

Ever This Our War Cry—victory, Victory!

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon passionately affirms the assured and glorious victory of Christ over sin, death, and all evil, encouraging believers to trust in the divine promise and share in the spoils of His triumph.

Scripture: Isaiah 53:12, Psalm 2:10-12, John 11:25, Revelation 19:16, Romans 8:37, Hebrews 2:14

Topics: "Victory of Christ", "Assurance of Salvation", "Christ's Sovereignty"

Description

In this powerful devotional sermon, C.H. Spurgeon expounds on Isaiah 53:12, emphasizing the assured and magnificent victory of Jesus Christ over all forces of evil. Spurgeon encourages believers to fix their hearts on Christ's triumph, highlighting the divine promise and the shared spoils of victory with His faithful followers. This sermon offers comfort and motivation to those anxious about the progress of God's kingdom, reminding them of the eternal glory and substantial results of Christ's conquest.

Transcript

"Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong; because He has poured out His soul onto death: and He was numbered with the transgressors: and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors" Isaiah 53:12.

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same text is #2070, Volume 35—CHRIST'S CONNECTION WITH SINNERS THE SOURCE OF HIS GLORY.]

OUR great concern is concerning Christ. "For Him shall constant prayer be made." It does not much matter what becomes of us, the common soldiers, so long as our great Captain is to the front. As the men of Napoleon's Old Guard could defy death for themselves, but were always anxious about the emperor, so every loyal soldier of Christ feels that the one question in the present conflict is, "How goes it with the King?" Is He crowned? Is He exalted? Is He winning His way among the sons of men? Brothers and Sisters, it may be that our star is waning. Does it matter if Hssun is reaching its noon? It may happen that the company with which we are associated is not so much to the front as it used to be, and the regimental flag is in the rear, but what of that? Let us do the best we can to retrieve its honor but, after all, the main consideration is the royal standard. Where is that? "Let my name perish," said Whitefield, "but let Christ's name last forever." Such a feeling should actuate us all! What are we, my Brothers and Sisters, and what is our father's house? What if ten thousand of us should fall merely to fill a ditch for Him to march over? What if He took the whole of us and crushed us to the dust—if He were lifted an inch higher, it were none too costly for such an One as He is who has redeemed us unto God by His precious blood!

Our first and last concern is about the result of our great warfare in regard to Christ. And my text will be consoling to your hearts in proportion as you are consecrated to Christ. If you are a worker for Jesus and your heart is tremulous for the cause of God—if you feel dismayed at times and often anxious about the progress of the Kingdom—such an assurance as this will be like a voice from the Comforter, Himself! It is the Father who speaks and He says, concerning the Well-Beloved, "Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong."

I. The first great Truth of God taught us here is that THE VICTORY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST IS SURE!

Sure, first, because these words are a Divine promise and every word of promise that comes from God is established. "Has He said, and shall He not do it? Or has He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" God has said, "I will divide Him a portion," that portion shall be divided. If the Lord has declared that He shall divide the spoil with the strong, who is he that shall keep Him back from the prey? We might have doubted if His Word had been a prediction as to the probabilities of the life of this religion or of that. We might have supposed that the religion of Christ would be crushed out by rougher faiths that could use carnal weapons, or that its exceeding spirituality might cause it to wither away in an atmosphere so uncongenial. We might, I say, have had some trembling because of the Ark of the Lord if this had been a mere influence or opinion! But we have none, now, for as surely as this Book is the Infallible Word of God, so surely must Christ win the day! As surely as God cannot lie, so surely must He, upon whom the Lord laid the iniquity of men, rise from all His sorrows to a glorious victory!

The text is a promise placed very singularly in connection with facts which have been accomplished. We are told that Christ shall divide the spoil with the strong, but that promise is set side by side with the declaration that He is "brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opens not His mouth." Just as surely, then, as that part of the prophecy is fulfilled in which Christ suffers, so surely shall that be fulfilled in which He triumphs! You have no doubt whatever about His being taken from prison and from judgment, about His making His grave with the

wicked and with the rich in His death. Well, the same Book and the same Chapter which contains the prophesy of those sorrowful facts contains this prophecy—that He shall divide the spoil with the strong! Therefore the ultimate victory of Christ is made sure by a Divine promise!

Notice, moreover, that it is the Father, Himself, who here puts forth His hand to guarantee the victory He writes, "Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great." "I will do it. I will see that He conquers. I will see that He has the reward of His labor. My own right hand and My holy arm shall so be with Him that He shall tread down His enemies and He shall take from them mountains of prey." Who is this that says, "I will divide Him a portion"? It is He at whose voice the earth trembles—

"The pillars of Heaven's starry roof Tremble and start at His reproof."

When He says, "I will do it," who shall stay His hand, or resist His will? God, the Everlasting Father, has staked His honor and His Glory upon the success of Christ! I make bold to say that if Christ wins not the world, and if He is not crowned King of kings and Lord of lords, it is not Jesus that is dishonored so much as the Great Father by whom He was ordained, sent and anointed! The stain would not only be upon the manhood but upon the Godhead, too, for God, Himself, appointed the Lord Jesus and said of Him, "This is My Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." He must see the Messiah through with it! It is the pleasure of the Lord that is in His hand—and that pleasure must prosper there, or else God's name would be

dishonored. I am sure that Jesus will win the victory!

I am delighted to notice a change of expression in the next sentence. The Son of God Himself also puts His hand to the work of ultimate victory. Read the text again—"Therefore will I divide Him a portion," "and He shall divide." God gives Him the victory and He takes it Himself. The Father grants it and the Son grasps it by His own right hand. The glorious Jehovah cries, "He shall divide," and the ever-blessed Son of the Highest, as a conqueror, comes forth actually to divide the spoil. O my Brothers and Sisters, Jesus is as gentle as a lamb, but I might say of Him as they at the Red Sea said of Jehovah, "The Lord is a Man of War: the Lord is His name." The Lamb is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, and who shall stand before Him when He goes forth to war? Who shall rouse Him? They that came against Him to take Him in the days of His humiliation stumbled and fell when He uttered the words, "I AM." And if the full power of that, "I AM," had been let loose upon them, they had not merely staggered to their falling, but each man among them had stumbled into his grave! It is He that stilled the waves upon Gennesaret! It is He that ruled the powers of the deep and made the devils fly at His bidding! If He puts His hand to the battle, woe to those that strive against Him! The defeat of Christ? Laugh the idea to scorn! No, the thorn-crowned Prince is victorious! Well spoke the apostate Julian in his dying moments, "Nazarene, You have conquered." All His foes will have to admit it. In the Day of Judgment, trembling, and in the lowest pit of Hell, despairing, they shall acknowledge His supremacy! The despised and rejected of men, with a rod of iron shall break His enemies in pieces! Yes, He shall break them in pieces like potters' vessels. "Be wise now, therefore, O you kings: be instructed, you judges of the earth. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him."

That is the first thing, then—the Christ will conquer. It is a Divine promise! Its fulfillment is guaranteed by the Father! It will certainly be achieved by the Son!

II. Secondly, THE VICTORY IS AS GLORIOUS AS IT IS SURE. "Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great."

The great King rewards our Champion. You have heard of great champions who have been knighted on the battlefield by their sovereigns—deeds of special prowess have been thus rewarded. Others, amid the acclamations of their troops, and while yet their hands were unwashed from gore, have been crowned on the field only because of their superior valor and the decisive nature of the battle. Now, what is it to be knighted or crowned by kings or nations? It is as nothing! But to be crowned of God? For God Himself to give the reward in the light of eternity? What must such a victory be? I know that many an act which man applauds is despised by the Most High—and many a fierce fight that has stirred the heart of nations and made the poets ring out their hymns for centuries—has been not only despicable but abominable in the sight of the Most High! But when God rewards, what must be the Glory of the achievement? And here we have it—God, even the Father, the same One whom it pleased to bruise His son when He made the iniquity of us all to meet upon Him—that same God who knows all things and weighs all things aright, and is the very source and soul of honor, He shall crown our Lord Jesus! Must it not be a glorious victory? He has crowned Him! He is crowning Him! He shall continue to crown Him, for thus it is written, "Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great."

The Glory of this victory may be seen, next, not only in the reward coming from so high a source, but from its being manifestly a great reward in the esteem of men, since our Lord is to have "a portion with the great." It is difficult to say what makes a great man. When I look over the lists of great men, some of them seem to be to be very little. But still, men have among themselves a sort of standard by which to measure,

and they say of such-and-such persons that they are "great." From different points of view they are. Now, Christ is to have a portion with the great. Perhaps you have been grieved to see how certain ungodly men in these times make nothing of Christ—like Herod, they set Him at nothing— but these people are mostly very second-rate individuals, of small account even among their own order. Almost all intelligent men, even if they do not accept all that Christ says, agree that He is a great Man and many confess that there never was such another man as He. There have been skeptics whose admiration of Christ has been extreme. I, for one, cannot understand how any honest mind can do other than reverence His marvelous Character and the grandeur of the Truths which He has revealed. He is great, inexpressibly great, and the day will come—must come, is every day coming nearer—when Christ will be seen even by His enemies to be supremely great. His Cross today towers over the wrecks of time and He, Himself, rises before my faith's vision so much above all the sons of men that I see all philosophies, theories, and human dogmas crouching at His feet! His victories are not victories among pigmies, but victories among the great, such as shall make all men see that He, Himself, is the Great—such as shall make all men see that He is the Greatest of the great!

My Brothers and Sisters, think for a minute what a battle Christ has waged with all the powers of evil. With all the wit, and craft, and unbelief, and pride, and lust of man. With all the foul devices and cruelties, and wickedness of the devil, and all the principalities and powers that obey his bidding. And with death and all that goes with it, and shall come of it—against all these He has set the battle in array, and over all these He has triumphed, so that He divides the spoil with the great! Your adversaries, O Prince Emmanuel, are not such as a common warrior might rout. They are foemen worthy of your steel! What desperate tugs they gave You when they forced the bloody sweat from out of You in the moment of your sternest wrestling. But you have flung them to the ground!

Of course, this language can only be used as speaking part of the Truth of God because the portion which God has given to His dear Son is indisputably greater than the greatest things that earth can hold! I take it that the question that Christ has come to answer is the greatest question that ever moved eternity. The work that Christ has come to do is the grandest work that ever stirred the ages. It is God's work and God's question—how shall evil be driven out of the world? How shall Justice, without a stain, smile on a sinner? How shall God be seen as the Holy One with all the Glory of His Character manifested, receiving to His bosom the guilty sons of men? The grandest work that ever was done of God, Himself, Christ has come to perform, and not only has He His portion with the great, but of all the great He is the greatest, and His portion is above their portion! They are not to be mentioned in the same breath!

Notice, too, that a part of the description of this victory represents the Lord as Himself dividing the spoil "with the strong." Not merely with great enemies did Christ wrestle, but with strong powers. I might give you a hundred illustrations of this, but I prefer to give you just one. When the Lord Jesus Christ came into my heart—came to battle there— He did, indeed, divide the spoil with the strong, for I was strong-willed and desperately set on mischief—and for a while I was in the hands of strong despair, out of which it seemed impossible that I could escape. The bands which held me were of iron, tough as steel, hardened in the fires of Hell! And yet this day I am His, for He has won me and taken the prey from the mighty! I have been, just now, to see our venerable Elder White. He is dying. I looked at his venerable beard as he sat up in bed, and I looked at the bright face that shone above it—and I was charmed at the joyful sight! He said, "I have no trouble. I have not a troubled thought. I am the happiest man in the world—I am going Home and I rejoice in it! Though I am perfectly satisfied to wait." Death is just nothing at all to him! Just like a dear Sister who went from us some time ago. When I went to see her, you might have thought she was

going to be married, she was so happy in prospect of departing! Charles Wesley once said, "They may say what they will about Methodism, but our people die well." That is my comfort—our people die well—they die gloriously triumphant in the Lord! When I think of it, I can see how my Lord divides the spoil with the strong. Death comes and he says, "That is mine." He has taken the poor, wrinkled body! And Christ smiles, and lets him have it, for He takes for His share, the soul, the life! And as He bears him off, He takes the best part of the spoil! He has left Death the husk, but He has, Himself, secured the kernel! Yes, the day will come when He will take the body, too, out of the custody of Death, for not a wreck or a rag of all His saints shall remain in the domains of Death. There is a resurrection of dead bodies as well as an immortality of spirits! Glory be to Christ! In this

way, here and hereafter, He divides the spoil with the strong! Strong is Death, but still stronger the Omnipotent Son of

God!

There is another aspect under which we may speak of the Glory of Christ's victory, He will share it with His people. The second paragraph of the text is, "He shall divide the spoil with the strong." That is, He will divide it out, and allot portions to all those who came to the help of the Lord against the mighty. Just as David after Ziklag, when he had taken the prey from the Amalekites, sent portions all round to his friends in Judah, so, when the King Eternal takes the spoil, He will give a share to you and to me if we have been faithful to Him. There shall be a portion even for us whom the Lord made strong for Himself in the day of battle. Does it not make your heart laugh to think of it? Jesus wins the victory, but He will not enjoy it alone—He will glorify His people. Even the sick folk that go not down to the battle, shall have their share of the spoil, for this is David's Law, and the Law of the Son of David, that they that abide with the stuff shall share with those that go down to the fight. He will give to each faithful sufferer or worker a portion of the prey. Make haste, O Champion, make haste to give to everyone of us a prey of divers colors, meet for the necks of them that take the spoil!

III. Thus we have seen that Christ will win the victory, and the victory will be glorious. Now let us declare, thirdly, that THE RESULTS OF THIS VICTORY WILL BE VERY SUBSTANTIAL.

Let me remind you that in consequence of what our Lord has done, myriads of souls will be redeemed. How many will escape from sin and death and Hell to live forever is not revealed. We have every reason to believe that a number that no man can number out of every nation, and people, and kindred, and tongue shall praise their redeeming Lord. Christ's death will not spend its force in the conversion of here and there one, but He will see of the travail of His soul and will be satisfied. And we are convinced that no little thing will satisfy Him. The great result of our Lord's death will be the eternal salvation of untold myriads!

Next to that will be the overthrow of every form of evil which now reigns in the world, and the extermination of religions falsehood, vice, drunkenness, war and every horrible mischief born of the Fall and of human depravity. Christ will conquer these and there shall be new heavens and a new earth, wherein shall dwell righteousness. Forever and ever boundless honors shall be given to Christ for His victory over every force of evil. The Seed of the woman shall trample on the serpent.

As the result of Christ's death, Satan's power will be broken. He will no longer go forth to rule among the nations.

Death also will have lost its dominion over the sons of men. The Son of David shall restore that which He took not away. More than our first father lost, shall Christ bring back. There shall be substantial Glory to Himself in the lives of His people on earth, in their deaths and in their lives forever. Glory shall be brought to God of a new and unusual kind. A light will be shed upon the Character of God which so far as we know, could not have come to us by any other means except by the death of the Only-Begotten. Hallelujahs louder than before shall rise up before the Throne of God. Praises shall ascend unto God such as Creation never produced, "for You were slain, and have redeemed us unto God by Your blood, and we shall reign forever and ever."

Now, my Brothers and Sisters, do not get into a state of fright and fear about the Christian religion. Do not go to your chambers and sigh, "Everything is going to the bad, and we shall all be eaten up by the devil." Nonsense! There is a stronger arm yet than that black arm of Satan! In God's eternal goodness resides a power and majesty that cannot be found in the infernal malevolence of the devil! I know which is the winning side—I am sure of it. Though we may drearily imagine that things go amiss and fancy that the vessel is ready to break up and become a wreck, she will enter the harbor yet with all her cargo safe—and from every wave that tossed her and every wind that beat upon her she shall derive eternal advantage! Courage, Brothers and Sisters, we are not beaten and we are not going to be beaten! We are succeeding all along the line. Shout victory, universal victory, from stem to stern of the good old ship! Not a foe has been able to live upon her deck. Give the enemy's black hull another broadside. When you think that the crew of the Black Prince are about to board us, grasp your pikes and give them a warm reception! This good ship bears the Red Cross at her masthead, and shall never be taken, but shall win the victory as surely as God lives and His Son lives who has risen from the dead!

IV. So I close with this last remark. THE WHOLE OF THIS VICTORY RESULTS FROM CHRIST'S OWN WORK.

Lend me your best attention for two or three minutes, because this is the pith and marrow of it all. "Therefore will I divide Him a portion"—that is logic. Why this, "therefore"? What is the argument? Christ shall divide with the strong because—how does it run? "Because His Doctrinal teaching is singularly in keeping with the progress of the age"? I have

heard that observation and smiled at it. "Because His Gospel is preached with such remarkable eloquence and singular clearness?" Indeed not! Why, then, will Christ win the victory? The answer is, "Because He has poured out His soul unto death." If God, Himself, deigns to take upon Himself our Nature and in that Nature pours out His life like a libation even unto death—if, I say, He thus pours out His life—it is impossible to conceive that He will be defeated! Blasphemy may imagine it, profanity may speak it, but truth abhors the idea that Jesus can be baffled! A dying God? It is an inaccurate expression, yet I know of no expression that is so accurate! God putting Himself into human form, so as to be capable of suffering and death, cannot suffer and die in vain! He must, He shall, He will win that for which He died! He must reign, "because He has poured out His soul unto death."

Listen again, here is the second reason, "He was numbered with the transgressors." This is mentioned secondly, as if there was something even more in that than in the first. To die is wonderful condescension, but for the pure and Holy One to deign to be numbered with the transgressors, and stand as if He had, Himself, transgressed, though transgress He never did, nor could—I say this is more wonderful! If Jesus did that, then He must win the victory! When I am dispirited, where do I find encouragement? Where the stars of Bethlehem burn and where men make merry on their Christmas days? No, their mirth is weariness

to a heavy heart! I will tell you where I go for comfort—to Gethsemane, to Golgotha, to the Garden and to the tomb. Christ cannot have suffered there in vain! Christ cannot have been despised, slandered and actually numbered with transgressors—and all for nothing! It cannot be! It cannot be! Death and Hell, you can defeat armies of men, but the Crucified treads you down! When our Champion of the pierced hands comes to the front, the battle no longer wavers! We glory in His death and in His making common cause with transgressors!

But this is not all. It is added, "and He bore the sin of many." This denotes His actual and literal Substitution—His acting as the Sin-Bearer. This is something more than being numbered with the transgressors. He actually takes the sin of the transgressors and bears their burden upon His own shoulders by a wondrous system of Substitution which is easier to be believed than to be explained! Because He did this, He must conquer! He must conquer! Sin cannot be victorious if Jesus has carried it on His shoulders and hurled it into His sepulcher! If the darkest days were to come and all the Churches of Christ were to be extinguished, if there were left only one Christian and he as good as dead by reason of weakness, yet might he believe that God, from the dead, would raise up seed unto His Son and fulfill His Covenant, and keep His Word! It must be so. The offering of Christ's soul for sin secures to Him a seed forever!

And lastly, there is this fourth reason given, "He made intercession for the transgressors." "I can conceive you praying, my dear Friend, and God's not hearing you. But if the Man who was despised and rejected should say, "Rise, poor suppliant, rise, and I will take your place." And if the Blessed and Beloved of the Father whose eyes are as the eyes of the morning, and whose lips are as lilies dropping sweet-smelling myrrh, kneels down and prays, "My Father, by My blood, and wounds, and agony, save this sinner," why, it must be done! And if He says, "Father, give Me those whom I have redeemed," it must be done! And if He pleads, "Father, keep them by Your Word," it must be done! And if He prays, "Father, make them one, as We are," it must be done! And when He shall ask, "Father, give them power and victory," it must be done! And when He shall ask, "Father, let My servants all become champions and send them forth, East, West, North, and South against idolatry, and infidelity, and Popery, and clothe them with the Holy Spirit," why then it must be done! The power of Christ's intercession is irresistible! Queen Mary reckoned the prayers of John Knox to be worth many regiments, but what shall I say of the prayers of Jesus, the Son of God? They are with us today! While we are sitting here, and troubling our minds about the Lord's work, and saying, "What shall we do?" and, "What will come of it?" and all that, Jesus is pleading! Hush till your hearts leave off beating—till not a thought is heard! You may hear Him saying, "Father, I will." Here is the power of the Church! The plea of Christ with authority before the Throne of God is the majestic force upon which the Church depends! "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Therefore pluck up courage. Jesus will yet win. You weak, faint-hearted ones, rejoice! The victory is sure, not because of anything you are, or of anything you can do, but for Jesus' sake! In the name of the Lord we set up our banners. Hallelujah!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: JOHN 19:14-37.

Verse 14. And it was the preparation of the Passover, and about the sixth hour: and he said unto the Jews, Behold

your King! [See Sermon #1353, Volume 23—ECCE REX.] They had accused Him of being a king, or of pretending to be one. Pilate had scourged Him, the soldiers had mocked Him, and there He stood—a piteous spectacle of woe. What cruel sarcasm there was in the tones of the Governor when he said to the

Jews, "Behold your King."

15. But they cried out, away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him! Pilate said unto them, Shall I crucify your King?" "How could you call Him, King, and bring against Him a charge of setting up a rival kingdom when you, who would be His subjects, are all crying out, 'Crucify Him'? 'Shall I crucify your King?'" How false they were their own actions proved.

15. The chief priests answered, we have no king but Caesar They said this with all the coolness in the world. The mob had been stirred up and excited, but the chief priests, the principal ecclesiastics of the day, coolly said, "We have no king but Caesar." Did they not recollect that the scepter was not to pass away from Judah until Shiloh came, so that, as it had evidently passed away, Shiloh must have come? After all their Bible reading, did they not know that? Oh, how easy it is to read much of Scripture and yet to know little about its teaching! Dear Friends, let us not join the Jews in refusing to have Christ as King. They cried, "Away with Him, away with Him," when He was set before them as King. Let us not do that, but let us rather accept the Crucified as our Master and Lord, and cheerfully bow at His feet.

16. Then delivered he, Him, therefore, unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led Him away. [See Sermon

#497, Volume 9—THE PROCESSION OF SORROW.] So was He led as a sheep

to the slaughter, as Isaiah had long before foretold that He would be.

17. And He, bearing His Cross, went forth into a place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha. Probably a knoll of rock which today stands outside the city gate looking wonderfully like a skull, with two depressions in the rock which, at distance, appear like eyes. This was the common place of execution—the Tyburn, the Old Bailey of Jerusalem!

18. 19. Where they crucified Him, and two others with Him, on either side, one, and Jesus in the middle. And Pilate wrote a title and put it on the Cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. What could have moved Pilate to write that title? Perhaps he did it just to let the Jews know that they had forced him to put the Christ to death. He would put over Him their accusation without any endorsement of His own—"JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS." And so He is, and King of the Gentiles, too!

20. This title then read many of the Jews: for the place where Jesus was crucified was near to the city: and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin. So that everybody could read it, for someone or other of these languages would be known to everybody in the crowd—they were not dead languages, then, as they are now.

21, 22. Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews, but that He said, I am King of the Jews. Pilate answered, What I have written I have written. He could sometimes be firm. Perhaps when there was least excuse for it but when there was need of firmness, this vacillating Governor was swayed by the will of cruel men.

23. Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments. It was the custom with executioners to take the garments of the criminal.

23. And made four parts, to every soldier a part, and also His coat: now the coat woven without seam, woven from the top throughout. The common robe of the country, for Christ assumed no garment or vesture that would make Him seem great. He was too great to need the adornment of any special style of clothes.

24. They said, therefore, among themselves, Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the Scripture might be fulfilled, which says, They parted My raiment among them, and for My vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did. Those rough Roman soldiers knew nothing about the ancient Prophecy, yet a Divine destiny guided them! God's Word must be fulfilled and they, in the freedom of their will, did exactly what God had ordained, and the Spirit had long before prophesied! There are two things that are true—that men act freely and are therefore responsible when they sin, but that there is a Divine Predestination that rules all things according to the purpose and will of God! It would have puzzled us to explain how such a prophecy could be fulfilled at all—parting Christ's raiment among them, and then casting lots for his vesture—yet so it was, they divided what could be divided, and they cast lots upon what would have been spoilt if they had torn it! I think that no Christian will ever like the rattle of dice when he remembers that they were used at the Cross! All games of chance should be put away from us, for we can, as it were, see our Master's blood spattered upon them.

25, 26. Now there stood by the Cross of Jesus, His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary, the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple standing by, whom He loved, He said unto His mother, Woman, behold your son!" See in John one who will act as a son to you."

27. Then said He to the disciple, Behold your mother!" John, take her home and treat her as a mother should be treated."

27. And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home. He was the disciple whom Jesus especially loved, so as a token of Christ's great love to him, He left His mother to his charge. Have you any poor folk dependent upon you? Do you know any of God's very poor people? Take care of them and do not think the charge a burden, but do it for the sake of Him who loves you so much that He entrusts His poor ones to you. Oh, that everybody would look at this matter of caring for God's poor in that light!

28. After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, I thirst. It seems a strange thing that Jesus should have said, "I thirst," because, out of all the pains that He endured upon the Cross—and they were very many and very sharp—He never mentions one except thirst! A person in such terrible agony as He was enduring might have mentioned 50 things, but He singles out this one because there was a prophecy concerning it.

29. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to His mouth. Why is hyssop mentioned here? You remember that the hyssop was used in the cleansing of the leper and that David prayed, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." The hyssop was also used in the sprinkling of blood under the Law of God, so it is introduced here with a set purpose. The sponge is introduced here, too—it always seems to me very remarkable that in the death of Christ the circle of life was completed. The sponge is the very lowest form of animal life and Christ is the very highest type of life of any kind. The sponge was lifted to the lips of the King of Glory and carried refreshment to Him—and you and I, like the sponge—the very least of God's living ones, may yet bring refreshment to our Savior's lips!

30. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, He said, It is finished. And He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost. It is not that He died, and that then His head fell forward, but while He yet lived, having before maintained an erect, noble bearing even in the pangs of death, He now, to show His perfect resignation to His Father's will, bows His head and yields up that saved spirit of His which dwelt within His body!

31. The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain on the Cross on the Sabbath day, (for that Sabbath day was an high day), besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. The breaking of the legs was intended to hasten death—a very cruel method, but a very effectual one. Passing by Christ hanging in the center it was a strange thing for them to do, yet it had to be done, although they were quite unconscious of the reason why they so acted.

32-34. Then came the soldiers and broke the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with Him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that He was dead already, they broke not His legs: but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side—To make sure that He would not survive—

34-37. And forthwith came there out blood and water. And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true, and he knows that he says the truth, that you might believe. For these things were done, that the Scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of Him shall not be broken. And again another Scripture says, They shall look on Him whom they pierced. "So His side must be pierced, but His bones must not be broken! See how the hand of God carries out the Word of God—and value every line of Scripture! Our Lord Jesus Christ seemed to go out of His way so as to ensure that every single word in the Old Testament in reference to Himself should be fulfilled, so mind that you do not think little of the

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