

Crucified
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Allen Power

Matthew 27:41–52 (ESV)

If you haven't seen the movie "Hacksaw Ridge," I recommend it. Be warned, the battle scenes are graphic and jarring, much like "Saving Private Ryan." It's based on the true story of Pfc. Desmond T. Doss, who won the Congressional Medal of Honor despite refusing to bear arms during WWII on religious grounds. Doss who felt called to be an Army medic, was ostracized by fellow soldiers for his pacifist stance but went on to earn respect and adoration for his bravery, selflessness and compassion after he risked his life -- without firing a shot -- to save 75 men in the Battle of Okinawa. I don't want to spoil the ending, but the key line was Private Doss praying to God over and over as he ran back into the battle, "Help me get one more!" He was asking for God's strength to save just one more life!

The Medal of Honor is the highest military award given by the United States. It is presented to a man or woman who has "distinguished himself conspicuously by gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty."¹ Intrepid means "fearless," "unflinching," unafraid."

Those who risk and even sacrifice their lives for others deserve our gratitude and honor. But what about dying to save those who hate and despise you?

In Romans 5:7–8 (NLT) Paul writes:

⁷ Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good. ⁸ But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.

Today we look at Matthew's account of the moment of Jesus' death on the cross. Though the story is familiar, there are some key things we need to notice, and some key questions we need to ask ourselves.

The big idea: Jesus willingly and voluntarily sacrificed His life to pay

the price for all of humanity's sin. That painful, dreadful, yet loving sacrifice demands a response from every person.

After a series of bogus trials, Jesus was flogged almost to death then taken to Calvary for crucifixion. You know about the crown of thorns, the nails, the excruciating suffering Jesus endured. Literally the crowd added "insult to injury."

⁴¹ So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him, saying, ⁴² "He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. ⁴³ He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him. For he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" ⁴⁴ And the robbers who were crucified with him also reviled him in the same way.

- Their taunt: "If he is the Son of God, let him come down from the cross." **What was ironic about that very idea? Why was the opposite true?**

Hebrews 2:14–15 (NLT)

14 Because God's children are human beings—made of flesh and blood—the Son also became flesh and blood. For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the devil, who had* the power of death. 15 Only in this way could he set free all who have lived their lives as slaves to the fear of dying.

- Jesus COULD have come down from the cross. He "chose not to perform what would have been the most spectacular miracle to date by saving his physical life."² He DID NOT come down, because He IS the Son of God. The Savior of the world who was born to die.
- Robert Mounce rightly observed, "*It was the power of love, not nails, that kept him there.*"³
- They put Jesus on the cross at nine in the morning. For three hours He suffered not only pain but also humiliation, hanging naked and exposed.
- Then, at noon, strange things began to take place.

The Death of Jesus

⁴⁵ Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour.

- Some have argued this was an eclipse of the sun or a sandstorm. Eclipses don't last for three hours. Plus, Passover happened at full moon making an eclipse unlikely. This was supernatural darkness!
- **Why would God the Father bring darkness as Jesus hung dying?**
- Wiersbe: It was during the time of darkness that Jesus had been made sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21). He had been forsaken by the Father! That darkness was a symbol of the judgment that He endured when He was "made a curse" for us (Gal. 3:13).⁴

⁴⁶ And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" ⁴⁷ And some of the bystanders, hearing it, said, "This man is calling Elijah." ⁴⁸ And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine, and put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink. ⁴⁹ But the others said, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him." ⁵⁰ And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit.

- At three p.m. Jesus cried out with a *"loud voice... My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"*
- Jesus wasn't questioning His Father's love, He was quoting verse one of the 22nd Psalm. Jesus was testifying to the fact that on the cross, separation had taken place between Him and His Father.
- The 22nd Psalm prophesied Jesus' death on the cross with great precision.
 - ⁷ All who see me mock me; they make mouths at me; they wag their heads; ⁸ "He trusts in the Lord; let him deliver him; let him rescue him, for he delights in him!" ⁵
 - ¹⁶ For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet— ¹⁷ I can count all my bones— they stare and gloat over me; ¹⁸ they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots. ⁶
- But Psalm 22 doesn't end in defeat, it concludes with VICTORY.

- o ²⁴ For he has not despised or abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, and he has not hidden his face from him, but has heard, when he cried to him. ⁷
 - o ²⁷ All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord,
 - o and all the families of the nations shall worship before you. ²⁸ For kingship belongs to the Lord, and he rules over the nations.
 - o ³⁰ Posterity shall serve him; it shall be told of the Lord to the coming generation; ³¹ they shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn, that he has done it. ⁸
- Psalm 22 records horrible suffering and death; yet victory over death!
 - Verse 50 tells us: ⁵⁰ And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit.
 - John 19:30 (NLT) tells us Jesus said, “It is finished!” Then he bowed his head and released his spirit. Luke 23:46 (NLT) says, ⁴⁶ Then Jesus shouted, “Father, I entrust my spirit into your hands!”* And with those words he breathed his last.
 - **Given Jesus’ terrible physical condition, How could Jesus have cried out in a loud voice? Why do these last words of Jesus, spoken loudly, indicate He was not a victim but the VICTOR?**
 - Fully man, yet fully God, our Lord VOLUNTARILY gave up His physical life. It wasn’t taken from Him by the Jews, by Rome, or by Satan. He LAID DOWN HIS LIFE willingly.

1 John 3:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.

John 10:11 (ESV) Jesus said,

¹¹ I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

⁵¹ And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.

- The inner veil hung between the holy place and the holy of holies and was passed only once a year by the high priest on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16). Hebrews 10:19–20 teaches that this veil represents our Lord Jesus Christ's body which was given for us on the cross. When He offered up His spirit, the veil in the temple was torn from top to bottom, thus allowing anyone to come at any time into God's presence (Matt. 27:50–51).⁹
- Followers of Christ can approach God anywhere at anytime, personally and directly because Jesus is our High Priest and His Spirit lives in us.

And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. ⁵² The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised,

- Creation was shaken to signify this pivotal moment in human history.
- Many departed saints of God rose to life to symbolize that Christ had conquered death for THEM that day, and two days later would conquer death for us all, by His own resurrection!

So, What's the Takeaway?

- Jesus willingly and voluntarily sacrificed His life to pay the price for all of humanity's sin. That painful, dreadful, yet loving sacrifice demands a response from every person.
- Rhetorical question, just answer in your heart, how does all this make YOU feel? How SHOULD it make us feel?
- In thinking about how people respond to Jesus' voluntary sacrifice, I imagined the responses of several kinds of people:
- First, what about the UN-believer - The Skeptic who says, "*I don't buy it!*" - The question for the skeptic is: "*What if you're wrong?*"
- The Ambivalent Admirer – "*You have to admire a man who will die for what he believes in.*" The question: "*Is that all you think this was?*" See above, "*what if you're wrong?*"
- Then there's the Marginal Believer – "*Sure, I believe Jesus died for the sins of the world, but not enough that I'm willing to let Him run my life!*" Translation: "*Spoil my fun or stop me from having my way.*" The question: "*Have you really believed?*" The Marginal Believer may really be an Unbeliever in disguise.

- The True Believer – One who has not only declared belief, but demonstrated trust. There is evidence of a changed nature because Jesus is Lord of our life. The question: *“How grateful are you for His sacrifice?” “Do you regularly remember what He did for you?” “How does it make you feel in the deepest part of your soul?”*
- Finally, there is what I call the Surrendered Believer - One whose mouth confesses, whose life demonstrates, and whose heart has never gotten over what Jesus did on the cross and in the tomb. Never a day goes by without remembering the cross. Never a day goes by without being thankful for it, without being changed by it.
- That’s the effect that the story of the cross should have on you and me.
- That leaves us with a final question for the TRUE and the SURRENDERED Believers: *“If that’s how we feel, have we shared that good news with others?”*

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medal_of_Honor#Evolution_of_criteria

² Blomberg, Craig L.. *Matthew: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture (The New American Commentary)* (p. 418). B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

³ *ibid*

⁴ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 1, p. 103). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

⁵ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Ps 22:7–8). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

⁶ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Ps 22:16–18). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

⁷ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Ps 22:24). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

⁸ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Ps 22:27–31). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

⁹ Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). *Wiersbe’s Expository Outlines on the Old Testament* (Ex 26:31–37). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.