

## HOW CHRIST DIED FOR US

Matthew 27:26--50

Even though he could not find any fault in Christ, Pilate yielded to the mob that was clamoring for His crucifixion. The Roman soldiers took Christ into the palace, stripped Him, put a robe on Him, placed a crown of thorns on His brow and pressed it down, placed a reed in His hand and then mocked Him. They spat on Him and smote Him on the head with a reed. They removed the robe from Him and reclothed Him with His own attire. From the pile, which lay close by, they selected a cross and laid it on His shoulder. The procession started along the most frequented streets of the city on the way to the place of crucifixion, which was about a mile in distance. The picture of Him passing out of Jerusalem, under the crushing weight of the cross, knowing that ere long He would be nailed to it, is a scene for meditation rather than exposition.

Christ did not bear the cross very far until His strength failed. The sleepless nights, the severe scourgings, the painful crown of thorns, the agony of Gethsemane and the weight of the cross were too much for Him. Exhausted from the tortures to which He had been subjected, the Saviour staggered beneath the weight of the heavy cross. Near the city gate His strength utterly failed, and we are told that He fell under His cross. Seeing that it was impossible for Him to carry the cross, the soldiers compelled Simon of Cyrene to carry the ghastly burden for the Saviour. In due time the procession ascended the skull-shaped hill overlooking the city, which was the common execution grounds for felons and outlaws.

Numerous places of historical interest attract multitudes of visitors. Many of these places thrill us and fill us with a deep sense of ecstasy. Among the various Bible scenes, for which we cherish a high regard, none stands out so prominently in the minds of devoted Christians as that "green hill far away" which is called Calvary. It was on that skull-shaped hill a short distance outside and overlooking the city that "Jesus bore our sins in His own body on the tree." I shall never forget the impressions that I received while standing and gazing on that hill where our Saviour died on the cross for us.

### I. The Crucifixion.

Upon their arrival at Calvary, and before placing Christ on the cross, "They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall," with a view to dulling His sensibility. Parched with thirst, He put this drink to His lips, and, as soon as He tasted it, with sublime heroism He refused to drink the stupefying potion. He did not want His senses to be deadened as He went through the agonies that lay ahead. He wanted a clear mind as He died voluntarily for sinners. Determined to face death fully conscious, He refused to take anything that would lessen the horror of His death for sin and sinners.

Having removed Christ's garments from Him, His executioners laid Him on His back on the cross which was lying on the ground. Then, they drove the cruel spikes through the palms of His hands, fastening them to the ends of the crosspiece, and they nailed His feet to the upright piece. Half-way down the upright piece was a peg, known as the seat, which gave a degree of support to the body; otherwise the weight of the body would have torn it from the cross. While Christ's blood was flowing, a hole was

prepared in the ground, the cross was lifted on end and dropped into the hole with a thud, leaving Him to suffer a lingering and painful death as the blood dripped from His head, His hands, and His feet.

"Not the nails, but His wondrous love for me,  
Kept my Lord on the cross of Calvary;  
O, what pow'r could hold Him there,  
All my sin and shame to bear?  
Not the nails -- but His wondrous love for me."

## II. The Charge.

A superscription, which contained the accusation against our Saviour, was placed above His head. It read: "This is Jesus the King of the Jews." In order that all who passed by might read it, it was written in all the current languages -- Hebrew, Greek, and Latin -- the languages of religion, culture, and government, respectively. The accusation or charge against Him did not express all the truth. Christ not only claimed that He was the King of the Jews, but also that He was to be trusted as Saviour and to be obeyed as Lord.

## III. The Critics.

Many passed near the cross and united in inhuman mockery of the Saviour in His dying agonies. They scornfully reminded Him of His own words at the opening of His ministry (John 2:18-21), and sarcastically taunted Him for His seeming failure to fulfill His word.

The religious leaders challenged Christ to perform another miracle by coming down from the cross. Their declaration that they would believe on Him if He would come down from the cross was nothing more than blatant falsehood and sheer mockery. They were like many today who want Christ without the cross. But, there is no Christ apart from the cross. Christ and His cross are inseparable.

Likewise the religious leaders mocked Christ. They referred to His healing and saving others, indicating the fact that they still had memories of seeing His miracles. What they said was true, but not in the sense that they meant. They said, "He saved others; himself he cannot save." Christ could not come down from the cross, but the reason He could not do so was not the one which His critics had in mind. It was true that Christ could not save Himself if the Scriptures were to be fulfilled, if His mission were to be accomplished, if Satan were to be defeated, if sin were to be put away, and if sinners were to be saved. Christ had the power to save Himself, but had He done so none of these things would have been achieved, and the Father's will would not have been accomplished.

## IV. The Consolation.

Mary, the mother of the Lord Jesus, was faithful to Him to the end. She stood near the cross during those horrible mockeries. Her presence, along with that of the other two Marys and John, must have brought great comfort to the heart of Christ. It required great love and genuine courage to stand there. With her heart stirred to its depths, Mary bravely and lovingly watched the Son of God die. What courage and fortitude she displayed as she repressed her grief and stood there silent! A real mother never forsakes her son, even if he goes down into the valley of the shadows.

Christ was not only a model son in His youth, but He continued to honor His mother to the very day of His death. It was a beautifully tender care which He manifested for her after He was hanging on the cross. At that

time of His greatest anguish, in an act of tender thoughtfulness, Christ provided for His mother the best care in the home of one whom He knew He could trust to do His very best for her. What marvelous compassion it was which led Him to forget His own sufferings and to think of the needs of His dear mother!

#### V. The Culmination.

Near the end of His six hours on the cross Christ uttered one word, "Tetelestai," which was translated, "It is finished." This word of the dying Godman was probably the greatest word ever uttered. This exclamation of supreme satisfaction was the cry of a victor as He saw the defeat of His foe. He finished His great work of redemption in a manner that was highly satisfactory to the Father. All that He had started out to do had been accomplished. It is our part simply to accept the finished work of Him Whose death was sacrificial, substitutionary and sufficient. Thereafter, we should live for Him Who died for us.