

## **Jesus, the Suffering Savior**

Dee Houghtaling, [5/17/2023 2:50 AM]

“He received 39 stripes because 40 was known to kill a man. They wanted Him alive.

They held handfuls of His beard, and hair and pulled it out by the roots. They wanted Him alive. They kicked, punched, and spit on Him for hours. Until there wasn't a single spot on His body not covered in blood. They wanted Him alive.

They shoved a crown of thorns down on His head so harshly it pierced His scalp right down to the bone. They wanted Him alive.

After hours of being beaten, mocked, whipped, flogged, and tortured they made Him walk with a cross. They made Him carry it. An extremely heavy, rough piece of wood with splinters digging into fresh wounds. They wanted him alive.

They wanted Him to feel every ounce of pain they could bring. He had to feel it in order to heal us. Crucifixion was historically one of the cruelest most tortured deaths a human could face. Hours upon hours of torture. Torture most of us cannot mentally think of because the cruelty isn't normal. It isn't something our minds can comprehend.

We celebrate Easter with pastel colors, happy children hunting eggs, and chocolate. Truth is there was absolutely nothing happy about the day Jesus died. It was cruel, bloody, and nasty. He could have stopped all of it. He could have called every angel in heaven to demolish every person standing and shouting "Crucify Him!" He didn't.

He knew in order to have a Sunday you have to have a Friday. He knew in order to have joy you have to carry your cross. He felt everything that day. He felt how your heart broke wide open when you had to watch your baby die. He felt how heavy your life was when you were staring down the barrel of a gun wondering if the man you called husband was going to shoot you. He carried the weight of the burden you have felt since your spouse died and life just doesn't seem right since.

On that cross He held the rapist and murderers, the sinner and the saint. He leveled every playing field and said ALL of you are worth it. He knew He had to carry the cross. He never promised the cross you carry in this life would not be heavy. His wasn't. His promise is that Sunday is coming.

No matter how heavy Friday is. Financially, emotionally, mentally, or physically. Friday is heavy. That cross is weighing you down and you are about to crumble under its weight. His promise was simply this. He won't make you carry it alone. What kind of king would step down from his throne for this? Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God did. For you. He did every bit of it for you and me. Oh yes it is heavy. So heavy sometimes you do not think you can take one more step.

But look up, because Sunday is coming.”

Was the suffering for Jesus more about the nails, about His flesh being ripped open, people mocking Him, thorns piercing through His skull, or trying to take deep breaths suspended by nails? In the natural it's hard to look past all the physical suffering He went through. What we don't truly understand is the intimacy He had with the Father. Jesus said, “that the world may know I love the Father”. The level of intimacy Jesus had was beyond what our natural minds could understand.

Did the physical pain of the scourging and the nails hurt? Most definitely, but He cried out while on the Cross... “My God My God Why have you forsaken Me”.

For the first time, He felt the darkness of His Father turning His back on Him, because He became sin for us. Those words He cried out expressed the eternal love He had for His Father. Most who hung on a Cross didn't die without their legs being broken, but what was broken for a moment was His heart because of the separation He felt. The soldiers realized Jesus was already dead before they were going to break His legs.

Jesus said life eternal to them that KNOW God. The life as a Christian is not about a salvation card in our pocket or a ticket to heaven. Unfortunately, our American church has been taught a superficial love for Jesus. Intimacy means you love God so supremely that if and when you sin you feel the hurt of God.

It's just not that we sin and ask Jesus to forgive us, there should be a pain within that we hurt our Father's heart. Imagine a husband confessing to his wife he cheated on her, and she begins to cry and weep. The husband will be hurt inside because he hurt his wife for doing something so terrible. This is expressed in scripture “Grieve not the Holy Spirit”, and this is about intimacy. When we suffer, we suffer with Him and He with us. May the world know we love Jesus.