

Our Savior  
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Matthew 27:27-31; 45-54

Opening: The movie, “Saving Private Ryan” gave us a gripping perspective on the horror of D-Day in World War II. Before *Saving Private Ryan*, we knew dates, battles, and casualty numbers. But when people saw the opening scenes of Omaha Beach, many said, ‘*I had no idea.*’

As we look at Matthew’s account of Jesus’ execution, we know the word *crucifixion* and we’ve seen crosses our whole lives. But familiarity can dull us to the horror Jesus experienced. In our study I want to share some facts that will cause us to see more clearly what Jesus endured as fully man and fully God. My goal is not to sensationalize His suffering, but to understand the depth of what Jesus willingly bore for us.

The Point: Being fully aware of the torture, humiliation, and terror of the cross allows us to understand the ugliness of sin and the immeasurable love of Christ for us. Understanding His suffering gives new understanding when we sing, “*Jesus paid it all.*”

One of my primary sources for the details of Jesus’ crucifixion is the work of T.W. Hunt, the co-author of the Bible study, “The Mind of Christ.”<sup>i</sup>

**(NLT) — 26** So Pilate released Barabbas to them. He ordered Jesus flogged with a lead-tipped whip, then turned him over to the Roman soldiers to be crucified.

- Verse 26: Pilate turned Jesus over to be “scourged” (flogged).
  - Ancient writers like Cicero, Livy, and Josephus described Roman flogging as brutal and often deadly. Some called it the “half-death” because the victims often died before they could be crucified.
  - Roman scourging was not limited to 39 lashes – it was unlimited.
  - Victims were stripped, tied to a pole and beaten severely with a whip that likely had leather thongs with metal or bone fragments tied into the knots.
  - T.W. Hunt speculated the flesh on Jesus’ back would have hung in bloody strips when the flogging was over.

**27** Some of the governor’s soldiers took Jesus into their headquarters and called out the entire regiment. **28** They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him. **29** They wove thorn branches into a crown and put it on his head, and they placed a reed stick in his right hand as a scepter. Then they knelt before him in mockery and taunted, “Hail! King of the Jews!” **30** And they spit on him and grabbed the stick and struck him on the head with it. **31** When they were finally tired of mocking him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him again. Then they led him away to be crucified.

- Imagine the pain Jesus felt when the robe was torn from His back, reopening wounds that had already begun to clot.
- These Roman soldiers thought they were clever as they mocked and spat on whom they believed was a “fake” king. Little did they know, they were abusing the King of Kings. Later their head officer would realize the truth.
- Jesus’ crucifixion began at nine in the morning.
- Matthew did not describe the physical details of crucifixion, but history and medical research help us understand its horror.
- Crucifixion was designed by the Romans to be a slow, humiliating, public death.
- Jesus was likely nailed with large spikes through the wrists and feet to a wooden cross, suffering extreme pain, blood loss, exhaustion, and difficulty breathing.
- There is still debate among medical scholars about the exact physiological cause of death in crucifixion. Possible contributing causes include:
  - Asphyxiation
  - Hypovolemic shock
  - Cardiac failure
  - Arrhythmia
  - Trauma
  - Fluid buildup around heart/lungs
- T.W. Hunt: *“Doctors tell us that the most dreadful moment of the entire process came...when, lifting the body, the spikes going through the wrist would assume the weight of the body, and when that happened, it would tear the median nerve. And doctors say it would feel like lightning struck the arms. They tell us that we probably can't imagine the screams that went up from the victims at the moment. The median nerve was torn.”<sup>ii</sup>*
- Regarding the asphyxiation, Hunt said, *“...once the diaphragm becomes paralyzed, the victim discovers that he can breathe in, but he can't breathe out... his arms would slump...wave after agonizing wave of muscle cramps would creep up the calf muscles of the body, and the victim hanging there would discover that if he would use the spike going through his feet as a kind of cruel step to force the arms back to 90 degrees, he could relieve, briefly and temporarily, the paralysis and could breathe again. This is why the statements of the Lord on the Cross are short ones.”<sup>iii</sup>*

**45** At noon, darkness fell across the whole land until three o'clock. **46** At about three o'clock, Jesus called out with a loud voice, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” [ee-LYE, ee-LYE, LAY-mah sah-bock-THAH-nee] which means “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?” **47** Some of the bystanders misunderstood and thought he was calling for the prophet Elijah. **48** One of them ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, holding it up to him on a reed stick so he could drink. **49** But the rest said, “Wait! Let’s see whether Elijah comes to save him.” **50** Then Jesus shouted out again, and he released his spirit.

- As horrible as the physical torture had been for Jesus, the pain of the three hours of abandonment and separation from God the Father are hard to comprehend.

*“The physical sufferings were terrible, but the spiritual sufferings were immeasurably greater.”— John MacArthur*

*“It was not the nails that caused His deepest agony, but the reality of bearing the sin of the world before a holy God.”— Warren W. Wiersbe*

*“Christ was forsaken so that His people might never be forsaken.”— Charles Spurgeon*

- T.W. Hunt gives more details from John’s gospel: *“There’s very little fluid, very little blood left in the body. But he must speak. His mouth is wooden. It’s been dry for hours and hours...God is waiting on him to speak. He managed to get out one word. Thirst. One of the soldiers ran to his pack [soaked wine vinegar into a sponge lifted on a reed to Jesus’ mouth] And so he took it, moistened his mouth. And now, at long last, he could say it, loud and clear. It suddenly rings across the hillside. What God has been waiting to hear. It... is... finished. And it’s finished. Did you know that? It’s finished. I don’t have to do it. You don’t have to do it. It’s finished. Jesus never did anything halfway...Jesus did not heal halfway, and Jesus did not teach halfway, and Jesus did not redeem halfway. Jesus paid in all. He said, ‘No man takes my life from me, I lay in town of myself.’ And he paid it. The debt is paid.”<sup>iv</sup>*

**51** At that moment the curtain in the sanctuary of the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, rocks split apart, **52** and tombs opened. The bodies of many godly men and women who had died were raised from the dead. **53** They left the cemetery after Jesus’ resurrection, went into the holy city of Jerusalem, and appeared to many people.

- Warren Wiersbe wrote about these miraculous events at Jesus’ death:
  - **The torn temple veil** showed that Jesus conquered sin and opened direct access to God. Because Christ completed the work of salvation, the old sacrificial system of priests, temples, and offerings was no longer needed (Heb.10:14–26).
  - **The earthquake** symbolized that Jesus fulfilled the Law and satisfied its demands. Just as God’s presence shook Mount Sinai when the Law was given, the earthquake at Calvary showed that the curse of the Law had been broken through Christ’s sacrifice (Hebrews 12:18–24).
  - **The resurrection of saints** demonstrated Christ’s victory over death itself. Even in His death, Jesus displayed His power to bring life from the grave.
  - At the cross, Jesus defeated sin, fulfilled the Law, and conquered death.<sup>v</sup>

- Jesus had bowed His head and given up His Spirit in death, and standing at the foot of His cross were some unlikely witnesses to gospel truth:

**54** The Roman officer and the other soldiers at the crucifixion were terrified by the earthquake and all that had happened. They said, “This man truly was the Son of God!”

- “God used hardened executioners as witnesses to the identity of His Son.”

- We all know the happy ending that came three days later at the garden tomb.

#### So, What's the Takeaway?

- To truly appreciate Jesus' sacrifice we need to see His cross as more than a stained-glass image. It was horrible physical torture, unimaginable spiritual separation from God the Father, and Jesus willingly experienced it so we can live forever in Heaven with Him if we've trusted Him as Savior and Lord.
- Jesus suffered it all and Jesus paid it all.
- That is why, as the song says, "*All to Him I owe. Sin had left a crimson stain, He washed it white as snow...*" through His terrible suffering.
- This week as we reflect on the reality of the cross of Christ, let's REJOICE in His definitive statement that certified our salvation: "*It is FINISHED!*" He paid it all!

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<sup>i</sup> Hunt, T. W., & King, C. V. (2008). *The mind of Christ* [Video series]. [Lifeway Christian Resources](#).

<sup>ii</sup> *ibid*

<sup>iii</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>iv</sup> *ibid*

<sup>v</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 1, p. 103). Victor Books.