

SUFFERING

(Seven Sayings of Christ 5)

There is power in the cross of Jesus! The cross of Jesus enables people to find forgiveness, healing and peace. To remove the message and significance of the cross from the Church, it would become powerless and meaningless!

In the sufferings of Jesus, lies the heart of the great salvation God offers us in Jesus. Forgiveness of sins, deliverance from evil and healing of our sicknesses.

Isaiah 53:5 *He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on Him, and by His wounds we are healed.*

We cannot fully comprehend the pain and suffering Jesus endured on our behalf.

Let's pick up the story where Jesus is betrayed by Judas and abandoned by His disciples. Arrested, bound and taken before the high priest.

Matthew 26:59-68 From here Jesus is led off to the Governor, Pontius Pilot.

Matthew 27:11-14 A second time Jesus remains silent, refusing to defend Himself.

Matthew 27:26 Jesus was flogged and scourged!

According to Jewish law often the guilty one was made to lay face down and whipped up to a maximum of 39 times with a leather whip.

The Romans had no such law. The Romans scourged with a whip that had either 9 or 12 leather thongs with pieces of led or bone on each end, which would tear the flesh to pieces. Most never lived through a Roman scourging.

One early church historian who witnessed a Roman scourging said.

"All those around were so horrified to see them so torn with the scourges that their very veins were laid bare along with their inner muscles and sinews. And even their very bowels were exposed."

Jesus endured a similar scourging. Yet there was more to come.

Matthew 27:27-35a

They hammered spikes through His hands (wrists) and through the top of His feet - the cruellest form of Roman punishment.

Jesus is now hanging on the cross with His full weight pressing down on the spikes in His feet – the pain was excruciating.

Matthew 27:39-44 Jesus was mocked and ridiculed while hanging.

The prophet Isaiah 700 years or so before the crucifixion of Jesus prophesied a vivid horrifying picture of what Jesus looked like at this point.

Isaiah 52:14 *Just as there were many who were appalled at Him - His appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and His form marred beyond human likeness.*

(tev) *Many people were shocked when they saw Him; He was so disfigured that He hardly looked human.*

The disciples could no longer recognize Jesus for the Man they once knew. He was beaten black and blue by the violent and brutal beatings inflicted upon Him.

The ancient historian Eusebius records the early Christian martyrs who gave their lives for the sake of Christ. The following is one such account...

"Sanctus endured marvelously and superhumanly all the outrages that he suffered. The wicked men hoped by the continuous severity of his tortures to ring something from him, which he ought not to say. But he girded himself against them with such firmness that he would not even tell them his name or the nation or city to which he belonged or whether he was bound or free. But answered in a Roman tongue to all their questions these words "I am a Christian." There arose therefore, on the part of the Roman Governor and the torturers, a great desire to conquer Sanctus. But having exhausted all their tortures and finding nothing more they could do to him, they finally fastened red hot brazened plates to his body until his body became a witness to his sufferings, being one complete wound and bruise, drawn out of shape and altogether unlike a human form".

Sanctus was no longer recognizable as the man he had been.

Now we begin to understand what Isaiah saw when he saw Jesus crucified.

Eusebius did not say Sanctus had many bruises or wounds, but rather, he seemed to be one complete wound and bruise. In other words, the blows inflicted upon him merged with each other to form one recognizable wound.

Is this what Isaiah saw? All of Jesus' injuries merging into one complete wound!
Jesus was indeed "the man of sorrows!"

For this purpose, Jesus lived. For this purpose, He set His face steadfastly toward Golgotha, just outside the walls of Jerusalem, known as "**Skull Hill**".

The nearest we can come to understanding Jesus' ordeal is to listen to the cries He made from the cross, while He was dying for us.

Two cries stand out. They both declare why at the cross we can find healing, forgiveness, and God's provision.

Those two cries are: "*I thirst!*" and "*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*"

He cried: "*I thirst!*"

Incredibly, during the previous night and throughout this violent day, this cry was the only indication Jesus gave of physical pain.

The physical torture of the cross, and all that had gone before, wrung from His lips those two tormented words, "***I thirst!***"

According to a medical dictionary there are six varieties of a wound:

- **Abrased wound:** where the skin is scraped off like sliding along cement.
- **Contused wound:** caused by a heavy blow.
- **Incised wound:** produced by a knife, spear, or other sharp instrument.
- **Lacerated wound:** where the flesh is torn open, leaving jagged edges.
- **Penetrating wound:** where the flesh is pierced right through.
- **Punctured wound:** made by a pointed or spiked instrument.

The gospels and the prophets reveal Jesus suffered all of those injuries.

His enemies filled with hate injured Jesus to the extent that *"...His appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man..."* **Isaiah 52:14**

He was *"wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities."* **Isaiah 53:5**

His pain was physical; but even more, it was spiritual.

Beyond His physical pain, the crushing weight of human sin had suddenly fallen down upon this one forsaken man causing such a **thirst for righteousness**.

2 Corinthians 5:21 *For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.*

Philippians 2:6-8

Jesus the Son of God, equal with God, stripped Himself of His beauty and of His majesty, took upon Himself human flesh, humbled Himself further, died a horrible death on the cross because of human corruption.

What was Jesus' purpose for doing this?

To free us from the bondage of sin and sickness!

Isaiah 53:4-6

Isaiah 53:10a *But it was the Lord's good plan to crush Him and cause Him grief. Yet when His life is made an offering for sin, He will enjoy many descendants...*

2 Corinthians 8:9 *You know the generous grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, so that by His poverty He could make you rich.*

We cannot measure the limits of the poverty, pain and emptiness Christ accepted at Calvary, an agonising and defining moment in His life which was brought into light by those bleak words of that awful cry, *"I thirst!"*

Nor can we measure the limits of the pardon, healing, provision, and the riches of God's grace. **Jesus' poverty is the source of our wealth!**

John 7:37-38 *On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. 38: Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him."*