

十字架所带来的生命见证——马可福音15:39-47

Life Testimonies Accomplished by the Cross—Mark 15:39-47

Introduction and Outline

- Scripture Reading: Mark 15:37-47; Hebrews 12:1-3
Mark 15:37-47 (NASB1995)
37 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. 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!” 40 There were also some women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the Less and Joses, and Salome. 41 When He was in Galilee, they used to follow Him and minister to Him; and there were many other women who came up with Him to Jerusalem. 42 When evening had already come, because it was the preparation day, that is, the day before the Sabbath, 43 Joseph of Arimathea came, a prominent member of the Council, who himself was waiting for the kingdom of God; and he gathered up courage and went in before Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus. 44 Pilate wondered if He was dead by this time, and summoning the centurion, he questioned him as to whether He was already dead. 45 And ascertaining this from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph. 46 Joseph bought a linen cloth, took Him down, wrapped Him in the linen cloth and laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. 47 Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses were looking on to see where He was laid.
- God has designed a unique experience of salvation for each of His children. Every Christian has a one-of-a-kind life story. Today’s Scripture shows us some real-life testimonies from real Christians.
- These testimonies come from three different groups: a Roman soldier who nailed Jesus to the cross, some Jewish women who watched Jesus' suffering, and a religious leader who took great risk to bury Jesus. The unique experiences of these individuals are obviously unreplaceable, but the spiritual life reflected in their stories—the conversion of repentant faith, the commitment of unyielding loyalty, and the consecration of life-risking boldness—are qualities that all Christians should have.
- Outline:
 - Title: Life Testimonies Accomplished by the Cross
 - 1. The Conversion of Repentant Faith (v.39)
 - 2. The Commitment of Unyielding Loyalty (vv. 40-41)
 - 3. The Consecration of Life-risking Boldness (vv. 42-47)

The Conversion of Repentant Faith (v.39)

- “Truly this man was the Son of God!”: Mark 1:1 states: “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” But in the following 15 chapters, no one confesses Jesus as the Son of God. Only after Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross do we see a centurion speak up and confess Jesus as the Son of God. This shows that the cross is central to Jesus’ identity as the Son of God.
- “The centurion who was standing right in front of Him.” A centurion in the Roman army is a commander of 100 soldiers. His job here is to guard the cross.

【Background】 This man was involved throughout the entire process of Jesus' crucifixion and was likely the one who nailed the nails into Jesus' hands and feet. He, along with the other soldiers, divided Jesus' clothes, and then remained by the cross to ensure no one would rescue Him off the cross. Since Jesus' arrest the night before, this centurion had been part of the group that mocked and tortured Jesus. Therefore, this centurion was one of the direct participants in humiliating, torturing, and killing Jesus.

【Insight】 If such a sinner can be saved, then no one can have a history so sinful that can put him forever beyond salvation.

- “When the centurion saw the way Jesus breathed His last.” This indicates the unique way Jesus suffered on the cross was a key reason for the centurion's repentance and faith. Jesus was completely different from all the criminals he had seen before.

【Process】 First, the centurion heard the Jewish mockers call Jesus "the Son of God" (John 19:7; Matt 27:40, 43), but at the time, he did not pay attention. Then, at noon, darkness fell over the whole land, and it filled him with fear (Mark 15:33), prompting him to consider who Jesus really was. Then, when he heard Jesus' final cry (John 19:30; Luke 23:46) and experienced the earthquake (Matt. 27:51, 54), he finally confessed: “Truly this man was the Son of God!”

【Response】 In his confession, the centurion also “glorified God” (Luke 23:47). This is the experience of every believer saved by grace. Something unbelievers find very hard to accept is why we must give glory to God. But for this centurion, as soon as he came to faith, he immediately knew he must give glory to God. His confession was not an attempt to earn salvation or claim any credit for himself, but rather a recognition that through the Son of God, he had been forgiven by God and could not help but give glory to Him.

The Commitment of Unyielding Loyalty (vv. 40-41)

- “There were also some women...” – These women were clearly important sisters in the early church. Their first-hand witness of Jesus' death and resurrection was crucial to the early church.
- “Who, when He was in Galilee, followed Him and ministered to Him.” – From the early days of Jesus' ministry in Galilee, they had been following and serving Him. They had already been born again by the Spirit and demonstrated a godly life.

【Key Point】 The testimony of their lives was marked by unyielding and steadfast commitment. Even at the foot of the cross—during the most difficult, painful, and incomprehensible moment—they remained faithfully by Jesus' side.

【Reference】 Luke 8:1-3 mentions some of these women who served Jesus in Galilee, stating that they “were contributing to their support out of their private means.” When Jesus led the brothers out to preach, it was these faithful women who provided crucial support behind the scenes, ensuring their basic needs of food, clothing, and shelter were met. The word “ministered” originally refers to serving at the dinner table, and that, literally, must be a main part of how these sisters served the brothers! God gave them a special role and resources and abilities to serve in that role, and so they became an indispensable part in the gospel work!

【Application】 The same applies to gospel ministry today! **Titus 2:3-4** instructs older women in the church to teach younger women “to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored.” In other words, this is the **primary contribution** of women to the gospel ministry. If, by God’s grace, sisters manage their households well and keep their family life in order, the Word of God will not be dishonored.

【Insight】 The church owes much of its growth to the dedication of such women. Even today, the most faithful and impactful women in God’s kingdom are often not the ones in the spotlight but those who diligently serve their families at home.

- “Looking on from a distance.” – Perhaps the soldiers did not allow them to come any closer, yet they were determined to keep Jesus within their sight. While the disciples had all fled, these women refused to leave. They stayed by Jesus’ side, sharing in His suffering.

【Observation】 The kind of pure, strong, devoted love is often more evident in women. By contrast, men’s thoughts are often more complicated, easily distracted by other concerns, and prone to lose that pure and undivided love for Jesus.

The Consecration of Life-risking Boldness (vv. 42-47)

- “Joseph of Arimathea... a prominent member of the Council”: A Council member is a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin—the highest religious authority in Israel, consisting of 71 leaders. These were the very people who despised Jesus the most and conspired to put Him to death. However, Joseph was different.
- “Who himself was also waiting for the kingdom of God”: This indicates that he was a true believer. His hope was in the kingdom of God, not in an earthly kingdom, which set him apart 【Background】 It is likely that Joseph had already been born again to become a believer even before Jesus’ public ministry began. Jesus stated that true believers of that time, upon seeing Him, would be able to recognize His identity and follow His teachings (John 3:21; 5:46). That is why Matthew’s Gospel refers to Joseph as “a disciple of Jesus”—he had already believed in and followed Jesus in his heart.

However, he had a serious problem—he **lacked the courage to openly confess his faith.** John 19:38 states that although he “was a disciple of Jesus, but a secret one for fear of the Jews.” He was a disciple in the closet! No one knew about it!

- “He gathered up courage and went in before Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus.” “Gathered up courage” is significant because this act required immense bravery. Previously, he didn’t have such courage. This is called - repentance! These words testify to Joseph’s true repentance. He realized his past way of following Jesus as a closet disciple was cowardly and unacceptable both to his conscience and to the Lord. Perhaps he suddenly understood Jesus’ teaching: “Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.”

【Key Point】 When Joseph finally gathered up the courage to come out of the closet and publicly declare allegiance to Jesus, it meant a complete break with his colleagues. More than that, it could have placed his very life in danger. **This truly is life-risking worship!**

【Application】 After all, shouldn't every disciple risk his life to follow Jesus in worship?

- “Pilate wondered if He was dead by this time.” Pilate was surprised because Jesus’ death came so quickly. Normally, the victims of crucifixion would suffer for days before dying. But Jesus' death was not a natural death—it was His voluntary surrender of life to the Father.
- “Laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out in the rock.” Matthew’s Gospel notes that this was a new tomb Joseph had prepared for himself, one that had never been used. The way Jesus was buried is a fulfilment of yet another Messianic prophecy in the Old Testament:

Isaiah 53:9 – “His grave was assigned with wicked men, **Yet He was with a rich man in His death**, Because He had done no violence, Nor was there any deceit in His mouth.” The Jewish leaders originally intended for Jesus to be “buried with wicked men”—meaning that His body would be thrown into the Valley of Hinnom, the garbage dump where criminals were burned. However, unexpectedly, a wealthy man named Joseph intervened and placed Jesus in his own tomb.

Summary

In this passage, we saw the salvation of the cross manifested in the lives of three different kinds of people. The only kind of people we didn’t see—the ones we should’ve seen—were Jesus' disciples, who had all fled in fear.

If the disciples gave us any life testimony at this point, it was their **cowardly fear of death**. They completely failed to live out the new life they had received. And yet, isn't this kind of failure all too often seen in us as well?

In the end, these disciples were also transformed by Jesus into fearless witnesses who became martyrs for the Lord. Their failure and restoration also bore powerful witness to the saving power of the cross.

May we also bear powerful witness to the saving power of the cross!