

Mark 15:21-40
The Crucified Son of God

Introduction

My speeding ticket at 17 and Dad “eating” the increase in insurance without saying a word to me

1. That’s love when someone pays the debt for your sin
2. We see that here in our passage today where Jesus, the Son of God, took our sin upon Himself and paid the debt that we owed

A. The Son of God not only allowed Himself to be crucified, but gave up His life voluntarily (READ 20-26)

1. It has been claimed that crucifixion is probably the most brutal and horrific method of execution ever devised:
 - a. It was invented by the Persians but then perfected by the Romans
 - b. It was intended not simply to kill the accused, but designed to maximize pain and suffering, and do so in a publicly humiliating way
 - c. It began with flogging:
 - 1) They used whips imbedded with tiny iron balls and pieces of bone at the end of each leather thong
 - 2) The balls would inflict deep and serious bruising while the pieces of bone would tear open the skin and muscle, often leaving bone and internal organs visible
 - 3) There would obviously be significant blood loss and the person would often be left in a state of shock due to the intense pain and physical damage
 - 4) It was considered so cruel that the Romans excluded their own citizens from it with one exception, desertion from the army
 - 5) Flogging was intended to bring a person right up to the point of death without actually killing him—so they could put him through further torture by crucifixion
 - d. The condemned was then expected to carry the cross beam for his crucifixion to the area where he was to be crucified:
 - 1) The beam generally weighed around 100 pounds
 - 2) It was placed on the shoulders and held in place by tying the condemned arms to it, and thus preventing him from catching himself when falling
 - 3) In v. 21 of our text today Mark tells us that Jesus was so weak from being flogged that He was unable to carry the crossbeam
 - e. Once the crucifixion site was reached:
 - 1) The condemned was nailed to the crossbeam with large 7 inch spikes through the wrists which severed the median nerve which caused intense pain and paralyzed the hands
 - 2) Hoisted up into the vertical beam
 - 3) The feet were then nailed to the upright part of the cross with the knees bent at 45 degree angles, allowing the victim to push up to breath as long as they were able
 - f. How crucifixion killed:

- 1) Once the legs gave out, the victim would have to rely on his arms to pull himself up to breath
 - 2) The shoulders would gradually dislocate, followed by the elbow and wrists making it more difficult to breath
 - 3) Once the arms completely give out, all the weight was born by the chest creating a situation where he could inhale but not exhale leading to death by asphyxiation (lack of oxygen) or suffocation
 - 4) The entire process generally lasted from 24 hours to a few days
2. I want you to reflect on two things for a moment:
- a. First, this is the Son of God being subject to unimaginable humiliation and torture, not just some man:
 - 1) Jesus was “**Immanuel**”, God in flesh
 - 2) Everything that exists was made by Him, through Him and for Him and He is now subjecting Himself to abuse by those He created
 - 3) It’s striking to see the nonchalant or business-as-usual behavior of the Roman soldiers— casting lots for Jesus’ clothes and casually sitting down to watch Jesus suffer and die (as recorded in Matthew)
 - b. Second, no one forced Him to do this; He did it willingly as the perfect, obedient Son of God:
 - 1) He gave up His own life; it wasn’t taken from Him (John 10:17-18): “**For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. 18 "No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father."**
 - 2) We also see this reflected in His prayer in the Garden (Mark 14:36): “**And He was saying, "Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will."**
 - 3) Finally, we see it in the language of Matthew 27:50 which states that Jesus Himself was responsible for giving up His Spirit when He died: “**And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit."**

B. The Son of God refused to save Himself so that He might save us (27-32)
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1. When we combine Mark’s account with the other Gospels, we see that there are four different groups that mock Jesus with the same theme:
 - a. The first group were who came to watch the crucifixion who mockingly called on Him to save Himself and come down off the cross (29-30): “**Those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads, and saying, "Ha! You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, 30 save Yourself, and come down from the cross!"**
 - b. The second group was the scribes (31-32a):
 - 1) They claimed that even though He saved others He could not save Himself (31): “**In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes, were mocking Him among themselves and saying, "He saved others; He cannot save Himself."**
 - 2) They also called on Him to come down off the cross so they could believe in Him (32a): “**Let this Christ, the King of Israel, now come down from the cross, so that we may see and believe!"**

- c. The third group were those who were crucified with Him (32b): **“Those who were crucified with Him were also insulting Him.”**—Luke records that they were **“hurling abuse at Him saying, “Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!”** (Luke 23:39)
 - d. The last group, recording in Luke but not Mark, were the Roman soldiers (Luke 23:36-37): **“The soldiers also mocked Him, coming up to Him, offering Him sour wine, 37 and saying, “If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself!”**
 - e. Do you see theme here?—no one believed He could save Himself or anyone else
2. Do you see the irony in this? It wasn’t Jesus’ lack of ability that prevented Him from saving Himself or anyone else that day; it was His love for us and His determination to fulfill God’s redemptive plan and secure ETERNAL salvation for mankind:
 - a. This was the same Jesus who told Pilate, **“Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels? 54 “How then will the Scriptures be fulfilled, which say that it must happen this way?”**
 - b. In Matthew 20:25 Jesus said, **“The son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”**
 - c. In John 15:13 He said to His disciples, **“Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. 14 You are My friends if you do what I command you.”**
 3. Jesus didn’t save Himself that day, because His goal was to save us

C. The Son of God bore the weight and consequences of our sin so that we wouldn’t have to bear it ourselves (READ 33-39)

1. The gospels record six things that Jesus said from the cross, but Mark only records one of them here and it is the most difficult to understand (34): **“At the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, “ELOI, ELOI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?” which is translated, “MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?”**
 - a. The word translated **“forsaken”** by the NASB means to leave behind or abandon
 - b. In essence, Jesus is crying out to God asking why He has abandoned Him
 - c. The words Jesus uses are a direct quote from Psalm 22:1 and while time does not permit us to review that Psalm, if you want to understand what Jesus must have been feeling and thinking at this very moment, I encourage you to read through it sometime today
 - d. The most difficult part of Jesus’ words here is exactly how we are to understand them—I believe William Lane says it perfectly in his commentary on Mark (p. 573):

“The sharp edge of this word must not be blunted. Jesus' cry of dereliction is the inevitable sequel to the horror which He experienced in the garden of Gethsemane. He must be understood in the perspective of the holy wrath of God and the character of sin, which cuts the sinner off from God. In responding to the call to the wilderness and identifying himself completely with sinners, Jesus offered himself to bare the judgment of God upon human rebellion. Now on the cross he who had lived wholly for the Father experience the full alienation from God which the judgment he had assumed entailed. His cry expressed the profound horror of separation from God. “Cursed is everyone who hangs upon a cross” was a statement with which Jesus had long been familiar, and in the manner of his death Jesus was cut off from the Father (Deut. 21:23; Gal. 3:13; II Cor. 5:21). The darkness declared the same Truth. The cry of dereliction expressed the unfathomable pain of real abandonment by the Father. The sinless son of God died the sinner’s death and experienced the bitterness of desolation. This was the cost of providing “a ransom for the many” (Ch. 10:45). The cry has a ruthless authenticity which provides the assurance that the price of sin has been paid in full. Yet

- Jesus did not die renouncing God. Even in the inferno of his abandonment he did not surrender his faith in God but expressed his anguished prayer in a cry of affirmation, “My God, My God.”
- e. What this all means theologically is a bit too much to cover here, but it should suffice to say that at this moment Jesus suffered the full weight of the world’s sin and all the associated consequences of that sin (physical death, separation from the Father, emotional torment)
2. Because He did this, we can now approach God with confidence and assurance:
 - a. All three of the synoptic Gospels record the tearing of the temple veil when Jesus died (37-38): **“And Jesus uttered a loud cry, and breathed His last. 38 And the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.”**
 - b. None of the Gospels explain the purpose or the meaning of the torn veil but we have a clue in the book of Hebrews:
 - 1) There were two veils in the temple, the one at the entrance to the temple and the one at the entrance to the Holy of Holies
 - 2) None of the Gospels tell us which veil was torn and there is debate among scholars
 - 3) However, I believe it was the veil that led into the Holy of Holies from something the author of Hebrews states (READ Hebrews 10:19-22):
 - a) The holy place the author refers to here is the Holies of Holies which was the inner sanctuary within the Temple; only the High Priest was permitted into this area
 - b) The author of Hebrews, however, says that we can now enter into the Holy of Holies (metaphorically into God’s presence) through the veil which is Christ’s flesh
 - c) So, the old veil was torn and symbolically replaced by the new and better veil, Christ’s flesh (e.g. His sacrificial death)
 3. The last thing I believe we need to see here is the response of the Roman centurion (39): **“When the centurion, who was standing right in front of Him, saw the way he breathed His last, he said, ‘Truly this man was the Son of God.’”**
 - a. Mark’s two main purposes have been to reveal Jesus as the Messiah and Jesus as the Son of God
 - b. The first climax of the book was when Peter declared, **“You are the Christ”** (Mark 8:27)
 - c. The second climax comes here with the centurion’s declaration, **“Truly this man was the Son of God”** (39)
 - d. So, what was it about the **“way he breathed His last”** that led the centurion to make such a declaration?
 - a) Normally when someone died from crucifixion it was with a whimper, slowly and painfully dying of exhaustion and asphyxiation
 - b) However, Jesus **“uttered a loud cry”** and according to Luke and John this cry was the two phrases, **“Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit”** (Luke 23:46) and **“It is finished!”** (John 19:30)
 - c) It would have been astonishing simply for Jesus to be able to speak just moments before His death, let alone cry out with a loud voice!
 - e. We get also get some additional fascinating details from Matthew and Luke:
 - 1) READ Matthew 27:51-54:
 - a) The ground shook
 - b) The rocks split
 - c) Tombs were opened (the saints didn’t raise and enter the city until Jesus did three days later)

- 2) According to Luke this led the centurion to begin **“Praising God, saying “Certainly this man was righteous!”** (Luke 23:47)
- 3) And according to Mark to declare, **“Truly this was the Son of God!”**
- 4) What a stark contrast between this gentile soldier and the Jewish people and leaders who condemned, shamed and mocked Him

Conclusion
