

# The Day Jesus Died

Matthew 27:27-50  
Morning reading: Psalm 69

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**Main point:** Jesus paid it all.

## Introduction:

Included in almost every major hymnal of the last thirty years, it is one of the most prominent and popular of the African American spirituals. Yet, like most spirituals, the origins are impossible to trace. Borne not from the pen of an individual but out of the communal slave experience, Paul Westermeyer noted its first publication in 1899. There, it included four stanzas:

1. Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
2. ...when they nailed Him to the cross?
3. ...when they pierced Him in the side?
4. ...when the sun refused to shine?<sup>1</sup>

Later, a United Methodist hymnal along with other songbooks included a fifth stanza:

5. ...when they laid Him in the tomb?

The series of questions that form the basis of this song is obviously not meant to be taken *literally*; for none of us were physically present at the Passion of Christ. Rather, the questions are meant to function as a mental time-machine to take us back to the day Jesus died.

Would you come with me now to revisit the day Jesus was crucified? A word of caution and preparation so that you get the most out of your visit. Please, take off your shoes (figuratively speaking)—we are about to stand on holy ground!

What does Matthew want us to *see*, to *understand*, to *feel*, to *believe*, or to *do*, as we stand here at the foot of the cross?

## Exposition:

Without oversimplifying or embellishing the details, think with me now about five observations on the day Jesus died.

### A. The mock coronation (vv.27-31)

- <sup>27</sup> Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole *Roman* cohort around Him.

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<sup>1</sup> Traditional Spiritual, *Were You There?*

The Praetorium was the palace where Pilate lived when in Jerusalem. His official residence was in Caesarea, but when he came to Jerusalem to conduct business and keep the peace during the Passover, this is where he stayed.

Accompanying him was the most elite soldiers in the Roman military—the best of the best. The Romans organized their soldiers into various regimes. A centurion was an elite officer in charge of 100 soldiers. A legionnaire was in charge of a legion of 6000 soldiers. A cohort was 600 soldiers. None are Jewish, and so they are completely and emotionally detached. There is only spite and indifference. 600 of these soldiers are called storming out of their barracks to make sport of Jesus in a mock coronation. There are six acts of scornful denigration.

- <sup>28</sup> They stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. <sup>29</sup> And after twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand; and they knelt down before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" <sup>30</sup> They spat on Him, and took the reed and *began* to beat Him on the head.

He has already been scourged—that is whipped within an inch of His life with a brutal instrument called the "cat-of-nine-tails." Now Jesus is stripped, mocked, beaten, abused, taunted, ridiculed, humiliated, and forced through a mock coronation. Here we witness the scorn He tolerated.

They are totally blind to who He is. They have no clue that He is, in fact, the Son of God. But they don't care either. He is a fool to them—a religious fanatic. They are a picture of the darkness of every unbelieving heart.

Listen to how Paul describes every unsaved person.

- **Ephesians 4:17-18**—So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, <sup>18</sup> being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart;

You may be the most intelligent person on your job or in your school. You may be the most skilled person in your family. You may be the most likable person in your neighborhood, but apart from Christ and the new birth, you are as blind as a bat in a snowstorm.

You are like a blind man in a dark room looking for a black cat that isn't there. I am not trying to insult you, but to speak to you plainly and lovingly about the spiritual condition of your life! Look at these soldiers! They are a picture of the unsaved man. And even if you grew up in church, and you are still unsaved, this describes you.

- **Titus 3:3**—For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another.

Yet, despite our condition, Jesus came into the world and endured the scorn and suffering of Calvary to bring salvation to all who would believe.

- **Titus 3:4-5**—But when the kindness of God our Savior and *His* love for mankind appeared, <sup>5</sup> He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit.

**Application:** Pause and think about the love that endured such suffering for you. Does it not melt the coldness of your heart? Does it not soften the hardness of your spirit?

## B. The surprising substitution (vv.31-32)

- <sup>31</sup> After they had mocked Him, they took the *scarlet* robe off Him and put His *own* garments back on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him.<sup>32</sup> As they were coming out, they found a man of Cyrene named Simon, whom they pressed into service to bear His cross.

Forced to carry His own cross through the streets of Jerusalem to the site of execution, which is outside of the city, Jesus allows Himself to take what was called, “the death march.” Criminals were made to carry their own crosses through the streets of Jerusalem as the people turned out in droves. It was intended by Rome to be a public statement of submission to the Roman Empire.

It was their way of saying, “This is what will happen to you if you rise up against Caesar.” It was a way of striking fear in the hearts of the people. It was a way of saying, “I am guilty, I agree with the charges, I am under submission to Caesar and Pilate. I am deserving of this.” We know it as the Via Dolorosa. Four soldiers under a centurion’s command lead and clear the way. But Christ has been so badly beaten that He cannot carry His cross without falling down. He has gone the entire night without sleep and endures hours of abuse. His humanity has limitation.

At this point, Jesus’ body is weakened. The cross beam is about 100 pounds. Both beams would be over 200 pounds. The Roman soldiers did not want Him to die along the way because they wanted a public execution, so they randomly grab a man coming from the country to the Passover.

Much has been written and said about this stranger who is enlisted in the Gospel story. Some say that this man was possibly a black man, but whether he is or not does not matter. Christ is the central figure here. We are told that his name is Simon, a man of Cyrene which was off the coast of Northern Africa with a large Jewish colony. He is a pilgrim who has come to celebrate the Passover. In Mark’s gospel, he tells us that he was the “*father of Alexander and Rufus*” (Mark 15:21). Rufus is mentioned in Romans 16:13 as a believer in the church at Rome.

It is reasonable to believe that Simon became a believer later on and that is why his family is listed. We do not know how, but the events of that day transformed His life. There is nothing mystical about carrying a piece of wood, but later—coupled with the events of that day and the glorious news of the resurrection and the ascension—this man’s life and family were changed! Oh, may it change yours and mine as well, as we make our way toward Calvary.

What are we to see? Here we simply witness, the strength He displays. Even in His dying, He is saving. Even in His weakened physical human nature, His deity is unbroken. Although Jesus had been beaten so badly that He could not shoulder the wooden instrument of death—he was the strongest Man who ever lived! He is determined and resolute. He is unflinching in His focus on the Father’s will. Beaten almost beyond recognition, He is durable in His mission on the earth.

**Application:** Simon may have been surprised by being pressed into this service, but God had a plan to press beyond his ignorance and suffer for His disobedience, that he would become a citizen of the kingdom and a member of the family of God. Perhaps, you find this compelling, pressing, convicting work taking place in your soul right now. Perhaps, you are now being captured and draw to the cross where Jesus suffered and died for you. Simon had a choice, and it would have cost him either way. If he

refused, he would pay. If he obeyed, it would also cost him his pride, his heart, his emotions, and his will. Carrying the cross that day did not save him, but seeing the One who died and believing did. Do you?

### C. The shameful crucifixion (vv.33-37)

- <sup>33</sup> And when they came to a place called Golgotha, which means Place of a Skull, <sup>34</sup> they gave Him wine to drink mixed with gall; and after tasting *it*, He was unwilling to drink. <sup>35</sup> And when they had crucified Him, they divided up His garments among themselves by casting lots. <sup>36</sup> And sitting down, they *began* to keep watch over Him there. <sup>37</sup> And above His head they put up the charge against Him which read, "THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS."

In this scene, we witness the shame He suffered.

Cicero, the famous Roman senator and orator writes,

"Crucifixion is a most cruel and disgusting punishment. It is a crime to put a Roman citizen in chains, it is an enormity to flog one, it is sheer murder to slay one, but what then shall I say of crucifixion? It is impossible to find a word for such an abomination. Let the very mention of the cross be far removed, not only from a Roman citizen's body, but from his mind, eyes, and his ears."

What Cicero was saying is this: "I don't want to have anything to do with a cross!"

Crucifixion was offensive—dishonorable. The Jews believed that the one who died on a cross was abandoned by God. Hanging in mid-air, as it were, rejected by man *below* and God *above*, the crucified one they believed had no home for the soul. So shameful was this form of death, that it could not be conducted in the city of Jerusalem. Therefore, Jesus was taken "*outside the gate*" (Heb.13:12). It was savage. Vicious. Barbaric. Sadistic. Merciless. Heinous. Bloodthirsty. Brutish. Ruthless. Inhumane. Fiendish.

**Application:** What was the instrument of shame has become the banner, the symbol, and the epicenter of our faith. In the cross, we see the wisdom of God and the seriousness of sin. Let us stand now at the foot of the cross and survey it. What do we see? Four facts stand out which ought to place us in awe of Christ.

#### 1. The shameful place

The place was called "Golgotha" which means "Place of the Skull" in Hebrew. In Latin, it is *Calvary*. The circumference and the outline of the hill gave it the look of a skull, but greater still, this was the place of death—a graveyard of bones outside the city. It was where you dumped anything and everything you didn't want. That's where Jesus died. The refuse and garbage of the city were taken here, and so to be crucified in this place, was *the ultimate rejection*. To die here said that you were *unworthy of a normal funeral* and burial place. To die here said you were *unworthy of having friends and family around you*. Unworthy of basic civility and decency. The shame of Calvary shouted to all who died there: here is one unworthy of honor. It was a place of reproach. It was a shameful place.

#### 2. The shameless ploy

- <sup>34</sup> they gave Him wine to drink mixed with gall; and after tasting *it*, He was unwilling to drink.

Wine mixed with gall is usually understood as a narcotic to reduce the pain of crucifixion, but in reality, it was intended to stupefy the victim. It was not given out of a sense of mercy, but those who

gave it to him were professional executioners. There was not an ounce of love or mercy to ease the pain, but they gave it to Him to make their job easier. Taking it would have put Jesus into a passive state and made it easier for them to stretch Him out on the cross and to nail His wrist to the crossbeam. He refuses it, for He chose not to diminish the full sufferings at the hand of His Father on behalf of sinners. He will drink the full wrath of God to the dregs. It was a shameless ploy.

### 3. The shameful punishment

- <sup>35</sup> And when they had crucified Him, they divided up His garments among themselves by casting lots.  
<sup>36</sup> And sitting down, they *began* to keep watch over Him there.

Notice, the crucifixion is mentioned but without any embellishment. We have some details, but not many. It is stated almost in a passing way. Reserved for criminals guilty of treason, insurrection, or murder, this kind of punishment though horrendous in nature, was commonplace at that time. All of the details of His arms being opened across the horizon beam, and His feet being nailed to the vertical beam are not given. There is no mention of His wrists being nailed right below the palms. The specifics are missing. Why? Because the *manner* was so despicable, so despised, and so horrible that there is no need to go into any details. A veil or covering is placed over the gory specifics by the gospel writers.

We do see in the next line—“...*they divided up His garments among themselves by casting lots.*” This directly fulfills Psalm 22:18, which anticipated this aspect of His suffering. This reveals to us that His punishment involved *a shaming that left him completely exposed*. He had no clothing left. Think of the shame of nakedness! The execution team stripped Jesus and left Him completely humiliated and exposed. The average person had six pieces of clothing: 1) *sandals*, 2) *an inner cloak*, 3) *a headpiece*, 4) *a belt*, 5) *an outer cloak*, and 6) *a tunic*.

They took it all! He had nothing in His death. No covering. No earthly possession. His garments were a part of the spoil given to these soldiers. There Jesus hung, even with His own mother standing there at the foot of the cross—humiliation beyond our imagination!

And the executioners have no concern for Him at all. Verse 36 adds that they are “*sitting down...to keep watch over him.*” This note is added by Matthew to communicate that there was no deception in His death. They have ice water in their veins and darkness in their hearts. They are cold-blooded, callous, and indifferent. The shameful punishment. One last thing.

### 4. The shameful placard

- <sup>37</sup> And above His head they put up the charge against Him which read, “THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.”

This was intended by Pilate to be an insult, a barb, a scornful statement to the Jewish people. The Jewish leadership pressured Pilate to give Jesus up to death, even over Barabbas, and it caused Pilate tremendous vulnerability, as he had to acquiesce in order to keep the peace, or his job would be lost.

In an effort to play one-upmanship and rub it in their faces, Pilate insisted that this shameful placard be placed above His head. In essence, it read, “This is your shameful, humiliated, King.” It was mockery, belittling, and taunting intended to bring scorn.

His *crown*...thorns. His *throne*...a cross. His *subjects*...Jewish rejectors. His *land*...the dump.

King don't look like this! Kings are comfortable, rich, pampered. Kings are protected. Yet, here is the shameful sign above the head of Jesus: THIS IS JESUS KING OF THE JEWS. Everything about the cross was shameful. The *place*, the *ploy*, the *punishment* of exposure and mockery, and the *placard*.

**Application:** If Jesus is to die in our place, *He cannot die as the Hero*. He must die as One who *bears the shame of sin itself*. And in order for any of us to know this Jesus by faith, we must come *acknowledging the shame of our sins*. We must come acknowledging the dishonor that our sins have brought to God.

- **Hebrews 13:12-13**— Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate. <sup>13</sup> So, let us go out to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach.

What this means is if we are to have Jesus, who was crucified outside of the city, then we must be willing to go outside of the city to have Him. We cannot remain in a pretty place and have a shameful Christ. We cannot *decorate our sin* or *pretend* that there is no sin to be atoned for. If we are to have THIS Savior, then we must be willing to publicly bear the shame, confessing our sin to Him, leave the popularity of the world, and stand with Him!

The scorn He tolerated, the strength He displayed, and the shame He suffered also involved a verbal abuse that reveals to us the slander He endured by a hardened nation.

#### D. The hardened nation (vv.38-44)

- <sup>38</sup> At that time two robbers were crucified with Him, one on the right and one on the left. <sup>39</sup> And those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads <sup>40</sup> and saying, "You who *are going to* destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross." <sup>41</sup> In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking *Him* and saying, <sup>42</sup> "He saved others; He cannot save Himself. He is the King of Israel; let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe in Him. <sup>43</sup> HE TRUSTS IN GOD; LET GOD RESCUE *Him* now, IF HE DELIGHTS IN HIM; for He said, 'I am the Son of God.'" <sup>44</sup> The robbers who had been crucified with Him were also insulting Him with the same words.

There are three groups that are heaping their slander and abuse upon Christ. The first is...

##### 1. The despicable robbers

In verse 38 and 44, the robbers are identified, and they are not petty thieves. They are notorious insurrectionist—guerilla soldiers. Today, we would call them terrorists. They are the Osama bin Ladens of the ancient world. Intent on overthrowing the Roman Empire, these zealots were the worst of the worst. Most likely, these men were companions of Barabbas. The middle cross, intended for Barabbas, is now occupied by the Holy One.

You would think that as they are facing certain death—a breath away from being ushered into eternity to stand before God—they would be seeking forgiveness! But no! They are hurling foul-mouthed, obscene language at Jesus. The second group of abusers is mentioned in verse 39.

## 2. The pathetic travelers

- <sup>39</sup> And those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads <sup>40</sup> and saying, “You who *are going* to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross.”

Now, these are travelers pouring into Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. The road that they are traveling down takes them right past Golgotha. As they flowed in from all parts of Judea, they look up and see Jesus; then they join in with the slander that has circulated through the city. Like angry travelers jammed in on the freeway, as it were, they see Jesus and start to attack His personage. They defame His character. They slander His claims. They sneer through their lips. The “wagging” of their heads is a non-verbal form of communication that is intended to show how utterly and violently they were abusing Him with their words. Again, a fulfillment of Psalm 22:7. Their body language expressed their defiance and their pompous abuse and hatred. Here are the most religious people on the face of the earth.

They bring up a statement that He made three years earlier concerning His bodily resurrection which was bought up at the trial with Caiaphas. This shows how much gossip and slander was spreading among the people. The final group is...

## 3. The disdainful leaders

- <sup>41</sup> In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking *Him* and saying, <sup>42</sup> “He saved others; He cannot save Himself. He is the King of Israel; let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe in Him. <sup>43</sup> HE TRUSTS IN GOD; LET GOD RESCUE *Him* now, IF HE DELIGHTS IN HIM; for He said, ‘I am the Son of God.’”

Dr. Lawson pictures these leaders like “sharks that have smelled blood in the water and they are tightening their circle so they can come in for the kill.” They are belittling Him. They are deriding Him. Anything and everything that their carnal minds and evil hearts can create, they conjure it up and hurl it at Him to wound Him. Like snakes full of deadly poison, they seek to inject their fangs into the Lord Jesus.

See their faces as they say, “*He saved others, He cannot save Himself. He is the King of Israel; let Him now come down from the cross and we will believe in Him.*” “You claim to be a Savior...let’s see you save Yourself. Why believe in a victim like You?” You can hear the hiss of the serpent and the voice the devil in their words—they match the words found in the wilderness temptation of Matthew 4. They even quote Scripture from Psalm 22. They take God’s own Word and beat Him over the head with the Bible itself.

So, get the picture. The robbers were insulting Him. The travelers were insulting Him. The religious leaders were insulting Him. And abuse after abuse, slander after slander, building up and piling on Him to utterly crush Him with defamation and abuse. They are maligning Him. In the midst of all of it, He is silent.

Oh, my Lord! The slander You endured.

**Application:** What are to see, understand, feel, or do? Peter, no doubt remembered this scene when he wrote to Christians, encouraging them to trust the Father—like the Lord Jesus.

**1 Peter 2:21-24**—For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, <sup>22</sup> WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH; <sup>23</sup> and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting *Himself* to Him who judges righteously;

- The scorn He tolerated
- The strength He displayed
- The shame He suffered
- The slandered He endured

Now, let your eyes drop to verse 45, where we witness the separation He experienced in that mysterious question of all of the ages!

#### E. The mysterious question (vv.45-50)

- <sup>45</sup> Now from the sixth hour darkness fell upon all the land until the ninth hour. <sup>46</sup> About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?” that is, “MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?” <sup>47</sup> And some of those who were standing there, when they heard it, *began* saying, “This man is calling for Elijah.” <sup>48</sup> Immediately one of them ran, and taking a sponge, he filled it with sour wine and put it on a reed, and gave Him a drink. <sup>49</sup> But the rest of *them* said, “Let us see whether Elijah will come to save Him.” <sup>50</sup> And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit.

This is the darkest part of the suffering. Blink hard and concentrate now dear friends! It is one thing to be *forsaken by men*, but it is totally another thing to be *forsaken by God*. To be *rejected by men* is hard, but to be *rejected by God*?

We are not speaking of some temporary inward feeling of aloneness that a child might feel when they realize they have lost sight of their parents in a store. No, this is utter and divine abandonment!

In the first three hours of the cross, Christ has been *brutalized*. He would spend a total of six hours on the cross from 9:00 in the morning until 3:00 in the afternoon. The sixth hour is noon. He has been on the cross for three hours!

Now, complete darkness covers the land for an additional three hours, from noon until 3:00pm. We cannot sing with Anne Ross Cousin,

Dark, dark has been the midnight, but dayspring is at hand,  
and glory, glory dwelleth in Emmanuel's land.<sup>2</sup>

Why? This is *a different kind of darkness* beloved. It is a supernatural darkness.

The sun refuses to shine. Just how dark was the darkness? We do not know. But we can imagine that this was no *ordinary* darkness. No reflection of the light from the stars or the moon. No reflection of light from the horizon. Pitch black. No “twinkle, twinkle little star” in the sky so high like a diamond in the sky. The diamonds of the sky have turned back into black coal! They seem to hide their face in shame. What is happening? Darkness in the Bible represents *error*, *evil*, and *judgment*. This is divine judgment. Just as darkness covered the land of Egypt when God's judgment came (*Ex.10:21-23*), darkness covers the land of Israel, providing a cosmic sign of God's judgment on sin.

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<sup>2</sup> Anne Ross Cousin, *The Sands of Time are Sinking*

The greater significance which is happening here is something we cannot really enter in to. No revelation is given about what occurs during these three hours of agony. From 12:00 until 3:00, He is alone in the dark—no word to help us understand; no light to let us see.

What we know, from the teaching of the Apostles, is what took place in those three hours were meant to be an interpreted sign that God is placing the sins of all who believe on His Son. Jesus is being made a curse for us (Gal.3:13). Jesus is bearing our sins in His body on the cross (2 Cor.5:21). The wrath of God is being inflicted upon the Sin-bearer. Jesus is entering into judgment for us. He is suffering the vengeance of God for us. It is indescribable! Darkness descends as Jesus becomes a curse for us.

Hendrickson, the New Testament commentator, says, "Hell came to Calvary that day" in the Father's wrath. The torment that we deserve is being hoisted on Him in a concentrated fashion.

Then, at about 3:00 in the afternoon, His voice is heard.

- <sup>46</sup> About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?" that is, "MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?"

"A loud voice" is Matthew's way of telling us that *Jesus is full of strength*. His voice is not weak. It is not faint. He is full of vigor. He is not swooning in and out of an unconscious state. He has enough breath to bellow out this cry that is mysteriously somber!

- "ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?" that is, "MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?"

What does it mean? God the Son *forsaken* by God the Father? How can God forsake God?

It is proper to understand this as God the Father forsaking the human nature of His Son. It cannot be that God the Father is forsaking the divine nature of God the Son—they have been one throughout eternity past, they have been one throughout His ministry (*John 10:30*), and there is no breach within the Godhead—no division within the Trinity. This desertion is between the Father and the human nature of the Son.

When Jesus became sin, God forsook the human nature of His Son. God cannot have fellowship with sin. "[His] eyes are too pure to look on evil," (*Hab.1:13*), and at this time, R.C. Sproul said, "He was not simply *feeling* forsaken, He *was* forsaken. He was forsaken not by His best friends, not by His mother, and not by His brothers and sisters, but by His heavenly Father...God had forsaken Him because *He must forsake sin*...it is only by His forsakenness that we can be received into His family."

The Father turns His face away, as wounds which mar the Chosen One,  
bring many sons to glory.<sup>3</sup>

Jesus is being utterly forsaken! Alienated! Abandoned by His heavenly Father, as He suffers eternal punishment for our sins.

- <sup>47</sup> And some of those who were standing there, when they heard it, *began* saying, "This man is calling for Elijah."

According to John's gospel, it is at this point that Jesus said, "*I am thirsty*," (*John 19:28*)

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<sup>3</sup> Stuart Townend, *How Deep the Father's Love for Us*

- <sup>48</sup> Immediately one of them ran, and taking a sponge, he filled it with sour wine and put it on a reed, and gave Him a drink.

Again, a fulfillment of Scripture (*Psalms 69:21*). Some scholars believe that this is under the command of the centurion who, in verse 54, gave the great confession. Yet, here he orders one of the soldiers to give Him wine on a sponge—lift it on the long pole and give some relief to Jesus.

- <sup>49</sup> But the rest of them said, "Let us see whether Elijah will come to save Him."

The rest gathered around the cross, continuing to mock Him—this is Satan's last attempt; his last arrow. The callousness of the human heart without salvation! "Let us see if Elijah will come to deliver Him!" But none of this happens, because it was appointed for Jesus to die. And we finally see in verse 50, the submission He chose.

After six hours on a cross, after three hours in darkness bearing our sins on the cross, we come to the end of His suffering for our sin.

- <sup>50</sup> And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit.

Please note the *energy*, the *passion*, the *strength* that our Lord had! "*He cried out again with a loud voice.*" By this Matthew is letting us know that He is not succumbing to weakness. There is a voluntary, willingness, and stretching out if you will, as the Champion of our salvation crosses the finished line in death for us! He "*yielded up His spirit.*" No one is taking it from Him. No soldier, no crowd, no demon can beat it out of Him, but He lays His life down deliberately.

Matthew doesn't even say the words, as if he chokes up with holy reverence in this moment. Luke gives us the words, "*Father, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT*" (*Luke 23:46*). And John adds, "*It is finished*" (*John 19:30*).

The work of salvation that the Father had given Him to do was fully accomplished.

- *Every demand* has been met.
- *Every sin* of the elect is covered.
- *Everything necessary* has been done.
- *Every account* has been settled.
- The atonement for sin has been fully *made*.
- The wrath of the Father has been *appeased*.
- The ransom for sinners has been *paid*.
- The sacrifice has been *offered*.
- The redemption has been *accomplished*.
- The reconciliation has been *made*.
- The transaction has been *completed*.

Jesus has built the only bridge from earth to heaven. Jesus is now the only way to the Father (*John 14:6*). He can now let go and die. This is the Passion of Christ. Everything in history, from the beginning of the world, has pointed toward this day. Everything after it will look back to what was done there. This is the way of salvation! Now, what does God require of you?

## Conclusion:

- Do you not find that this is the most remarkable thing in the world?
- In light of what we have just studied, how serious a thing is sin if it takes this to redeem sinners? I cannot trifle with sin. And neither can you. We cannot flippantly dismiss one single command or violation of the Law of God if it resulted in this kind of dishonor to Christ.
- How holy is God who requires such a payment as this? Have we underestimated the holiness of God if it demanded such a death of the Innocent One, the Only Begotten Son? How holy God is! Moses was right when he wrote in Exodus 34:7, *"...He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished..."*
- Why hold back when He held back nothing to save you?
- What can you not endure, since the Champion endured all of this?
- How great is the love that God would make such a provision for sinners as this?
- Will you turn your back on that which has caused Him such dishonor?
- Will you believe in the Savior whose proved His love on Calvary's tree?
- Will you now step away from the comfort of the world and go out to confess your sin to Him?
- Will you by faith take and trust this King who has been shamed so that you can be saved?

What thou, my Lord, hast suffered was all for sinners' gain:  
mine, mine was the transgression, but thine the deadly pain.

Lo, here I fall, my Savior! 'Tis I deserve thy place;  
look on me with thy favor, vouchsafe to me thy grace.

What language shall I borrow to thank thee, dearest Friend,  
for this, thy dying sorrow, thy pity without end?

O make me thine forever; and should I fainting be,  
Lord, let me never, never outlive my love to thee.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Paul Gerhardt; based on medieval Latin poem ascribed to Bernard of Clairvoux; translated from German by James W. Alexander, *O Sacred Head, Now Wounded*