

So Great a Suffering
April 18, 2025
Pastor Jim Danielson

Opening Illustration

Why?

Introduction

Why did Jesus have to suffer and die? What did His death accomplish? Why was the cross so necessary? Good questions.

Jesus' Suffering Means Everything

1. He was tortured by the soldiers.

Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate...had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified. ¹⁶The soldiers led Jesus away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium) and called together the whole company of soldiers. ¹⁷They put a purple robe on him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him.¹⁸ And they began to call out to him, "Hail, king of the Jews!" ¹⁹Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spit on him. Mark 14:15-19

These were seasoned, hardened and merciless men who were an occupying army in Israel. These soldiers weren't respected and when they got the chance to inflict torture on an Israelite, they inflicted pain and suffering with pleasure. They were tough, callous men who thought nothing of torturing a criminal handed over to them and Jesus was no exception.

Isaiah described this day when he spoke of the effects of torture upon the suffering servant.

Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. ⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. Isaiah 53:4-5

Jesus' suffering means everything to us because in His suffering, He took the punishment that we deserved because of our sins upon Himself. He took our place and carried our guilt.

Illustration

The unbroken hero came home broken.

2. He was taunted by the people.

He was mocked, despised and ridiculed by the nameless, faceless, merciless mob, by the jealous religious leaders, by the hardened soldiers and even one of the criminals. All three taunted those being crucified because they didn't care about them. They were criminals so they deserved what they got. Jesus was no different to them than the other criminals. In looking at the gospel accounts, we learn of four groups of people who tormented Jesus while He hung on the cross.

1. He was taunted by the **crowd**.

Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads⁴⁰ and saying, “You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!” Matthew 27:29-30

The unthinking crowd is always ready to join in and express their common disdain for the ones who can't defend themselves. They were the passersby who stopped to watch the show. They had the time and they weren't in a hurry so they stood and watched. Then they got swept up in the drama and began to taunt Jesus to come down off the cross and save yourself if you are the Son of God.

2. He was taunted by the **religious leaders**.

In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. ⁴² “He saved others,” they said, “but he can't save himself! He's the king of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. ⁴³ He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’” Matthew 27:41-43

These were the ones who wanted Jesus out of the way. He'd accused them of hypocrisy and confronted them with their spiritual abuse of the people. He'd showed them for what they really were, men who loved the praise of men over the praise of God. They'd made a mockery of the true worship of God

and they continually plotted against Jesus. Now they believed they'd beaten Him and he would be rid of. They shouted, "He saved others, but He can't save Himself. He trusts in God, let God rescue Him."

3. He was taunted by the soldiers.

The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar³⁷ and said, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself." Luke 23:36-37

Soldiers were the third group mocking Jesus. "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself." What they and everyone else missed was that Jesus came to seek and to save the lost, not Himself. He entrusted His life to His Father.

4. He was taunted by one of the criminals.

One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" Luke 23:43

Sadly, even one of those abused becomes an abuser. He cries out, "Save yourself and us!" He doesn't want to die but in his fear his voice joins the chorus of mockers. Even though he will soon die without hope, he fails to see Jesus as his Saviour.

Illustration

The Three Crosses by Rembrandt.

3. He was triumphant in His death.

the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? ⁴¹ We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." ⁴² Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." ⁴³ Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise." Luke 23:40-43

Against the unrelenting abuse aimed at Him, there is one small voice on a cross next to Jesus. This man, who is about to die, whose body is wracked in pain and agony, his throat burning up with thirst, cries out to Jesus. His life is all but over with no chance to escape his eminent death. In his agony he whispers, Jesus, I need you. Help me. I believe in you.

"Remember me when you come into your kingdom."

Jesus gave him the hope he desperately needed. *"I tell you the truth, today, you will be with Me in paradise."* As Jesus fulfilled the Father's plan. He found one last sinner to bring into His kingdom. His final words were a shout of triumph!

Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. John 19:30

Closing Illustration

Jesus' final words, "It is finished!"