

Jesus Suffers

Mark 15:6-39

Central Idea: Jesus' suffering on the cross led to our salvation and we join in His suffering while still on this earth.

Text – Mark 15:16-39

⁶ Now at the feast he used to release for them one prisoner for whom they asked. ⁷ And among the rebels in prison, who had committed murder in the insurrection, there was a man called Barabbas. ⁸ And the crowd came up and began to ask Pilate to do as he usually did for them. ⁹ And he answered them, saying, "Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" ¹⁰ For he perceived that it was out of envy that the chief priests had delivered him up. ¹¹ But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release for them Barabbas instead. ¹² And Pilate again said to them, "Then what shall I do with the man you call the King of the Jews?" ¹³ And they cried out again, "Crucify him." ¹⁴ And Pilate said to them, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Crucify him." ¹⁵ So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified. ¹⁶ And the soldiers led him away inside the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters), and they called together the whole battalion. ¹⁷ And they clothed him in a purple cloak, and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on him. ¹⁸ And they began to salute him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" ¹⁹ And they were striking his head with a reed and spitting on him and kneeling down in homage to him. ²⁰ And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. And they led him out to crucify him. ²¹ And they compelled a passerby, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross. ²² And they brought him to the place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull). ²³ And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. ²⁴ And they crucified him and divided his garments among them, casting lots for them, to decide what each should take. ²⁵ And it was the third hour when they crucified him. ²⁶ And the inscription of the charge against him read, "The King of the Jews." ²⁷ And with him they crucified two robbers, one on his right and one on his left. ²⁹ And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, ³⁰ save yourself, and come down from the cross!" ³¹ So also the chief priests with the scribes mocked him to one another, saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. ³² Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe." Those who were crucified with him also reviled him. ³³ And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. ³⁴ And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" ³⁵ And some of the bystanders hearing it said, "Behold, he is calling Elijah." ³⁶ And someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink, saying, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down." ³⁷ And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his

last. ³⁸ And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. ³⁹ And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, “Truly this man was the Son of God!”

Introduction

As we come together on this special day to remember and celebrate the death of our Lord Jesus, we must keep the focus in the proper place. Millions around the world today are celebrating Jesus’ death, many of them focused on death itself and how His death granted us life. We live in a culture that glorifies death and violence. Many who come to this moment approach it with almost a morbid curiosity or joy in discussing the sickening and grotesque images of Christ on the cross.

Certainly these images are present, for crucifixion was the most inhumane way to kill a person in Rome. It was so gruesome that it was reserved for Rome’s greatest enemies, insurrectionists and common thieves who stole the livelihood of others. Because Roman soldiers spent most of their time on the edges of the empire fighting in wars, crucifixion became a great policing policy. But today, I want to focus on Christ’s cross, and the cross that each one of us has been called to bear in following Him.

- I. Jesus gave up His life for you (Mark 15:6-39).
 - A. Jesus paid through physical torture for your life.
 - i. There is so much in the accounts of Jesus’ torture, crucifixion and death. As we approach it today, I must paint with broad strokes, or we would be here all day and beyond..
 - ii. In our Easter series this year, we have been talking about how these events were not just about then, but also about now. And we focus today on Christ bearing the cross, the instrument of God’s wrath against the sin of the world.
 - iii. What I find interesting is the accounts in which a simple action is mentioned, and yet there is so much to unpack. For instance. Mark spends an awful lot of time explaining the guilt of the religious leaders who stir up the crowd.
 - iv. But when it comes to what happens to Jesus, other than the lengthy description of the soldiers macking Him as a King, one word would take a good amount of time. These two action words would have needed no word-pictures drawn, full of violence and unthinkable suffering.
 - v. The first is that Pilate had Jesus scourged. Then the account moves along to them taking Jesus down the road to Golgotha. But that word includes in it one of the most painful of all forms of torture.

- vi. A scourging can be described as a number of soldiers, sometimes switching places, who would take a whip that had multiple strands on it and whipping the victim. Each strand was made of leather and had chunks of metal and bone embedded in them.
- vii. The slap of the leather pieces would sting as the chunks of metal and bone would lodge under the skin. Then when the soldier yanked the whip away, these fragments would tear right into the underlying flesh and muscle.
- viii. Pretty gruesome, but Mark didn't need to explain it. Everyone in his day knew what a scourging entailed. Again, these very violent actions were a deterrent. Someone who hated Rome and wanted to be an insurrectionist would have to come to grips with this being their punishment.
- ix. The other action that gets a mere word and no description is the word crucify. No one needed a blow-by-blow account of what it meant to be crucified. They had seen them before, and no one wanted to detail it.
- x. But we are set apart from that time, and hearing about the crucifixion helps us to understand the full amount of pain Christ physically suffered. Therefore, not because I enjoy gore and gruesome pictures, but because we must not minimize how our sin affected Jesus, let us briefly describe it.
- xi. Crucifixion was done by placing a person onto a cross, usually a large vertical beam with a horizontal beam nitched into it. The crosses would be reused, and many believe that Jesus would not have carried the whole cross, but rather would have been tied to the horizontal beam, and then that would be incorporated into the horizontal beam on Golgotha.
- xii. The beam would have still been unmanageable for Jesus, who had just been scourged. Much blood loss has already occurred. He is already weak. The common cross beam could have weighed up to about 120 pounds.
- xiii. The soldiers get help for Jesus because he cannot carry it on his own. Once there at Golgotha, the soldiers would have nailed the horizontal beam into the vertical one and placed ropes on the ends of the horizontal beam for raising.
- xiv. Then they would have laid Jesus on the cross, stretched out His arms, and taken a spike about 4-6 inches long and pounded it through His flesh into the cross beam.
- xv. Some argue that it would have been placed in the hands, but it was most likely placed in the hollow part of the bone right above the wrist in the arm. The original words for hand can extend to the elbow, so the text is not inaccurate.
- xvi. The hands have no bones to stop the nail from slipping through the end of the hand. But the bones of the wrist would put incredible strain on the hand, but hold.

- xvii. Then the soldiers would place the same size spike into Jessu' feet, after crossing them over. There was most likely a plate that jettted out of the cross either on an angle or straight. The ankles would bear the weight of the upper body.
 - xviii. Then the soldiers would gather on sides and begin to pull on the ropes until the cross bumped up against the hole it would stand in, and then begin to raise on an angle. As the cross was raised, the strain caused by gravity would push the body toward the feet and pull on the arms and shoulders.
 - xix. Once the cross was almost upright, the cross would then slide the rest of the way into the hole, and the body would be jolted as it hit the bottom of the hole. Then the shock of the pain would slightly subside.
 - xx. But the pain of pulling up to breath would be excruciating. Jesus lasts only six hours from 9 AM until 3 PM. That is when He breaths His last. Most lasted for 3-4 days before dying and would be exposed to the elements.
 - xxi. Generally, the Romans would leave the carcasses and skeletons on the crosses until they were needed again for the next victim. They would put these close to public areas, like roads, to deter others from thievery and rising up against Rome.
 - xxii. However, in Palestine, there were religious laws against leaving a carcass out, so if Jesus had not died by sundown on the holy day of both the Sabbath and the Passover, the Jews would have demanded his legs broken so that he would die and be taken down.
 - xxiii. **Application:** Jesus endured the things we can't even imagine or bear to think about physically so that each one of us could be freed from the sin that we have committed and the sickness of our souls. He did that because of His great love for you and me!
- B. Jesus paid through emotional anguish for your life.
- i. Many people have heard these accounts and pondered them enough to realize at least part of the physical suffering that Jesus went through for them.
 - ii. But so many do not realize the emotional anguish that this whole week of the passion has caused, not just this Friday. We are talking about an innocent man who bore the torture and death for being innocent, not guilty.
 - iii. Even Pilate declares Jesus' innocence. And yet Pilate still offers Jesus for crucifixion. The injustice of that day had to have stung for Jesus. Here He is the innocent Son of God paying for the sins of others.

- iv. We can't even imagine what it was like for the sinless Son of God to bear the weight of sin and the penalty for sin. He had never sinned or come into contact with it, and now the whole world's sin was upon Him!
- v. What agony to suffer someone else's punishment! The Father would crush Him because of that sin, and none of it was because of Him, but because of everyone else.
- vi. Besides this, Jesus is mocked by everyone in the whole event. The soldiers mock Him as a King. The people deride Him as a powerless Messiah. The religious leaders slander Him by telling Him to save Himself.
- vii. Beyond all of this, even the Father turned His back when Jesus took on sin and became the sin offering. The Bible teaches us that God cannot look upon evil. Paul shows us in 1 Corinthians 5:21 that Jesus became sin for us.
- viii. Jesus even says it Himself from the cross when he cries out, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?" While many say this was just quoting Psalm 22 in His anguish as a calming remedy, but Paul has told us already that Jesus became sin, and God does not look upon sin.
- ix. So how do we understand what Jesus says? We must remember a couple of important truths about Christ on the cross. First, the word forsaken does not carry the same exact connotation that it does in English. This does not mean that God abandoned Jesus on the cross and ran away from Him.
- x. The word forsake means that God left him in the hands of his enemies. God gave Him over to them to kill. As you read through Psalm 22, you will find that even David did not mean abandon, but given over to enemies. This means that God does not leave Jesus and go away, but turns His back. He most likely as the Father cannot bear to watch His Son at this point.
- xi. We see creation react to this giving over by the darkness in the middle of the day and the earthquake that rends the temple curtain in two. The significance of this is that when Jesus died, the sacrifice was made and God was no longer separated from those who would believe!
- xii. So God did not abandon Jesus. He gave Him over to be killed by His enemies. The question is now seen as rhetorical. Jesus knew what must happen to bring salvation. But in that moment of anguish, He cries out because of the separation from His Father.
- xiii. Jesus is indeed quoting Psalm 22 to show the people what is happening, but what is happening is very real, that He is separated from the Father to be given over to enemies and death.
- xiv. Second, we must realize about Jesus on the cross that He dies of His own free will. Jesus Himself told us in the book of John that no one can take

His life from Him, but that He lays it down and picks it back up again (John 10:17-18).

- xv. This is evidenced in Jesus giving up His spirit. He gave it up. It was not taken from Him like a final breath. And He would indeed pick it up again. You see, Jesus' life was not demanded because He never sinned. He gave it in place of our lives. But because He is innocent, He takes it back up again.
- xvi. Death is the result of sin. Jesus didn't sin, and therefore could take up His life again. Because He was innocent, that life paid for all the guilty, but could still be taken up again.
- xvii. **Illustration:** Let me put it in economic terms for you. Let's say you owed 1 million dollars. But you don't have a million dollars. So you cannot save yourself from bankruptcy, but Jesus had 2 Million dollars. He comes in and pays your 1 Million Dollars, but He is far from bankrupt. His life is like that. It was able to pay the price for your death, and still not be exhausted by death's claim on it!
- xviii. **Application:** Jesus suffers more than physically for the sins of the world. He suffers rejection, being alone, and the separation from His Father. Our sin causes all that and more! Our sin does not just separate us from God, but hurts His heart and causes Him pain. Let us not cause the Lord pain, but in grateful service, live pure lives for His joy, not His sorrow.

Luke 9:23–27 (ESV)

²³ And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. ²⁴ For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. ²⁵ For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself? ²⁶ For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. ²⁷ But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God."

II. We give up our desires for Him (Luke 9:23-27).

A. We must be willing to suffer for Jesus.

- i. In our world today, we want to shy away from the pain and torture of following Christ. Preachers rightly say that when you find Christ your life will be better than it was.
- ii. But they falsely imply or outright say that you'll never endure suffering or pain or trial or sickness or anything else. That is not true. In fact, Jesus Himself told us in Luke 9 that we would take up our cross daily.

- iii. Now the cross in the New Testament became a way of talking about killing the flesh or the wicked desires of our old nature. You can see this imagery of being dead to sin in Romans 6:6, 2 Corinthians 13:4, Gal 2:20, 5:24, 6:14 and Hebrews 6:6.
- iv. The idea that Jesus is giving us here is that just as He bore the cross to forgive our sins and pay our debt caused by our sins, we must also as we follow after Him deny our wicked and godless desires.
- v. We live with a different purpose, to serve and bring joy and honor to Christ. We don't live for ourselves anymore. That cross for you might be something different every day.
- vi. It could be the temptation to do what you want to do instead of what God's telling you to do. It could be the desire to do something you used to do when you weren't saved. It could be wanting to say something that you know isn't redemptive.
- vii. We all bear a cross. That cross could be a trial that God wants to use to make you stronger. It could be persecution marked for you because of your faithfulness to God.
- viii. It could be like Paul's thorn in the flesh. It could be a number of things. The problem is that we don't readily run to pain and anguish and suffering. We flee it.
- ix. When we serve Christ, we must take up that cross, whatever it may be, and allow God through His strength to help us through whatever this affliction may be.
- x. **Application:** Everyone else is running away from their cross, or choosing not to bear it by allowing temptation and trial and persecution to get the best of them. But we are called to take up our cross, to die to our sinful desires daily, so that we can live for God!

B. We must be willing to live and die for Jesus.

- i. Part of bearing our cross daily is choosing to live for Him. It can be argued that dying for Christ is easy in persecution. It is a static moment, an opportunity to shine for Jesus in death, but death only occurs once.
- ii. But how hard is it to daily live for Christ? This is the challenge for us, to be consistently representing and following Christ. It is a sacrifice to follow Him, to seek Him, to spend time with Him, and to search out and follow His ways.
- iii. We may not want to do what He commands. We may find others who don't like us because we believe what He says at face value. We may find persecution and rejection because we follow Him.
- iv. In that sense, taking up our cross daily is a choice to serve God no matter what may get in the way of me doing that. Perhaps there are road blocks

ahead as we try to follow God's ways. Those road blocks will bring difficulty and trial into our lives if we don't give in to them.

- v. But in another sense, the one in the New Testament a lot, we die to our desires and we are made alive to God. To take up our cross is to do what God wants in place of what we would want.
- vi. Our lives are not our own. Christ paid a premium price for our lives, and when we live for Him and die to ourselves, when we live out the fact that our lives are not our own, we take up our cross daily.
- vii. We follow after God no matter what trials and afflictions come our way, no matter what persecution is being planned for us. We do what God wants rather than what we or others in our society want.
- viii. This is taking up our cross and following after Christ. It is a risk. It is painful at times. But it is extremely rewarding. Jesus bore the pain of the cross, but His reward is seeing us in Heaven with Him and the Father. It was worth it for Jesus. It must be worth it for us.

Conclusion

Jesus took on the cross with all of its affliction and suffering. He willingly, and even joyfully took it so that you and I could know God and not be separated from Him anymore. He did it for you and for me. And we must also take up our cross for the joy of serving Christ. He's making us better and greater than we could have made ourselves. He saw you and me as so precious that the pain and suffering were worth laying down His own life! It's worth following Christ, and we must bear our own cross and follow Him!

Action Points

- Jesus suffered more than anyone else just for you and me. In looking on the cross, we don't do it to worship death and violence but because through that death our eternal life was purchased!
- Jesus paid in full your penalty on the cross, but we must not abuse His kindness. Let us live pure lives before Him so that He sees our gratitude and love.
- As we live for God, we take up our own cross, the temptations and trials we suffer, the persecution of the world, and the desires that war within, and we put to death our desires and sins so that we might live for God. The cross is not just for our sins once, but daily we take up that cross and die to self so that we can live in Christ!