

Expository Thoughts On Matthew - Matthew

27:27-44

by J.C. Ryle

Transcript

These verses describe the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ after his condemnation by Pilate, his sufferings in the hands of the brutal Roman soldiers, and his final sufferings on the cross. They form a marvelous record. They are marvelous when we remember the sufferer—the eternal Son of God. They are marvelous when we remember the persons for whom these sufferings were endured. We and our sins were the cause of all this sorrow! He died for our sins (1 Corinthians 15:3). Let us observe in the first place the extent and reality of our Lord's sufferings. The catalogue of all the pains endured by our Lord's body is indeed a fearful one: seldom has such suffering been inflicted on one body in the last few hours of a life. The most savage tribes, in their refinement of cruelty, could hardly have heaped more agonizing tortures on an enemy than were accumulated on the flesh and bones of our beloved Master. Never let it be forgotten that he had a real human body, a body exactly like our own, just as sensitive, just as vulnerable, just as capable of feeling intense pain. And then let us see what that body endured. Our Lord, we must remember, had already passed a night without sleep, and endured excessive fatigue. He had been taken from Gethsemane to the Jewish council, and from the Council to Pilate's judgment hall. He had been twice placed on his trial, and twice unjustly condemned. He had been already scourged and beaten cruelly with rods. And now, after all this suffering, he was delivered up to the Roman soldiers, a body of men no doubt expert in cruelty, and, of all people, least likely to behave with delicacy or compassion. These hard men at once proceeded to work their will. They gathered together the whole band; they stripped our Lord of his raiment and put on him, in mockery, a scarlet robe, they plaited a crown of sharp thorns, and in derision placed it on his head. They then bowed the knee before him in mockery, as nothing better than a pretended king; they spit upon him; they smote him on the head again and again; and finally, having put his own robe on him, they led him out of the city to a place called Golgotha and there crucified him between two thieves. But what was a crucifixion? Let us try to realize it and understand its misery. The person crucified was laid on his back on a piece of timber, with a cross-piece nailed to it near one end—or on the trunk of a tree with branching arms, which answered the same purpose: his hands were spread out on the cross-piece, and nails driven through each of them, fastening them to the wood; his feet in like manner were nailed to the upright part of the cross. Then, the body having been securely fastened, the cross was raised up and fixed firmly in the ground. And there hung the unhappy sufferer, till pain and exhaustion brought him to his end—not dying suddenly, for no vital part of him was injured; but enduring the most excruciating agony from his hands and feet, and unable to move. Such was the death of the cross. Such was the death that Jesus died for us! For six long hours he hung there before a gazing crowd, naked, and bleeding from head

to foot—his head pierced with thorns, his back lacerated with scourging, his hands and feet torn with nails, and mocked and reviled by his cruel enemies to the very last. Let us meditate frequently on these things: let us often read over the story of Christ’s cross and passion. Let us remember, not least, that all these horrible sufferings were borne without a murmur: no word of impatience crossed our Lord’s lips. In his death, no less than in his life, he was perfect. To the very last Satan found nothing in him (i» ; John 14:30). Let us observe in the second place that all our Lord Jesus Christ’s sufferings were vicarious. He suffered not for his own sins, but for ours. He was eminently our substitute in all his passion. This is a truth of the deepest importance. Without it the story of our Lord’s sufferings, with all its minute details, must always seem mysterious and inexplicable. It is a truth, however, of which the Scriptures speak frequently, and that too with no uncertain sound. We are told that Christ —bare our sins in his own body on the tree— ; —that he —suffered for sins the just for the unjust— ; —that —He was made sin for us who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God— ; in him.— —that he —was made a curse for us— ; —that —he was offered take bear the sins of many.— ; —that —he was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities,— ; —and that —the Lord had laid on him the iniquity of us all.— (1 Peter 2:22, 1 Peter 3:18, 2 Cor 5:21, Gal.3:13, Heb 9:28,i» ; Isaiah 53:5-6). May we all remember these texts. They are among the foundation-stones of the Gospel. But we must not be content with a vague general belief that Christ’s sufferings on the cross were vicarious. We are intended to see this truth in every part of his passion. We may follow him all through, from the bar of Pilate to the minute of his death, and see him at every step as our mighty substitute, our representative, our head, our surety, our proxy—the divine friend who undertook to stand in our stead, and by the priceless merit of his sufferings, to purchase our redemption. Was he scourged? It was that through— his stripes we might be healed.— Was he condemned, though innocent? It was that we might be acquitted, though guilty. Did he wear a crown of thorns? It that we might wear the crown of glory. Was he stripped of his raiment? It was that we might be clothed in everlasting righteousness. Was he mocked and reviled? It that we might be honored and blessed. Was he reckoned a malefactor, and numbered among transgressors? It was that we might be reckoned innocent, and justified from all sin. Was he declared unable to save himself? It was that he might be able to save others to the uttermost. Did he die at last, and that the most painful and disgraceful of deaths? It was that we might live forevermore, and be exalted to the highest glory. Let us ponder these things well: they are worth remembering. The very key to peace is a right apprehension of the vicarious sufferings of Christ. Let us leave the story of our Lord’s passion with feelings of deep thankfulness. Our sins are many and great, but a great atonement has been made for them. There was an infinite merit in all Christ’s sufferings: they were the sufferings of one who was God as well as man. Surely it is meet right and our bounden duty to praise God daily because Christ has died. Last, but not least, let us ever learn from the story of the passion to hate sin with a great hatred. Sin was the cause of all our Saviour’s suffering. Our sins plaited the crown of thorns; our sins drove the nails into his hands and feet; on account of our sins his blood was shed. Surely the thought of Christ crucified should make us loathe all sin. Well says the Church of England Homily of the Passion: —Let this image of Christ crucified be always printed in our hearts. Let it stir us up to the hatred of sin, and provoke our minds to the earnest love of Almighty God.— ; —

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