

# THE SUFFERING SAVIOUR

Meditations on the Last Days of Christ

By

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## CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

### THE SCOURGING

THE PATH OF THE HOLY ONE of Israel becomes increasingly dark and obscure. The night-piece of His passion carries us from the region of the tragical into that of the appalling. His sufferings increase to torture, His disgrace to infamy; and the words of Isaiah, "**He was despised and rejected; and we hid as it were our faces from him,**" are completely realized.

After the momentous decision has been made at Gabbatha, and the lot of the murderer has fallen upon the just, the latter is for a while removed from the view of the people, having been given up to the armed band of executioners' assistants and led away by them, amid wild uproar, like a sheep for the slaughter, into the inner court-yard of the palace. Thither let us follow Him, although we do so with reluctance; but we must be witnesses of the scene, since it is the will of God that we should be aware of what Our restoration and redemption cost our great Surety.

What now takes place? A deed respecting which a feeling comes over us as if it were improper and even sinful to behold it with the naked eye. look at yonder pillar, black with the blood of murderers and rebels. The iron collar which is attached to it, as well as the ropes which hang down from its iron rings, sufficiently point out its cruel object. look at the rude and barbarous beings, who busily surround their victim. Observe the brutal vulgarity of their countenances and the instruments of torture in their hands. They are scourges, made of hundreds of leathern thongs, each armed at the point with an angular bony hook or a sharp-sided cube. Such are the instruments of torture prepared for Him, who was dear to God as the apple of His eye.

We naturally think He could not and ought not to descend to such a point of degradation, but that all heaven must interfere to prevent it or that the world must perish under it. But it takes place; and neither does heaven protest against it, nor the world sink into ruin.

See, see - the execution of the sentence begins! The executioners fall upon the Holy One like a host of devils.

They tear off His clothes; bind those hands which were ever stretched out to do good, tie them together upon His back, press His gracious visage firmly against the shameful pillar, and after having bound Him with ropes in such a manner that He cannot move or stir, they begin their cruel task.

O do not imagine that I am able to depict to you what now occurs. The scene is too horrible. My whole soul trembles and quakes. Neither wish that I should count to you the number of strokes which are now poured upon the sacred body of Immanuel, or describe the torments, which, increasing with every stroke, sufficed in other cases of this kind to cause the death of the unhappy culprit before the formal execution which this scourging usually preceded.

It is enough for us to know that it lasted full a quarter of an hour; streams of blood flow from His sacred form. The scourging continues without mercy. The arms of the barbarous men begin to grow weary. New tormentors release those that are fatigued. The scourges cut ever deeper into the wounds already made. His whole back appears an enormous wound.

After the horrible act is finished, another instantly follows which almost exceeds it in cruelty. The agonized sufferer is unbound from the bloody pillar, but only to be tortured afresh. The material rods have done their duty, and mental ones of the bitterest and most poignant mockery are now employed against Him. Their ridicule is directed against His kingly dignity, even as it was on a former occasion, against His prophetic office.

A worn-out purple robe, once the garment of the leader of a Roman cohort, is produced. This is thrown over His back still bleeding from every pore, while the barbarians exult aloud at this supposed witty and appropriate idea. They then break off twigs from a long-spiked thorn-bush, and twist them into a circle, which is afterwards pressed upon His sacred head as a crown. But in order to complete the image of a mock king, they put into His hands a reed instead of a scepter, and after having thus arrayed Him, they pay mock homage to Him with shouts of derisive laughter. The miscreants bow with pretended reverence to the object of their scorn, bend the knee before Him, and to make the mockery complete, cry out again and again, “**Hail, King of the Jews!**”

It is not long, however, before they are weary of this abominable sport and turn it into fearful seriousness. With satanic insolence, they place themselves before their ill-treated captive, make the most horrible grimaces at Him, even spit in His face, and in order to fill up the measure of their cruelty, they snatch the reed out of His hands, and repeatedly smite Him with it on the head, so that the thorns pierce deeply while streams of blood flow down the face of the gracious Friend of sinners.

How can we reconcile such revolting occurrences with the government of a just and holy God! A great mystery must lie at the bottom of them, or our belief in a supreme moral government of the world loses its last support. And is not this really the case? What befalls Christ befalls us in Him, who is our representative. The sufferings He endures fall upon our corrupt nature. In Him we receive the due reward of our misdeeds. With the shudder at the sight of the martyred Lamb of God ought to be joined a thorough condemnation of ourselves, a profound adoration of the unsearchable wisdom and mercy of God and the glorious accomplishment of the counsel of grace.

Our hell is extinguished in Jesus' wounds; our curse is consumed in Jesus' soul; our guilt is purged away in Jesus' blood.

The sword of the wrath of a holy God was necessarily unsheathed against us; and if the Bible is not a falsehood, and the threatenings of the law a mere delusion, and God's justice an idle fancy, not a single individual would have escaped the sword, if the Son of God had not endured the stroke and taken upon Himself the payment of our debts.

This He undertook. Then it thundered upon Him from the clouds; the raging billows of a sea of trouble roared against Him; hell poured upon Him all its tortures and torments, and heaven remained unmoved. What was all this but the fate which awaited guilty sinners? But since Christ endured it, the crosses which were erected for us have been thrown down; the stake which waited for us has been removed; and from the royal residence of the Lord of Hosts, the white flag of peace is held out to us poor dwellers upon earth.

The case has been well stated by an ancient writer in the following words:

“Adam was a king, gloriously arrayed, and ordained to reign. But sin cast him down from his lofty throne, and caused him the loss of his purple robe, his diadem and scepter. But after his eyes were opened to perceive how much he had lost, and when his looks were anxiously directed to - the earth in search of it, he saw thorns and thistles spring up on the spot where the crown fell from his head; the scepter changed, as if to mock the fallen monarch, into a fragile reed; and instead of the purple robe, his deceived hand took up a robe of mockery from the dust. The poor disappointed being hung down his head with grief, when a voice exclaimed, ‘Look up!’ He did so, and lo! what an astonishing vision presented itself to his eye! Before him stood a dignified and mysterious Man, who had gathered up the piercing thorns from the ground, and wound them round His head for a crown; he had wrapped himself in the robe of mockery, and taken the reed, the emblem of weakness into his own hand. ‘Who art thou, wondrous Being?’ inquired the progenitor of the human race, astonished; and received the heart-cheering reply, ‘I am the King of kings, who, acting as thy representative, am restoring to thee the jewels thou hast lost.’ Our delighted first father then bowed himself gratefully and reverentially in the dust; and after being clothed with the skin of the sacrificed animal, fathomed the depths of the words of The Lord, ‘Adam is become like one of Us.’ “

What I have now related to you is a parable, but one which rests on an historical basis. For in fact, the great exchange which Christ made with us, as regards the reversion and the right, has placed us in the full possession of glory, seeing that we are **“begotten again to a lively hope, and to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us, who are kept by the power of God, through faith unto eternal salvation.”**

~ end of chapter 35 ~

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