

THE SEVEN CRIES

OF THE

REDEEMER ON THE CROSS.

THE First cry was, "FATHER, FORGIVE THEM ; FOR THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO." (Luke xxiii. 34.)

This was the prayer of Jesus for his murderers—for those wicked men who were embruing their hands in his blood. Behold him stretched on the ground ! Hearken to the sound of the hammers as they nail his sacred body to the cross ; and see the blood gushing from his wounds !

But he uttered no cry of reproach ; neither did he call for vengeance on the guilty and impious soldiers. They knew not the Lord of glory, whom they were crucifying. They mocked his claims ; they laughed to scorn his

power, and derided his authority as King. They digged a hole, and reared up his cross, and let it fall into it, so that he could say, "All my bones are out of joint." (Ps. xxii.) Behold him lifted between heaven and earth, rejected by man, insulted by devils, and forsaken by God. Oh, amazing love! Why did he suffer all this? It was for our salvation and the glory of God. Yes, heavy-laden sinner, that thou shouldst have heaven, he was willing to endure the suffering of death; hearken to his prayer, "Father, forgive them." The "many waters" could not quench his love, and the deep-seated malice of his foes did but draw out the boundless pity and compassion of his tender heart. They cursed, but he blessed. They hated, but he loved. He was not overcome with evil, but he overcame evil with good. He loved them, in whom there was nothing lovely or of good report. His prayer was not in vain, for we read that the centurion and they that were with him, when they saw the earth quake, and those things that were done, feared greatly, saying, "Truly, this was the Son of God." And "no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." (1 Cor. xii. 3.) And whoso "confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God." (1 John iv. 2.) Flesh

and blood revealed it not to them, but the Father who is in heaven : (Matt. xvi. 17; Matt. xi 27 :) so that the blood which they drew from his veins, supplied a fountain in which they were cleansed, and by which their enormous sins were pardoned and blotted out for ever. Thus is the love of God manifested in the character of the sinners that were saved, and in the manner of the grace which saves. Weeping sinner, take courage. Are you guilty? so were they. Are you lost? so were they. Have you been a persecutor? so were they. Have you despised the blessed Saviour, and by your conduct joined in rejecting him? so did they. Yet they believed and were saved; and before his enemies and friends they confessed him to be the Son of God.

II. The Second cry was to the dying thief, "TO-DAY SHALT THOU BE WITH ME IN PARADISE." (Luke xxiii. 43.)

We read that "the two thieves cast the same in his teeth," (Matt. xxvii. 44,) and "that they reviled him." (Mark xv. 32.) They cast the same taunting sneers in his teeth, and reproached him for not saving himself, and, in mockery, bade him leave the cross. Oh ! if there is any scene that shows the enmity of the carnal mind to

God, and that it is under the dominion of the prince of darkness, it is the fact which is here recorded. Men who were suffering the due reward of their deeds, and who were on the brink of hell—even they spat out their venom, and out of their polluted hearts burst forth a stream of wickedness and hatred, directed against the blessed Saviour: for even “the abjects spake against him, and he was the song of the drunkard.” But let us never forget that man could have had no power against him, unless it had been given him from above. Not the whole Roman army, nor earth and hell combined, could have kept him on the cross. It was not the nails that held him there. No: it was the glory of God; it was the salvation of the thief, and the salvation of all who should believe on him. It was love—pure, unmixed love—love that was stronger than ridicule, shame, and death. It was inexpressible, inconceivable, infinite, Godlike love to us poor, wretched, and by nature God-hating, Christ-despising sinners. (Rom. i. 30.) This was the mighty principle which influenced his conduct, and constrained him in all his wanderings here. This was the mighty motive which brought him from the glory to the manger, and which propelled him onward from the manger to the

cross. This made him undaunted in danger—patient under daily provocation, and persevering in the attainment of his object: for he “loved the Church, and gave himself for it.” (Eph. v. 25.) This was the power that bound him to the cross, and held him a willing victim there.

We read that one of the thieves, who a short time before had been railing on the dying Saviour, cried for mercy. “*Lord, remember me.*”

Oh! glorious sight! one heart was broken. While the sincere tears of repentance ran down his pallid face, and out of the bitter anguish of his agitated and broken spirit, he cried for mercy and sought forgiveness; he recognised in his fellow-sufferer the Son of God, the King of Israel, and the Saviour of men. He asked and received; he sought and found; he knocked and it was opened to him; he believed and was saved. “*This day,*” said Jesus, “*shalt thou be with me in paradise.*” The word fell like oil upon the troubled waters. It was a blessing far beyond what his heart had even conceived. It was the sweetest music his troubled spirit had ever heard. It was the voice of Jesus proclaiming “liberty to the captive,” and giving rest to his troubled and weary soul. It was like the life-

boat bearing over the angry and roaring waters, the shipwrecked and exhausted mariner into the port, which he never expected to enter. The eye of Jesus saw him; the heart of Jesus loved him—and the hand of Jesus rescued him from impending danger, and bore him into the desired haven. He believed in the merit, and rested on the value of the death of Jesus, and that word was fulfilled, "*Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.*" "*This day,*" said Christ, "*thou shalt be with me in paradise.*" Oh! what a change passed upon this poor man! One moment he was a child of wrath; the next, a child of God. About to become a prey to the devil, and to be for ever an inhabitant of hell, he was borne away by Jesus as the first-fruits of his death, and the earnest of an abundant harvest, which will be gathered into the garner of our God. Hell saw it with dismay; heaven saw it with joy: for there is joy in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth. They rejoice because they know the misery from which the sinner is delivered, and the glory to which he is raised. "Where I am shall my servant be. In my Father's house, thou shalt be with me;"—not only in rest and happiness with angels, but with Jesus. Wherever Christ is, and whatever

Christ has, on the throne, or before the throne, all will be the portion of the ransomed Church; for they are one with him, and "he is not ashamed to call them brethren." Thus, though we were driven out of paradise in the first Adam, and though, through our own sins, we have forfeited for ever the favour of God; yet Jesus, the second Adam, restores the true believer to a better paradise, and to greater joys, and to a more intimate knowledge of God, than Adam ever knew.

I would remark, that the conversion of this sinner was not an exception to God's rule. It required no stretch of His grace. Whether we owe much or little, we are in the same state—we have nothing to pay. The old and the young sinner—the most moral and the most debased, all are on one level before God: "children of wrath," (Eph. ii. 3;) "enemies," (Col. i. 21;) "without hope and without God," (Eph. ii. 12;) "condemned," (John iii. 19;) "lost," (Luke xix. 10;) "so that there is none righteous, no, not one." (Rom. iii. 10.) Oh! how humbling is this to the proud heart of man! It sweeps away all their refuges of lies under which many take shelter, who seek to justify themselves before men, whilst publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before

them. And we read that in the Church of Corinth there were some who had been murderers, whoremongers, and adulterers; but they were washed, and sanctified, and justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God; and the voice from heaven had said, "*What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common or unclean.*"

III. The Third cry was, "MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME?"—(Matt. xxvii. 46.)

It does not appear that any words had passed his blessed lips from the sixth to the ninth hour, when he broke the awful silence with that affecting and piercing cry. The sun hid its glory and veiled its brightness, not so much in sympathy with the sufferer as with God, who was punishing sin in the person of the sinner's Surety. The darkened heavens and heaving earth seemed to concur in God's condemning sin to shame and destruction in the flesh of His obedient and well-beloved Son. As man he suffered; but being God, there was efficacy in his sufferings, and infinite atonement in his blood, which was the great price, and the only meritorious cause of redemption. Upon his endurance of the cross, every thing depended

—the honour and glory of an insulted God, and the perfect honouring of the law, and the atonement required for the violation of it, and the salvation and exaltation of unnumbered millions. The darkness represented that cloud which hung between him and Jehovah. All communication was cut off. No ray of light penetrated to his tortured soul. There was no intercourse kept up between the holy God and himself, who was standing in the place of unholy and guilty man, and enduring the curse for him. But that wrath which, even in anticipation, made him quail in the garden, and which, in reality, must have been so tremendous—it was the bearing of it which was so intolerable to his holy soul.

He did not cry, Why did my servant Peter deny me? nor, Why did my disciples forsake me? nor, Why hath my nation rejected their rightful king? nor, Why have my creatures treated me thus? but, “*My God, why hast thou?*” All his sufferings from earth and hell were light, compared with the intense agony of his heart from the wrath of Almighty God. In the 22nd Psalm he says, “*Thou hast brought me into the dust of death;*” and in the 102nd Psalm he says, “*Because of thine indignation and thy wrath, for thou hast lifted me up, and cast me*

down;" and "*He weakened my strength in the way; he shortened my days.*" In the 53rd chapter of Isaiah it is said, "*He was stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted;*" and "*the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.*" It was this which caused him to say, "*I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me.*" (Ps. lxi.) And again, "*All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.*" (Ps. xlii.) This was the baptism for which he was pained until it was accomplished, (Luke xii.,) and whereby we are saved. He was the substitute and sin-bearer. He suffered the judgment of God upon sin, that God might never enter into judgment with us. This solves the mystery, and explains the reason, and answers that most affecting and heart-rending question, "MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME?"

It pleased (or it was the will of) Jehovah, to bruise him and put him to grief; to make his soul an offering for sin. He treated him as an *alien*, in order that He might adopt us as *children*. He poured on him, in the place of death, and darkness, and uncleanness—without the camp, without the city—the dreadful curse which we sinners merited, that we might be made meet through his death and righteous-

ness, to stand holy and unblameable and unreprouable in his sight. (Col. i. 22.) He crushed him under His righteous wrath, that through *his* bruise *we* might be healed; that through *his* fall *we* might rise; that through *his* humility and degradation *we* might be lifted from the dunghill of corruption, and “set amongst princes,” and be given to “inherit the throne of glory.”

Lastly, the darkness represented the outer darkness into which the rejectors of this great salvation will be cast, where there is “weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.” (Matt. viii. 12.)

IV. The Fourth cry was to his mother. “When Jesus, therefore, saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, WOMAN, BEHOLD THY SON! Then saith he to the disciple, BEHOLD THY MOTHER!” (John xix. 26.)

Now the sword, spoken of by Simeon, pierced through her own heart. She had heard the hootings and execrations of the multitude as they cried, “*Away with him, Crucify him.*” She had gone with his weeping followers to the blood-stained summit of Mount Calvary, when to her the Divine Sufferer, sympathising with

the sinless affections of the nature which he had taken that he might redeem us, cries, "WOMAN, BEHOLD THY SON!" Then committing her to the care of the beloved and loving disciple, who, with her, was witness of his unparalleled sufferings, he cries, "BEHOLD THY MOTHER!" Beautiful exhibition of tenderness in the hour of his extremity! And how ready the response it called forth from the heart of John! for, "from that hour, that disciple took her unto his own home."

Reader, you are called to behold this great sight—such a sight as was never seen before, nor ever will be repeated. Think upon it until it engrosses your attention, and wins your affection to God. Be assured that if you want power to enable you to break off your sins by repentance, and to forsake them, and to bear your cross after Jesus, it is from his cross that you must gain it, so that by it you may be crucified to the world, and the world unto you. It is in gazing by faith on the wounded, mutilated body of the Lord—it is by witnessing that unparalleled and inconceivable love, which was seen in Gethsemane, and exhibited on Mount Calvary, and in remembering that God could not open any way to Himself for the sinner, but

through the broken heart of His beloved Son. Oh ! contemplate the love of God ! Think of it by night, and meditate on it by day. Read the Psalms, Prophets, and Gospels, where his sufferings are recorded. Dwell upon the nature and the end of them, and ask God to make your heart impressible to His love, so that, with all saints, you may know the love of Christ, and be enabled to love him who first loved you.

V. The Fifth cry was, "I THIRST." (John xix. 28.)

That the Scripture might be fulfilled, he said, "*I thirst ;*" and (oh, shame and everlasting reproach to man !) when He who had created all the oceans, rivers, and springs of waters upon earth, needed some moisture to cool his burning fever, "they gave him vinegar to drink." But he had a more intense thirst—a thirst for the presence of his Father, and to finish the work which He had given him to do. His heart and his flesh cried out for the living God. It had always been his meat and drink to do his Father's will ; and it was so even on the cross ; "by the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." (Heb. x. 10.)

VI. The Sixth cry was, "IT IS FINISHED."
(John xix. 30.)

Oh! glorious tidings! Every thing was finished. His sufferings were now over. All that it was needful to endure in working out our salvation, was now finished.

The last billow had rolled over him. He had drunk the cup to its dregs, and wrung it out. The tremendous whirlwind of God's wrath had fallen upon his head. The storm and tempest, from which, for a moment, he wished to fly, had beat round his soul, (Ps. lv.,) and had expended on him its wildest fury; but all had now ceased, and with joy he proclaimed, "*It is finished.*" Redemption was finished; all that God required, and all that the law demanded, had been given by our Kinsman-Redeemer, and "*by his one offering he perfected for ever them that are sanctified;*" and "*when he had by himself purged our sins, he sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high,*" having purchased the Church with his own blood. (Acts xx. 28.)

In the next place, the ceremonial law was now finished and abolished—the sacrifices ceased to be required, because the end had been answered for which they had been instituted, in the death of the Lamb of God, the antitype of

the types, and the substance of the shadows. (Dan. ix. 24.)

The Levitical priesthood was then finished, for "our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood; for he testified, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec, who is made not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life." He is a great High Priest, touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and "the Mediator of a better covenant, established upon better promises;" and now all true believers in Jesus have liberty to enter the holiest of all by the blood of Christ, (Heb. ix. ;) for they are "a royal priesthood," (1 Pet. ii. 9;) and he "hath made us kings and priests unto God," (Rev. i. 6,) "to offer up spiritual sacrifices," "the fruit of our lips, giving thanks unto his name." (Heb. xiii. 15.)

"*It is finished.*" It was heard in heaven, and angels rejoiced. It was heard in hell, and devils were confounded. It has been heard in every country under heaven, bringing to all who believe and know the power of it, present peace and joy, and everlasting happiness.

VII. The Seventh and last cry was, "FATHER,

INTO THY HANDS I COMMEND MY SPIRIT." (Luke xxiii. 46.)

This was in the language of restored communion. Not "*My God*," but the endearing and sweet name of *Father*. He had fought a good fight. He finished his course. He had been untiring in his willing service, and faithful as the great Captain of salvation. He had fought and won our battle. He had never swerved in his purpose of love, from the cradle to the grave. Nothing could exhaust his patience—no treatment, however base. No allurements, however attractive to others, could hinder or divert him from setting his face to go to Jerusalem, to bleed and die, that all things written by the prophets should be accomplished. (Luke xviii. 31.) For "the Son of man must be lifted up." (John iii. 14.) Oh! what a glorious enterprize was his! Pregnant with everlasting glory to God, and eternal blessing to man! It is impossible to calculate the infinity of blessings that spring from the cross. Only eternity can develop its mighty effects; and as they will be revealed to the blood-washed and white-robed multitude that will stand around the everlasting throne, each discovery will call forth fresh bursts of praise to Him that sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever! (Rev. v.)

Dear Reader! pause and consider with me a little while this affecting scene. Let us look, by faith, upon the lifeless body of Jesus. His heaving sighs have ceased; his agonies are over. His night of sorrow is past. The sun shines again upon Calvary, and all is still, for the trembling earth has ceased to quake. And behold his sacred body covered with blood, and sweat, and gore. But see—the enemy makes one more effort, and uses the last opportunity he could ever have of mutilating the body of his fallen but victorious foe. “One of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came thereout blood and water.” (John xix. 34.) This was the last insult which could be put upon him. It was the last desperate malignant effort of defeated hell. It was the crowning act of man’s guilt, and of Satan’s rage and malice. Ask yourself for whom did he suffer, and why did he die? The Scripture answers it, He “*suffered, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God;*” and the reason why he suffered was, because it was impossible for God to be just to Himself and merciful to the sinner, unless the Surety bore the punishment, in the sinner’s stead. And the way that He could pardon sinners before the coming of Christ, was because of the fore-ordained yet

voluntary sacrifice of the Son of God. And it is the same way now, only we look back to what he has done, and "*being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.*"

Reader, what think you of Christ? It is not what *others* think, but what do *you* think? Does his condescension astonish you?—does his love affect you? Is he yours? Can you lay your hand upon him by faith, and say, "He is my beloved, my Saviour, my Lord, and my God"? If so, "blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed." "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*" (Mark xvi. 16.)
