

Jesus Christ Crucified

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When we consider how much the church of God owes to the cross of Christ, and that the everlasting joy of heaven springs from the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus, it well merits a place in our thoughts to dwell a few minutes on the astonishing subject.

The cross, as far as we can learn from history, on which criminals were executed, was a kind of gibbet, with timber across, on which the person condemned to suffer was nailed. The body was suspended from those nails, which were driven through the hands, and the arms stretched out to each extremity. In this manner the criminal remained until life, from the extremity of suffering, expired. Some have said, that the wretched sufferers were first nailed to the cross, and then the whole body lifted on high, and the bottom of the cross fixed in a socket prepared for that purpose. And as this was done by a jerk, some of the bones were generally broken by this act of violence. But this is not probable. Indeed, in respect to the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, it is very unlikely to have been done, for a bone of Him was not to be broken.

As crucifixion was not only the most painful but the most disgraceful of all deaths, the Roman law never allowed a Roman, be his crime whatever it might, to be thus degraded. It was only inflicted on slaves and criminals, for some more atrocious transgressions. And in order to heighten the shame and pain, the poor victims, so condemned to death, were first scourged, and their backs lacerated with whips or leathern lashes; and not unfrequently led through the city naked with their blood streaming from their wounds, and carrying their cross to the proposed place of execution. The reader will not need to be told, that thus they treated the Lord of life and glory, whom none of the princes of this world knew, until that the holy Sufferer fainted from beneath the load and severity of His pain, when they compelled one that was passing by to bear the cross for the Lord Jesus.

It was an additional aggravation to the ignominy of crucifixion, that the sufferer was perfectly naked, and without the smallest covering. Thus all criminals suffered. And when we consider the personal cruelties all along shewn to the Lord Jesus, we cannot suppose, that the smallest respect was manifested in this particular to His sacred person. Such then was the death the Son of God in our nature endured, for the redemption of His church and people! But who shall describe the soul agonies of Jesus? Here I stop short. It is the crucifixion of the body that I am now limited to, when speaking of the cross of Jesus. Over this view only, let the reader and writer for a moment pause, while listening to the call of the Holy Ghost by His servant

the Baptist, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).

Was there ever such an object proposed to the mind of contemplation as the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross? It should seem as if the Lord Jesus, thus stretched forth and thus lifted up, was inviting, with His arms extended and His heart bleeding, all His redeemed to come to Him. Indeed, every part of His sacred body joined in giving the welcome. His arms spread to receive, His feet fixed to wait, and His head bowed down as if to kiss His people. Oh, for grace, with Paul, "to know nothing among men, save Jesus Christ and him crucified"! And with the same holy indignation as he felt, against every thing that would check the ardour of his love, to cry out, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world!" (Galatians 6:14).

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