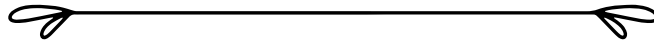


the volunteer



Jesus wasn't a victim.

I used to arrive at this passage and get myself all riled up thinking about the unjustifiable and unfair nature of Christ's crucifixion and death. I would pity Jesus for being a victim in this cruel scheme. Objectively, Christ did nothing wrong (literally) and therefore did not deserve any sort of punishment. But He ended up getting tortured, mocked and crucified. That always shouted "victim" to me.

But I was reminded that He **chose** this path.

He was not forced.

He was **obedient**.

That was a significant paradigm shift for me. Two people can experience the same suffering, affliction, and pain, but the way you feel towards one or the other drastically changes if you find out one volunteered and one was forced.

Whether Christ was a victim or volunteer, I believe either perspective should result in our gratitude and appreciation. Because either way, He had to go through it. But which one is not only correct, but also evokes a greater sense of gratitude?

In my opinion, it has to be Jesus the Volunteer.

It has to be Jesus who humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

But what did He exactly volunteer for? The quick answer: to be crucified and die. And that is wholeheartedly, 100% true. Going through this passage, however, I found it very interesting the way Matthew described the entire process of the crucifixion. Or more specifically, a lack thereof. When it comes to Jesus being crucified, this is all we get from today's passage:"

And when they had crucified Him, they divided His garments among them by casting lots."

That's it.

The crucifixion of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ doesn't even get a paragraph. It gets a part of a sentence. And grammatically, it's not even the significant part of that sentence. It's just the introductory clause that informs the actual independent clause that follows.

That's not to say it isn't significant. Jesus volunteering to die the most excruciating death known to man at the time is very significant. It shows a ridiculous level of obedience and determination to carry out God's will. But was it the crucifixion that caused Christ the most pain?

In Matthew's account of Christ's death, aside from Jesus affirming Pilate's question if He is the King of the Jews, there is no account of Jesus saying anything or crying out in any manner. Not even when He gets crucified. But what is the first thing He speaks throughout this entire ordeal?

"Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is 'My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?'"

Through the mockery: Nothing.

Through the torture: Nothing.

Through the crucifixion: Nothing.

But when does Christ finally cry out? When God forsakes Him. When the presence of His Father departs from Him.

What does it say when the Man who volunteered to die the most physically painful death doesn't cry out when that's happening, but does when God leaves Him? I believe it speaks to an even more excruciating pain. Something even worse than the physical pain of being tortured and crucified. But the mental and emotional anguish that comes from being abandoned by the perfect, holy, almighty Father in Heaven.

And He volunteered.

Brothers and sisters, how can we be anything but thankful?

Because He volunteered to suffer more than anyone has ever suffered, we now don't have to. All praise and glory to God for displaying the greatest act of worship, surrender and humility that day on Calvary. May we live our lives in gratitude. And may that gratitude forever manifest itself in worship.

"Why do bad things happen to good people? That only happened once and He volunteered."
- R.C. Sproul

Thank you, Jesus.