

Matthew 27

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[0 : 00] Thank you, Richard, for leading us so helpfully up to these thoughts concerning our Lord Jesus Christ. Before we consider those things, I'm going to read briefly from a very well-known passage, Isaiah 53, written 600 years before that first Good Friday, yet speaking so plainly and clearly of what happened. I'll break into the chapter in verse 10.

Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer. It was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer. When the Lord Jesus spent time with his disciples over those three years leading up to that Good Friday and ultimately to his resurrection, he often spoke to them about what was coming. He didn't sort of keep them in the dark. He didn't sort of keep them from knowing things. And when they asked, he told them very plainly and clearly what lay ahead of him in the future and particularly what lay ahead of him in going to Jerusalem.

Most of them didn't understand. They completely didn't grasp what Jesus was saying. Like many of us, they were a bit thick in the brain department. But at least on one occasion, Peter tried to stop Jesus. He grasped it and understood it. And he said to Jesus, no, you mustn't do this. You mustn't. And Jesus had to rebuke him and tell him it was absolutely necessary. And each time that Jesus spoke to his disciples, and we have several of them recorded here, each time he would use just one word to describe everything that was going to happen. Just one word that would explain the whole and describe the whole of what would happen to him on that first Good Friday. And the word that he used was the word suffer. Suffer.

Many months earlier on, Luke tells us that Jesus spoke to the disciples in chapter 9 and says to them, the Son of Man, that was his favorite title for himself, the Son of Man, must suffer many things.

[2 : 28] Later on when he was at the Last Supper, as he talked with his disciples there, he again made it very clear what was coming as he shared the bread and the wine with them.

In Luke 22, in verse 15, he says to them, I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. And even later on, after his death and his resurrection, when he spoke to his disciples and taught them about these things, he still used the same phrase, suffer.

Luke 24 records how he met with two of the disciples as they were walking to Emmaus on that day, Easter Sunday. And we're told this, he said to them in Luke 24, verse 46, how foolish and slow you are to understand and believe all that the prophets have spoken.

Did not the Christ have to suffer these things? And later back in Jerusalem, when he's with all the other disciples, he explains to them, this is what is written, the Christ will suffer, rise from the dead on the third day.

So it's no surprising when Jesus uses the word suffer to describe his experiences on that Good Friday, it's no surprise that when the New Testament writers later teach the young church about Jesus, and what happened, they too use the word suffer.

[3 : 56] Peter particularly in his letter, his first letter, says to the believers he was writing to. Chapter 2 and 21. To this you were called because Christ suffered for you.

Later in the same chapter, chapter 4, verse 1. Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body. The writer to the Hebrews as well makes notice of this truth concerning the suffering of Jesus. Hebrews 5 and verse 8. Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered. You see, there is this sense in which we're meant to grasp and to comprehend that Christ suffered. Yes, he died, that's imperative, but that's not how he describes. Yes, he was tortured, he was beaten, he was mocked, he was all these things. But this word suffering is here very poignantly. Now we live in a world of suffering. We can't escape suffering. Wherever we turn, suffering is always there.

[5 : 12] It's in our faces. It's something that we find unpleasant. It's something that we detest. It's something we try and hide away from. But wherever we turn, we hear of a shipwreck with many hundreds of children who were killed.

We hear of a plane crashing into the sea and everybody lost. We hear of wars and famines and abuses and all sorts of illnesses and disease. And at times, I'm sure like myself, you feel, I wish I could lock myself away from the suffering of this world.

Sometimes, for my own sanity, if I'm honest, I have to turn off the mute button when the news comes on because I just find it so depressing. Suffering is everywhere.

Suffering is everywhere. And for many people, Christians alike, and perhaps for you too, if you're not a Christian, there is this big question, why suffering? Why is there so much suffering?

Why does suffering happen? What is the sense in this suffering? And I put to you, dear friends, that for that very reason, because of that very question, we are told here of the suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[6 : 25] And that as we consider his sufferings, we actually find for ourselves something, the only thing that makes any sense in the midst of a suffering world.

And so I want us just to consider briefly the suffering of Jesus and three things which come out very clearly in the words of Jesus and the things that we can grasp hold of and that will help us cope with and deal with and bring hope to a suffering world.

The first thing that's very clear is that the sufferings of Jesus were real. They weren't pretend. They weren't put on. They weren't sort of something which was just a little bit of a slap on the wrist.

Peter, as I read before, in 1 Peter, this time in chapter 4 and verse 1, says, Christ suffered in his body. The sufferings of Christ on the cross were very real.

Yes, he was truly the Son of God and truly the Son of Man. And so when he hung upon that cross, when they beat him across the head, when he was beaten with a whip so that his back was open, when the nails were driven through his hands, he felt it.

[7 : 43] It wasn't that somehow his divinity meant that he could elevate himself above suffering. It wasn't as if somehow he put himself into a self-hypnosis to prevent himself feeling the suffering.

He felt it. He was fully human. He suffered physically on the cross. He speaks of his thirst. There's the loss of blood. There's exhaustion. And at last there is death.

In Jesus Christ there is very real, physical, painful, excruciating suffering. Crucifixion was really the very most, the worst and most torturous death that the Romans could imagine.

And the Romans were pretty imaginative when it came to death. They sort of had a bit of a gift, if we put it that way, in the way they killed people. And for them, crucifixion was the worst of the worst of the worst.

And they reserved it for the worst of the worst of the worst. No Roman could be crucified, no matter what he'd done. It had to be for those who were not Roman. Those who were traitors.

[8 : 43] Those who were murderers. Those who were the blackest hearted. It was meant to be slow and agonizing. And it's exactly what it was. It was meant to deter people against even thinking of revolting against the Roman Empire.

It was meant to make people stop and say, am I willing to go and suffer that kind of death if I'm going to put myself in this place of revolution and revolt against Rome?

You had to be sure that you were going to get away with it, or else you wouldn't dare even consider it. So Christ Jesus suffered in the body.

His suffering was real. Not pretend, not false, not half-hearted. But you see, there was much more, wasn't there, to the suffering of Jesus. Jesus speaks about himself suffering many things.

Christ did not only suffer in the body, but he surely suffered also emotionally. If I can put it that way. Mentally, he suffered. Jesus was truly man in body and in mind, in emotions.

[9 : 51] We know that he speaks of his joy in other places. We know that he weeps in other places. Weeping over Jerusalem. Weeping over the graveside of his dear friend Lazarus, who has died. But surely in the cross and in what he experienced in the sufferings that he went through as they were laid out for us in Matthew 27, you can see there must have been emotional damage.

Emotional suffering. He's abandoned by all his friends. They scarp. They flee. They leg it and leave him alone to face the music.

He's attacked by everybody around about him. He hasn't got one single friend, it seems, in the world. They mock him. They sneer at him. They spit at him.

They revile him. They speak cruelly of him and to him. Just listen to Luke's account. People watching and the rulers even sneered at him.

The soldiers also came up and mocked him. One of the criminals hung their hurled insults at him. Again and again and again.

[10:57] Verbal suffering. Verbal abuse. Did these things have any effect upon him? Of course they did. Of course they did.

He didn't sort of say, which we say, and it doesn't mean anything, sticks and stones may break my bones, words will never hurt me. They do hurt. In fact, words hurt more than sticks and stones at times, don't they?

Why? Physical wounds can heal. Emotional, mental wounds, much harder. Perhaps some of them never heal. Surely the Lord Jesus suffered more emotionally than you and I would have suffered emotionally.

Think of it. Here is Jesus. He is the sinless, holy, spotless Son of God. He is so sensitive to evil. We are not sensitive to evil.

No matter how upset we may get when we see things, we are desensitized, aren't we, by what we see around about us. But we're desensitized by the sinfulness of our own hearts. But here is Christ whose heart never knew any sin, whose lips, from his lips fell, no insult and no rebuke and no mocking.

[12:09] And here he is being bombarded for hours. Surely he felt and he suffered emotionally and mentally.

But then there is yet another sort of suffering, isn't there, that Jesus endured. A suffering that we might call spiritual. Spiritual. That cry of his from the cross, in his own language, Aramaic, translated for us, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

We can't plumb the depths of the suffering of Christ, that, as it were, squeezed, if I can put it that way, squeezed from him, such a cry to his Father in heaven.

The pain in his very soul, as he experienced then, for the first time in all of eternity, and the only time in all of eternity, the abandonment of his Father's presence, as he suffered what can alone be described as hell on earth.

He is the only person who's ever experienced hell on earth, no matter how often people use that phrase flippantly, because only then upon the cross did he, the sinless, holy Son of God, experience and feel the very anger of a holy and just God against sin.

[13:43] Only did he experience the abandonment and the desolation that comes upon a soul when God has forsaken them. He suffered in body, he suffered in mind, he suffered in soul, dear friends.

Now that is so, so important for us to understand. Because in a world of suffering, where there seems to be no sense in suffering, we are able to assure people and ourselves that we have a God who has suffered also.

that the God that we have put our faith and trust in is not a God who is indifferent to suffering. He's not a God who looks upon the suffering of men and thinks it's a nothing.

Not a God who has set himself up in an ivory tower and has no concern, who is unmoved. But we have a God who has suffered to the greatest and most painful extent in every possible way. who has entered into the fullest of human experience and felt suffering that no other human could possibly feel.

[15:12] And we can say to those around about us who suffer, not flippantly, and we cannot say to anyone, oh, I know how you feel.

You don't. Sorry, I don't know how you feel and you don't know how I feel. We can't say that to one another. But we can say this, I have in the Lord Jesus Christ one who does know how you feel.

Who fully does comprehend. Paul, sorry, the writer to the Hebrews makes this very plain and gives us great encouragement because he says this, we know Jesus, we see Jesus who is made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honour because he suffered death so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

This is who we are pointing people to, a suffering God. But we see as well here something which is more than that and something again which gives us hope in a suffering world.

And we see that the sufferings of the Lord Jesus were essential. The sufferings of the Lord Jesus were necessary. Jesus insisted, didn't he, when he spoke to his disciples, the Son of Man must

suffer.

[16:28] He didn't just say the Son of Man will suffer or the Son of Man shall suffer but the Son of Man must suffer. There's an essentialness about it. It's necessary.

It was absolutely imperative that Jesus should suffer. The cross was not an option. The suffering he bore and endured was not a maybe or a possibility.

When he was born into this world, when he came into this world, when he set about the beginning of his ministry, he knew that there was no other end in sight, no other way ahead apart from that he should suffer as he did.

Why? Why? Why must he suffer? Why was it necessary? Was it because he was trapped? Was it because there was no way of escape for him? Was it perhaps that the devil had cunningly tricked him and got him into that place?

Or was it the trickery of those religious leaders who had determined that he must die and had wound Pilate around their finger and the crowds around their finger and got them into that place because they were jealous of him and envious of him and so he had no way out.

[17:36] He had no way of escape. Was it? Could we imagine that he was forced to do it by his father?

God said, you will do it and there was nothing he could do but obey his father? No. No. None of those things are the case.

The devil didn't trick him and the religious leaders didn't con him and the father didn't force him. We have the evidence of that, that Jesus was the only person who has ever lived who had a truly free will.

No other person in the world has a truly free will. You don't have a free will and neither do I. No such thing. If we had a free will then I could simply say to you right then, your free will, don't do anything wrong tomorrow.

Don't think a wrong thought, don't say a wrong word, don't do a wrong action. Don't ever sin again in your life. Can't do it, can we? Proves we haven't got a free will. But Jesus had a free will and his free will was expressed and shown in the Garden of Gethsemane.

[18:46] As he goes with his disciples and he alone prays and speaks with the father. And what was the topic of his prayer? What was it that he spoke with his father about?

It was concerning his sufferings. Mark's account tells us in verse 35. Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible, if possible, the hour might pass from him.

Abba, Father, he said, everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but you will. There he is freely and gladly surrendering his will to the father.

Not coerced, not pushed, not pressurized, but choosing to suffer. If it's possible. But it wasn't possible because there was no other way.

Jesus had to suffer and he knew he had to suffer because all the way through history, God had been telling and recounting that there would come one who would suffer and die as a servant of God.

[19:59] We read just a few moments ago from Isaiah 53, let me remind you. Verse 10, yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer.

The Messiah, the promised saviour of the world, the king who was coming into the world that God had told his people was coming would come to suffer. But they had lost sight of that. As they read through the Bible, like many people, they had one hand over one eye.

They only saw the things they wanted to see about the Messiah. The Messiah would be a great king. So they thought of somebody like David and Solomon. They thought about somebody who would be a great victor in battle, who would drive the Romans out, establish a new era greater than any of the kings before.

They didn't see and they weren't willing to see that the Messiah had to triumph through suffering and sacrifice. And so the rest of Isaiah 53 carries on.

Yes, it was the Lord's will that he should suffer, but listen. Therefore I will give him a portion among the great and he will divide the spoils with the strong because he poured out his life unto death.

[21:10] Because he poured out his life unto death. That was the triumph. That was the victory. The way to victory was through death and suffering. The way to triumph was through defeat.

Seemingly. So again, one of the core teachings in the New Testament, one of the things that the disciples began to preach and to talk about whenever they began to preach in the book of Acts is

they preached about the fact that Jesus died because God had planned it. God had purposed it. Here's Peter on the day of Pentecost. What does he say? This man, Jesus, was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.

Later on, as he begins to preach to the people after the lame man has been healed, he says the same thing. Chapter 3, verse 18. This is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets saying that his Christ would suffer.

If Jesus suffered because it was necessary, why is it that men and women suffer today?

[22 : 28] Why is it that children suffer now? Why is suffering is inescapable? Why are we surrounded by it?

Because we live in a fallen and a broken world. suffering is the consequence of sin.

God created this world, he made it perfect. He made it very good. He gave to Adam and to Eve the opportunity of either doing what was good or what was evil.

And Adam and Eve chose that they should disobey and reject God's rule and in doing so they opened a door to let in sin and evil.

The sin and evil that we witness today and the suffering that accompanies that sin and evil is because of our disobedience, our rejection of God.

[23 : 39] Paul makes that play and he writes in his letter, therefore just as sin entered the world through one man and death through sin and in this way death came to all men because all sin.

The tap was turned on as it were and so we find this dream of suffering has polluted our world in which we live and it's no good any of us pointing to this person or that person because ultimately the finger points at us.

We are the cause of suffering as well or we may not be those murderers and molesters and robbers and so on but just look at your hearts just listen to your thoughts.

What about those cruel words that you think and speak? What about the suffering that you have inflicted upon your families by your selfishness by your pride and so on and so on?

We see that suffering starts with sin but this is why it was necessary for Jesus to die. This is why he must suffer in the body and in the mind and in the soul because the sufferings of Christ were effective.

[25 : 04] They did something. They changed something. They accomplished something. Jesus' sufferings were not in vain. They were not pointless. They were not simply just a demonstration of God's love.

They were something more than that. Here's Peter as he writes for Christ died for sins once for all the righteous for the unrighteous to bring you to God.

His suffering did something which nothing else can do. God did not simply come into our world and suffer that he might emphasize with us that he might feel our suffering that he might be able to say yes I understand.

he didn't just come into this world to show that he loved us enough to suffer and to die and that truly is seen. Romans in chapter 5 God demonstrated his own love for us in this way that while we were sinners Christ died for us but above all Christ's sufferings were for us.

They were on our behalf. They were in our place instead of us. He suffered what we should have suffered. He endured what we deserve to endure.

[26 : 29] Here's Peter again as he writes to this you were called because Christ suffered for you.

As he writes later the righteous for the unrighteous the good for the bad the perfect for the imperfect the sinless for the sinful it was this great substitution you see Christ never sinned and therefore he did not deserve to suffer in fact therefore death and sin had no hold on him there was no way that they could get hold of him and grasp him or cause him to die but you and I have sinned and you and I have sinned in such a way that we deserve death sinned in such a way that we deserve separation from God sinned in such a way that we deserve the punishment which is indeed hell but in such great power and in such great love Jesus came into this world and with the father's agreement said yes because I love them

I will die in their place I will suffer so that they should not suffer again back in in in Isaiah's prophecy he makes this very clear he understands these things these 600 years before Jesus surely he took up our infirmities he carried our sorrows we considered him stricken by God smitten by him and afflicted but he was pierced for our transgressions he was crushed for our iniquities the punishment

that brought us peace was upon him and by his wounds we are healed see this great paradox this great play as it were between him and us he'd done no wrong he'd kept all of God's commands in every way he'd lived a perfect life yet it was him who suffered and not us though we're the guilty ones but I said that this death of

Jesus this suffering of Jesus accomplished something it's not just enough in one sense that he should die in our place what has he done by that what is it what has it achieved well in suffering in our place he has accomplished something which is so marvelous so wonderful that actually it puts every other type of suffering in the shade remember this verse Christ died for sins once for all the righteous for the unrighteous to bring you to God to bring you to God see without his sufferings we were alienated from God we were cut off from God the Bible makes it clear we were enemies of God we are enemies of God because when we set ourselves up as the God of our lives and the one who can make decisions in our lives and the one who is right in our own eyes then we are immediately saying that we don't need God and that we are equal with God but God in his love and mercy though he hates sin and he hates evil yet he chose that his son should suffer in such a way that we might be brought into the family and friendship of God see Jesus didn't just die to save us from hell he didn't just die to take us to heaven he died that we might know

God that we might be in relationship with God that we might be in fellowship with God and that's the wonderful thing that Jesus has done he hasn't just sort of said I've done all these things to make a way for you to come to God no he doesn't just say that he says I have done this so that you will come to God it's that powerful it's that effective it's that that that's mighty to bring you to God people people think well it's you know he's made a way so if we if we if we sort of find the way if we if we sort of work our way we can find our way to God if we sort of through religion or being good or these sort of things no no there's nothing for us to do there's nothing that we can do to bring ourselves to God Jesus has done it all for us it must simply be the fact that we accept that fact accept that truth and rejoice in it and receive it for the precious gift that it is that we who once were so repugnant to God we who once were so awful in his sight have now been made so lovely and delightful in his sight we who once were rejects from God because of our own decision and our own wickedness and now those who are accepted and acceptable to God there's a lovely picture that comes out through the

[31 : 40] Bible and it says that Jesus suffered so that you might be a precious gift for him to give to his heavenly father for all eternity to enjoy sometimes we get it the other way around and it's right in one sense the other way around God gives himself to us that we might enjoy him for eternity but you see the wonderful thing is Christ's love for the father as well as love for us was such that he wanted to bring to his father a love gift which are all those for whom he died and that's exactly what he will do on that day when he comes again that he will gather together all those that he died for all those he suffered for and he'll bring them to his father and he'll say here they are father and all the children that you've given me I give them to you and so if we belong dear friends to the Lord Jesus Christ then we have been brought to God now and we can never be taken away from God whatever our suffering whatever our experiences nothing can take us out of his presence nothing can remove us from his nearness we can speak to him in prayer we can enjoy his nearness to us even in those times of great difficulty and struggle and one day we are looking forward to the certain and definite reality of being in the presence of God for all eternity in heaven when the Bible speaks about death and speaks about

Jesus coming and speaks about what will happen it says something along these lines we will be with the Lord which is better by far than anything else in this world be with the Lord that's where you're going dear Christian to be with the Lord you're not going to heaven in that sense you're going to be with the Lord you're not going to some paradise you're going to be with the Lord that's the focus of heaven that's the delight of heaven that's what makes heaven heavenly that Jesus will be there and finally dear friends as we live in this suffering world which we shall leave behind we recognise that the sufferings of Christ are that place of comfort for us and for those who suffer the apostle Paul was a man who knew something of suffering he gives a big list of some of the things he went through stoning beating with rods shipwreck hunger thirst nakedness and so on and he says when I look at all of these things all these things that I've suffered all these things that I've been through and when I compare them with what I have in the Lord Jesus Christ he says these are light and momentary troubles they're light and momentary troubles they're real and they're painful but they're passing they're not for eternity and he says compared to the eternal glory that far

outweighs them all that's because he trusted in the sufferings of Christ who suffered for him and he recognised that those sufferings that he endures in his body now are nothing compared to what Christ has delivered and rescued him from trusting in Jesus who suffered for us can transform sorrow into joy and death into life and grief into peace that's the testimony of every Christian and that's why again and again we're told to look and fix our eyes on Jesus is this the Jesus that you know is this the Jesus who suffered for you and is this the Jesus that you gladly and willingly call my Saviour and my God our final hymn this evening is number 248 man of sorrows what a name for the Son of God who came ruined sinners to reclaim hallelujah what a Saviour two four-eighths two four-eighths and our sorrows are turning for the Son of God who came who made saviour who reigned for the Son of God who came who made saviour to reclaim for the Son of God who came for the Son of God who came who made saviour who made saviour to reclaim hallelujah what a Saviour who made saviour who made saviour who made saviour who made saviour who made saviour in my face and empty stood sealed my garden with his blood hallelujah what a Saviour what a Saviour

What a Saviour what a Saviour what a Saviour The King of Prince saluted bright The King of Prince sexual arts Exalted God, Hallelujah, what a Savior.

When He comes a glorious King, all His ransom for to bring, Then a new His song we'll sing, Hallelujah, what a Savior.

Our Father and our God, we thank You that in the Lord Jesus Christ we have one who knows what it is to suffer, and that His suffering was full and real, but it wasn't pointless or empty, but it had full purpose and meaning.

[38 : 30] And we thank You that in that suffering of Jesus we have the deliverance from suffering, we have the comfort in suffering, we have, O Lord, the end of suffering.

And O Lord, we ask that again in this world in which we live, where there is so much suffering, that O Lord Jesus, the suffering Savior, that You would make Yourself known, that, Lord, You would cause many to come to see You as the one who bears their wounds, and that they might receive the wonderful forgiveness and peace and life that You bring.

We thank You for Your assured promise that, O Lord, we shall one day be with You when all suffering will cease, when every tear will be dried, when all pain will end, when there will be no more death.

We thank You that all that is real and certain, and, O Lord, it is ours because You have suffered in our place and tasted death for us.

And so with great faith we look forward and we are assured from Your Word that You are the one who is able to keep us from falling and ultimately to present us before Your glorious presence without fault and with wonderful joy.

[39 : 57] And so we say to You, our God, our Savior, may to You be all the glory and all the majesty and all the power and authority, both now and forever, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.