's house.

And you see him at the window. It is your own enemy, the very man. He is about to be burnt.

Full of loving kindness, you say, I will save that man if I can. He sees you approach the house. He puts his head from the window and curses you.

An everlasting blast upon you, he says. I would rather perish than that you should save me. Do you imagine yourself then dashing through the smoke and climbing the blazing staircase to save him? And can you conceive that when you get near him, he struggles with you and tries to roll you in the flames? Can you conceive your love to be so potent that you can perish in the flames rather than leave him to be burned? You say, I could not do it.

It is above flesh and blood to do it. But Jesus did it. We hated him.

We despised him. And when he came to save us, we rejected him. When his Holy Spirit comes into our hearts to strive with us, we resist him.

But he will save us. Nay, he himself braved the fire that he might snatch us as brands from eternal burning. The joy of Jesus was the joy of saving sinners.

The great motive then with Christ in enduring all this was that he might save us. And now, give me just a moment, and I will try and hold the Savior up for our imitation. I speak now to Christians, to those who have tasted and handled of the good word of life.

Christian men, if Christ endured all this merely for the joy of saving you, will you be ashamed of bearing anything for Christ? The words are on my lips again this morning. If on my face for thy dear name shame and reproach shall be, I'll hail reproach and welcome shame, my Lord. I'll die for thee.

Oh, I do not wonder that the martyrs died for such a Christ as this. When the love of Christ is shed abroad in our hearts, then we feel that if the stake were present, we would stand firmly in the fire to suffer for him who died for us. I know our poor unbelieving hearts would soon begin to quail at the crackling faggots and the furious heat.

But surely this love would prevail over all our unbelief. Are there any of you who feel that if you follow Christ you must lose by it, lose your station, or lose your reputation? Will you be laughed at if you leave the world and follow Jesus? Oh, and will you turn aside because of these little things when he would not turn aside, though all the world mocked him till he could say, It is finished! No, by the grace of God, let every Christian lift his hands to the Most High God, to the Maker of heaven and earth, and let him say within himself, Now for the love I bear his name, what was my gain I count my loss. I pour contempt on all my shame and nail my glory to his cross.

For to me to live is Christ, to die is gain. Living I will be his, dying I will be his. I will live to his honor, serve him wholly if he will help me, and if he needs it, will die for his name's sake.

This message, The Shameful Sufferer, was preached by Charles Haddon Spurgeon on January 30, 1859. This is Charles Kelsch inviting you to join me again for another message from the Prince of Preachers.

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