

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit

MOCKING THE KING

A Sermon

Delivered by

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“And they stripped Him, and put on Him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon His head, and a reed in His right hand: and they bowed the knee before Him, and mocked Him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon Him, and took the reed, and smote Him on the Head.”

— *Matthew 27:28-30*

I am certain that I should fail if I were to attempt to preach a sermon that should be worthy of such a text as this. I shall make no such attempt; but, during the few minutes available for the Address of this evening, I shall try to set forth our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, as he was when —

“ Sinners in derision crown'd him.”

I pray the Holy Ghost to enable me to do this; for, unless he shall do so, my words will be of no avail.

Brethren and sisters in Christ, we have before us a King, and such a King as was never known before; his pedigree more glorious than that of any mere earthly monarch; his right to reign indisputable; his power to subdue all to himself infinite, whether he chose to use it or not, his character such as never belonged to any king before, as eminent in goodness as he was supreme in power, “the Son of the Highest,” “who is over all, God blessed for ever,” yet who became the Son of man for our sakes. This is the King who is now before us.

But what an enthronement was accorded to him! See that scarlet robe; it is a contemptuous imitation of the imperial purple that a king wears. See that old chair into which the soldiers have thrust him, so that he may be seated upon a mockery of a throne. See, above all, that crown upon his head. It has rubies in it, but the rubies are composed of his own blood, forced from his blessed temples by the cruel thorns. See, they pay him homage; but the homage is their own filthy spittle which runs down his cheeks. They bow the knee before him, but it is only in mockery. They salute him with the cry, “Hail, King of the Jews!” but it is done in scorn. Was there ever grief like his? It amazes us that such superlative goodness should have been treated with such fiendish malice, that such mercy should have been in such misery, that such majesty should have been reduced to such despising. Truly, he was “despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;” and they do not exaggerate who speak of him as the Emperor of sorrow and the enthroned Prince of misery. Look at him, and then restrain your tears if you can. Gaze upon him, ye who love him, and who know how fair was his glorious countenance ere it was marred more than the face of any man, and see it all bestained with his own blood, and then let your heart delight if it can; nay, rather let me say, indulge your griefs, and let your sorrow flow in copious streams, for of all spectacles that were ever witnessed by human eyes, this surely is the most grievous.

There are three things upon which I am going to speak; there are many other things to be seen in this strange exhibition of majesty in misery, but these three things will suffice to occupy our thoughts at this time.

I. The first is this. I see, in our Saviour thus mocked and put to shame, **THE EMBLEM OF WHAT OUR SIN HAS DONE.**

Remember that, *Jesus Christ stood in the sinner's place*. This is an old truth, with which you are very familiar, but of which you are never tired of hearing. Having been “made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man,” and having agreed to stand in the room and place of sinners as if he had been himself a sinner, you see in Jesus Christ the full result of sin epitomised. Man wanted to be a king, or to be more than a king. “Ye shall be as gods,” said the serpent to Eve in the garden of Eden, insinuating that the great God was jealous of man, and fearful that man would grow so great as to be his rival. Thus tempted, man put out his hand, and touched the fruit whereof he had been forbidden to partake. He had been a happy subject, but he hoped that he might become a happier king. It had been his delight to do the will of the Lord, but now he thought he should be able to do his own will, and that he should be able to reign side by side with God, or even in his place.

Ah, foolish man, see what kind of royalty it is that sin can bring thee! Come here, and see as in a glass the image of the coronation which sin gives to man. See how it doth crown him with mock dignity and honour. It makes him look like a king, but it is only a tinsel splendour, all outside show and sham. It gives him no royal rank or regal character in any case whatever. It is true that there is a crown upon man's head, but it is a crown of thorns, and this is the only crown that sin can ever give to poor humanity. Man wanted to be lord of the earth, and so he was in a certain sense; but his first act of lordship was to cause a blast and blight upon paradise, and to sow the earth with thorns and thistles, so that thenceforth he should never even eat bread without being reminded of his sin through the very sweat on his face. O yes, man, thou art a king! I can see thy crown; set great store by it if thou canst, proud, foolish monarch! Thou didst scorn to be a subject of the great Ruler of the universe, and now thou hast become thyself a monarch! Behold thy royal regalia! Specially notice thy crown, — a crown of thorns! This is how sin crowns us. We see the same thing in our Saviour, when he stood in our place, he was mocked, despised, rejected, and crowned with thorns, and this is what we become through sin. “Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.” Christ on the cross is a yet fuller type of what man would have become had sin been let alone. It brings manhood ever lower and lower until it plucks his very life out of him, and lays him dead beneath the clods of the valley. Sin's only throne is a mock one, its only crown is a painful one, and its only reward is sorrow and

shame. In Jesus, mocked by the soldiers, we see what sin had brought our race to and all that sin could do for us.

But our Lord, as a spectacle of shame, was also a representative of all of us in another way as to what sin would make of us. *In the time of his shame, nobody had a good word for Jesus.* All his disciples forsook him and fled, and he was deserted by all other men, and given over to mockery. That is just what our condition would be apart from Christ; and, mark you, it is just what will be the condition of every sinner who has no share in Christ's substitutionary sacrifice. The angels that kept their first estate must be ashamed of men; and redeemed men themselves will, throughout eternity, be ashamed of ungodly men. Daniel tells us that, when men shall awake, after the resurrection, unforgiven, unsaved, they will wake up "to shame and everlasting contempt." Amongst the pains and miseries of the world to come, to the ungodly this will perhaps be one of the most crushing, that the whole universe will ring with scorn of them. There will not be any beings capable of thought that will have any admiration for sinners then; they will all wonder with the wonderment of contempt how men could ever have acted as they have done. Methinks some angel will say to them, "You, created by God, and fed by his bounty, used your breath only to speak against the Most High. Though every day you owed every morsel that you ate to the benevolence of God, and even the garments upon your backs, which else had been naked, were the gifts of his charity, you ungratefully lifted up your heel against him. You were constantly receiving favours from the plentiful Benefactor, and yet were never grateful for them. Shame on you, you ungrateful men and women." And then the angel might say, "And after you had sinned so foully, the gospel was brought to you, and you were bidden to believe in Jesus. Christ crucified was set before you, but even that wondrous sight never touched your heart; or, even if your heart was touched for a little while, the impression soon wore off, for you turned your back upon that wondrous sight, and said, by your action, if not by your words, that it was nothing to you that Jesus should die!" It seems to me that an angel, looking down upon a sinner who has rejected Christ, will think of him as some sevenfold atrocity of nature.

My dear hearers, do not think that I am speaking too strongly; I am not, for there can be no crime that can be equal to that of the rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ by a sinner who has had the gospel preached to him. It will be proved to be so in the world to come if not in

this; and I believe that you impenitent sinners will be ashamed of yourselves then, and that you will call upon the mountains and rocks to fall upon you, and to hide you from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, because you will feel so mean, so wretched, so contemptible even to yourselves as you remember that Jesus Christ upon the cross, with love unparalleled, had no charms for you. You will see then what you do not appear to see now, that you must have been the meanest creature that ever existed that you did not at once fly to his arms, and kiss his feet, and there and then say, “Blessed be God for such a Saviour! I love him, and will spend and be spent for him all my days.”

Jesus Christ there, then, as an object of shame and scorn, is only a picture and emblem of what every sinner is and what every sinner will be unless renewed by grace, — he will be an object of everlasting shame and contempt. How the very devils in hell will mock him throughout eternity! He shall wear his mock crown, it shall not even be a crown of thorns; it shall be a circlet of flames of fire. But how terrible will be the laughter of the fiends in the pit as they gather around him, and cry, “You would be your own master, would you not? You would be a king, would you not? You would not kiss the Son, you would not yield to his sway, you would have your own way; now see what it has all come to — a crown of fire that cannot be quenched! You said that you could save yourself; why did you not do so? You said that you could make yourself fit for heaven any day without a Saviour; why did you not do so?” Such mockings as these, which will come as much from the man himself as from his companions in misery, will make him realise that the fruit of sin is shame, and that it is bitter beyond all description or imagination.

II. Now, secondly, our Saviour thus mocked, and despised, and rejected of men, gives us **A PICTURE OF THE WORLD’S ESTIMATE OF HIM.**

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to this earth as the Saviour sent from God, not “to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.” What does the world think of him? He has lived upon the earth three and thirty years and all that time he has done nothing but deeds of kindness to all with whom he has come into contact, and now the world is about to give its verdict concerning him. What eulogy will it pass upon this great Lover of humanity? What will it say to this grandest of all philanthropists? What are the rewards with which it will seek to ennoble him? There they are! There they are! Coarse laughter

and cruel mockery in the common room of the Praetorian guards! That is what the world thinks of Christ; it thinks nothing of him, it ridicules and despises him.

“But,” say some of you, “we have never treated Christ like that.” Harken, sirs, there are some of you in this house who are quite indifferent to the Lord Jesus Christ. You pay some outward deference to religious worship, but you have never given your hearts to Christ. You have never spent even an hour in your whole lives in seriously meditating upon his blessed person and his glorious work. You are not in a right state of heart to speak to his praise and glory, neither can you do anything to extend his cause and kingdom in the earth. It is true that you do not blaspheme him; you are not openly in opposition to him, but you are just indifferent. Yet can there be anything much worse than indifference to the Lord Jesus Christ? He is so loving, and gentle, and so tender of heart that to be indifferent to him is to cut him to the quick. Oh, had he been indifferent to us, when there was no other eye to pity us, and no other arm to save us, — if he had been indifferent to us then, instead of meeting in this place tonight to hear of him, we should all of us have been in hell. But he was not indifferent to us, so let none of us be so cruel as to be indifferent to him.

There are some who are not indifferent, for they are opposed to Christ, — not to the Christ whom they have imagined, but to the real Christ of Calvary. If they hear the gospel preached simply as we find it in the Bible, they are very angry. They can admire any false gospel that men have manufactured, but the gospel of the Bible does not suit them; when they listen to that, they are carried away with wrath and indignation. For instance, the great central doctrine of substitution, Christ suffering in the sinner’s stead, how many turn away with contempt from that plainly revealed truth! Then the doctrine of justification by faith, which is the very marrow of Christ’s gospel, how many are incensed at that, and cry out against it! The true Christ, the real Christ, they are angry at every mention of him. Perhaps there are some of you who have been persecuting your children because they have been speaking about the Saviour. Do, I address a husband who has spoken very bitterly to his wife because of her religion, or a brother who has been persecuting his sister because she is a Christian, or a master who has been sneering at and ridiculing his godly servant? Do you not know that, in acting thus, you are ridiculing Christ himself? For, if these people are really followers of Christ, he counts that whatever is done to

them is done to himself. He said to Saul of Tarsus, “Why persecutest thou *me*?” Saul had no idea that he was persecuting the Lord; he thought it was only a few poor deluded men and women that he was haling off to prison or to death; but it was Christ himself, in the person of his followers, whom Saul was persecuting. Take care what you are doing, I pray you, you who are thus persecuting the Christ of God, for it is very common for Christ, in this way, to receive from the world nothing but indifference and contempt, or actual opposition and persecution.

And, alas! I grieve to have to say it, but I fear that Christ is crowned with thorns and mocked by a great many who scarcely think they are doing so. I mean, for instance, do you not feel that it is mocking the Saviour to have his image set up in many countries as an idol to be worshipped? Even in our own land you may find tens of thousands bowing down before what they think to be the image of Christ or before a picture of his cross. I would rather die a thousand deaths, if I could do so, than that anyone should set up my image, and turn it into a god; yet I am only a poor weak sinful man, and therefore so to degrade me would not matter much; but to take Jesus Christ, the pure and perfect Son of God, and make an idol of him, — a detestable loathsome thing, for such an idol is, — must cut him to the quick, must daily crucify him afresh, and put him to an open shame. If you will make idols, take devils, and make idols of them; but to take the Son of God, and make an idol of him, is infamous. When the poor heathen bow before their ugly idol of wood or stone, it is degraded by being put to such an evil use; but when the immaculate Son of God has his image prostituted to such a vile use as that of being made part of the machinery of idolatry, it is atrocious. Now is he mocked indeed.

But there are other people who, seem determined to mock Christ in other ways. He instituted the ordinance of believers’ baptism to be the introductory rite into church-fellowship; but the mockers have changed the subjects, and mode, and meaning of the ordinance, and turned it into a piece of witchcraft, which, they say, regenerates unconscious babes, and makes them members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. Christ also instituted a simple supper of bread and wine to be a memorial of his death; but the mockers have changed that ordinance into the sacrifice of the mass, a thing for “priests” to conjure with, saying that they make the bread and wine into the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ. Oh, these are dreadful horrors! I sometimes marvel that the earth does not open, and swallow up these mockers, and

that Almighty God still allows these abominations to continue. Surely, the mockery of Christ by the Praetorian guard was not such a crime as this. Then there are others who mock Christ in another way. They preach Christ, but say that he is nothing but a man. They exalt his humanity, but deny his Deity. Is not this doing spiritually what the soldiers did literally? Such preachers put on Christ a purple robe; but, as they deny his Deity, it is only a mock robe, it is not the true purple of omnipotence and omniscience which belongs to him of whom the psalmist said, "The Lord reigneth, he is clothed with majesty." They put on him the crown of humanity, but it is only a crown of thorns. They put in his hand a sceptre, but it is nothing but a reed. Their christ is nothing but a man, and not the co-equal and co-eternal Son of God, Christ Jesus our dear Lord and Saviour. They have taken away the King's real regalia, his real sceptre, and his real crown, and thus they have degraded him to their own level; or, rather, I should say that they would do so if they could. It is thus that Jesus is still mocked and shamefully treated by some whose preaching consists of philosophical essays in which there is no mention of the precious blood of Christ, and the atonement and all the other grand old doctrines of Christianity are utterly ignored. This is just imitating the Roman soldiers who set Christ up on an old chair, and mocked him with all the emblems of royalty travestied, and with everything that constituted regal power and majesty taken away from him.

Worst of all, there are some professors who, in a certain sense, hold the truth, but who hold it in unrighteousness. There are some who say that they love the Lord Jesus Christ, and they will probably come with us to the communion table to-night pretending that they love him, yet knowing all the while that Christ has no real power over their lives. I marvel at some of you, who can degrade yourselves by drunkenness, and by even worse sins, or who can be guilty of dishonesty in business, or who live altogether graceless lives, and yet dare to talk as if you were trusting in the precious blood and righteousness of Christ. Oh, how you mock him and insult him by acting thus! Never did the soldiers' spittle, which ran down his blessed cheeks in that season of shame, dishonour him so much as when his praises are sung here by you who will to-morrow be singing a lascivious song, or who even dare to come to his table fresh from the haunts of sin. May God have mercy upon you, and turn you from your evil ways; for, if he shall not do so, there shall be no punishment too stern to mark his sense of your gross insults to his well-beloved Son. I charge you, in the name of the thrice holy Jehovah, if

you are living in sin, to refrain from pretending to be saints. If you cannot keep close to the Lord Jesus Christ, if you will not follow after holiness, I beseech you not to play the fool with God, and the liar to yourselves, by saying that Christ is your King. The devil is your king, so you cannot love the cup of the Lord while you love the cup of the drunkard, and you must not sit down to feast with the saints while you revel in uncleanness. How can you enjoy the pleasures of religion while you are satiated with the pleasures of the world? You think that I am speaking severely, and so I am, for I sometimes feel almost broken-hearted over some whose inconsistencies make sad havoc in the church, “of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ. “Talk not of Roman soldiers mocking Jesus while there are wanton professors, while there are dishonest professors, while there are unforgiving and unchaste professors who dare even to come to the table of the Lord. May God preserve all of us from ever mocking Christ in such a way as this!

III. Time fails me, or it would do so if I lingered over this theme as I might, and therefore my last point shall be this. The Lord Jesus, thus mocked and despised, is **THE MODEL TO US OF WHAT OUR CONDUCT SHOULD BE.**

Oh, how he, loved us! Oh, how he loved us! I cannot find any other sentence coming to my tongue but that same one a third time as I look at him, oh, how he loved us! This is he whose “eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set,” whose “lips are like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh,” whose “head is as the most fine gold, and his locks are bushy, and black as a raven.” He is the altogether lovely One, yet he was most shamefully treated, and he willingly endured it, for our sake. There is a famous picture which represents the Saviour wearing the thorn crown, and at the bottom of it are these words, written in German, “I suffered this for thee; what hast thou done for me?” Count Zinzendorf, then gay and worldly, walked into the picture gallery, and read these words. He stopped a while, and then he went out a new man in Christ, to be a most devoted servant of the Lord for the rest of his days. I wish I could paint that picture now by my words so that Christ might be visibly set forth before you, and that you might then hear him say, “I suffered this for thee; what hast thou done for me?” What actions can ever be worthy of such self-sacrificing love? What gifts can ever be equal to such unparalleled affection? What high and fervent thoughts shall ever rise to

the height of this great argument? What consecration shall ever be worthy of him? What all-consuming zeal, eating us up for his sake, shall ever approach the ardour of his love for us? I ask you who say that you love him, to judge for yourselves how you ought to act towards him who was willingly put into the place of scorn for you.

One or two things are perfectly clear. First, that *none of us ought, henceforth ever to court ease, and pomp, and show*. When the Crusaders took Jerusalem, and Baldwin was proclaimed king, he refused to have a crown put upon his head, for he said, "How can I wear a crown of gold where my Master wore a crown of thorns?" I wonder sometimes how professing Christians can dress as finely as some of them do. I wish they had clearly before their eyes the likeness of their Lord dressed in the scarlet robe, crowned with thorns, and made the subject of the soldiers' cruel mockery. They would not then care as they do now for those prettinesses which, after all, are often only uglinesses to those who have true taste. Jesus Christ would not pick out as his imitators those who make a grand display; he was notable for his poverty and his shame, but some professing Christians are never happy unless they are notable for show. Let us give all that sort of thing up for the love of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Then, again, it is quite clear that *we ought not to care about scorn*. Scorn! Let us scorn scorn. Does the world laugh at us? Let us laugh at the world's laughter, and say to it, "Dost thou despise us? It is not one half as much as we despise thee. Our fathers despised thy sword, O world, thy dungeons, thy racks, thy gibbets, thy stakes, and dost thou think that we shall tremble at thy scoffs, and jeers?" Certain infidel writers, when they caricature Christian people or the Church as a whole, think they have done a clever thing, but how insignificant and trifling it all is, a thing scarcely worth mentioning! Our Lord was so scoffed at that any satire we may have to endure will be only a compliment in comparison with what he had to bear. And present-day ridicule and scorn cannot mix a cup anything like that which he drank to the dregs. His cup was so bitter that anything they can give us to drink is comparatively sweet. They began so fiercely with him that they cannot do anything as bad as that to us. They called the Master of the house Beelzebub, so they cannot call his servants by any worse name than that. They mocked him, and put him to death; they brought forth their sharpest weapons first, so that the puny laughter and scorn that they

bring against Christians now are really not worthy of a moment's consideration. Yet I know some who are very much troubled by them.

“Ah!” says one, “I am a Christian, I hope, but I have been misrepresented by those who ought to know what I really am.” Well, but is that a new thing? You need not be astonished, for that is just what they did with Jesus. You might doubt whether you were a true servant of Christ if they did not tar you with the same brush that they used for him. “Ah! but they say such cruel things about me, and have such a way of jeering at me that it quite stings me.” Just so; but if they even crown you with thorns, you may be sure that the points of the thorns are broken off first, for Christ had them on his head, and he has taken away the sharpness of the thorns; and if the ungodly mock you, it never can be with that refined irony with which the soldiers mocked him when they said, “Hail, King of the Jews.” Who is ashamed to be a Christian? Ay, who is ashamed to be a Nonconformist Christian? Who is ashamed to be called by the name of that church to which he belongs? If there be any such here, let them sneak out by the back way, for cowards are not wanted in the army of God. But if ye know that ye are followers of Christ, glory in that blessed fact, and never blush at being put to shame for it. Nay, rather count “the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt.”

Before I close, I want just to say that I think such a text as this ought to stir up all of us who love the Lord *to be doing something for Christ that will demand self-denial*. I think it must be the reading of such a passage as this that has made some of our brethren and sisters go and labour amongst the very lowest of our population, where filth and vice abound. I can understand a delicately-nurtured lady devoting herself to such work as that, and a gentleman of the highest culture toiling heroically among the people in the worst slums in London, after having seen Christ wearing the thorn-crown. I can understand a missionary, for Christ's sake, living and labouring in the midst of tenfold filth in China, and making himself a Chinaman among the Chinese that he may win them to the Saviour. I can understand something of the spirit that has made men and women devote themselves entirely to the cause of Christ, going about preaching the Word, or ministering to the poor or the sick. I can understand how some have even gone to plague-infested cities, and lived and died among the sick and the dying. When once we have seen Christ and his thorn-crown, there ought to be such enthusiasm as would make us capable of

any deed of daring for him. As I look at my Master's head environed with thorns, I feel that any man who loves the Saviour must grow heroic at the sight, if the Spirit of God will but help him to see it as he should. And, my brethren and sisters in Christ, it is not for me to suggest what you should do, but for each one of you to suggest it to yourselves. I would ask each one of you whether you cannot do something for Jesus which you have never done before, make some sacrifice, wear a thorn-crown, — I mean spiritually, — for his sake, go a step farther than you have ever gone before, plunge deeper into the waters of consecration, give yourselves up to Christ more completely from this night forward. I pray that you may, I pray the Spirit of God to enable you to do it, and unto the Lord Jesus shall be honour and glory in compensation for his shame, and surely that compensation he richly deserveth. May he have it now, for his own dear name's sake! Amen.

**SOME QUOTABLE QUOTES FROM
THE PRINCE OF PREACHERS :**

“ The trials of the Christian life you shall find heavy, but grace will make them light.”

“ As well might a gnat seek to drink in the ocean, as a finite creature to comprehend the eternal God.”

“ Virtues without faith are whitewashed sins. Unbelief nullifies everything.”

“ A Christian should be a lamp and not a damp. He should cheer and enlighten his brethren, and not act as a wet blanket to their zeal.”