

**Mark 15: 1-39; “Christ’s Triumphant Sufferings”, A Sermon Delivered at Church on Maundy Thursday, April 9th, 2020, by Pastor Paul Rendall and put up online for the saints.**

At the end of the last chapter is related the account of the apostle Peter denying our Lord three times, even as Jesus had said that he would. And afterwards when he thought of it, he wept to think that he, the one who had stated that he would follow His Lord even to death, would do such a thing. “Even if all are made to stumble,” he had said to Jesus, “yet I will not be stumbled.” Peter had not understood what a deep-rooted principle sin was in his heart. And he really did not understand how much he needed the power of the Holy Spirit in order to do good things for Christ. And so, it may be possible that there are some here today, who may not understand this either. Jesus needed to suffer for everyone who would be saved from their sins. It cannot be gotten around. He had to suffer for you or else you could never have been forgiven of your many sins, and you could not have been set free from sin’s dominating power. But Jesus also needed to suffer in order that He could give to you who believe in Him, the grace to stand and to suffer for the truth of His Word in the day of trial. And so, it will be good for us, today, to follow the Lord Jesus, and to recount the triumphant sufferings which He underwent, in order that we might have eternal life, and all things.

As we look at this passage we find that there are 4 major steps that Jesus took on His way to the cross, which tell us much in relation to ourselves as sinners. Our Lord Jesus underwent these sufferings for our sakes during that painful time when He was falsely accused, beaten, mistreated, and scourged under Pontius Pilate. And these sufferings increased, and they reached their awful climax in the exquisite pains which He bore for us, during that awful time in which He hung upon the cross. It was by these sufferings that He purchased all the blessings and benefits of our great salvation. Let me list them for you: 1<sup>st</sup> of all – Jesus’ suffering injustice on our behalf silently, before the Jewish council and Pilate the Roman Governor. (verses 1-5) The 2<sup>nd</sup> Step – Jesus’ suffering the indignity of being placed in the same category with criminals – Murderers, insurrectionists, and thieves. (verses 6-15) 3<sup>rd</sup> – Jesus’ being degraded from His dignity and mocked because He was the King of the Jews. (verses 16-20) 4<sup>th</sup> – Jesus’ willingly allowing Himself to be crucified. (verses 21-39)

**The 1st Step – Jesus’ suffering injustice on our behalf silently, before the Jewish council and Pilate the Roman Governor.** (verses 1-5)

In Mark 14, verse 55 it says: “Now the chief priests and all the council sought testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, but found none. For many bore false witness against Him, but their testimonies did not agree.” “Then some rose up and bore false witness against Him, saying ‘We heard Him say, ‘I will destroy this temple made with hands and within three days I will build another made without hands.’” “But not even then did their testimony agree.” “And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, saying, ‘Do You answer nothing?’” And here in verses 4 and 5 of our text it says that Jesus said nothing before Pilate in His own defense. Now, the first aspect of suffering that we need to consider here, in these passages that I have read to you, is this: Christ’s suffering silently on your behalf. The chief priests accused Him of many things, but He answered nothing. Pilate marveled over Jesus’ silence, but He could not get Him to speak at all in defense of Himself.

We have to ask ourselves: Why was Christ silent? It should be obvious to us that Christ was well able to defend Himself in words. Why didn’t He do it here at this critical time? Well, turn with me over to Isaiah Chapter 53, verse 7. Speaking prophetically of what our Lord Jesus would undergo for every poor and needy sinner, it says this: “He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its

shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth.” “He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who will declare His generation?” “For He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgressions of My people He was stricken.” Here is the reason that Christ was silent. He was cut off for the transgressions of God’s elect people. His was a definite and certain atonement on their part. He would take their place as an offering and a sacrifice for our sins. He had to be silent; He could not undertake to defend Himself. His mission was, to experience everything that was due to us, so that He would be taking our place in judgment. Sin brings oppression of spirit, and so He was oppressed and afflicted. In our sin there is always the temptation to revile the one sinning against us, but in Christ’s case, He did not revile or answer back.

The guilty sinner has no defense that they can make in the sight of the Holy God. The person who sins is guilty in the sight of God, and they must receive the punishment which God Himself determines is right, for His justice to be satisfied. And so, the Lord Jesus, in taking our place, said not a word in defense of Himself, to keep Himself from the punishment which we so richly deserved. He was silent as a sheep before its shearers. He was silent also in regard to the justice of God’s having to punish Him as our Surety. He knew that there was no other way that we could be saved. Even his murmuring or complaining would have been considered as sin; for we most certainly, as sinners, deserve to be punished. And, we would not have escaped being punished under any condition, unless He had intervened with His precious blood. How thankful every believer ought to be that Jesus was silent, for our sakes. He was stricken, and we should speak His praise continually because of it, and not be silent.

**The 2<sup>nd</sup> Step – Jesus’ suffered the indignity of being placed in the same category with criminals – Murderers, insurrectionists, and thieves.**

(verses 6-15)

Now we find the Lord Jesus standing before Pilate. And as it had been the custom to release one prisoner to the people every year at the Passover; whomever they requested; Pilate asked them if they wanted him to release the King of the Jews, our Lord Jesus Christ? They said that they wanted Barabbas to be released instead. This man Barabbas was a criminal who was chained with his fellow-rebels; those who had committed murder in the rebellion,” it says in verse 7. He had been convicted of the crimes of insurrection and murder and now he was scheduled to die. But the chief priests, it says in verse 11, “stirred up the crowd so that Pilate should rather release Barabbas rather than Jesus. Pilate knew, however, that the chief priests had delivered Jesus up for envy. He knew that they wanted their own sinful way in this matter. They wanted to see the Lord Jesus die. And so we find them stirring up the crowds to cry out all the more – “Crucify Him, crucify Him!” Pilate, realizing that Jesus had not committed any crime deserving of death, nevertheless, wanted to please the crowd. And so, in a very unrighteous act, he released Barabbas to them; and he delivered Jesus, after he had scourged Him, to be crucified.

Now this was a great personal injustice to our Lord, but we should understand that it was ordained by God the Father before the foundation of the world for His glory, and for our eternal good. I hope that you will understand that it was God who appointed that this awful injustice would be done to His Son. He gave His only-begotten Son to suffer so that we might not perish in our sins, but have eternal life. He very surely and certainly overruled all of these sufferings for our good, so that we as sinners, could be saved. And in beholding His Son in His most intense sufferings, His perfect justice was satisfied in relation to us. Surely we must marvel at the depth of depravity in the human heart; that it could prefer to put a sinless man to death in order to see a convicted criminal go free, when a choice between the two was offered. Surely these scribes and Pharisees were completely biased against this good man because they are envious that He could be so righteous and so good. It irritated them exceedingly that there was

someone more righteous than they were; someone perfect in righteous who was telling them that they must believe in Him.

But we must marvel more greatly still, when we see Jesus not protesting at all; not defending Himself at all. He did not assert His own righteousness; neither did He protest the injustice being done to Himself; because His intent was to love sinners and to give Himself to suffer for them. “Jesus what a friend for sinners; Jesus lover of my soul.” He suffered for guilty sinners everywhere; He was numbered among the transgressors. Let’s personalize this. Can you say: For me He bore the cruel curse which my sin deserved? Can you say: My sins deserved that I should be condemned to the death of the cross, but it pleased the Lord to bruise Christ and put Him to grief, and to make His soul an offering for sin? (Isaiah 53: 10)

It will be good to pause here and ask whether we can understand what Barabbas must have felt when they told him that he was free to go; that there would be no execution for him, that he would not be punished for his crimes; that he would not die but live, and that he would not be held responsible for all of the terrible things that he had done. We sense that this was not right; that Jesus was given over to be punished instead of him, and he would go free. But I want you to consider that this is what has happened with each one of us as well; we who have believed in Jesus. “Was it for crimes that I have done, He groaned upon the tree?” “Amazing pity, grace unknown!” “And love beyond degree!” Surely Christ has triumphed over all the charges which were brought against us, and He by His triumphant sufferings has secured our pardon.

**The 3<sup>rd</sup> Step – Jesus’ being degraded from His dignity and mocked because He was the King of the Jews.** (verses 16-20)

“Then the soldiers led Him away into the hall called Praetorium, and they called together the whole garrison.” “And they clothed Him with purple; and they twisted a crown of thorns, put it on His head, and began to salute Him, “Hail, King of the Jews!” “Then they struck Him on the head with a reed and spat on Him; and bowing the knee, they worshiped Him.” “And when they had mocked Him, they took the purple off Him, put His own clothes on Him, and led Him out to crucify Him.” What awful and demeaning acts were perpetrated upon the Lord of Glory at that time! But we should understand that our Lord bore these acts of wickedness in our place. “Alas and did my Savior bleed, and did my Sovereign die?” “Would He devote that Sacred Head for such a worm as I?” Jesus suffered this blasphemous treatment at the hands of wicked men so that He might purchase the grace necessary for us to be able to submit to His righteous rule. This was necessary because all of us, by nature, are opposed to His ruling over us. By nature we do not honor Him as He deserves. We do not treat Him rightly in our thoughts. We will not have this man to rule over us, and indeed in many cases we are those who despise His right to rule all men and nations, which is that authority which has been given to Him by His Father.

Those who treated the Lord Jesus in derision the psalmist says this of them in Psalm 2, verse 1 – “Why do the nations rage, and the people plot a vain thing?” “The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against His Anointed, saying, “Let us break Their bonds in pieces and cast away their cords from us.’ “He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall hold them in derision.” “Then He shall speak to them in His wrath, and distress them in His deep displeasure: Yet I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion.” “I will declare the decree: The Lord has said to Me, ‘You are My Son, today I have begotten You.’ “Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession.” “You shall break them to pieces like a potter’s vessel.”

These verses show us the purpose of the Father, to exalt His Son to indeed be “the King of the Jews”. And further, they tell us that Christ will indeed come to rule over all the nations of the world; for the Father has given them to Him, and in a time yet coming He will give them to Him as an inheritance and a possession. Christ has been triumphant in His sufferings, and so the Father has rewarded Him with His possession of them. Therefore, it says in verse 10, the

kings of the earth are to be wise; the judges of the earth are to be instructed. They are to serve Him with fear (that is with godly reverence and consideration); they are to believe in Him and worship Him. They are to Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and they perish in the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. How good it is; how blessed a thing it is, when people trust in Christ. For then they can submit to His righteous rule over all men and nations.

**The 4<sup>th</sup> Step – Jesus’ willingly allowing Himself to be crucified.** (verses 21-39)

“Then they compelled a certain man, Simon a Cyrenian, the father of Alexander and Rufus, as he was coming out of the country and passing by, to bear His cross.” “And they brought Him to the place Golgotha, which is translated, Place of a Skull.” “Then they gave Him wine mingled with myrrh to drink, but He did not take it.” “And when they crucified Him, they divided His garments, casting lots for them to determine what every man should take.” “Now it was the third hour, and they crucified Him.” Our Lord had already endured much suffering before he reached the cross. In the scourging that he underwent He was bound to a pillar, and then a soldier took a cat-of-9-tails whip which had bits of metal and glass in it, and harshly laid it upon the Jesus’ back so that tore it open at many points, and it his back actually came to look like a plowed field. In Psalm 129, our Lord Jesus prophetically says this: “Many a time they have afflicted me from my youth; yet they have not prevailed against me.” “The plowers plowed on my back; they made their furrows long.” “The Lord is righteous; He has cut in pieces the cords of the wicked.”

You see how willing the Lord Jesus was to undergo these sufferings, but He could not physically take up his own cross and bring it outside the city to the place where He would be crucified. So they enlisted Simon the Cyrenian to bear it for Him. Simon seems to be a literal fulfillment of what the apostle Paul would later write in Colossians 2: 24 – “Now I rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which the church.” Indeed, it is entirely possible, I think, that Simon came to know the Lord spiritually during the time of his carrying this cross. He did not merit his own salvation, but he was rather impressed with what Christ was undergoing, even though a righteous Man. When they reached Golgotha, the place of the Skull, they tried to give our Lord wine mingled with myrrh to drink but He did not take it.” He refused because He wanted to feel all the pain that He knew that we deserved in relation to the punishment of our sins.

They then crucified Him, putting the nails in His hands and His feet, raised the cross up between the crosses of two other criminals, and it was the 3<sup>rd</sup> hour. This was at 9 o’clock in the morning, the time when the chief priests should have been at their devotions, but instead their murderous hearts wanted to see Christ die. Those who passed by Him blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, ‘Aha!’ “You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself, and come down from the cross!” “Likewise the chief priests also, mocking among themselves with the scribes, said, ‘He saved others’; Himself He cannot save.” “Let the Christ, the King of Israel, descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe.”

You can see here the blasphemous words that were spoken against our Lord; trying to get Him to do something to prove His Messiahship to them. And Christ could have done this, had it been the righteous thing to do. He could have indeed come down from the cross, but then He would have been taking matters into His own hands and would have been acting independently of the Father’s will for Him. It was the Father’s will that He stay on the cross and complete the work of redemption. He would purchase our salvation at the price of His blood and His laying down His life for us.

Jesus hung there on the cross for 6 full hours, from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m. There was a darkness that came over the whole land from the sixth hour until the ninth hour; from about noon until 3. The light of the world was being eclipsed by the clouds and the power of darkness, before the whole watching world, as He died. But I want you to understand, and indeed, all of Scripture

would convey this thought to you, dear believer, that Christ at this time of His most awful distress was triumphantly bearing our sins in His body on the tree. He bore them there in that awful place so that you will never have to bear them, at all, anymore. In verse 37 of our text it says that He cried out with a loud voice, and breathed His last.” He cried out with a loud voice because He was triumphing over the sins of the world. And He was also triumphing over Satan. John chapter 12, verse 31 – “Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out.” “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.” “This He said signifying by what death He would die.”

And, it also says that when He died, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.” This veil which was in the tabernacle of old, and in the temple of Jesus’ day, was what separated the worshiper from the Holy of Holies, the place where God came to accept the offerings for sin offered up by the High Priest once a year. It says in Hebrews chapter 10, verse 20, that the veil kept the worshipers from rashly entering the Most Holy Place in their own righteousness, which entrance was symbolic of entering heaven itself. But Christ had every right to enter, and to open up the entrance to everyone who would believe in Him.. And now we ourselves can even enter. So it says: “Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh; and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.”

It is my prayer that if you have not seen Jesus triumphing in all of these sufferings that He underwent, that you will today. It is my prayer that you will believe in Jesus and be saved; that you will continue to believe and triumph through Him over all of your doubts, triumph in all of your battles with indwelling sin, and that you will indeed be brought to heaven where the gates shall be opened and you shall enter Paradise because Jesus triumphed over sin and death for you. Remember the saving experience of the Centurion who stood opposite Him when He died. It says in verse 39 – “So when the centurion, who stood opposite Him, saw that He cried out like this and breathed His last, he said, ‘Truly this Man was the Son of God.’”

### **A Footnote on holding Maundy Thursday and Good Friday Services:**

On Palm Sunday Christians are often led to consider Jesus’ humility; His riding upon a colt, the foal of a donkey, into Jerusalem, to show forth the triumph of His humble obedience to the will of the Father, that He go to the cross. This is certainly a good thing; to consider Jesus’ humbling Himself to the point of death, even the death of the cross. But often on Palm Sunday, many people do not get to hear of Christ’s sufferings on their behalf, and so they come to church the next Sunday, and they hear a sermon on His glorious resurrection from the dead. And so it may happen, that as the years go by, if they do not go to church enough, they may never hear a sermon which goes into any specific detail of how our Lord triumphed through His sufferings unto death. Instead, what has come to fill the place of this, in many churches, is what is called a Maundy Thursday service. And then the next day a Good Friday service is sometimes held.

No doubt it is the desire of those churches to remember the sufferings of Christ in such a way that an impact is made upon those who come, of the terrible things that took place in the hours of Christ’s sufferings, so that they can sympathize with Him. And so it might therefore be thought to be profitable, by those who attend. But sometimes, even when these services are attended, it is not so much that Christ’s sufferings on behalf of sinners are explained and set forth in detail; so that they might believe and be saved, but rather certain rituals are enacted which are intended to create a serious atmosphere where the person is made to feel bad that Jesus had to die at all. And thus the triumph of His sufferings is not really understood.

Listen to what Harold Dinsmore says in his “Easter Idea: How to Observe a Maundy Thursday Service.” He says: “Darken the room and have a candle light observance. “Structure your music to be mournful and solemn.” “Enlist members of the congregation to perform a choral reading of scripture.” “Alter the way you distribute the elements.” (Be sure and list what the people can expect in the bulletin).” “Enlist a team to act out the Lord’s Supper in costume as a mini-play.” “Utilize hymns and songs as an outline for the service.” “Close with the auditorium becoming darkened as all exit silently to contemplate what Christ was to endure.” “Host a reading of the clinical horror of flogging and crucifixion.” “These are just a few things one can do to vary the service from year to year. The focus is on the mandate and the tenseness of the situation that Christ and His disciples faced.” “You want to leave the people with a feeling of despair and mournfulness so as to anticipate the joy and gladness of Easter Sunday morning.”

Now, having read this to you, I want us to consider together that the object of relating the events leading up to the cross is not meant to make us to feel a sense of despair and mournfulness, but rather we are to think of these things in terms of Christ’s having triumphed at every point; even when He was at His weakest, even when He died. We have no command in the Bible to hold Maundy Thursday services or Good Friday services, but we do have a command to observe the Lord’s Day and to preach Christ and Him crucified. We ought often to be considering Christ’s sufferings in relation to ourselves. We ought to consider them on a regular basis, and not just during the Easter week. We should be daily considering Christ’s sufferings in relation to our sins, just as we ought daily to consider His resurrection.

It is into Christ’s death that we have been baptized. We were buried with Him through baptism into His death. That is, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. (Romans 6: 4) We ought not to think that it is by our feeling badly that He had to go to the cross, that we are healed or God is glorified. It was Christ who was wounded for our transgressions; it was He who was bruised for our iniquities, and it is by His stripes that we are healed. It is not by our feeling bad about Christ having to die, but it is by our seeing that He willingly and lovingly died for us, that saves us. And it is our exercising faith in that, which is the basis for our being healed and forgiven.