

The Crown of Suffering

Mark 15: 16-21

Our last study ended with a gripping statement: [And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified.](#) It doesn't reveal much detail. We are merely told that Jesus was delivered to be crucified after He was scourged. Most of the detail we have regarding such punishment has been handed down through historical writings. This included a severe flogging endured by the scourged, being whipped with a cat of nine tails. We know from prophecy that Jesus was beaten beyond recognition. I am certain we cannot begin to comprehend the severe physical abuse Jesus suffered at the hands of the Roman soldiers as He was scourged just prior to the crucifixion.

He had been beaten mercilessly, and yet the abuse continued. The heartless Romans and accusing Jews were not satisfied with the physical abuse already inflicted. Here we discover their determination to add to Jesus' suffering. No doubt, barely able to stand from the recent scourging, Jesus then endured a time of emotional abuse at the hands of His accusers.

As we move through these verses, keep in mind, Jesus endured all of this for you and me. He willingly subjected Himself to unimaginable pain and suffering so we might escape the pain and suffering of death and condemnation. I want to consider the [humiliating events](#) described in this passage as we think on: [The Crown of Suffering](#).

I. The Exhibition of Jesus (16) – [And the soldiers led him away into the hall, called Praetorium; and they call together the whole band.](#) Following the horrific scourging, Jesus was brought again to the hall of Pilate, paraded before His accusers. Consider:

A. The Spectacle (16a) – [And the soldiers led him away into the hall, called Praetorium.](#) We find that Jesus was brought into the Praetorium, an area within the compound of Pilate's residence in Jerusalem. It referred to a courtyard located within the governor's palace. We can imagine a grand courtyard, arrayed for the governor's pleasure, and Jesus standing in the midst – bloody, battered, and abused by His tormentors. At this moment, there may have been some who were sympathetic to Jesus among the crowd, but they would have been a small minority. Jesus is there surrounded by those filled with hatred and animosity, demanding His crucifixion. He stood alone before them.

- It is interesting to note the place for this spectacle. The Sanhedrin was there, crying out for Jesus' death on the cross, but they were too self-righteous and hypocritical to enter the palace of Pilate. Such activity would render them ceremonially unclean, but they had no problem demanding

the condemnation and death of an innocent Man. They must have demanded these proceedings take place within the courtyard.

B. The Soldiers (16) – *And the soldiers led him away into the hall, called Praetorium; and they call together the whole band.* This appears to reveal the soldiers who subjected Jesus to the horrors of public scourging had gathered the entire band of soldiers under Pilate's authority to witness this spectacle. Some argue that since Pilate's primary residence was in Caesarea, these would have included his elite palace guard that traveled with the governor to ensure his safety. These were hardened men, having little compassion for those who were subject to Roman authority and rule, especially the Jews. A full Roman cohort of soldiers was comprised of 600 men. This would have been a large, intimidating group of soldiers gathered around Jesus.

II. The Humiliation of Jesus (17-19) – There can be no doubt, the physical abuse already inflicted upon Jesus at this point would have been unbearable, but the soldiers seem intent on adding to His suffering. They publicly humiliated Jesus before the multitude. Consider:

A. The Mockery (17-18) – Notice the aspects of this mockery:

➤ **The Robe of Scarlet** (17a) – *And they clothed him with purple.* The garment Jesus wore was removed and a purple, scarlet robe was put on Him. Just the act of removing His garment would have been painful after the flesh had been ripped from His back, but the soldiers were determined to ridicule Jesus. The purple robe was put upon Him to add to His shame. Scarlet, or any variation of purple, was considered the color of royalty. The soldiers were displaying a beaten and battered Man to the crowd. In their minds, this man only claimed to be a king. It was as if to say, "Behold your King! Doesn't he look like royalty?" If you remember, Herod's soldiers had done the same.

Unknowingly, the soldiers' treatment of Jesus bore witness to the provision He would soon make for humanity. *Isaiah 1:18 – Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.*

➤ **The Crown of Suffering** (17b) – *And platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his head.* A crown made of thorns was platted and placed upon the head of Jesus, mocking the crown of royalty a king would wear before His subjects. This further added to the suffering and misery of Jesus. As the thorns were pressed into His head, fresh blood would have run down His face, intermingling with the blood already upon His body. This too paints a picture of the provision of

Christ for us. Thorns became a painful reminder of the curse of sin after the fall. Jesus would bear the curse of sin for each of us as He endured the wrath of God in our place.

➤ **The Ridicule of Soldiers (18)** – *And began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews!* This was not a display of honor or submission to Jesus, but another form of mockery and denial of who He really was. These refused to bow in submission to Jesus then, but one day they will bow and proclaim Him Lord over all. *Phil.2:10 – That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth.*

As I considered the ridicule Jesus suffered at that moment, I was reminded of a time yet future when things will be much different. He was mocked, despised, and rejected the first time, but His return will be in great power and glory. *Rev.19:11-16 – And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.* ^[12] *His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.* ^[13] *And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.* ^[14] *And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.* ^[15] *And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.* ^[16] *And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.*

B. The Mistreatment (19) – *And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and bowing their knees worshipped him.* There is little more degrading than being spat upon. The soldiers displayed their utter contempt and disdain for Jesus as they spat upon Him. I cannot imagine the hatred and cruelty of such actions. He had already been beaten beyond recognition, publicly humiliated, and then they resorted to the greatest display of contempt. Oh, the sadness when these stand before the One they spat upon in righteous judgment.

▪ The soldiers also took a reed and began to beat Him upon the head. No doubt this caused the thorns to drive deeper into His flesh, adding more physical pain. This was a display of their rejection of Jesus as King. It showed their disapproval of His claims. One would never treat a sovereign whom they respected in such a demeaning way. Finally, they bowed their knees in mock worship to the one they considered a rejected and illegitimate king.

III. The Condemnation of Jesus (20-21) – Following the suffering and humiliation of this encounter, Jesus was condemned to death and led away to be crucified. Consider:

A. The Prophecy (20a) – *And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him.* After the spectacle, the purple robe was removed and Jesus' clothes were put back on Him. These men did not know, but this had to happen for the prophecies to be fulfilled. *John 19:23-24 – Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout.* ^[24] *They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did.* God's sovereign plan for the redemption of humanity was being carried out to the smallest of details. The soldiers thought they were in control, but this was going according to God's plan.

B. The Punishment (20b) – *and led him out to crucify him.* We will deal with the crucifixion in a later study, but this reveals the punishment rendered for Jesus. He would suffer a horrific death, condemned to the fate of a common criminal. Death by crucifixion was not uncommon in Jesus' day. Historians tell us that the roads into Jerusalem were often lined with those who suffered this fate as a means to deter criminal activity. However, crucifixion was reserved for the vilest of criminals, those who had committed the most heinous acts.

C. The Procession (21) – *And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross.* We must keep in mind that Jesus possessed a body of flesh like ours. He experienced hunger, thirst, and fatigue just as we do. As they led Jesus away to be crucified, He was expected to bear the beam for the crucifixion on His back. Utterly exhausted from the lack of sleep, the physical and emotional abuse, and the loss of blood, the soldiers selected a man from among the crowd, viewing the spectacle, to bear the cross for Jesus as they made their way to Calvary. They chose Simon, a man from Cyrene, the capital city of Libya. It is interesting to note that Mark identified Simon as the father of Alexander and Rufus. Apparently, these men were known to Mark and others as fellow believers. One could likely assume this encounter with Jesus made a profound impact on Simon, and eventually his family.

- I don't wish to over spiritualize the encounter Simon had with Jesus, but it seems apparent this encounter likely changed his life. One cannot examine Jesus as the sinless sacrifice and walk away unchanged. Simon was forced to decide regarding Jesus and we must as well. I urge you, as you consider the facts, don't disregard Jesus as the Christ!

Conclusion: It saddens me to read this portion of Scripture. I am troubled by the mistreatment and mockery of Jesus by sinful men. I also realize this rejection and mockery continues today. Many deny and ridicule the name of Jesus, failing to realize He is their only hope of salvation. I am

thankful my eyes and heart were opened to the truth and that I was given the opportunity to respond to Jesus in faith. I know He endured all of this on my behalf.

Have you considered Jesus today? Are you willing to embrace Him as the Christ, Savior of all mankind? Do you know Him as your personal Savior? He endured all of this for you. He suffered and died in your place so you could escape the penalty of sin. If you don't know Jesus as Savior, respond to His call by faith, repent of sin, and be saved today!