

It's Friday, but Sunday's coming!

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Date: 10 April 2009

[0:00] Let me take some snapshots with you on the way to the cross and to think about what Calvary means today.

The Lamb of God was slain. We know that bleeding started in Gethsemane.

In that garden of Gethsemane, the Lord Jesus prayed and as it were, great drops of blood were falling to the ground. Some have said that it could be a medical condition where tiny blood vessels burst in the sweat glands and mixed with the blood causing great weakness.

So the blood was dripping as it were from the garden. And then the rest. Around midnight, some 500-600 soldiers were there.

A mob, a great multitude with swords and clubs, with officers of the chief priests, the Pharisees, led by Judas.

[1:22] What would it have felt like for our Saviour? Betrayed, deserted. His disciples, all of them, it says, they forsook Him. They left Him. They fled. He was seized and roughly bound by these soldiers.

Unrefreshed by food or sleep from the previous night, He was hurried from one indignity to another, from one torture to another. All that night and all that morning.

And all this He bore willingly. Whilst as God Almighty, as it says, twelve legions of angels. That's some 80,000 angels. Of course, so much more.

Had He wished He could have summoned as God Almighty to free Himself at any moment, at any instant, with one signal to the heavens.

About midnight now, one of the officers struck Jesus with his hand or rod as he was having the preliminary examination before Annas. And he was sent then bound to Caiaphas for another trial.

[2:25] An informal trial now before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin, the Jewish council. It was about 2am, 2 o'clock in the morning Friday, before dawn. The Lord Jesus was tried illegally, condemned.

The hatred of the Jewish council was such that they broke so many of their own rules of legal procedure. In fact, they had to break 18 Jewish laws to crucify the Saviour.

Then the strong armed men that held Him, mocked Him and beat Him whilst He was blindfolded. Imagine that. Picture that.

They spat upon His face. They struck Him, cursed Him and thumped Him harshly with their fists. Then, Peter's denial. Our Lord knew that would happen. How that must have hurt Him too.

Then the formal trial. Our Lord was condemned by the prejudiced Sanhedrin. He was then bound again and the mob carried Him away. Then, before Pilate, the first time.

[3:32] Our Lord was harshly accused of many evil things by the chief priests and the elders and was questioned by Pilate. Then sent to Herod. Before Herod, Jesus was questioned at length.

Then he was vehemently accused by Herod and the rough soldiers. They degraded Him. Treated Him with contempt. Robbing Him in a mock royal robe.

Traveled with me to Calvary. Before Pilate, the second time now. It was towards sunrise. Friday. Pilate acquitted Him.

Four times. Yet, the bloodthirsty crowd just wouldn't have that.

By inflicting scourging, Pilate hoped to move the crowds of pity. Pilate and his soldiers placed a woven crown of thorns upon our Saviour's head.

[4:33] It was like a small bush. Really. Thorns up to six inches long. Jammed on his head. A royal purple robe was put upon him.

And he was mocked again as king. They then beat him with rods or with hands. Giving him blows to his face. Causing the thorns to press deeper.

Cut deeper. Into his scalp. He was paraded before the yelling mob. Blood streaming down his face. The multitude crying loudly that they wanted Him crucified.

Pilate, knowing our Lord's innocence, asked them, Why? What evil hath he done?

But a riot was starting and Pilate was pressured to release the notorious rebel Barabbas in place of our Lord. Just think of the scourging then.

[5:34] The scourging that occurred. One infliction of scourging often proved fatal. It was a terrifying punishment. The Romans set no limit. Unlike the Jews who had a limit of 39.

The Romans set no limit. On the number of strokes of the whip. And the Lord Jesus was at the mercy of the merciless scourges. It must have been revolting and horrifying.

The flesh torn open. The whip cutting to the bone. The leather thongs of the scourge were laden with pieces of bone and metal.

Even hooks. It greatly lacerated. Your Saviour's back. For you. For me. The human flesh was cut deep. The scourge had a dozen leather cords.

It left a lacerated back, face, chest. Inner muscles and sinews could be exposed, laid bare, sliced open, shredded. Friends, the suffering was intense.

[6:37] We can't picture it really. We can't imagine it. You know, there's religious movies made. Yet really, we can't come close to picturing what it would have looked like. As the archeries might be hit also.

And the scourge used on our Lord, had it had 12 cords, as was reputed. And had he been hit just 39 times, this would have made at least 468 stripes.

You know, sometimes we think of just a few, but 468. We can't fathom it, can we? No wonder the word tells us, as Isaiah prophesied, that he would be more marred than any man.

Think of the mockery then of Pilate soldiers as they mocked our Lord some 600. If the whole band had been present in mockery, he was saluted as their king.

Hit on the head, brutally beaten, with a staff, spat upon him. Spitting in the face was counted as the most utter contempt. The greatest insult for that to occur.

[7:45] 600 spat upon him in utter contempt. The mock royal robe was taken off then harshly. His own garments replaced in contact with the cut and bruised skin, creating more pain.

And Golgotha hasn't even started yet. To Golgotha now. After the suffering, the most intense punishment that he had endured so far, now was the road to Golgotha.

Some wailing and mourning women were behind, following a great multitude. Tread in his footsteps. Regarded as a common criminal, he was compelled to bear the cross.

It was heavy. Weighing over 100 pounds, he carried it 650 yards to the place of execution.

Golgotha, of course we know at one point he was aided as they beckoned someone to help.

His flesh hanging in ribbons. The rough wood gouging in his bare torn back. By now he was already dehydrated. It was a miracle that he was still alive.

[8:51] He was probably beaten by the crowd on the way there. As the word says that they plucked his beard. Isaiah 50 verse 6. I gave my back to the smiters and my cheeks.

To them that plucked off the hair. I hid not my face from shame and spitting. The public shame was intense. That was in itself such an awful thing.

As the centurion acting as a herald went ahead. He held the title of the cross proclaiming the nature of the crime. For the standers by. The accusation written.

The criminals walking alongside of him. He was numbered with the transgressors. He was the most despicable of the land.

The crucifixion now. Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22 prophetically records our Saviour's death. Though this form of execution was unknown under the Jewish system until hundreds of years later.

[9:54] What a miracle that Isaiah saw the slain one. The pierced one. The psalmist saw some hundreds of years before it was ever known.

Death by crucifixion. It was the most degrading forms of punishment ever conceived by perverse humanity. And Josephus, a person of the time, recorded that it was the most wretched of all ways of dying.

The word excruciating refers to the crucifixion. Excruciating. The pain was so agonizing.

It was the most painful form of death. Essentially death by exhaustion. For a Jew, it was even more devastating. For a Jew, because cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree.

He was branded accursed by God. Yet this, our Lord Jesus, your Saviour, freely bore for you that curse for your sins and mine.

[11:09] He bore it freely, though he was totally guiltless. And, as I say, at any moment, he could have snapped. He didn't have to do that.

He could have chosen to free himself at any moment. But he did it willingly. He was not a victim of circumstance.

He was a willing sacrifice for you. Willingly he did it. Lovingly he did it. We can't conceive of that really, can we? Fully what that means.

What Calvary means. And the place of execution, it was outside of the city. There, the condemned Jesus was stripped of much of his clothing. Jesus was then made fast with large dull rusty spikes. These spikes caused gangrene and tetanus to start in the wounds which grew inflamed. His feet also, with one 18-centimetre long spike, were affixed together to the word.

[12:15] And in this contorted position, the leg muscles would have probably caused severe pain, spasmodic contractions and rigid cramps.

Around the foot of the cross were four soldiers, a centurion and a jeering crowd. Each hand was extended to utmost stretch. It was intense severe pain.

Every nerve in his body was in anguish. All at once, Jesus endured agony, starvation, insufferable thirst, excruciating convulsions of pain. He suffered this freely for you and I.

The weight of the body frequently caused such a state of exhaustion that death occurred in a matter of several hours. With his body hung up by the arms, Jesus' blood would have sunk rapidly into the lower extremities of his body.

Within 6-12 minutes, blood pressure dropped to 50% and the pulse rate doubled. There was a lingering agony, tension, inflammation. Just the slightest movement was to mean additional torture.

[13:24] Traumatic fever was induced. The arteries of the head, stomach would be surcharged with blood causing a throbbing headache. It was a state of absolute helplessness, even unable to brush away the flies.

A place of degradation and misery. A little jar when the cross went down. Yep, when the cross went down, certainly it would have hurt. Dizziness, cramp, thirst, starvation, sleeplessness, traumatic fever, setness, publicity of shame, horror of anticipation, certain death, mortification of all untended wounds.

All intensified, just short of the point that would give the sufferer the relief of unconsciousness.

The intolerable pain and pang of a burning and raging thirst. This was the most agonising death a man could face. He had to support himself in order to breathe.

The flaming pain caused by the spikes hitting the median nerve in the wrist explodes up into his arms, into his brain and down his spine. The spike burning through the nerves between the metatarsal bones of the feet jerks his whole body erect.

[14:49] Then the leg muscles convulse and drive his body downward, beating him against the cross. Air is sucked in but cannot be exhaled until the build-up of carbon dioxide in the lungs and the bloodstream stimulates breathing to relieve the cramps.

So every breath, every breath, every breath was a... We can't imagine it, can we? Every breath, exhaustion, shock, dehydration, paralysis, destroy the victim.

The heart is barely able to pump the thick blood as each of his billions of cells die, one at a time.

And yet, what did our Lord do? The crowd came, the soldier came and extended some relief.

Our Lord refused the narcotic that he was offered to dullen the pain. This medicated drink of wine mixed with drugs in effect, he refused it. He preserved his clarity of mind to the end in doing his Father's will.

He wanted a clear mind. He wanted to bear the full brunt for you and I. Soldiers there divided his clothes gambling.

[16:05] Jesus was derided by one of the criminals while he led the other to salvation. Some have said, perhaps that one was the first one born again.

Hope is lost. Death has won. Sin has conquered. And Satan's just a laughing. It's Friday. Jesus is buried. A soldier stands guard. And a rock is rolled into place. But it's Friday. It's Friday. It's only Friday.

Sunday's coming. Friends, we know. Sunday's coming. And of course, this account is to be continued. This sermon. Because we know that.

We're thinking of his death this morning, of course. And yet we know that, of course, he's alive. He's risen. He's alive. Although his tomb was guarded by 16 crack Roman soldiers, Jesus was miraculously raised from the dead.

[22:47] And our Lord Jesus is alive today. He can be our saviour by faith today. Our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us pray. Lord, we thank you today for Calvary.

Help us, Lord, as we prepare.