

Reopening the Wounds

The scenes during the hours leading up to the crucifixion of Jesus are absolutely horrifying. When first brought before the Jewish leadership for His “trial,” the Lord was spat upon, punched, slapped and made a spectacle of (Matthew 26:67). In a further attempt to humiliate Him, Jesus’ captors blindfolded Him, hit Him in the face and said, “Prophecy, who is it that smote thee?” (Luke 22:65). When Herod’s minions had their turn, they mocked the Lord by placing a kingly garment about Him (Luke 23:11). Soldiers under Pilate’s charge would later duplicate this effort by enrobing Jesus with a garment of purple and placing a crown of thorns upon His head (John 19:2). This was followed by the cruelly tormenting pseudo-tribute, “Hail, King of the Jews!” (John 19:3). In the midst of this there was also the scourging (Matthew 27:26), an incredibly painful form of punishment that literally tore the flesh off the back of its victim. All of this occurred prior to Jesus being led to Golgotha for the crucifixion.

At the cross itself, Jesus was hung by His flesh with nails driven through His hands and feet (John 20:25-27; Luke 24:40). Writhing in pain, He nonetheless refused the relief that might have been brought by the mixture of vinegar and gall that had been offered Him (Matthew 27:34). With coarse and cruel humanity at His feet, the sinless Son of God bore the shame of the cross, the excruciating pain of the nails and the humiliation of a public execution.

Not that any human is deserving of such wretched treatment by another human, but the innocent Jesus most certainly did nothing that could warrant such viciousness. Those whom He came to save (Luke 19:10) turned their backs on Him. Anxiety (Luke 22:41-44), feelings of betrayal (Luke 22:54-62) and intense physical agony characterized these final hours of Jesus before His death. In our mind’s eye we see hanging on a cross on Calvary’s hill nearly 2,000 years ago the limp and lifeless figure of a man despised by many, forsaken by all and completely unworthy of a single moment of the punishment inflicted upon Him.

Oh, how these scenes bring tears to our eyes when we take them to heart. What sadness wells up within our being when we envision these events through the vivid description offered by Sacred Scripture. How could such a thing ever happen? Had we ourselves been there, might we have gone against the grain and fought tooth and nail to prevent all of this, or would we too have cowered before the mob and joined the other disciples of Jesus in turning away from Him? Not a one of us can tell what we would have done because we were not there and we will never be there for that sacrifice is complete and will not be repeated (Hebrews 9:28; 10:26).

No, we were not nor will we ever be party to the actual abuse and destruction of the physical body in which Jesus lived while He was on earth. Would we ever do such a thing even if we could? Perhaps not, and yet, when a Christian falls away and goes back into the world from which he or she was redeemed through the blood of Christ, the Bible says, “they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame” (Hebrews 6:6). Think of that for a moment. You and I would cringe at the very idea of being among that mob who cried out for Jesus’ death (Luke 23:21-23). We stand appalled and even shed tears upon reading the Bible’s description of the ungodly treatment suffered by Jesus. We wince when we consider the nails that were driven into His body and the spear that was thrust into His side. Our hearts are cut to the quick as we contemplate the pinnacle of man’s inhumanity to man. But when we turn from following God to following Satan, we reopen the wounds and kill Jesus all over again, not literally of course, but by breaking the heart of the One who gave everything for us. When a Christian goes back into the world, it’s as though he is telling the Lord that His sacrifice really didn’t matter.

How can any Christian, having been blessed by the mercy and goodness of God (Hebrews 6:4-5), go back to the life of darkness, hopelessness, despair and eternal damnation? How can any Christian turn back and reopen the wounds of the Savior?