

THE PRESENT TRUTH

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No Murmur of Complaint

Christ, the precious Son of God, was led forth and delivered to the people to be crucified. The disciples and believers from the region round about joined the throng that followed Jesus to Calvary. The mother of Jesus was also there, supported by John, the beloved disciple. Her heart was stricken with unutterable anguish; yet she, with the disciples, hoped that the painful scene would change, and Jesus would assert His power, and appear before His enemies as the Son of God. Then again her mother heart would sink as she remembered words in which He had briefly referred to the things which were that day being enacted.

Jesus had scarcely passed the gate of Pilate's house when the cross which had been prepared for Barabbas was brought out and laid upon His bruised and bleeding shoulders. Crosses were also placed upon the companions of Barabbas, who were to suffer death at the same time with Jesus. The Saviour had borne His burden but a few rods when, from loss of blood and excessive weariness and pain, He fell fainting to the ground.

When Jesus revived, the cross was again placed upon His shoulders and He was forced forward. He staggered on for a few steps, bearing His heavy load, then fell as one lifeless to the ground. He was at first pronounced to be dead, but finally he again revived. The priests and rulers felt no compassion for their suffering victim; but they saw that it was impossible for Him to carry the instrument of torture farther. While they were considering what to do, Simon, a Cyrenian, coming from an opposite direction, met the crowd, was seized at the instigation of the priests, and compelled to carry the cross of Christ. The sons of Simon were disciples of Jesus, but he himself had never been connected with Him.

A great multitude followed the Saviour to Calvary, many mocking and deriding; but some were weeping and recounting His praise. Those whom He had healed of various infirmities, and those whom He had raised from the dead, declared His marvelous works with earnest voice, and demanded to know what Jesus had done that He should be treated as a malefactor. Only a few days before, they had attended Him with joyful hosannas, and the waving of palm branches, as He rode triumphantly to Jerusalem. But many who had then shouted His praise, because it was popular to do so, now swelled the cry of "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!"

Upon arriving at the place of execution, the condemned were bound to the instruments of torture. While the two thieves wrestled in the hands of those who stretched them upon the cross, Jesus made no resistance. The mother of Jesus looked on with agonizing suspense, hoping that He would work a miracle to save Himself. She saw His hands stretched upon the cross--those dear hands that had ever dispensed blessings, and had been reached forth so many times to heal the suffering. And now the hammer and nails were brought, and as the spikes were driven through the tender flesh and fastened to the cross, the heart-stricken disciples bore away from the cruel scene the fainting form of the mother of Christ.

Jesus made *no murmur of complaint*; His face remained pale and serene, but great drops of sweat stood upon His brow. There was no pitying hand to wipe the death dew from His face, nor words of sympathy and unchanging fidelity to stay His human heart. He was treading the winepress all alone; and of all the people there was none with Him. While the soldiers were doing their fearful work, and He was enduring the most acute agony, Jesus prayed for His enemies--"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Luke 23:34. That prayer of Christ for His enemies embraced the world, taking in every sinner who should live, until the end of time.

After Jesus was nailed to the cross, it was lifted by several powerful men and thrust with great violence into the place prepared for it, causing the most excruciating agony to the Son of God. And now a terrible scene was enacted. Priests, rulers, and scribes forgot the dignity of their sacred offices, and joined with the rabble in mocking and jeering the dying Son of God, saying, "If Thou be the King of the Jews, save Thyself." Luke 23:37. And some deridingly repeated among themselves, "He saved others; Himself He cannot save." Mark 15:31. The dignitaries of the temple, the hardened soldiers, the vile thief upon the cross, and the base and cruel among the multitude--all united in their abuse of Christ.

The thieves who were crucified with Jesus suffered like physical torture with Him: but one was only hardened and rendered desperate and defiant by his pain. He took up the mocking of the priest, and railed upon Jesus, saying, "If Thou be Christ, save Thyself and us." Luke 23:39. The other malefactor was not a hardened criminal. When he heard the sneering words of his companion in crime, he "rebuked him, saying, Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man hath done nothing amiss." Luke 23:40, 41. Then, as his heart went out to Christ, heavenly illumination flooded his mind. In Jesus, bruised, mocked, and hanging upon the cross, he saw his Redeemer, his only hope, and appealed to him in humble faith: "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee Today, shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." Luke 23:43.

With amazement the angels beheld the infinite love of Jesus, who, suffering the most excruciating agony of mind and body, thought only of others, and encouraged the penitent soul to believe. While pouring out his life in death, He exercised a love for man stronger than death. Many who witnessed those scenes on Calvary were afterward established by them in the faith of Christ.

The enemies of Jesus now awaited His death with impatient hope. That event they imagined would forever hush the rumors of His divine power and the wonders of His miracles. They flattered themselves that they should then no longer tremble because of His influence. The unfeeling soldiers who had stretched the body of Jesus on the cross, divided His clothing among themselves, contending over one garment, which was woven without seam. They finally decided the matter by casting lots for it. The pen of inspiration had accurately described this scene hundreds of years before it took place: "For dogs have compassed Me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed Me: they pierced My hands and My feet. . . . They part My garments among them, and cast lots upon My vesture." Ps. 22:16, 18.

The eyes of Jesus wandered over the multitude that had collected together to witness His death, and He saw at the foot of the cross John supporting Mary, the mother of Christ. She had returned to the terrible scene, not being able to longer remain away from her Son. The last lesson of Jesus was one of filial love. He looked upon the grief-stricken face of His mother, and then upon John; said He, addressing the former: "Woman, behold thy son!" Then, to the disciple: "Behold thy mother!" John 19:27. John well understood the words of Jesus, and the sacred trust which was committed to him. He immediately removed the mother of Christ from the fearful scene of Calvary. From that hour he cared for her as would a dutiful son, taking her to his own home. The perfect example of Christ's filial love shines forth with undimmed luster from the mist of ages. While enduring the keenest torture, He was not forgetful of His mother, but made all provision necessary for her future.

The mission of Christ's earthly life was now nearly accomplished. His tongue was parched, and he said, "I thirst." They saturated a sponge with vinegar and gall, and offered it Him to drink; and when He had tasted it, he refused it. And now the Lord of life and glory was dying, a ransom for the race. It was the sense of sin, bringing the Father's wrath upon Him as man's substitute, that made the cup He drank so bitter, and broke the heart of the Son of God.

As man's substitute and surety, the iniquity of men was laid upon Christ; He was counted a transgressor that He might redeem them from the curse of the law. The guilt of every descendant of Adam of every age was pressing upon His heart; and the wrath of God and the terrible manifestation of His displeasure because of iniquity, filled the soul of His Son with consternation. The withdrawal of the divine countenance from the Saviour in this hour of supreme anguish pierced His heart with a sorrow that can never be fully understood by man. Every pang endured by the Son of God upon the cross, the blood drops that flowed from His head, His hands and feet, the convulsions of agony which racked His frame, and the unutterable anguish that filled His soul at the hiding of His Father's face from Him, speak to man, saying, It is for love of thee that the Son of God consents to have these heinous crimes laid upon Him; for thee He spoils the domain of death, and opens the gates of Paradise and immortal life. He who stilled the angry waves by His word and walked the foam-capped billows, who made devils tremble and disease flee from His touch, who raised the dead to life and opened the eyes of the blind, offers Himself upon the cross as the last sacrifice for man. He, the sin-bearer, endures judicial punishment for iniquity and becomes sin itself for man.

Satan, with his fierce temptations, wrung the heart of Jesus. Sin, so hateful to His sight, was heaped upon Him till He groaned beneath its weight. No wonder that His humanity trembled in that fearful hour. Angels witnessed with amazement the despairing agony of the Son of God, so much greater than His physical pain that the latter was hardly felt by Him. The hosts of heaven veiled their faces from the fearful sight.

Inanimate nature expressed a sympathy with its insulted and dying Author. The sun refused to look upon the awful scene. Its full, bright rays were illuminating the earth at midday, when suddenly it seemed to be blotted out. Complete darkness enveloped the cross and all the vicinity about, like a funeral pall. The darkness lasted three full hours. At the ninth hour the terrible darkness lifted from the people, but still wrapt the Saviour as in a mantle. The angry lightnings seemed to be hurled at Him as He hung upon the cross. Then "Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Mark 15:34.

In silence the people watch for the end of this fearful scene. Again the sun shines forth, but the cross is enveloped in darkness. Suddenly the gloom is lifted from the cross, and in clear trumpet tones, that seem to resound throughout creation, Jesus cries, "It is finished." "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." Luke 23:46. A light encircled the cross, and the face of the Saviour shone with a glory like unto the sun. He then bowed His head upon His breast and died.

At the moment in which Christ died, there were priests ministering in the temple before the veil which separated the holy from the most holy place. Suddenly they felt the earth tremble beneath them, and the veil of the temple, a strong rich drapery that had been renewed yearly, was rent in twain from top to bottom by the same bloodless hand that wrote the words of doom upon the walls of Belshazzar's palace.

Jesus did not yield up His life till He had accomplished the work which He came to do; and He exclaimed with His parting breath, "It is finished!" Angels rejoiced as the words were uttered, for the great plan of redemption was being triumphantly carried out. There was joy in heaven that the sons of Adam could now, through a life of obedience, be exalted finally to the presence of God. Satan was defeated, and knew that his kingdom was lost. {The Story of Redemption Pg. 219-227}

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