

## **DAY 34.**

### *Jesus drank vinegar and gall upon the Cross.*

NOW that our Lord Jesus had uttered this word concerning His thirst, a certain man filled a sponge with vinegar and gall, and offered it to Christ's sacred mouth. And this, indeed, our Lord, according to David's prophecy, desired to taste, that He might suffer torment in all His members and senses; and that the sin of Adam, which had been committed through the delight of taste, might be corrected by this bitter and unpleasant taste. But here, first of all, we may notice the spitefulness, and hardness of heart, and bitterness of the Jews, in that all these torments, and blood-sheddings, and cruel sufferings, which they had inflicted on our Lord, had not even yet quenched their blood-thirstiness. They saw Him now at the very point of death, yet in no way did they restrain their cruelty. It had been decreed, indeed, by Solomon, that those who were condemned should be refreshed by an aromatic and sweet draught, so that they might become unconscious of their pains; but these wretches drank this wine themselves, and made up for Christ instead, as bitter a draught as they could think of in their poison-laden hearts. For they were, indeed, themselves vessels of gall and vinegar, full of hatred and spite; nor could they draw from there anything but gall and vinegar. Oh! how afflicted must our tender Lord have been, Whose nature is goodness, when He looked at the poisonous and bitter dregs, which were, truly the unquenchable fire of the cruelty and the stony and obstinate malice of the Jews, whereby they, whom He had fed for so many successive years in the wilderness with the manna of heaven, which had in it the sweetness of every taste, and whom He had embraced with such Fatherly love, and enriched with so many and such marvelous benefits, feared not in His extreme and greatest need to offer Him such a draught. Truly, their envy and want of mercy was a greater torment to our Lord than the bitter draught itself. For the more virtuous a man is,

so much the more is he grieved when he beholds malice and cruelty; and the more clearly he perceives it, so much the more grievously is he tormented in heart.

But so far as related to the spiritual meaning, it was not only on the Cross that our Lord Jesus was tormented by the Jews with this bitter draught, but even now is He given, day by day, vinegar and gall to drink, by those who fear not to anger Him by their sins and iniquities; but, above all, by all Christians, who know, indeed, the way of truth and will of God, and yet do not do what they ought. Of these He Himself complained, saying: “I planted you a chosen vineyard, and I fenced you round with the wall of faith, and I built in the midst of you the high tower of My contemplation, and I gathered the stones from out of you; that is, the holy martyrs and doctors, who are the foundation stones of the Church, and who have taught you the way of life and truth both by word and deed. What more ought I to have done to My vineyard, and I have not done it? How are you turned into bitterness, even though, in cultivating it, I have spent so much labor and zeal and which I bought for Myself at such a high price? I looked, that you should bring forth the sweet grapes of burning love, the fruit of good works; and you offered Me vinegar and gall, thorns and briars.”

But let us now see what kind of wine every man should offer to Christ, and what are the fruits which he should give Him out of his vineyard. The Scripture said: “A good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, brings forth good, and a bad man, out of the evil treasury of his heart, brings forth evil.” Some, therefore, like the Jews, offer Christ wine mixed with gall. These are those great sinners who still have the will to work evil; who, although they perform good works, are all tainted with bitter gall, and contract the taste of the corrupt and filthy vessel in which it is contained; and these, as soon as they touch Christ’s palate, are spat out by Him. Of these Moses spoke in the canticle of Deuteronomy: “Their grape is the grape of gall, and the gall of dragons is their wine.” And St. Peter

said to Simon the Sorcerer: “I perceive that you are in the gall of bitterness, and your heart is not right before God.”

Others, indeed, offer wine to Christ, but it is corrupt, and acid, and bitter; for it is turned into vinegar. These are those dissolute and thoughtless men, who abstain, indeed, from deadly sins; but even as they take no thought of daily venial sins, so they abound in them, and exceeding often fall into them. And this happened to them, because they look not into the depths of their own souls, nor hearken to the warnings and reproaches of the Holy Ghost—no, inwardly, they are blind and deaf. These seek God with a torn and divided heart. For they have not wholly torn themselves from all that can come between them and God; and although they receive from above a certain inward light, and their reason bears witness to them that in certain things they offend God, and displease Him, yet still they will not forsake these things; for they think that they can serve both God and the world. These, for the most part, are lukewarm, and slothful, and wandering in heart, and distracted; and they continue lukewarm when reading, or meditating, or doing anything of this sort. This, moreover, they have done for a long time, so that they have become utterly vapid and sour. And this wine, in like manner, Christ vomited out, as He said in the Apocalypse: “I would that you were either warm or cold, but because you are lukewarm I will begin to vomit you out of My mouth.” And of these is it elsewhere said: “As vinegar to the teeth, and smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to them who have set him in the way.”

Thirdly, there are others who offer Christ wine out of their vineyard; but as Isaiah said, their wine is mingled with water. Yet these are somewhat better, and are more watchful over their salvation, but their works are full of an exceeding perverse and strange intention; as, for example, because they work out of fear, or for reward, or from custom, or to please men, or for their own private convenience, or for consolation, or to obtain some other gifts from God, or for other things of the same sort, where they seek themselves rather than God’s pure honor, and to satisfy His will. These

mingle water, as I have said, with their wine; some more, some less, so that Christ takes no great pleasure in drinking it.

Fourthly and lastly, there are others who offer Christ Jesus most pure and sweet wine. These are the men who are truly dead and resigned, who in all their works look only to God's honor, and seek not their own selves in anything. These are the true sons of God, who have forgotten their natural generation, so as to deserve to have God for their Father: and they have received the Spirit of God as a sign and proof that they are the sons of God, in Whom also they cry: "Abba, Father;" and this, in truth, no man can say from the Spirit's witness and declaration, unless he is the son of God. These have no fear of death, nor of hell, nor of the enemy, nor of man, nor of gain, nor of loss. For they have given themselves wholly unto God, and utterly resigned themselves into His hands, and it is pleasing to them to do whatever God wills both in time and in eternity; for they have already broken through and overcome all servile fear, and mercenary rewards, being taken up and translated into the noble liberty of the Spirit. And therefore they have despised all things beneath God as dung, that they may gain Christ, and may be fit to receive Him for their reward. Already they are utterly dead to the world and to nature, that is to say, the flesh; and therefore Christ lives in them, and works with them all their works. It is He Who digs, plants, waters, plucks up, and gives the increase; while they, like good and obedient instruments, and a pliable soil, allow their God to accomplish His own work within them and with them. These are like a watered garden, and a fat field, which the Lord has blessed; and they produce wine exceeding sweet, which makes joyful the Heart of Jesus Christ. For they are cut off from their own natural and fruitless root, and are grafted into that noble Vine which springs forth from the Father's Heart, and they draw their nourishment from that Heart. Lastly, these men so inebriate Christ, as easily to obtain from Him whatever they will, so that He Himself confessed: "I am becoming like drunken men, and as one who is moist with wine."