

Sermon outline and notes prepared by:

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Matthew 27:27-31 “Mocked & Abused for Us!”

Intro. Have you ever been verbally abused? Has someone ever made fun of you, or ridiculed you? Has someone ever physically abused you? I believe all of us have suffered some kind of abuse or ridicule at some time in our lives. Some may be going through it right now.

Well I want you to know that Jesus Christ suffered abuse and ridicule more than anyone I know. He knows what it feels like. And so when you go through such times of suffering, you can take your problem to the Lord. He understands. He will sympathize with you, and comfort you, and strengthen you. And this morning we are going to learn more about what we should do when *we* suffer abuse & ridicule.

We are also going to see a dark picture of the depravity of man. Right before Jesus was crucified, the Roman soldiers were utterly cruel to Jesus. Now we may not be as bad as these Roman soldiers, but we all share the same problem of having a sin nature. As a result we all have sinned against a holy God, and so often, we just can't seem to help ourselves, especially when we get in certain situations, or around certain people. So we all need to be saved from sin, and Jesus was willing to suffer incredibly in order to pay the full penalty of sin.

Now this morning we will partake of the Lord's Supper. Before we do, let us reflect upon one aspect of the suffering of Jesus for us. In a moment we will take the bread, by which we are to remember the body of Jesus. We will reflect upon the fact the Jesus suffered in His body. He was lashed with a whip, and the flesh of His head was pierced with many thorns. Then we will take the cup, which is to remind us of His blood, and I will invite you to reflect upon the fact that His blood flowed freely even from His head and brow. And as we reflect upon the sufferings of Jesus for us, we should certainly respond by loving Jesus more, and desiring to serve Him more fully and faithfully.

So let's look into this brief text of Scripture, and consider the lessons that God has for you and for me. Now first of all:

I. THE SOLDIERS SHOW US HOW SINFUL WE CAN BE

Jeremiah 17:9 says, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” If ever there was a place where we could see that verse proved, it was in the palace of the governor. Jesus had already suffered incredibly in Gethsemane, during His mock trials (26:67-68), and during His flogging (27:26). By now His body must have been throbbing with pain. He was about to suffer to an even greater degree during His crucifixion. Wouldn't that be enough? No! The blood-thirsty soldiers sunk to even lower levels of depravity as they added to the suffering of Jesus. I will share with you the specifics in just a moment.

Now what happened to Jesus was not all that unusual. First-century executions were not like modern ones. When any criminal was to be crucified, he was turned over to the Roman soldiers. They were a brutal lot. And since the authorities wanted to make an example of condemned criminals, they wanted the condemned prisoners to suffer greatly. So they often permitted the soldiers to abuse & humiliate such men before their crucifixion. They were free to

do with Him pretty much as they pleased. Such was the torture that our Lord Jesus Christ endured for us. Notice with me what they did:

A. They Engaged in Gang Violence – In v.27 Matthew says, “Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium [the governor’s palace] and gathered the whole garrison around Him.” Pilate’s soldiers amused themselves by mocking & abusing the condemned Prisoner, and they invited the rest of the cohort to join in the brutal horseplay. Now a full cohort was 600 men, but I doubt that many were directly involved. Another commentator says a cohort would have been about 200 men. Quite a few probably just watched. In such a close-knit band, there would have been ringleaders, regimental clowns who would have sharpened their wits on this man delivered to their hands. There would also have been bullies in the band, who would not have been able to refrain from taking advantage of a helpless man.

Now in such a situation the soldiers must have surrounded Jesus like a pack of dogs. In a group, men will behave worse than they would alone. And they were like the wild beast that plays with its prey before killing it. In fact, I remember my own cat doing something similar with a bird that it had caught. So Christ became a plaything for this brutal, cruel, crowd.

I want to encourage our children and youth to be careful about getting involved in a group of ungodly people. You are much more likely to do something terribly wrong in such a gang atmosphere. And when you go off to college, what do you think will happen when you join the typical Fraternity or Sorority? You will be much more likely to engage in alcohol or sexual abuse.

B. They Mocked His Claim to Be King – They knew He claimed to be a king from what the people screamed about Him. Jesus had also affirmed this claim before the governor (v.11). So this bit of information gave them an opportunity of showing their contempt for the Jews. They hated the Jews, for many Jews hated them, and their lives were always threatened in the same way the lives of our troops are constantly threatened in Iraq. So they would thoroughly enjoy any opportunity they might have to mock a Jew, especially One who was supposed to be “the King of the Jews.” Notice what all they did to mock Him. Children like to dress up to fit a certain part, or they like to dress up dolls. So some immature soldier who had never really grown up laughingly said, “Well, if He is a king, then he need a robe.” So the first thing they did to mock Him was:

1. They Robed Him – V.28 says, “And they stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him.” The “robe” was probably a short cloak, such as was worn by military officers, kings, and emperors. The one they selected was most likely well worn & discarded by some military officer.

2. They Crowned Him – A king must have a crown, so v.29 says, “When they had twisted a crown of thorns, they put it on His head....” The soldiers intended the crown to be a cheap and painful imitation of the wreath-type crown worn by Tiberius Caesar.

Little did the soldiers know how suitable the crown of thorns was. Thorns are the symbol of the curse, for they resulted from the curse of sin according to Genesis 3:17-18. And so Jesus bore the curse so that the curse might be removed from us, including the curse on the world of nature. Romans 8:19 says the whole creation waits “for the manifestation of the sons of God.” It too shall be liberated from the curse.

Then someone said, “A king also needs a scepter.” So:

3. They Put a Scepter in His Hand - V.29 also says that they put “a reed in His right hand.” Matthew alone mentions that the reed was placed to Christ’s hand as a scepter.

4. They Bowed & Mockingly Gave Homage – In the last of v.29 we read, “And they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’” By the way, these soldiers were probably recruited from the province of Syria; and if so, were able to speak Aramaic, which was spoken also by the Jews. So it is likely that they were speaking to Jesus in His own tongue. Now get the picture: A soldier would drop to his knees in front of Jesus and say, “Hail, king of the Jews!” Then another would take his turn, and still another, until all had shared in this fun. But there was no sincerity in their proclamation, only sarcasm, ridicule, and laughter. They repeated this mock homage over and over, not realizing that the One they were mocking was indeed King of kings and Lord of lords. Imagine how they will feel when they stand before Jesus on Judgment Day!

Then they did something that no subject would ever do to his king:

5. They Spat in His Face – V.30 says, “Then they spat on Him....” Jewish leaders had spit on Him (Matt. 26:67), and now the Roman soldiers were doing so. This was the ultimate insult. Has anyone ever spit in your face? So imagine what it could have been like. Each soldier, when his turn came around, knelt & said “Hail, king of the Jews!” Then, after getting up from his knees he spat into the face of God’s beloved Son! By the time they were through, the face of Jesus must have been covered with blood and spit. This was in fulfillment of Isa. 50:6, which says, “I did not hide My face from shame and spitting.” Here we see Jesus suffering great emotional pain as His creatures mocked Him, and even spit upon Him.

This was not all the mocking that Christ endured. In Lk. 23:11 we read that Herod & his men of war had already “treated Him with contempt and mocked Him.” Now look down to vv.41-42, “Likewise the chief priests also, mocking with the scribes and elders, said, ‘He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him.’” Jesus bore wave and wave of mocking.

So here we see Jesus insulted as one utterly contemptible. And why was this? Well sin brings shame. The adulterer has shame. The thief brings shame to himself & his family. And so Christ bore our shame that we might instead have glory, honor and eternal life through faith in Christ’s atonement.

Another lesson is this: We should never engage in such behavior. Have you ever had selfish fun at other people’s expense? Have you ever told a joke about someone that really hurt their feelings, or humiliated them? If so, you are guilty of the same kind of sin as these soldiers. Children can be very cruel to one other in what they say and do. Many a child has come home crying their heart out for how they have been mistreated. I had a stuttering problem while growing up, and I can remember how other kids would make fun of me. And let me warn you: Paul said in 1 Cor. 6:10 that revilers, verbal abusers, will not “inherit the kingdom of God.” There is no place for that kind of behavior in a Christian’s life.

Now the soldiers mockingly denied that Jesus was a king. Do you likewise deny that Jesus is king of your life? Do you deny His lordship? Well I can also point out that even when Jesus was mocked, He demonstrated that He was indeed the Messianic King, the Son of God. For back in Mt. 20:19 Jesus predicted this would happen to Him. There He said that the leaders of Israel would “deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify. And the third day He will rise again.” (Same prediction reported in Mk. 10:34; Lk. 18:32). So if we think of who He was who bore all this, and of why He bore it, we may well bow not only the knee, but also the heart in endless love and thankfulness. And those who do not bow before Jesus in this

life, will bow before Him in the Day of Judgment, for the Bible says that “...every knee shall bow..., and every tongue shall confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of the Father” (Phil. 2:10-11). I suggest that you sincerely bow before Him now.

Now these cruel soldiers were not through. For in our text we also see that:

C. They Added to His Physical Suffering – Keep in mind that Jesus had been flogged. His back & shoulders were bruised, lacerated, and bloody. So when they removed His clothes it hurt. When they put on the old robe, it must have hurt (v.28). Now at this point there was probably no part of His body which was not bleeding except His head, feet, & hands, and now that head must be made to suffer too. So when they placed that crown of thorns upon Him it must have hurt terribly (v.29). It especially hurt when they no doubt hit the crown of thorns with that reed (v.30). The tense of the verb indicates that they hit him over and over again as each soldier stood up, took the reed from His hand, spit in His face, and then hit Him with His scepter. As a result the thorny spikes were driven deeper into His flesh. Bolts of pain would shoot through His body. Rivulets of blood must have run down his face, neck, and other parts of his body. And as they were hitting Him, it was as if they were saying, “What a king you are! One that gets hit over the head with his own scepter!” You can just picture them laughing at Jesus, who seemed to be so helpless. Finally, they removed the robe & put His garment back on. That must have hurt as well (v.31). Do you see what He endured when He took your place?

Jesus had never done anything to them. Yet they had no interest in alleviating His agony. They showed no concern for His suffering and no interest in healing His wounds. They were bent on aggravating that agony. They reflected the heart of their father the devil. But these men had not yet done their worst to God’s Son. Next some of them were to lead Him outside the city and nail Him to a cross.

We infer from John’s Gospel that Pilate may have encouraged the mistreatment of Jesus that we read about here. At the very least he did nothing to restrain them. Instead, he used it for his own purposes. For after it was over, Pilate presented Jesus to the crowd, bloody, bruised, & beaten, at that point still wearing the crown of thorns. It was a pathetic spectacle indeed. Then Pilate said, “Behold the Man!” He was hoping that the crowd, seeing Him, would have sympathy upon Jesus and stop demanding His crucifixion. And he tried to show that such a man couldn’t possibly be a threat to Rome or to Israel. But it didn’t work. Many in the crowd screamed even louder for His crucifixion, and warned Pilate that he was no friend of Caesar if he released Jesus. As a result, Pilate gave in & signed the death sentence.

One main lesson from this horrible picture is the sinful depravity of man. Hellish cruelty is displayed here. We all need to face up to the fact that humanity has a sin problem. Since we were created in the image of God, we are also capable of goodness. But that doesn’t negate the fact that we have a sin problem. Your sin nature hasn’t manifested itself to the degree that we see here, but your sin nature is nevertheless real.

Social science experiments help us face the biblical truth about human depravity. In the summer of 1971, Stanford psychologist Philip Zimbardo conducted a now-famous prison simulation experiment. Volunteers were recruited and randomly assigned to be “guards” and “prisoners.” In a matter of hours, the abuse began. The experiment was scheduled to run for two weeks, but Zimbardo cut it short at six days. But Zimbardo marshals evidence showing that certain situations unleash the propensity for evil in ordinary individuals. Human evil remains a mystery. Somewhere in each of us there is a potential for evil. Without restraining influences, we

are all prone to mistreat others.¹ Yes, the sin problem is real, and you need to make sure that you have turned to Jesus, who alone suffered and died for your sin. He is the only One who can save you from your sin.

So the soldiers show us how sinful we can be. Have you acknowledged your sin problem, and your need of a Savior? Now the second main point is this:

II. JESUS SHOWS US HOW STRONG WE SHOULD BE

We have seen that they mocked Jesus regarding His claim that He was a king. But He was a King in the truest and most emphatic sense. Though in one sense He appeared to be weak to the soldiers, in another sense He was quite strong. He was in complete control of His emotions. Though He was abused, Jesus kept His anger under control. He who had the power to calm the raging storm could have lashed out at these men with angry force, but He did not. He didn't even use His reed to hit the soldiers. Christ also showed no evidence of fear. Ps. 118:6 says, "The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?" I believe that Jesus maintained a calm composure through it all.

Now Jesus was mistreated in the first degree. Wouldn't we all agree with that? Now you can expect to be mistreated, and made fun of from time to time as well. And if you are a dedicated Christian, you are sure to be persecuted and made fun of by sinners. It should encourage us to know that Jesus also was mistreated. He knows what it is like. And how Jesus responded to such mistreatment is in many ways a pattern for us to follow.

A. Let Us Patiently Endure Suffering Like Jesus – Jesus endured all the humiliation and suffering. He said nothing, offered no resistance. Though he could have spoken the word, and all would have fallen before him dead, Jesus patiently bore their abuse. He was longsuffering toward His abusers. He willingly endured this because He knew that He was accomplishing the work which the Father had given him to do. He was drinking all the cup of suffering that our sins deserve. He knew that was the only way we could be saved from our sin. So I'm not saying that we should never defend ourselves. But there are times when suffering will be unavoidable, and we should follow the example of Jesus in terms of strong, triumphant endurance through that time of suffering. The strength of His love mastered the weakness of manhood; He put that cup to His lips and never shrank, but He drank right on till not a dreg was left. In 1 Cor. 4:12 we read how the apostle Paul followed the example of Jesus when he said, "being persecuted, we endure." We are not to seek a quick exit from suffering. We are not to avoid suffering through sinful means. 1 Pet. 2:20 says, "when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God."

Only love for His Heavenly Father and love for us could have compelled Christ to endure such suffering and abuse. How the Savior must have loved us! Do you love Him? Have you given your heart to Him? Are you following His example of patient endurance?

B. Let Us Not Pay Evil for Evil – Turn over to 1 Pet. 2:23. There Peter said of Jesus, "who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return...." He did not do unto others as they were doing to Him. No, just because others sin against you, that does not give you the right to sin against them. That is why 2 times Paul said to "Repay no one evil for evil" (Rom 12:17; 1 Th. 5:15). The apostle Peter said that we are not to be "returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling"

¹ *Christianity Today*, July 2004, p.22.

(1 Pet. 3:9). Prov. 24:29 says, “Do not say, ‘I will do to him just as he has done to me...’.” Instead, Jesus did exactly what He told His disciples to do, “Love your enemies.” He even said from the cross, “Father forgive them for they know not what they do.”

In 1 Cor. 4:12 we read how the apostle Paul followed the example of Jesus when he said, “Being reviled, we bless.”

So the next time you are verbally abused, will you respond in like manner, or will you be like Jesus?

1 Pet. 2:23 tells us one other thing Jesus did, that we should also do in our time of suffering:

C. Let Us Trust God – There Peter said of Jesus, “when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously.” Even a false faith can trust God when things are going well, but it takes true faith to trust God when you’re facing a great trial. Jesus believed that His heavenly Father would ultimately deliver Him from the trial He was facing, and on Easter morning, He did! Spurgeon said, “If we cannot believe God when our circumstances appear to be against us, we do not believe Him at all.” [Illus.#C-286].

Ah, who but the Son of God, the King of kings, could have suffered so and responded in such a way? Let me give another reason why I believe that Jesus is the Son of God. Since there could have been nobody there except the soldiers, it is well to inquire, “Who told this story?” It must have been an eyewitness. May it not have been that centurion who in the same chapter is reported to have said, “Certainly this was the Son of God?” May not that scene as well as the Lord’s death have led him to that conclusion?

Conclusion: Yes, I believe also! Jesus *is* the Son of God, the King of Israel. Who else could have borne such suffering with such patience, self-control, and love? He is my King. Have you believed in Him? Have you made Him Lord of your life? You will not turn to Jesus until you see yourself as a sinner in need of a Savior. Do you acknowledge your sin today?

God’s plan of salvation culminates in the cross. On that cross the Lord bore the sins of the world and provided salvation for all who believe in Him. Will you believe in Him today? Christian, will you follow His example of patient endurance in the face of suffering? Will you be careful not to repay evil for evil, reviling for reviling? Will you trust God for deliverance the next time you are called upon to suffer for Him?

Sources: Ronald A. Beers, ed., *Life Application Study Bible* (Tyndale House & Zondervan, 1991); Stephen Felker, *Devotional & Explanatory Notes on the Entire Bible* (Col. Hghts, VA: Published by Author), 2007; William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973); John MacArthur, Jr., *Condemned and Crucified: Matthew 27:11-56* (Panorama City, CA: Word of Grace Communications, 1987); J. Vernon McGee, *Thru The Bible*, Vol. 4 (Pasadena, CA: Thru The Bible Radio, 1983); John Phillips, *Exploring The Gospel of Matthew: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1999); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible* [CD-ROM] (Ontario: Timnathserah Inc., 1996); Alfred Plummer, *An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to S. Matthew*, reprint, Christian Publishing Co.; Charles H. Spurgeon, *12 Sermons on the Passion and Death of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1971 reprint), 95-102; [25G.44]; Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Loyal: Matthew* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1980). Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).