

ON THE WAY TO GOLGOTHA
Mark 15:15-23

Intro: In these Sunday night messages as we have followed our Lord through the events which were to be finished with His crucifixion, we have come to Pilate's hall and we have seen his refusal to listen to his own conscience when he realized that Jesus Christ was not worthy of death.

The first verse of the Scripture reading tonight tells us that Pilate had the Lord scourged.

The scourge was a handle with several cords or leather thongs attached to it. At the end of each cord was a piece of rough bone or metal. The victim was usually tied to a post, stripped down, and could be hit any place on the body. Sometimes they were hit in the face; sometimes in the loins. Usually it was on the back. Quite often a prisoner would die as a result of the scourging, but this practice was used by the Romans to precede capital punishment. BEFORE A BAND OF MEN - 400-600.

To understand this helps us to see the barbarity of that which followed.

From the time that our Lord was scourged until He was crucified four things of importance took place.

I. HIS HUMILIATION BY THE SOLDIERS (Matt. 27:27-31; Mark 15:16-20; John 19:23).

Nothing shows the depravity and sadism that is in the human heart more than the opportunity to do anything that a man might want to do!

Prisoners were usually treated in accordance with the crime which they had committed. Our Lord had claimed to be the King of Israel, and so they treated Him in mockery like a king.

And yet everything which they did revealed the hypocrisy of their actions: the robe (an army robe with somewhat the color of royalty), the crown (intended to make more blood flow), and the reed (a sign of weakness, not a sceptre which would have been a sign of strength).

This would have been bad enough for anyone, but the indescribable shame that such things should be done to our Lord, who was already suffering from wounds and from the loss of blood. Then--they took His reed and hit Him, spit on Him, and then fell down in complete

mockery to worship Him.

But through all of this there is not an indication that our Lord said a word. As Peter says, "When he suffered, he threatened not" (1 Pet. 2:23). Isaiah long before had seen this prophetically and had said, "As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth" (Isa. 53:7).

They did not know what they were doing, but cannot we who know Who He was not understand just a little more of how much He loved them and how much He loves us. Cf. Rom. 5:10.

We have here a terrible picture of the attitude of the human heart toward God.

But sometimes the enemies of God overstep themselves. Note the second thing which has to do with

II. HOW HIS CROSS WAS CARRIED.

John (19:16-18) alone tells us that the Lord carried His own cross for a time. But apparently He had been so weakened by what He had already suffered, so they had to get someone else to carry it.

Who did they get? Cf. Mark 15:21.

Note carefully how he is presented here.

- (1) He was a Jew from North Africa--from Cyrene. He had evidently come all of the way from Africa to observe the Passover. But he had done one thing wrong. He was traveling at the time the Sabbath had approached. And so it was as if someone had said, "Here comes another violator of the law; let us force him to do some more work!" And so they did.

But what happened? John Mark tells us that he was "the father of Alexander and Rufus." Turn to Rom. 16:13--the only other time a man by the name of Rufus is mentioned in the Word of God. Alexander we do not know. It is hard to think that he might have been the Alexander mentioned in 1 Tim. 1:20 and 2 Tim. 4:14, but this is possible.

But the point is evidently this. These two men, evidently well-known in Rome, traced their salvation to this event when evidently their father came to the Lord! How wonderful it is to see some evidence for believing this! And how indicative of the sovereignty of our Lord!

III. THE LAMENTATION OF THE WOMEN--mentioned only by Luke in 23:27-31.

Is it not possible many times during these terrible hours to see our Lord's concern for others--to see how He was able to look beyond all of these events to see the coming glory, but to see also the tragedy which was ahead of Israel.

During the trial before Pilate the Jews said one ominous thing which is being felt down to the present time. When Pilate washed his hands before them, declaring falsely that he was not guilty of sin in giving Jesus into their hands, they said, "His blood be on us, and on our children" (Matt. 27:25).

Man was having his day then. It looked like the Jewish leaders had been able to silence all opposition. BUT THE TIME WAS COMING WHEN JEWISH MOTHERS WOULD BE SORRY THAT THEY HAD HAD CHILDREN, AND WHEN ALL THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL WOULD CHOOSE DEATH TO LIFE. The words of Luke 23:30 are found again in Rev. 6:16, 17; 9:16.

But there is one other thing.

IV. THE MYRRH WHICH THEY GAVE HIM TO DRINK (Mark 15:23).

What was it for, and why did He reject it?

The irony, the paradox of this whole situation is that after doing all that they had done to Him, He was offered an anesthetic! BUT HE REFUSED! Why?

Let your mind go back for a moment to Gethsemane. Do you remember the issue there? "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matt. 26:39). It was settled there that He should drink all of it.

Then when the men came to take Him in the garden, you will remember that Peter drew his sword, and cut off the ear of the high priest's servant--a man by the name of Malchus. What did the Lord say to Peter? "Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (John 18:11).

In Hebrews 2:9 we read, "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man."

If Jesus had taken this (different from what He was

offered when He was on the cross), there would have been those who would have used this to minimize the significance of His death. BUT HE DIED KNOWING COMPLETELY WHAT HE WAS DOING. ALL THAT WAS INVOLVED IN HIS BEING MADE SIN FOR US HE EXPERIENCED WITHOUT ANY ANESTHETIC WHATSOEVER. He paid the price in full, and suffered as no one else has ever suffered--the physical being evidence of the greater sacrifice which could not be seen by the eyes of men!

Concl: Can you and I ever doubt but that His work was complete, that His work was sufficient for our sins and for the sins of the whole world?

The most ridiculous thing that any man can do is to come and try to add anything to His work on the cross. This is what a righteous God demanded, and this is what a loving Saviour did!