

## Golgotha – AD 33

Bent nearly double under the weight of a huge cross, a man guarded by soldiers and followed by a yelling, mocking mob, struggles up the hill. Sweat and blood are mingled on His pale, pain-drawn face which is swollen almost beyond recognition. The marks of someone's fingers can still be seen on one pale cheek. A crown of sharp thorns has been pressed on His head with such force that the thorns are piercing the flesh deeply. One needle-like thorn has penetrated just above one eye and the blood is running down partially obscuring His vision. His back, cut and lacerated in almost every area, is streaming with blood,. Long livid welts show where the whip has fallen in the awful scourging He has received.

He staggers on, then without warning, falls insensible. The rough cross crushes down with all its weight on the horrible lacerated back. The man can go no further thus burdened, and so the soldiers take a member of the howling mob and bind the cross on him. In the meantime, the man has been revived and is once more standing on His trembling legs. Once again, the procession starts up the steep hill.

Reaching the summit, the cross is dropped to the ground and the man is stretched out on it. Someone at the base pulls His feet together on the heavy beam. They bring a huge spike, about eight inches long, and a heavy hammer. What are they going to do?

Two burly men stretch His arms out on the cross beams. Someone has brought more hammers and spikes. Is it possible? Can we believe our eyes – our ears? Are they really driving spikes through the hands and feet of a living human being? It's true!

The thud of the hammer striking the nails is mingled with the sound of deep groans from the bloodless lips of the stricken man. The heavy spikes tear through the flesh and they grate past bones on their way to the wood beneath.

Surely now they will be content with their hellish hate. But no, a deep hole is dug at the base of the structure and several husky soldiers lift the burdened cross and drop it with a heavy thud into the hole. The strain of His weight falling suddenly on the nailed hands and feet, force a cry from His inner being. And yet, He does not curse those who so cruelly torture Him. Instead, He lifts His eyes to heaven and prays – for Himself – that His pain may be lessened? No! This is His prayer, *Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.*

He pleads for forgiveness for the cruel, heartless people who have subjected Him to such untold suffering and humiliation – for His people who have betrayed Him, and have caused Him to be nailed to a cross to die in excruciating agony – for the soldiers who have beaten Him – for the throng who are even now mocking Him.

Time passes and He hangs motionless, the blood dripping ceaselessly from His head – His back – His hands – His feet – His whole

body. The mangled body is throbbing with pain. His throat is parched. Feebly, He asks for a drink. Someone runs quickly and dipping a hyssop into a liquid, raises it on a long reed to the pale lips, but it's not water! Their hate of this poor, suffering man is so great that He is denied what one would give a dying dog – a cool drink of water. They bring Him vinegar mingled with gall. Think of it! They could have pitied Him now, seeing that He is dying. Surely there must be someone in all that vast crowd who will relent and have compassion. But no! Instead they mock Him. Even the religious leaders taunt Him in every way, wagging their heads and telling Him to save Himself – if He is indeed the Son of God.

But suddenly, every voice is hushed. The people stand scarcely daring to breathe. Horror grips their hearts as every light in creation seems to be snuffed out. An intense darkness, so deep it seems tangible, settles over the earth. As they fearfully ask each other what this can mean, a vivid flash of lightening splits the darkness for a moment only to make it more intense. The lightening seems to strike at the cross, and is followed by crashes of thunder that shake the earth.

For three hours, the man on the cross is the center of this strange and terrifying storm. It is as if the mighty wrath of God has joined its fury with that of the mob against this One, forsaken, suffering Creature. The heart that had so bravely endured man's rejection cannot endure separation from His God. Suddenly a loud cry issues from His tortured lips, *My God, My God, why has Thou forsaken me?* With

another loud cry, His head falls forward and He dies.

Then indeed, it seems that God would vent His wrath on the people who have so misused His only Son. The earth shakes. The veil of the temple is torn from top to bottom. Graves are opened. The dead are seen walking on the streets of Jerusalem. The terrified people begin to speak to each other in awed tones, *Truly this was the Son of God*, and they flee in every direction from the awful place of skulls.

What horror must have filled the hearts of the followers of Jesus. The Messiah was dead! The Promised One, the Hope of the World, had been stripped naked, beaten, crucified. There was nothing for them. No hope. No future. No dreams. No love. No more companionship with the Son of God – He was dead!



The Sabbath day is over and Mary Magdeline and the other Mary trudge sorrowfully to the grave. They must go and be as near as possible to their dearly beloved. Their minds are still reeling from the tragedies of the previous days. Thoughts of the beatings, the horrible crown of thorns, the taunting crowds, the crucifixion, will never leave their minds.

But, what is happening? Another earthquake. The angel of the Lord rolls the heavy stone back from the opening of the tomb! Then he sat on the stone with a countenance like lightning and clothing as white as snow. Their minds are stunned. The guards begin to

shake and fall to the ground as though they are dead.

The two Mary's minds are completely bewildered. What is happening? Where is Jesus? They can hardly understand what this marvelous creation is saying.

*Do not be afraid,  
I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified.  
He is not here; for He is risen, as He said.  
Come, see the place where the Lord lay.  
Go quickly and tell His disciples that He is  
risen from the dead!*



In the marvelous joy we share this Resurrection season, it's important to remember not only the resurrection of our Lord, but also His horrible death. His death is not just something that happened almost 2,000 years ago. It is not just a historical event.

It is for you and me that His back was cut to ribbons with a cat-o'-nine tails.

It is for you and for me that He endured the soldiers buffeting His face until it was swollen almost beyond recognition.

It is for you and for me that the sharp thorns were crushed on His brow.

He carried the heavy cross until He fainted for you and for me.

He was nailed to the cross –  
He endured the awful pain  
without even a drop of cool water –  
His last hours were tortured  
with the separation from His Father.  
He literally became sin for us! It was our sins

that caused the Father to hide  
His face from Him.  
It was our sins that made Him  
cry out in sorrow.

It was our sins that sent Him to His death.

Why did Jesus die? It was because of His tremendous love for mankind. Our minds are too small to ever comprehend this kind of love. We can only understand that He suffered and died so that we could be free from the power of Satan – so that we could have eternal life.

Such suffering, such love – for you and for me.

### ***What does He ask in return?***

That we believe in Him  
and receive everlasting life.

That we serve Him  
and have joy beyond description.

That we love Him  
and have fellowship with Him.  
That we spend all eternity with Him!

### ***How could we do less?***

The inspiration for this writing was taken from a tract written by B. Johnson which was given to me when I was a young teen. It helped me picture the reality of Christ's death. It's my prayer that it will do the same for you. *Joyce Gill*

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