

# THE SUFFERING SAVIOUR

Meditations on the Last Days of Christ

By

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## CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

### THE WAY TO THE CROSS

**“THEN DELIVERED HE HIM therefore unto them.”** Alas for Pilate! Had he but known who it was, and all that he gave up in thus delivering Him! We have tasted only a little of His heavenly manna, but we would not give Him up for all the world. **“Lord, to whom else shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.”**

We confess, indeed, with deep humiliation, that we are frequently guilty of denying His name, and whenever this is the case, we go out, weeping bitterly, with Peter, and after having been comforted by Him afresh, we again say, with stronger emphasis than before, “We will never again deliver Him up.” We renounce the friendship, favor, and honor, of His adversaries. If the whole world were offered to us, Jesus is not to be had in exchange. Our union with Him bears the stamp and signature of eternity.

**“Then delivered he him therefore unto them.”** Oh, if Pilate had had any idea whose instrument he was at that moment! But he is unacquainted with the precious words, **“God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son,”** and those of the apostle, **“He who spared not his own Son, but freely gave him up for us all: how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?”** These testimonies, however, are known to us; we also know their mysterious depth; we hang down our heads at the words, **“Then delivered he him therefore unto them,”** and adore Him.

**“Then.”** He was now ready and prepared for the last great sacrificial act. He had fulfilled the law, had victoriously endured every trial of faith, and had proved Himself in every ordeal to be pure and unalloyed gold. He was **“the Lamb without spot,”** obedient beyond compare, and it was just such a sacrifice as this that the God of holiness required. He must first be found worthy of a crown before He could bear the curse. All is now in readiness.

**“Then delivered he him.”** Now close the temple, ye sons of Aaron; the types and shadows with which ye had to do have done their duty, now that the substance has appeared. Lay aside the band from your foreheads, and the breastplate, ye ministers of the sanctuary; for know that Another now justly adorns Himself with both, and your priesthood has reached its termination.

The act of delivering over the accused has taken place; Jesus is now in the hands of His enemies, like a lamb amid wolves, or a dove in the claws of the vulture. How was David in the right when he said, **“I will rather fall into the hand of the Lord, than into the hands of man.”**

Look how they treat the Holy One, now that they have Him among them. They again assail Him with the bitterest mockery, cruelly and rudely tear the purple robe from His bleeding body and put on Him His own clothes again, not from compassion, but because it seems to them that the awful death to which they are now preparing to conduct Him, is no longer to be treated as a jest or a scoff, but requires a certain solemn seriousness.

The change of garments which took place in the court of the praetorium reminds us of an act in our own life.

In the days of our blindness we had also divested the Lord Jesus of the glory of His inherent splendor, while presuming to deny one or other particular concerning Him, so as to leave Him little more than the title of a Jewish Rabbi, or the Sage of Nazareth. But how did we afterward alter our course, when the Lord stripped us of the garments of our imaginary righteousness, and in the mirror of His law exhibited to us our real form!

How hastily did we then put upon Immanuel His own raiment! We first gave Thee back Thy Messiah-crown, and then Thy sacrificial and priestly robes, and, finally, Thy diadem as the King of Glory; for the awakened necessities of our hearts had rectified our vision and sharpened it for Thy beauty. Amid many tears of repentance and delight, we again clothed Thee in Thy original attire. Thou now standest before us in Thy full and complete array, and we will never cease to bow the knee before Thee, and to rejoice, and say with Jacob, **“Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise!”**

After the soldiers had made their preparations, the awful cross appears which has since become the standard of the kingdom of Christ and the token of our salvation.

During the space of three thousand years it had been constantly symbolized to the view of the believing Israelites. It is even reflected in the peculiar manner in which the dying patriarch Jacob, with crossed hands, blessed his grandsons Ephraim and Manasseh. It glimmered no less in the wave-offerings of the tabernacle and temple, which, as is well known, were wont to be waved so as to make the form of a cross appear. In the wilderness the sign was elevated to support the brazen serpent, and the spirit of prophecy interwove it in the figurative language of David's Psalms when placing in the mouth of the future Messiah the words, **“They pierced my hands and my feet.”**

Look, yonder they bring it!

According to the Roman custom, all who were condemned to the punishment of the cross were compelled to carry that instrument of their death to the place of execution, and even the divine sufferer is not spared this disgrace and toil.

Without mercy they lay on His wounded back the instrument of torture; and, after having given Him for His escort two grievous criminals, similarly burdened and condemned to the same death, they open the gate of the courtyard toward the street in order at length to satisfy the people who had been impatiently awaiting the cruel spectacle.

A low murmur of malicious joy and profound excitement pervades the mass when the three cross-bearers make their appearance. The procession sets itself in motion. In the van an armed troop on foot and on horseback; then the three victims with their crosses, surrounded by their executioners; behind these the civil and ecclesiastical authorities of the nation; and, finally, the crowding, gaping, innumerable multitude.

We silently join them in spirit. Oh, what a path is that which we now tread! Only think, it is thus the unhappy world repels the Man who entered upon it heralded by angels and in the midst of heavenly songs of praise. It is thus she rewards Him for the unwearied love with which He poured upon her the abundance of all conceivable benefits and mercies! Oh, who that is still inclined to doubt whether mankind was worthy of eternal perdition without the intervention of a Mediator, let him cast a look at this path of suffering and convince himself of the contrary!

Yonder they conduct the Man of Sorrows! One can not reflect who it is that is thus laden with the accursed tree, without feeling surprise and astonishment. But it is well for us that He traversed this path. Only observe how the form of the Lamb which taketh away the sins of the world is so clearly expressed in Him.

Behold Him, and say if you do not feel as if you heard the ancient words proceed from His silent lips, **“Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire, a body hast thou prepared for me. Lo! I come, I delight to do thy will, O my God! yea, thy law is within my heart.”**

Had He shrunk back from this fatal path, His road to suffering would have represented to us that on which, when dying, we should have quitted the world. Instead of soldiers, the emissaries of Satan would have escorted us; instead of the accursed tree, the curse of the law itself; instead of fetters, the bands of eternal wrath would have encircled us and despair have lashed us with its fiery scourge. Now, on the contrary, angels of peace sent by Eternal Love will at length bear us on a path of light, illumined by heavenly promises, to Abraham's bosom.

To whom are we indebted for this? Solely to the Man who totters yonder under the most awful of all burdens; and who carries away with Him everything which stood opposed to us and threatened us with destruction. Certainly it may still be the case that during our earthly pilgrimage we are led on similar paths to that on which we see Jesus, our Head, proceeding. For the world hates His members like Himself; and Satan ceases not to desire to have His redeemed, that he may sift them as wheat.

But heaven is no longer closed over our path of suffering and disgrace, nor does the black cloud of rejection and the curse obscure it. The sword of God has returned to its scabbard, and peace and hope are the gracious companions who walk by our side. Christ has deprived our fearful path of its horrors, our burdens of their overpowering weight, our disgrace and need of their deadly stings, and placed us in a situation to say with the royal Psalmist:

**“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.”**

Blessed therefore be the path of our Prince of Peace to the cross! Let us not cease to accompany Him daily thereon in the spirit. It will unspeakably sweeten our own painful path; for why does He take this horrible road, but to enable us to traverse ours with heads erect, because we are freed from curse and care. Upon His path He not only carries all our sins to the grave, and breaks a passage through all the obstacles which blocked up our access to the Father, but He makes, at the same time, all the bitter waters of the desert sweet, and neither leaves nor forsakes us, till He brings us safe to our heavenly home. Blessed be His holy name!

**~ end of chapter 38 ~**

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