

## THE CROWN OF THORNS

"And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews" (Matthew 27:29).

Just before we enter the common hall of Pilate, the Roman governor, to see the Lord Jesus Christ as He goes into the depths of shame and is crowned with thorns, let us pause on the threshold of the doorway for a period of quiet meditation upon the crown of thorns that He wore. Think for a moment of the One Who is here brought down to the deepest shame. Let us contemplate His Person and His Power.

Who is this One Who is set at nought in Pilate's judgment hall? Who is this One of Whom Pilate says, "Behold the Man"? Who is this prisoner Who has been subjected to all the shame and ignominy of the scourging and mockery of the Praetorium? Who is He?

I want you to remember the excellency of His Person and the glory of His Eternal Majesty. I want you to remember that this is God's Incarnate Son, the One Whom angels dared not look upon, but rather veiled their faces and cried, "Holy! Holy! Lord God Almighty." This One is the Everlasting Son Who was in the bosom of the Everlasting Father. He is the One of Whom the Father said at His incarnation, "Let all the angels of God worship Him."

If you are going to get this tremendous theme into proper perspective, you must remember something else which is equally important. I want you to meditate upon His Power. He is the One Who threw the stars into the heavens. He is the One Who spread the blue curtains of the universe around. He is the One Who set the stars in their courses. He is the One Who created all things by the Word of His Power. He is the One Who keeps the world going, for "by Him all things consist." In His hand is all the strength of heaven. In His breast heaves all the power of eternity. He is the Eternal God enthroned in humanity.

Having thus considered the Person and Power of the blessed Christ of God, let us cross over the threshold and fix our gaze on the crown of thorns which was so cruelly fixed upon His lovely brow. Let us meditate on this garland of thorns. There are different things about the crown of thorns to which I want to direct your attention.

### I. The Material Of The Crown.

The material for the construction of this crown was thorns. Let me emphasize the fact that when the world came from the hand of the Creator there was not a thorn on any plant. Thorns were not a part of the perfect earth over which heaven announced its approval "All very good." At that time the rose bloomed without thorns, and the berries were brought forth without briars. It was a thornless world which God had created. Thorns, let me emphasize, are the result of sin. Thorns are the natural fruit of sin.

People often ask, "Why does this happen?" Tragedies happen because men have sinned. Do you know why there are thorns in this world? Because people are sinners. Do you know why you are having a thorny experience and why you are among the briars? It is because you have sinned and gone astray from God.

God speaks in Genesis 3:17-18 and says: "And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field;" (Genesis 3:17-18).

The fall has taken place. Man has plunged into the abyss of sin, and the world with Adam has sunk in the abyss of iniquity. By one man sin has entered into the world, and death by sin. God meets fallen Adam in Eden's garden, and the curse of sin is set forth, and thus we have the origin of the thorn. Are you beginning to see the significance of the material from which the crown was made? They did not have any trouble getting thorns, for there were thorns everywhere, and the rabbis of Israel recorded the fact that there were twenty-five kinds of thorns in the Holy Land.

When God created this earth there were roses without thorns and berries without briars, but after man fell there was never another rose without a thorn or another berry without a briar. Thorns are the proof of sin. Briars are the insignia of the fall.

## II. The Making Of The Crown.

"They platted a crown of thorns." This crown of thorns was made by the hands of men. The "they" in our text refers to the whole band of soldiers. They were all engaged in making this crown of thorns. They had one thought, one objective, and one goal in mind. "We'll make a crown of thorns": that is what every heart proposed.

It would have been impossible to make a crown of thorns without pricking the fingers. The long thorn of Palestine is very, very sharp, and apt to pierce the flesh and draw the blood. Do you know that as they made this crown of thorns they themselves were identified with the making, and upon it was their own blood. Before the blood of the Lord Jesus dyed those thorns in that crown they were already stained by its makers. The blood is the life, and Christ answered blood for blood and a life for a life in His great atoning sacrifice on Calvary.

May I draw another lesson here? If you, sinner, play with sin, it will really prick you and wound you and rob you of your very life. The price of sin is your life's blood. No one ever played with sin and got away with it. Sin always demands blood for blood and life for life. If you think that you can plait the thorns of sin and lie down in the briars of iniquity and get away with it, you are very foolish. Sin, when it is finished, will leave you scarred and marked and broken and pricked to the very eternal death. How often this happens! Are you playing with the thorns of sin? Are you occupied in plaiting a crown of thorns to place on the head of Jesus? Remember, to plait a crown of thorns for Jesus in time is to make a bed of thorns for your soul for all eternity.

## III. The Misery Of The Crown.

"And (they) put it on his head." The crown was made. The Lord Jesus Christ, the sinless, harmless and lovely Son of God and Son of man, was stripped in Pilate's judgment hall. After the cruel

scourging by which they ploughed His quivering back with stripes, they threw over His shoulders a purple and scarlet robe in mockery of royalty. In mockery of a coronation they placed the crown of thorns upon His head. You can see the cruelty of the soldier who does the vile deed as he plants with all his power the jagged chaplet on the temples of Jesus Christ, and He bore the crown of thorns because of the curse of sin.

Think of the misery which Christ Jesus endures, when His temples are penetrated with these long and sharp eastern thorns. From every penetration and laceration there runs a stream of blood and it trickles down His lovely face. I want you to see Him. The sacred head is now wounded. The Son of God is having His coronation, not with a crown of diadems, but with a crown of thorns. Let us gaze upon His misery, and remember that it was for us.

The misery inflicted by this crown of anguish is twofold. It is both outward and inward. Let us consider first the outward agony of wearing this crown. What agony upon the temples! What pangs of pain in the head! Remember the sensitivity of the head to pain. Yes, and not content with the mere crowning, the soldiers take a reed, and they start to hammer His blessed head with it. So they drive the thorns right down into His head. They seek to plunge Him into the very depths of anguish. Before they mock Him they lead Him through the vale of the darkest misery. I see the body of my blessed Saviour quiver. I hear the quick drawing of His breath as the thorns penetrate His temples. Oh the misery of the crown of thorns!

Let us never forget that this outward misery is not to be compared with the inward misery of the God-Man. You know that He was born to be King. Upon His temple should have been a crown of diadems, one that was unparalleled among the crowns of the world. He should have been crowned with many crowns, for He was the Prince of the kings of the earth. I wonder how He felt in His soul as men crowned Him with thorns? He knew He was the King of kings, and yet, behold, He is crowned with thorns. He knew that He was born to be King. He knew that His was a royalty without rival among the sons of men, and yet, into the depths of misery He must sink. He did not draw back. He could have seized that reed, and with the strength of omnipotence He could have smitten every soldier in the Praetorium. But no, He bears the crown willingly, patiently and meekly. He despises the shame as He is crowned with thorns. Oh the inward misery of God's Son! A crown of agony was on His temples, and a forest of briars was in His heart.

#### IV. The Mockery Of The Crown.

Here, in Pilate's hall, the blasphemous legionnaires mocked His kingship and ridiculed His kingdom. Notice the steps in this mockery.

##### 1. They repudiated His claims.

This they did by crowning Him with thorns. They jeeringly challenged Him by saying, "You are a King, are you? You're the King of the Jews, are you not? We'll crown you King! We'll show you what we think of you. See this crown of thorns. We'll make this your coronation day. We'll crown you, and then we'll do homage to you."

So they do their nefarious work of crowning God's Son with thorns, and kneeling before Him in mock homage, they sneeringly cry, "Hail, King of the Jews!" Then rising to their feet, they buffet His tender face, pull out the hairs of His beard and spit upon Him. Thus they repudiated His claims.

2. They ridiculed His character.

They sought in every way possible to ridicule the spotless, sinless character of our precious Lord. The Lord Jesus had prophesied His crucifixion and His scourging. This, of course, forms part of the scourging, the ridiculing of His character. This is the prelude to the depths of anguish of the cross. Down the corridor of mocking the Lord Jesus passes to the cross. As He passes down, they ridicule His character.

3. They rejected His compassion.

Upon His countenance was infinite compassion as He sat despised and rejected. Alas, not one of the soldiers accepted His love. They all rejected His compassion. So hardened, so callous and so brutal were these sinners and assaulters that they mocked Him more and more by rejecting His compassion.

4. They refused His commandments.

These soldiers well knew Who Jesus was and what His message was. His teaching had resounded from Galilee in the north to Judea in the south. By crowning Him with thorns they publicly refused His commandments.

Unsaved friend, does not this find you a mocker of the Lord Jesus? You have repudiated His claims, you have ridiculed His character, you have rejected His compassion, and you have refused His commandments; therefore, you are a mocker of Christ. You have rejected His compassion, abused gospel opportunity and turned your back on the redeeming love of the Saviour. You have refused His commandment. The Bible says, "And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ."

V. The Message Of The Crown.

The message of the crown is twofold:

1. It speaks of dark perdition.

You can take the crown of rejection and press it on the temples of the Christ of God. You can crucify to yourself, afresh, the Lord of Glory and put Him to an open shame.

2. It speaks of glorious pardon.

You can kneel at the feet of Christ, and, realizing that He wore sin's cruel crown of thorns for you, you can crown Him Lord of all. It is either the crown of perdition or the crown of pardon. God grant that you will crown Him as your Saviour, Lord and King.

"O Sacred Head, once wounded,  
With grief and pain weighed down;  
Now scornfully surrounded  
With thorns, Thine only crown;  
How art Thou pale with anguish;  
With sore abuse and scorn;  
How does that visage languish,  
That once was bright as morn!

O Sacred Head, what glory,  
What bliss till now was Thine!  
Yet, though despised and gory,  
I joy to call Thee mine;  
Thy grief and Thy compassion  
Were all for sinners' gain;  
Mine, mine was the transgression,  
But Thine the deadly pain.

What language shall I borrow  
To thank Thee, heavenly Friend,  
For this Thy dying sorrow,  
Thy pity without end?  
Lord, make me Thine for ever,  
Nor let me faithless prove;  
Oh, let me never, never  
Abuse such dying love!"