

## 苦路——马可福音15:15-23

### The Way of Suffering—Mark 15:15-23

#### *Introduction and Outline*

- Scripture Reading: Mark 15:15-23; John 15:18-25
- **Mark 15:15-23** (NASB1995)  
15 Wishing to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas for them, and after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified. 16 The soldiers took Him away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium), and they called together the whole Roman cohort. 17 They dressed Him up in purple, and after twisting a crown of thorns, they put it on Him; 18 and they began to acclaim Him, “Hail, King of the Jews!” 19 They kept beating His head with a reed, and spitting on Him, and kneeling and bowing before Him. 20 After they had mocked Him, they took the purple robe off Him and put His own garments on Him. And they led Him out to crucify Him. 21 They pressed into service a passer-by coming from the country, Simon of Cyrene (the father of Alexander and Rufus), to bear His cross. 22 Then they brought Him to the place Golgotha, which is translated, Place of a Skull. 23 They tried to give Him wine mixed with myrrh; but He did not take it.
- The 2004 movie, *The Passion of the Christ*, vividly depicts the crucifixion of Jesus in gory details. The movie is full of violent and bloody images that many viewers find strongly objectionable; but after studying the Bible in its historical background, we find that the crucifixion of Jesus was really such a bloody, violent, and painful process. But the most obvious and prominent theme of this passage is the cruel mocking, ridicule, and humiliation of Jesus by the Roman soldiers.
- Why did God put these details in the Bible for us to think about the pain and humiliation Jesus suffered? Is there any other purpose than to witness the real suffering process of Jesus so we may see the cost God paid to atone for the believer’s sins?

**John 15:20** “Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A slave is not greater than his master.’ **If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you。**

- Outline:  
The Way of Suffering—Mark 15:15-23
  1. Brutal Scourging (v.15)
  2. Derisive Mocking (vv.16-20)
  3. Providential Saving (v.21)
  4. Complete Suffering (vv.22-23)

### **Brutal Scourging (v.15)**

- “Pilate ..... having Jesus scourged”: a common Roman scourging. The whip consisted of several leather straps tied together on one end to a small wooden stick for holding, while to the other end was attached numerous sharp objects, such as metal pieces or bone fragments. With this whip lashing on the bare back, skins are broken, muscles are torn, nerves and blood vessels are cut, and even the bones are exposed. In a short time, the prisoner's entire back would become a bloody mess.
- “Handed Him over to be crucified.”: Pilate's intention in whipping Jesus was to arouse the Jews' compassion so they might release Jesus (Jn 19:1-5); but at the sight of the bloodied Jesus, the Jews shouted in unison, ”Crucify, crucify!” (Jn 19:6); Pilate eventually succumbs to the Jews' evil scheming (Jn 19:7-16).

### **Derisive Mocking (vv.16-20)**

- “they called together the whole Roman cohort.”: A cohort is made up of 600 soldiers. They all came to participate in this merciless mocking show.
- “Into the palace (that is, the Praetorium),”: there were 600 Roman soldiers in the courtyard, and outside the courtyard were the massive Jewish crowd. Thousands of people openly put the Son of God to extreme public humiliation.

【Motivation】 The Roman soldiers wanted to vent their racial hate against the Jews by humiliating the “King of the Jews”.

- “Dressed Him up in purple”: Purple is the color of royalty, a symbol of dignity; they wanted to make Jesus look like an emperor. But Matthew 27:28 says it was a “scarlet robe”, probably because it was quite worn-out and the purple color faded into scarlet. Both colors have significance as intended by the Holy Spirit. What does the color scarlet represent?

**Isaiah 1: 18** “Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool.

【Meaning】 It is because Jesus is here fully clothed with our sins and suffered the penalty of God's wrath for us that our souls can turn from scarlet to snow white before God.

- “after twisting a crown of thorns, they put it on Him”: The crown was also a royal symbol of the king, and here it was a prop to mock Jesus with. Perhaps thorns also remind us of the curse of sin, for the first mention of thorns in the Bible is God's punishment for Adam and Eve's sin (Gen. 3:18).

【Significance】 In God's sovereign plan, Jesus wore the curse of sin, symbolized by this crown, for us.

【Imagine】 Jesus' face was by now bruised and battered, with spittle from the religious leaders; and now, thorns were piercing into his head, with drops of blood running down his face, mingling with the spittle...

**Isaiah 52:14** “..... So His appearance was marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men.”

【Significance】 This prophecy of Isaiah about Jesus is fulfilled exactly in this scene where he is beaten and mocked.

- “Hail, King of the Jews!” : Jesus is, of course, the King of the Jews. Not only of the Jews, He is the King of the whole world, of all mankind. But they said this as a sarcastic joke to mock and ridicule him. Sarcasm can hurt deeply. The suffering of Jesus was far more than mere physical pain. It entails much spiritual suffering too.

【Connection】 Have you ever mocked Jesus in your heart? Have there been times when you treated God's Word with contempt? Six days of creation? Must be six ages..... Evangelism and the Great Commission? Pastor's job..... Submission to all earthly authorities? Only those I like..... New heavens and new earth, pearly gates and jasper walls? Spiritual metaphors that have little to do with my life today..... As the song says, “Ashamed I hear my mocking voice call out among the scoffers.”

- “Kept beating His head with a reed”: Reed isn't the best tool to inflict pain, but it serves as yet another prop to mock Jesus with. Matthew 27:29 says they first put the reed “in His right hand”, imitating the kingly scepter which symbolizes authority and power. The purpose of the reed was to show Jesus' authority and power were as weak as a reed stick. And then, they proceeded by taking it from Jesus' hand and hitting his own head with his reed. They used Jesus' own kingly scepter to beat him, for it was exactly his own people, the Jews, who got him to this place.
- “Led Him out to crucify Him”: This process involves a path which is today called Via Dolorosa (meaning the way of suffering). That's the road Jesus took from the Pilate's court all the way to the place of crucifixion (as depicted in the song Via Dolorosa).

**Hebrews 13:12** “Therefore Jesus also **suffered outside the city gates**, that he might sanctify the people by his own blood.”

【Significance】 All sin offerings in the Old Testament were to be taken outside and burned. Since Jesus was the ultimate fulfillment of all of those animal sacrifices, even the fact that He walked through the way of suffering to go outside the city gates to be crucified was a perfect fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.

### **Providential Saving (v.21)**

- “A passer-by coming from the country, Simon of Cyrene”: most likely he came to celebrate the Passover. Cyrene is in the North African country of Libya, quite far from Israel. Historical sources say some Jewish diaspora there would travel to Jerusalem once a year for Passover. It was on his way into the city that this man from Cyrene, Simon, happened to meet Jesus.

- “pressed [him] into service, to bear His cross”: apparently because Jesus himself could no longer carry it. After all that whipping and mocking, Jesus had no strength left. The soldiers, in order to carry out their mission, grabbed a passerby on the spot to help him carry the cross. This was not Simon's intention at all; he most likely didn't even know Jesus, let alone to be his disciple.
- “The father of Alexander and Rufus”: This designation allows us to reasonably infer what happened later. The two sons of Simon are mentioned apparently because they were a pair of brothers familiar to the reader.

**Romans 16:13** “Greet Rufus, a choice man in the Lord, **also his mother and mine.**”

【Conclusion】 Not only Simon himself later believed in Jesus, but also his wife and sons; and, his wife even developed a very close relationship with Paul in the Lord. So Mark 15:21 testifies to the **marvelous experience of a whole family's salvation by grace.**

### Complete Suffering (vv.22-23)

- “brought Him to the place Golgotha”: That is, the place of crucifixion.
- “They tried to give Him wine mixed with myrrh”: Matthew calls myrrh “gall” because of its bitter taste. Myrrh has an anesthetic effect that reduces pain. The soldiers wanted to reduce the prisoner's struggle so they could carry out their mission with ease.
- “But He did not take it”: The point is Jesus refused to take one single drop. Why? To fully bear God's penalty for our sin, of course. If the pain Jesus suffered was in the slightest way lessened by the anesthetic, then our sins would've not been fully washed away, and we would've never been able to come before God with a clean conscience.

【Significance】 **Jesus drank up the full cup of suffering from God to atone for our sin, without a single drop of alleviation.** This is our Savior. For the glory of God and for our eternal salvation, he willingly submitted to God's will until he gave his life completely in the most painful way.

### Summarizing Application

*If Jesus paid such a price for us, should we then pay our due price for serving Jesus? Should Jesus' determination to suffer for our salvation translate into our determination to suffer for serving Jesus? **If we are not willing to give up some meager worldly pleasure for serving Jesus diligently in times of peace, how can we possibly live a life of following Jesus when persecution and suffering comes?***