

Crucifixion 1

The lesson today is very difficult to present. We sing a song called “Lord Make Calvary Real to Me”, the idea in this song is that when we understand the reality of what our Lord and Savior did for us, it helps us to realize this is not just a story or fable handed down to scare us like little children. This type of lesson is also very difficult to listen to, as it illustrates and brings to light some things that are not pleasant to hear. But they are vital to the foundation of our faith and the degree of our acceptance of Jesus as our Savior.

Heb 12:1-2 2

1 Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, **2** fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

The writer in Hebrews tells us that Jesus is both the author and perfecter, the one who completes, our faith. He is this because He endured with joy the cross, despising the shame, for the purpose of presenting Himself before God as the propitiation for our sin and having done so, has sat down on the right hand of God. Read that again, “*who for the joy before Him, endured the cross*”. Jesus understood exactly what was going to happen to Him, the beatings, the physical agony of the cross, and the ultimate penalty that man experiences when he sins and He was not afraid of the pain He was to endure, He knew it was necessary.

In this lesson we are going to follow our Lord from the upper room to His burial. It makes sense to understand that Jesus was probably in pretty good health prior to the ordeal that He faced in the hours before His death. Having been a carpenter and traveling throughout the land during His ministry would have required that He be in good physical condition. Before the crucifixion, however, He was forced to walk 2.5 miles over a sleepless night, during which He suffered great anguish through His six trials, was mocked, ridiculed and severely beaten, and was abandoned by His friends and Father. That is not to say that He was forgotten, He was not, but He had to experience the things He did in order to accomplish God's purpose.

The ordeal began in an upper room of a house at what we now call the Last Supper, where Jesus, in instituting the first communion, predicted that His body and blood would be given.

Matt 26:26-29 3

26 And while they were eating, Jesus took some bread, and after a blessing, He broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." **27** And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; **28** for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins. **29** "But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom."

From the upper room, Jesus went to the Garden of Gethesemane to pray. The garden was outside of the city and had many olive trees, and it was here that Jesus agonized in prayer over what was to occur. It is significant that according to Strong's, this is the only place in the KJV where the word "agony" is mentioned. The Greek word for agony means to be "engaged in combat", Jesus agonizes over what He is to go through, not the pain of the cross as we have already seen in Hebrews, but the thought of being separated from His Father, feeling that He is at the point of spiritual death.

Mark 14:34 4

34 And He said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death; remain here and keep watch."

For all the anguish He knew He would experience, as much as He dreaded going through what He knew had to occur, and having the ability to stop it, yet He prays...

Luke 22:42

5

42 saying, "Father, if Thou art willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Thine be done."

Jesus gave Himself into the hands of His Father and became obedient to God's will even in the face of the agony, the battle that was being waged within Him. The humanity of Jesus is illustrated for us in that battle and the stress that it was causing within Him.

Luke 22:44

6

44 And being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground.

Is that even possible? Can one sweat blood? Or is this just a metaphor that Luke, the physician, uses to illustrate the intensity of Jesus as He prayed. I don't know if the medical knowledge of that time knew, but there is a medical condition for sweating blood. It is called "*hemohidrosis*" or "*hematidrosis*", and has been seen in patients who have experienced extreme stress or shock to their systems. The capillaries around the sweat pores become fragile and leak blood into the sweat. A case history is recorded in which a young girl who had a fear of air raids in WW1 developed the condition after a gas explosion occurred in the house next door.

It is not so difficult to see the human side of Jesus as He is filled with the stress of what He knew was coming, dreading the separation from his eternal deity, to think that He experienced this stress caused condition and as Luke states, "***His sweat became as blood***".

While in Gethsemane, Jesus is betrayed by Judas and arrested by the Jews. His disciples all desert Him...

Matt 26:56

7

56 "But all this has taken place that the Scriptures of the prophets may be fulfilled." Then all the disciples left Him and fled.

Jesus is then brought back to the city to the court of the High Priest, which is located near the Upper room.

So desperate and intent were the leaders of the Jews on eliminating Jesus that they violated their own laws to bring him to trial. Look at some of the illegal aspects of the trial of Jesus:

- X 1) Trials could occur only in the regular meeting places of the Sanhedrin (not in the palace of the High Priest)
- 2) Trials could not occur on the eve of the Sabbath or Feast Days or at night
- 3) A sentence of '***guilty***' could only be pronounced on the day following the trial

After the mockery of the trial and being taken before the Romans so they could execute the punishment, Jesus is sentenced to be crucified.

Mark 15:15

8

15 And wishing to satisfy the multitude, Pilate released Barabbas for them, and after having Jesus scourged, he delivered Him to be crucified.

Matt 27:28-30

9

28 And they stripped Him, and put a scarlet robe on Him. 29 And after weaving a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand; and they kneeled down before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!"

The soldiers stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand and knelt in front of him and mocked him. "***Hail, king of the Jews!***" they said. They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. Jesus was then beaten by the Roman soldiers. In mockery, they dressed

Him in what was probably the cloak of a Roman officer, which was colored dark purple or scarlet. He also wore the crown of thorns. Unlike the traditional crown which is depicted by an open ring, the actual crown of thorns probably covered the entire scalp. The gospels state that the Roman soldiers continued to beat Jesus on the head. The blows would drive the thorns into the scalp, one of the most vascular areas of the body, and forehead, causing severe bleeding.

The significance of the scarlet robe and crown of thorns seems to emphasize Jesus' taking the sins of the world upon His body. The Bible describes sin by the color of scarlet as we see in Isa. 1:18, and the thorns that first appeared after Adams fall in the garden, as a sign of the curse. So the things that Jesus was forced to wear, seem to appear as symbols to show that He took the sins, and the curse, of the world upon Himself.

Matt 27:30

12

30 And they spat on Him, and took the reed and began to beat Him on the head.

The physical abuse that Jesus was subjected to is horrific in its description. In a messianic prophecy in...

Isa 50:6

13

6 I gave My back to those who strike Me, And My cheeks to those who pluck out the beard; I did not cover My face from humiliation and spitting.

They scourged His back and beat Him on the head, as part of the humiliation they spat on Him and according to the prophecy from they pulled His beard out. As horrible as this is note another messianic prophecy from...

Isa 52:14

14

14 Just as many were astonished at you, My people, So His appearance was marred more than any man, And His form more than the sons of men.

The severity of the beating is not detailed in the gospels. However, in the book of Isaiah, it suggests that the Romans pulled out His beard. It is also mentions that Jesus was beaten so severely that His form did not look like that of "*a son of a man*" i.e. that of a human being. The literal translation of the verse reads, "*So marred from the form of man was His aspect, that His appearance was not as that of a son of a man.*" People were appalled to look at Him. His disfigurement may explain why He was not easily recognized in His post resurrection appearances.

Matt 27:31

15

31 And after they had mocked Him, they took His robe off and put His garments on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him.

After the beating, Jesus walked on a path, now known as the Via Dolorosa or the "*way of suffering*", to be crucified at Golgotha. The total distance has been estimated at about 650 yards, 6 football fields. Up a narrow street of stone, probably surrounded by markets in Jesus' time, He was led carrying the crossbar of the cross, called a *patibulum* across His shoulders. This was a common practice of the Romans to cause the condemned to carry the crossbar tied to their hands and shoulders to the site of the crucifixion. The crossbar probably weighed between 80 to 110 pounds. He was surrounded by a guard of Roman soldiers, one of which carried a *titulus*, a sign which announced His crime of being "*the King of the Jews*" in Hebrew, Latin and Greek. On the way, He stumbled and fell, being unable to carry the cross, in all likelihood suffering greatly from the beatings and loss of blood.

Ps 22:16-18

16

16 For dogs have surrounded me; A band of evildoers has encompassed me; They pierced my hands and my feet. **17** I can count all my bones. They look, they stare at me; **18** They divide my garments among them, And for my clothing they cast lots.

The crucifixion event is prophesied in several places throughout the Old Testament. One of the most striking is recorded in Isaiah 52:13, where it says that , "*My servant will act wisely (or prosper). He will be raised and lifted up and greatly exalted.*" In John 3, Jesus talks about His fulfillment of that prophecy when He says, "*Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life.*" The passage in 1 John 3 shows that the prophecy in Isa. 52 points to the crucifixion, where Jesus would be lifted up on the cross for the judgment of sin, so that whoever believed in Him should not die an eternal death but live an eternal life. That point is amplified in...

2 Cor 5:21

17

21 He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

It is interesting that the sign of Aesculapius which is the symbol of the medical profession today, had its roots from the making of the bronze serpent. Jesus is indeed the healer of all! So, Jesus is led to the place of the skull, in the Latin, Calvary, and in the Aramaic, Golgotha, to be crucified. Jesus was then crucified. Crucifixion was a practice that originated with the Persians and was later passed on to the Carthaginians and the Phoenicians. The Romans perfected it as a method of execution which caused maximum pain and suffering over a period of time.

The procedure of crucifixion may be summarized as follows, according to historians;

The *patibulum*, the cross bar, was put on the ground and the victim laid upon it. Nails, about 7 inches long and with a diameter of 1 cm (roughly 3/8 of an inch) were driven in the wrists. The points would go into the vicinity of the median nerve, causing shocks of pain to radiate through the arms. It was possible to place the nails between the bones so that no fractures, or broken bones, occurred. Studies have shown that nails driven through the small bones of the wrist or hands would not support the weight of a body. In ancient terminology, the wrist was considered to be part of the hand. Standing at the crucifixion sites would be upright posts, called *stipes*, standing about 7 feet high. In the center of the *stipes* was a crude seat, called a *sedile* or *sedulum*, which served as a support for the victim. Some think that in lieu of the seat there may have been a small platform at the feet. The *patibulum* was then lifted on to the *stipes*. The feet were then nailed to the *stipes*. To allow for this, the knees had to be bent and rotated laterally, being left in a very uncomfortable position. The *titulus*, or sign was hung above the victim's head.

Ps 22:14-15

18

14 I am poured out like water, And all my bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; It is melted within me. **15** My strength is dried up like a potsherd, And my tongue cleaves to my jaws; And Thou dost lay me in the dust of death.

Having suffered from the beatings and flogging, Jesus suffered from severe hypovolemia, a medical term for the loss of blood. The verses from Psalms describe His dehydrated state and loss of His strength.

When the cross was erected upright, there was tremendous strain put on the wrists, arms and shoulders, resulting in a dislocation of the shoulder and elbow joints. The arms, being held up and outward, held the rib cage in a fixed inspiratory position which made it extremely difficult to exhale, and impossible to take a full breath. The victim would only be able to take very shallow breaths. This may explain why Jesus made very short statements while on the cross. As time passed, the muscles, from the loss of blood, loss of oxygen, and the fixed position of the body, would undergo severe cramps and spasmodic contractions. Shallowness of breathing causes small areas of lung collapse. Decreased oxygen and increased carbon dioxide causes acidic conditions in the tissues. Fluid builds up in the lungs, this makes the condition of acid in the tissues worse. The heart is stressed and eventually fails. The slow process of suffering and resulting death during a crucifixion has been summarized by DePasquale and Birch as follows:

"...it appears likely that the mechanism of death in crucifixion was suffocation. The chain of events which ultimately led to suffocation are as follows: With the weight of the body being supported by the sedulum, the arms were pulled upward. This caused the intercostal and pectoral muscles to be stretched. Furthermore, movement of these muscles was opposed by the weight of the body. With the muscles of respiration thus stretched, the respiratory bellows became relatively fixed. As dyspnea developed and pain in the wrists and arms increased, the victim was forced to raise the body off the sedulum, thereby transferring the weight of the body to the feet. Respirations became easier, but with the weight of the body being exerted on the feet, pain in the feet and legs mounted. When the pain became unbearable, the victim again slumped down on the sedulum with the weight of the body pulling on the wrists and again stretching the intercostal muscles. Thus, the victim alternated between lifting his body off the sedulum in order to breathe and slumping down on the sedulum to relieve pain in the feet. Eventually, he became exhausted or lapsed into unconsciousness so that he could no longer lift his body off the sedulum. In this position, with the respiratory muscles essentially paralyzed, the victim suffocated and died.

Due to the shallow breathing, the victim's lungs begin to collapse in small areas, causing hypoxia, a decrease in the amount of oxygen being carried by the blood, and hypercarbia, an increase in the amount of carbon dioxide carried in the blood. A respiratory acidosis, with lack of compensation by the kidneys due to the loss of blood from the numerous beatings, resulted in an increased strain on the heart, which beats faster to compensate. Fluid builds up in the lungs. Under the stress of hypoxia and acidosis the heart eventually fails. There are several different theories on the actual cause of death. One theory states that there was a filling of the pericardium with fluid, which puts a fatal strain on the ability of the heart to pump blood, another theory states that Jesus died of cardiac rupture", where Jesus' heart was so over worked that it ruptured. The actual cause of

Death is not of import, the fact the Jesus offered Himself willingly is. To know that this was ones fate, and as we saw in Hebrews, to count it joy to endure, may be the most telling statement of the great Love for man that Jesus had. He knew that there was only one way for the sins of man to be forgiven, a twofold process in which the physical penalty had to be paid, but also the spiritual penalty, separation from God, must be paid.

Matt 27:46

19

46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? "that is," My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? "

With the sin of the world upon Him, Jesus suffered spiritual death, separation from the Father. Isaiah 59:2 says that sins cause a separation from God, and that He hides His face from you so that He does not hear. The Father had to turn away from His Beloved Son on the cross. For the first time, Jesus does not address God as His Father.

The agony that Christ was experiencing in the garden had come to fruition in His agony on the cross and His separation from His Father.

Christ had accomplished all He had been sent to do, He gave man the avenue to come back to God through His sacrifice. He gave His all to save you and me.

Now think about that in light of...

1 Cor 11:27-29

20

27 Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. **28** But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. **29** For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly.

Jesus gave His everything for us. The Lord's Supper is the memorial to remind us of what He did. When we come to the table to remember what are we remembering? Are considering His life, death, burial, and resurrection as we look at ourselves and the lives we have chosen to live? I don't think this is saying that if we are feeling unworthy because of sin in our life that we should not partake, Primarily that is because we can never be worthy of what Jesus did. Rather it appears to be saying that the responsibility of assessing our lives in comparison to the standard of the Word and the example of the life of Christ falls upon our own shoulders and we need to look into that mirror and make a worthy judgment of who we are.

The real question of worthiness comes from our willingness to faithfully obey all that God has given us.