

THE SUBSTITUTIONARY SUFFERING OF THE CRUCIFIED CHRIST

Mark 15:15-32

Christ our Saviour is the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world. We had lost relationship with God and were separated from Him because of sin, but Jesus came to bear our punishment, guilt and condemnation, which we deserved. He took the punishment we should have taken, bore the pain we should have borne and took the shame, scorn and crown of thorns we should have borne because of our sins. That is why His death, suffering and agony were substitutionary. This means He stood in our place in everything before the heavenly Father. He took away and put upon Himself the divine wrath and suffering that should come upon us. That was the reason for His crucifixion.

1. THE SHAMEFUL SCORN BEFORE HIS CRUCIFIXION

Mark 15:15-20

The people humiliated Christ just to scorn Him. There are three things to consider in the passage.

One, *the scourging of our Substitute before crucifixion* (Mark 15:15; Psalm 129:3; Isaiah 50:6; Matthew 20:18, 19; 1 Peter 2:24). All that Pilate did in scourging Christ; the shame, degradation and reproach against Him were prophesied even before He came. This was fulfilled in the New Testament. Scourging is taking a whip and beating someone with it. Jesus had those stripes and the scourging so that we will be healed from our diseases, sicknesses and infirmities.

Two, *the scorn by the soldiers with a crown* (Mark 15:16-18; Luke 23:11; John 19:2-5; Psalm 22:6-8; Isaiah 53:3-6). Sometimes, people would ridicule or insult you out of scorn or malice. In the sight of Pilate, Herod and the soldiers, Christ was reproached and ridiculed. But this was not surprising to the Lord because He knew all things concerning Him must be fulfilled. His love, compassion and mercy for us made Him to volunteer and accept to bear all these reproach and pain for the whole of humanity. He was “**smitten of God**” because God allowed, ordained, predicted and demanded it.

Three, *the spite of spitting with contempt* (Mark 15:19,20; 10:34; Matthew 26:66-68; 27:30,31; Hebrews 12:2-4). In spite of the shame, reproach and spitting, we should look unto Jesus; He is the Author and Finisher of our faith. He did not consider the shame but looked at the joy of salvation of sinful humanity, which would bring transformation and reconciliation with God. Now the will of God has been done; the price has been paid and He has gone to be with the heavenly Father “**and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.**”

2. HIS SUBSTITUTIONARY SUFFERING ON THE CROSS

Mark 15:21-28

Christ suffered and bore the pain of crucifixion for humanity. In this section, there are three aspects to consider:

One, *the stranger forced to bear His cross* (Mark 15:21,22; John 19:17; Luke 23:26-31; Romans 16:13; Colossians 1:24). The cross Jesus carried was heavy and the soldiers needed to get to the place of crucifixion in good time. Christ had lost much strength due to the loss of blood from the lashes. Therefore, He could not move as fast as they wanted. The soldiers grabbed a stranger called Simon to help the Lord carry the cross to the place of crucifixion. Eventually, he got to know the Lord, including his family, and they came to the faith because of what had happened. We are called to bear the cross today. When we do, it will bring salvation and enlightenment to other people as well. We should not dodge the suffering that might come upon us as we share in Christ's afflictions.

Two, *the Scriptures fulfilled on the cross* (Mark 15:23-28,36; Psalm 69:21; 22:16-18; Isaiah 53:12; Luke 24:44-47). Christ was not yet dead when they began to cast lots to share His garment. They crucified and treated Him like a transgressor or a common criminal. All these were done so that the Scripture might be fulfilled. The things concerning Christ were prophesied in the Psalms about a thousand years before He came and they were fulfilled to the letter. It shows that the Scripture is the word of God; and that the crucifixion and substitutionary suffering of Christ was not accidental.

Three, *the superscription fixed on His cross* (Mark 15:25,26; John 19:19-22; Psalm 2:6; Zechariah 9:9; Matthew 2:1-6; Isaiah 46:10). No other book in the world is like the Bible. Everything that happened to Christ, the Captain of our salvation, was according to God's specification and prophecy. Our salvation and reconciliation too will be fulfilled as we turn away from our sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, the approved Saviour and anointed King for all of humanity.

3. THE SAVING SACRIFICE OF CHRIST

Mark 15:29-32

Christ's sacrifice saves and sanctifies. It sustains us in the grace of God and attaches and reconciles us with Him. This sacrifice gives us salvation, sustains us in it and guarantees us the final salvation when we close our eyes in death and open it in eternity. The sacrifice also gives us complete salvation for spirit, soul and body. Sadly, some people then and now do not understand why Christ came.

Here, we see three things. One, *the piercing malice of cruel slanderers* (Mark 15:29,30; Psalms 22:7,8,13,14; 69:20; 109:25; Lamentations 1:12). These were people having cruelty in their heart and language; as a result, they slandered and pierced Him. When Christ spoke about destroying and rebuilding the temple, they thought He was speaking about the physical temple. So, they slandered and mocked Him to come down from the cross.

Two, *the priests' mockery of the crucified Saviour* (Mark 15:31,32; Psalms 2:1-4; 22:16,17; Matthew 27:41-43; 1 Peter 3:17,18). They knew He saved others from Satan, sicknesses, affliction, imminent judgment and sin, and forgave many. But they said, **"Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe"**. We cannot do things that sinners and unbelievers ask us to do because we want to make them see the power of God and believe. Christ would never contradict the prophecy of the Word to make them believe. Even those who were crucified with Him reviled Him. He suffered **"for well doing, than for evil doing"**. Christ suffered for our salvation rather than for our damnation. He died on the cross to purchase our redemption and to assure the Father that the entire price for our salvation has been paid.

Three, *the preeminent mandate for our committed Substitute* (Isaiah 53:3-12; John 18:11; 1 Peter 1:18-20; Romans 16:25,26; Ephesians 3:9-11). Christ is our committed, consecrated and commissioned Substitute. For this purpose, He suffered the way He did. This mandate had been given even from the foundation of the world. He was ready to carry out the predicted, preeminent and prophesied mandate with real consecration and commitment.

As a steward of the mystery of the gospel, we should also find out what has been written concerning us and take it as a preeminent, prioritized and predicted mandate in our lives. Regardless of what Satan says or does, we should let our eyes always be on the preeminent mandate the Lord has given to us.

* * * * *

Congregational Song:

When I Survey the Wondrous Cross

1. When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.
2. Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
Save in the death of Christ my God:
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His blood.
3. See, from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down;
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?
4. Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were an offering far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.