

8 Ways Jesus Suffered for You

In the churches I grew up in, all the crosses I saw were plain and empty—and usually painted white. We celebrated the fact that Jesus came off the cross and was raised from the dead on Resurrection Sunday. So I always considered the Catholic cross very odd because Jesus was still hanging there in bloody agony. Some people I knew even suggested that crucifixes should be avoided because they leave Jesus in perpetual death.

I'm not lobbying for anyone to wear a crucifix. But I do think we Protestants have at times been so fearful of Catholic doctrines that we minimized Jesus' painful suffering. In the Gospels, plenty of time is spent describing the torture that led to Calvary and the pain Jesus suffered while nailed to a piece of wood. We should ponder what Jesus suffered if we ever hope to fathom the price He paid for our salvation.

Here are eight things we should think about during the days leading up to Easter:

1. He was betrayed by His disciple Judas. Jesus' pain was not just physical. Can you imagine the sorrow He felt when one of His own trusted friends became the ultimate traitor? We aren't exactly sure how to calculate the modern value of 30 pieces of silver, but many scholars suggest about \$950. All the pain Jesus endured on Good Friday began the night before, when Judas took blood money to have his Master arrested.

Think about it: There's a bit of Judas in all of us, and we all betrayed Jesus to get our own way. Yet He chose to forgive us!

2. He was abandoned by His other followers. We often focus on Peter's denial of Jesus. But the Scriptures remind us that all of Jesus' disciples "left Him and fled" after His arrest (Mark 14:50, NASB). Jesus had to suffer alone. All the men He had

taught and invested in for three and a half years abandoned Him in His hour of need.

Think about it: Jesus paid it all. He accomplished His work of redemption without our help. But He forgave us for our denials!

3. He carried the burden of the sins of the world. Jesus' greatest agony didn't start on the cross. It began at Gethsemane, where God laid on His Son the sins of the world. Jesus agonized so intensely in those moments that He sweat drops of blood (Luke 22:44). Scholars say He probably developed a condition known as hematidrosis, in which blood is emitted through the sweat glands because of intense stress.

Think about it: Your sin was transferred to Jesus' account, and He bore the punishment you deserved!

4. He was falsely accused and rejected by Jewish leaders. Can you imagine the heartache Jesus experienced when the very people He was sent to save spat in His face, blindfolded Him, cursed Him and accused Him of blasphemy? The Sanhedrin set up a kangaroo court and sentenced the Son of God to death.

Think about it: Jesus did not open His mouth in self-defense when He was falsely accused. Now, when Satan accuses you, Jesus argues your case and declares you not guilty!

5. He was mocked and abused by Roman guards. After Pilate caved into pressure from the Jews, Roman soldiers flogged Jesus with a whip, drove a crown of thorns into His scalp, beat His head with sticks and mockingly pretended to worship Him. The flogging alone—which would have involved leather cords with pieces of lead or bone attached—would have drained much of Jesus' blood.

Think about it: Jesus could have called on angels to stop His

torture—but He chose to endure the pain because He loved us!

6. He was crucified between two thieves. We cannot even fathom the pain of crucifixion. Metal spikes were driven into Jesus' hands and feet, and He had to slide His mangled body up against the wood of the cross in order to catch His breath. And because it was the habit of Romans to crucify criminals naked, Jesus endured the ultimate shame. What's more, He hung on that crude cross next to two men who had been convicted of crimes—while He was completely innocent.

Think about it: We should have been on death row, not Jesus. But He took our place!

7. His body was pierced with a spear. Even after Jesus took His last breath, a soldier jabbed a spear up through the chest cavity—most likely to make sure Jesus was dead. John tells us that blood and water spilled out (John 19:34), evidence that the spear pierced the pericardium, the sac around the heart. Jesus' heart was literally broken for us.

Think about it: Just as Adam's side was opened to bring forth the first woman, Jesus' side was opened to bring forth the church. His piercing produced a fountain of life for us!

8. He tasted death for all. This is the most horrible reality of the cross. Christ did not die metaphorically or symbolically. He died literally. The Son of God, who had never sinned—and who was least deserving of death—died so we could have life. His heart stopped beating, He stopped breathing and His spirit left Him. First Peter 3:18 says: "For Christ also died for sins once and for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God."

Think about it: Because Jesus died in our place, we no longer have to die. Eternal life is His free gift to us!

This Easter season, ponder the steps the Savior took from Gethsemane to Golgotha. Look at His nail-pierced hands and feet. Take a careful survey of His wondrous cross, and thank Him for hanging there six hours for you.

Note: If you know someone who doesn't understand what Jesus did for them on the cross, please forward this article to them—and invite them to your church on Easter Sunday.

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