

## Mark 15:16-32

### “Tried And Crucified”

The coercion of the crowd... That's what Pilate fell prey to that day, the pressure that the people were putting on him to crucify Christ. He wasn't a criminal, it was obvious enough to Pilate that there was nothing "guilty" about Him yet because he wanted to gratify the volatile, on the edge of hostile crowd, he freed a known criminal & sentenced an innocent Man to be executed. 2 Things are worthy to be thought through & considered concerning this particular scene. #1 Beware of the fear of man, the bible is clear that the fear of man brings a snare. When we begin to place more emphasis upon what man thinks of us; what our buddies (guys) or our girlfriends (gals) might think rather than doing what is right & just before God you've set yourself up for a fall. Sin lies at the door, & it's just waiting for you to fold under the pressure that people are putting on you that it might come in like a flood to your life.

The fear of *God* will promote *holiness* in your life, the *fear of God* (the bible says) is clean; which is to say that it will keep you out of ambiguous, uncertain or just downright obvious sinful situations. But there's a catch isn't there? Because you can't do both, you can't please people, & still please God, you've got to decide. If you're going to please God there will be times when people will be angry w/you, or hostile toward you. But if you want to please man than it's impossible to please God & you'll find yourself in situations that invoke His discipline, His chastisement, or perhaps His judgment. You've got decide which side of the fence you're going to walk on. That's why Jesus said, "*He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad.*" *Matt 12:30* We're either on the side of God or the side of man but we can't have it both ways. The fear of man will snare you; the fear of God will save you...

The 2<sup>nd</sup> thing that strikes me about this whole seen isn't so much the cowardice of Pilate (not willing to do the right thing though he knew in his heart Jesus was innocent) but rather the compassion of Christ toward him. Think about it, Pilate was a ruthless man; he'd done, been a part of, & seen more carnage on a capital level than we could probably imagine. He was preparing to have Jesus executed & yet for all of that Jesus was still reaching out to him. My wife & I talked a bit more about this later on (after last Sunday) & some people will see people like Judas, & Pilate as helpless victims of prophetic fate (well someone had to do it). But I'm not sure that emphasizing their position is the appropriate course of action. It seems to me that the incredible thing in the mix of it all is that Pilate seemed to be about as low on the moral/ethical ladder as you could get & yet God loved him so much as to put His Son personally in front of him that he might have the opportunity to respond *to* Him in repentance.

When Pilate asked Jesus if He were the King of the Jews Jesus asked him right then if he was inquiring for himself personally, or was he simply repeating what he'd heard of Him w/regard to the charges specifically. Jesus was reaching out to Pontius Pilate in the midst of His trial, he gave this man of low moral/ethical character, who thought nothing of whether someone lived or died the opportunity to repent. Consider the love of God toward Judas, there would never be a more treacherous act in all of world history & God knew that Judas would choose to betray His Son yet for all of that He placed Jesus in his life personally for 3 yrs, that he might

see Him, come to *know* Him, learn *of* Him & have the opportunity to be changed *by* Him. It's not the treachery of man that should be *emphasized* it's the love & grace of God in Christ that needs to be *magnified*.

God is in the business of reaching out to mankind through the person of His Son, He's not willing that *any* should perish, but that *all* should come to repentance; so the invitation goes out. How people respond is a personal decision, some repent, others reject J.C. Pilate, wanting to gratify the crowd, released Barabbas to them & delivered Jesus, after he had Him scourged, to be crucified.

As you read through the gospel accounts, it's pretty amazing to me how little attention is given to the details surrounding the scourging & the crucifixion of Christ. As a matter of fact in Mark's gospels it's declared in that single passing phrase; that Pilate, delivered Jesus, "*after he had scourged Him,*" to be crucified. That's all we get, there's no description of the scourging, we don't receive any details of what the crucifixion entailed, it's simply stated as a matter of fact & that's all; why is that?

It would seem as though there may be a few reasons. #1 & Most obviously it's because in that day everyone knew exactly what was meant by the words "scourging" & "crucified" they didn't need the details they were all too familiar w/what that entailed. It would be like writing down the details of a firing squad, or a lethal injection, the electric chair or gas chamber; we know what those things mean we don't need the descriptive details. Mark's generation was readily aware of what the scourging process & what crucifying a criminal entailed. They were offended by it, disgusted by it, it was so horrendous that Rome wouldn't even execute their own citizens via the cross; it was reserved for the criminal classes of those whom they were oppressing.

#2 I believe it's because as we mentioned last week the gospel message was never really intended to evoke your emotions. Jesus isn't seeking to get you to *feel for* Him, it's His desire that you place your *faith in* Him. That's why He came, that's why He endured the things He did, not so that you would get worked up emotionally, but so that you might come to believe in Him & be forgiven of your sin personally.

#3 Because what Jesus suffered physically, paled in comparison to what He endured spiritually & to me it seems that *that* is where the emphasis should lie, that's where the mystery takes place. Somehow & in some way He became sin for us, separated from the Father that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. What He went through physically comes in a distant 2<sup>nd</sup> to what He underwent for you & for me spiritually. So as we seek to understand some of His suffering physically never let that overshadow the work that He did for you spiritually & the ramifications that we get to enjoy eternally because of what He was willing to endure for us vicariously.

Most of us have heard of the details surrounding a Roman scourging. As a general rule they would take the flagellum (a whip w/several leather extensions about 2' long on it) & the leather thongs would be loaded at intervals w/led balls, pieces of bone or metal. The victim would traditionally be stripped naked & tied to a post w/his back out stretched. It wasn't uncommon for there to be 2 soldiers flogging the victim so as to reserve the strength of each blow. Now we know that the Jewish law limited the # of blows to 39, the Romans had no such law. The idea was to gain a confession out of the criminal, as you confessed your crimes they would lay the whip on lighter & lighter, if you confessed nothing each blow would be

successively harder. Jesus of course had nothing to confess. The lead balls would bruise the tissue it connected w/while the bone & metal shards would rip & tear the flesh off the person's body. It wasn't uncommon for people to die at the scourging from shock & the radical blood loss.

A man by the name of Dr William Edwards writes this, "As the Roman soldiers repeatedly struck the victim's back with full force, the iron balls would cause deep contusions, and the leather thongs and sheep bones would cut into the skin and subcutaneous tissues. Then, as the flogging continued, the lacerations would tear into the underlying skeletal muscles and produce quivering ribbons of bleeding flesh. Pain and blood loss generally set the stage for circulatory shock. The extent of blood loss may well have determined how long the victim would survive the cross." He goes on to say, "The severe scourging, with its intense pain and appreciable blood loss, most probably left Jesus in a pre-shock state. Moreover, hematidrosis had rendered his skin particularly tender. The physical and mental abuse meted out by the Jews and the Romans, as well as the lack of food, water, and sleep, also contributed to his generally weakened state. Therefore, even before the actual crucifixion, Jesus' physical condition was at least serious and possibly critical."

Kenneth Wuest (A Greek NT scholar) in his word studies said this, "Peter, in his first epistle (2:24), in the words, "with whose stripes ye were healed," gives us a vivid picture of his recollection of how our Lord's back looked after the scourging. The word 'stripes' in the Greek text is in the singular number. The word refers to a bloody wale trickling with blood that arises under a blow. Our Lord's back was so lacerated by the scourge that it was one mass of open, raw, quivering flesh trickling with blood, not a series of stripes or cuts, but one mass of torn flesh."<sup>1</sup>

All of that is entailed by the single phrase found in Vs 15 of Ch 15, "after he had scourged Him." His body was broken that we might be made whole. Now look at Vs 16.

### **Vs16-20**

While certain soldiers are preparing the instruments of the cross there's a little "down" time & so these soldiers decide to blow off a little steam & relieve a little stress by making a further mockery of Christ. We read that the whole garrison was gathered around Him, undoubtedly most of the same guys that had been sent to arrest Him earlier that night. They found an old faded military cloak of sorts, that had the faded remnants of purple still in it (the color of royalty) & they laid it over His quivering flesh. "There You go Your majesty, Your royal robe!" "Wait, wait He's missing His crown!" You've no doubt seen statues or paintings; you're familiar w/the wreaths that royalty would often wear on their heads. They take twigs from some thorny plant (now don't think of a rose bush kind of thorn) these were about 1½"- 2" long & they twist them into a crown place it on His head. Matt's gospel tells us that place a reed in His hands, "There's Your royal scepter!" Then they grabbed the reed out of His hand, spat on Him & began to beat Him over the head w/the reed, which of course drove the thorns deep into His scalp. However unwittingly they thrust a picture of God's curse on sinful humanity upon Him when they placed the thorns upon Him; remember thorns were a part of the curse from the

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<sup>1</sup>Wuest, K. S. (1997, c1984). *Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament : For the English reader* (Mk 15:13). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

fall of man. Now Jesus will bear that curse. Next they begin to bow before Him & pay mock homage to Him, “Hail, King of the Jews!”

Now John tells us that after the scourging, after this mockery & further punishment (can you imagine the repercussion of treating a criminal like this today, this makes Guantanamo bay look like child’s play & yet the outrage that people have cried out w/against the way known war criminals & avowed enemies of the U.S. have been allegedly treated) they bring Him back before Pilate one last time. Pilate tried to continue to converse w/Christ. Turn w/me quickly to John 19 (Vs 5-16).

Pilate was rocked inwardly yet refused to stand up publicly because he was too worried about how it might impact him personally or his career more specifically. So he gave the official verdict (in Latin, or perhaps Greek I think I said Aramaic last week, that would’ve been incorrect), “You shall mount the cross.”

What did Jesus say? ***“For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” Mark 8:36-37*** I can’t emphasize it enough, your verdict pertaining to the person of Christ is *paramount*. Your decision will determine your eternal destiny. Whatever happened to Pilate? I don’t know, he kind of drops off the pages of history, tradition says that he was banished by Caligula & w/his life in ruin he committed suicide. Whether that’s accurate or not I don’t know, but how important it is to seize the opportunity to make the right decision concerning Christ when it’s given to you. The ramifications of rejecting Jesus can be (presently) & will be eternally devastating. Now look at Vs 20...

### **Vs20**

Why? So that He might die for them. Jesus is preparing to die for those who’d just beaten Him, scourged Him, mocked & abused Him. That’s why He’d come, sin was doing its very best to destroy Him, these soldiers represent about the lowest you can go on the moral ladder, seeking to kill the Holy Son of God in brutal, humiliating fashion. Yet He was there to deliver them. It’s no wonder that as they were mocking Him, abusing Him, having nailed Him to the cross He cried out, ***“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.” Luke 23:34*** Paul said that if they’d known what they were doing they’d have never crucified the Lord of glory. But can you imagine that kind of grace, that kind of compassion, that kind of love coursing through you, crying out for the forgiveness of those who are humiliatingly seeking to torturously kill you? Apart from Christ it’s impossible that we should wrap our minds *around* or hope to have any sort of grip *on* that kind of love.

They “led” Him out to crucify Him. Don’t think they took the most direct route they could either. They made a procession out of this taking long & winding roads as they made their way out of the city seeking to cover as much ground as they could, why? Because it made for good P.R. (public relations) The centurion would lead on horseback & there would be written on a sign held up in front of Him the crime that He was being executed for & it would send the signal loud & clear, “This is what happens when you mess w/Rome, don’t do it.” The people would see the man carrying the cross beam (weighing between 80-110lbs), in Jesus’ case He was a bloodied, unrecognizable mess, & they would lead Him to the place where He would be crucified. Since that upright stayed upright in the ground when it wasn’t being used I imagine that Jesus saw that upright that He would be crucified upon many times as He travelled in & out of Jerusalem.

## Vs21-22

Did you catch that? In Vs 20 they were *leading* Him, by the time we reach Vs 22 they were *bringing* Him. Now, it may imply that they were still pressing Him & prodding Him along. However it's quite possible that what's being said here is that by the time they had made it to Calvary that Jesus was physically unable to walk & was being dragged to the place of the cross. Compound that by the fact that He was no longer bearing the cross beam & it seems that may've been the case.

They had to *compel* someone else to carry it for Him because He'd lost so much blood; He was so exhausted that couldn't carry it Himself. Now Roman law permitted them to touch anyone on the shoulder w/their sword, or the tip of a spear & you would have to bear whatever burden they were hauling for a mile. That's why Jesus said that when you're compelled to go a mile, carry it for them 2. That's where we get the phrase, "Go the extra mile" from. Here they chose a man by the name of Simon who was coming in from the country, no doubt to celebrate Passover & he was snatched (seemingly randomly) from the crowd & compelled to carry the cross of Christ.

I'm sure that he was disgusted over it, this would've made him ceremonially unclean, he'd travelled hundreds of miles to be there & now he couldn't partake of the Passover. But unbeknownst to Him He was serving the Passover Lamb of God Himself. It would seem as though later Simon came to believe in Christ because he's mentioned here as the father of Alexander & Rufus, people apparently known to the readers whom Mark was writing to. It could be the same Rufus that Paul mentions in Rom 16.

But he was compelled to do this, he didn't enjoy it initially, it cost him his dignity, in a very real respect it humiliated him. But realizing whom he was serving, what was happening in that moment I have no doubt that it became the most privileged moment of his life. He came to understand that he didn't *have* to carry that cross, he was blessed w/the privileged opportunity, he *got* to carry the cross of his Lord. Simon got to bear the cross of the Lord..!

Think about this; Jesus didn't carry the cross at that point, why? We know why physically, but there was more to it. It was the guilty who bore the cross, Jesus was innocent, Simon was guilty, Simon bore that cross on behalf of humanity, on behalf of you & me, we're the guilty ones, not Jesus. Jesus said, "*If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.*" Matt 16:24 Oh it may cost you your dignity, you may feel the sting of humility, but eternity will bear out that it was the most privileged opportunity you ever had.

Interesting that it was a man named *Simon* who carried the cross isn't it? There should've been another Simon there, Simon Peter who said he'd always be there *for* Jesus, never would he *deny* Jesus. Which Simon do you most closely resemble? Will you carry the cross *for* the Lord, somehow in service *to* the Lord? Or will you crumble under the pressure, forsake the opportunity & head the other direction when the pressure is on? I would imagine that later on when Peter heard that the name of the man who carried the cross of Christ was Simon it stung deep into his heart.

**Vs23-26**

By approximately 9:00 a.m. they had nailed Him to the cross, the wine mingled w/myrrh was given as a general anesthetic. Generally it would've been some of the women of Jerusalem who would've sought to offer it to Him in response to **Prov 31:6-7**, "*Give strong drink to him who is perishing, And wine to those who are bitter of heart. Let him drink and forget his poverty, And remember his misery no more.*" Jesus refused anything to numb the pain or take away His mental faculties, He would bear the agony of the cross w/a clear mind, not in any way medicated. Part of the soldiers pay would be in dividing up the possessions of the criminal at their execution. So unaware of the fact that they were fulfilling Ps 22:18 they cast lots for His clothing.

Generally Romans would crucify criminals completely naked in order to add to their humility. The Jews would often times ask them to allow at least a loin cloth to cover them, whether or not Jesus was wrapped in a loin cloth we don't know. But crucifixion was an incredibly torturous experience. Perhaps next time we'll discuss a few of the details that surrounded crucifixion. Suffice for now to know that our word, "Excruciating" is derived from crucifixion, it means, "Out of the cross."

**Vs27-30**

"Save Yourself!" The cry of the world, look out for #1, when Satan tempted Jesus he told Him to *serve* Himself (Mt.4:3,4), when He was speaking of going to the cross Peter told Him to *spare* Himself (Mt.16:21-23), when His ½ brothers were making fun of Him they told Him to *show* Himself (Jn.7:4), the crowd here at Calvary was saying, *save* Yourself, Jesus denied *all* of those appeals that He might *give* Himself for you & for me.

God's thoughts are not our thoughts, He wasn't here to serve Himself, or spare Himself, He didn't need to *show* Himself or *save* Himself, He *gave* Himself, laid down His life for our sake.

**Vs31-32**

In Vs 29-30 He was mocked as a Prophet, in Vs 31 He was mocked as a Savior, & in Vs 32 He was mocked as a King.

2 Things & we're finished. #1 I want you to draw attention to, perhaps underline or at least reflect on the phrase found there in Vs 31, "He saved others; Himself He cannot save." Couple of things in that phrase: 1<sup>st</sup> of all notice that they couldn't deny the fact that He'd saved (that is delivered) others; the streets of Jerusalem were filled w/men who were once blind that could now see, lepers who'd been made whole, a few who had been dead who were currently alive! There were lame who were walking, sick & diseased who'd been healed, He'd saved others; they had to acknowledge that. However Himself (a statement equally true) He *could not* save. Oh He *could've* saved/delivered Himself, but had He done that He *couldn't* have saved others. He was there paying our penalty & if we were to be saved, than Himself He *could not* save. We praise the Lord that He refused to save Himself, the condemnation that He bore, would mean salvation for you & me. As Caiaphas had unbeknownst to him prophesied, 1 man would die for the people. So that as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> thing I want to draw your attention to is found there in Vs 32. "Let the Christ, the King of Israel, descend now from the cross, that we may *see & believe.*" *Is seeing really believing?* We'll consider that (Lord willing) in our next gathering.

For now why don't we close thinking through the love of God, Here's Jesus between thieves. Question, random act or Divine appointment? We talked earlier about God's love seen in placing Jesus before Pilate so that Pilate might have a chance to respond appropriately to Christ. We see the love of God in placing Jesus in the life of Judas that Judas might have the opportunity to hear Him, witness His works, & receive of His goodness for some 3 yrs before Judas sealed his own fate. Now here's Jesus, between thieves (perhaps the cohorts of Barabbas) & now they have their chance to *receive* Him, to *respond* to Him, they're right there w/Him... they begin to *revile* Him. To *blaspheme* Him; "If You're the Christ save Yourself, & us!" We don't know if one of them perhaps glancing at the sign above His head began to think about that, or if perhaps hearing people saying, "He saved others" led him to look at Jesus differently. But what we do know is that he stopped reviling Jesus, he repented before Jesus, he *rebuked* the other thief, "Don't you even fear God, we're here because of a crime, this Man has done nothing wrong!" Maybe he heard the trial, he was evidently judged the same morning. Be that as it may he *responded* to Jesus & he *received* Him. What an incredible act of faith to look at a bloody, mangled unrecognizable mess hanging on a cross & say, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom..." Jesus said, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be w/Me in paradise." The love of God reaching out to him, & he repented of his sin & received it.

Don't think that you're here by some random act, or coincidence, it's a Divine appointment. The love of God is reaching out to you in the person of J.C. how will you respond? Will you revile Him? Or repent of your sin & receive Him? (And if you *know* Him let me encourage you to be renewed in Him today).

#### Prayer Points:

Father we thank You that You love us enough to bring Jesus into the sphere of our lives, that we might have the opportunity to respond appropriately to His goodness, His grace, & His mercy. Lord may the extent of Your sacrifice do more than stir us emotionally, may it make a determined resolve in us personally, that we wouldn't give ourselves over to walking in the flesh so as to fulfill its lusts. But denying ungodliness & worldly lusts, may we live soberly, righteously, & godly in this present age. For Your name's sake & Your glory.

As I was saying none of us are here by coincidence or random chance. We're all here by Divine appointment because God wants to speak to us, to build up & encourage us, to strengthen us in our walk & relationship w/Him.

But maybe you've not began that walk, that relationship w/Him, you've never given your heart to Christ. Not really, you've maybe played the game, you know the lingo, but you've never personally repented; asked Jesus to come into the deep recesses of your heart, forgive your sin & save you from eternal separation from Him. Here's the deal, God placed Jesus between thieves, one reviled, one repented. Today you have a choice, receive the Lord, or reject Him. God is gracious, full of compassion, my advice to you would be that you would repent right here, right now & receive Christ while the door stands open...