

The True Meaning Of Golgotha

How Do We Fellowship in His Sufferings?

"But what thing were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all thing but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death" (Phil. 3:7-10).

I once had someone who graduated from our Bible school and had been in the church for a long time say to me, "I don't really know what the sufferings of Christ are, and so I don't know if I've ever experienced them." Paul mentions it in Philippians 3:10. He expresses a desire to know the Lord, even though he is already saved. There is a desire in his heart to know the Lord beyond salvation and the simple things where most people stop: he actually wants to know Him in the arena of death and resurrection, being made conformable to His death, and understanding the things Jesus went through and fellowshiping with Him in that. Fellowshiping in Christ's sufferings has nothing to do with us having nails driven through our hands; it is not just the physical sufferings, like being nailed to a physical cross. That is not the only way to fellowship in His sufferings. Rather, in our daily life, we can be pressed in such a manner that we choose to self-protect instead of fellowship in His sufferings. For those with a heart like Paul, it will take the Holy Spirit beginning to open the Word to us so that we can be with the Lord instead of always insisting on him being with us. We can be with the Lord, and even be with the Lord in areas that are important to *Him*: being made conformable to His death, fellowshiping in His sufferings, being in the likeness of His resurrection. All of that points to Him; it does not point back at us saying, "Look! I'm the focus of everything!" To embrace Christ in this way takes a heart that does not just see God as a great big Santa Claus, but as the One that we love, and because we love Him we want to be with Him, like a bride with her husband.

He Went Into a Place

"Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him away. And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha: where they crucified him, and two others with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst" (John 19:16-18).

Here in John we have the judgment that came to Him when He was before Pontus Pilate. First, Jesus was falsely accused, slapped, beaten, spat upon, and after all that, they took Jesus and led Him away outside the city and the Bible says that, bearing His cross, he went to a place. He went to a specific place bearing His cross, not just any place. Interestingly, in the King James translation it says Jesus went "into" this place, not "unto" this place. That would be like dropping a strawberry in chocolate milk. It is not a perfect picture, but you see it is different from the strawberry coming up to the glass of milk and saying, "Hi, I'm a strawberry and you're chocolate milk." Jesus went *into* the Place of the Skull. The Place of the Skull is exactly the same as Jesus Himself: they are one in the same reality, He went *into* it.

All four gospels mention the exact place where Jesus was crucified, that He went to the Place of the Skull. Luke 23:33 says, *"And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they*

crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.” “Calvary” is the Latin word for “Place of the Skull.” Luke uses the Latin, the other three gospel writers use the Hebrew “Golgotha,” but it is exactly the same place, and the point is that He went into the Place of the Skull. Whenever you hear the word “Calvary,” understand that what it means is Jesus went to the Place of the Skull.

He Was Not There For Himself

“Who hath believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted” (Isa. 53:1-4).

First of all, these verses describe Jesus’ ability to grow in a dry place. That nature, that life, that Jesus, that One we love, that One with whom we have been joined, can grow even in dry ground. Out at the ranch, we have cacti and Mesquite trees growing out of very dry ground, and a friend of mine told me to dig them all up, because they will take any little bit of moisture in the ground. In other words, if there is even just a little bit, they can thrive off of it. That is Jesus in dry ground. And that Jesus lives in us! Anybody see an advantage to having Jesus as our Life living in us?

“...he hath no form nor comeliness...”

That is making reference to Jesus on the cross. They beat Him, they pushed a crown of thorns into His head, He was bleeding and bruised and disfigured...there was no beauty. No beauty that we should desire Him. He is desirable, but not on the basis of beauty or comeliness the way we see it.

“Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.”

In other words, whatever He is going through, it is because He was being there for us. It is not because of His stuff that He is going through all this, it is not because of His failures that He looks the way He looks or that He is going through the things He is going through. It is for others. It is for God and others: the first commandment, love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, and strength, and thy neighbor as thyself. It is the in-working of the law of love at work in Jesus Himself.

He Was Stripped Bare

“Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him away. And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha: where they crucified him, and two other with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst” (John 19:16-18).

As I began to meditate on these scriptures, I considered what a skull looks like, and I saw that Jesus and that mount, the Place of the Skull, were one in the same thing, because He went *into* that place. A skull has had everything removed from it that could make it beautiful.

We all have a skull, and eventually we all will die, and when we are in the grave, all the flesh on that skull will melt away. This is true physically when you die physically, and it is true spiritually when you embrace your death with Christ: when the Holy Spirit reveals the reality of Christ, it brings about a removal of the flesh so that the beauty that is Jesus – not just *of* Jesus but that *is* Jesus – begins to be seen, but only by those who have eyes to see. But what God presents to us as beautiful, His Son on the cross, is not beautiful in an outward, external way. In an outward, external way, it is as unappealing as a skull with all the flesh melted off it. With a skull, there is nothing left to appeal for compassion, or mercy, or love.

Here is an example: let's say there is a nice looking girl driving too fast in her little red Mustang, and she gets pulled over by a police officer. She might bat her eyes and toss her hair and say, "Oh, I didn't know!" or "Oh, I'm unfamiliar with this area!" and use her womanly wiles and her looks and whatever else she can utilize to get out of what she deserves: a ticket. Now, if the policeman walked up and sitting there is a person whose head is just a skull, it's going to be harder for her to talk and have the policeman go, "Oh, that moves my heart" or "Oh, I think I want to show mercy" or something like that because it has been stripped bare. Jesus was stripped bare on that cross like a skull, and he was bleeding and he was ugly and there was absolutely nothing – no beauty – that our natural eyes will find pleasing. All has been stripped bare. Now what is seen is hideous and hard to look at, and why? Because all of the outward trappings that appeal to the flesh and appeal to the sight and would draw out human compassion, human love, human mercy, all of that has been removed.

And now you will judge based on what you really are: if you are flesh, and you look at Jesus on the cross, you look at that skull, you will not be drawn into that. Think of John: he was the only disciple standing there. The rest had run away. And John is the same one who, during the Lord's Supper, was leaning over on Jesus' breast. It was almost like he was listening to His heart more than He was listening to His words. It's almost like he is hearing His insides. It's like he was getting the inside of Jesus, he was getting the reality of Jesus, and not just drawing on the moment. Imagine one of the disciples sitting there saying, "Oh, what a lovely meal" or "Oh, this is so nice" and they had no inclination that Jesus was about to go to the cross. In their minds He was about to be made king and they would be honored along with Him. It's the room, and the setting, and they are so caught up in all of that, and John just did not seem to be caught up in any of it. He is caught up in Jesus and he is just right there at Jesus' heart, trying to hear His heart beat, trying to hear the reality of what is going on in His heart. He is not just listening to the words. And I think that is part of what drew him to the foot of the cross, at the worst of times. When they were stripping Jesus bare, when they were gambling over his clothes, when they were doing all of that, John was standing right there. Peter was not even at the cross, he was just at the courtyard outside during the trial, and somebody says, "Aren't you one of his disciples?" and Peter says, "No, I'm not!" and denied Jesus three times. Well, the trial is one thing. Standing at the foot of the cross? When they are ripping and tearing at Jesus, and they find out you are one of them? How much worse could that have been for John? He did not care. He was there. Maybe he was there because he really did hear His heart. Maybe he really was in tune with the heart of Jesus, not just the circumstances. He could have said, "Oh, these are terrible circumstances! Everything was going so well! We were feeding the 5,000 and we were blessing and we were doing all these wonderful things and now look how bad it is! Run away!" But he did not. There is something more eternal working in him to where he is not repelled by Jesus when He has no outward beauty to make Him desirable.

Think about when you see a picture of an elderly person when they were younger, and you think to yourself, "Oh, she was so beautiful when she was young!" or "He was so handsome back then!" There is still beauty in their face, but it just is not like when they were at their height. Well, a skull removes all of that completely. If someone had really attractive eyes, they are gone. Now you just see empty sockets. Imagine a girl batted her beautiful eyes at a guy, and he is thinking, "Oh, she batted her eyes at me!" and then a minute later she turns back around and tries again, but this time someone has plucked out her eyes, he is going to scream and run away. The skull is ghastly in appearance. It is frightening to look upon. There is nothing there to desire, nothing there to want, because it has all been removed.

Let's face it: so much of what we can get, what we can get away with, and how far we can get are connected to our physical features. The other day I saw a singing competition on TV, and there was a guy on there that had a great smile, and the judges kept commenting on the guy's smile. The judges were saying, "I give you extra points for that smile!" But there should not be extra points for his smile, the question is, can the guy sing?

Spiritually, there should not be extra points for this or that, for anything that we put out there that is of us. The question is, is it Jesus? Because it is *Christ* in you, the hope of glory. If someone is moved by Jesus, then obviously that was of God. But if they are moved by you, you do not know that was of God. If you have worked people, if you are manipulating, or you are doing something, you can *call* it Jesus. You can even manipulate things for the sake of the things of God. I have been in churches where the pastor literally gets up and says things in a certain way to manipulate the people into doing things because the people will not just do it by life. It was not life in them, so the pastor just works them, and if the manipulation does not work, then they use power and fear and intimidation to get them to do the things of God. But are those the things of God anymore? One might say, "Sure they are the things of God! They're in the Bible!" Well, that does not make it God. What makes it God is God. What makes it Christ is Christ. And Christ went *into* the Place of the Skull.

What we are talking about here is what comes out of us being Christ, being from the Place of the Skull. There is a difference between going to the Place of the Skull, or rather going *into* the Place of the Skull, and maintaining everything you have got and trying to use those things to do the things of God, but not going to the Cross, not going to the judgment, not going to the Place of the Skull. Remember: the Cross *is* the Place of the Skull. Cannot get around that. This is what I see: the cross driven into the mountain of Golgotha, the Place of the Skull, and the mountain was literally a skull, a profile view of a skull. Thinking of it that way reminds me that it is not just dying on a physical cross, but going into the Place of the Skull. There may not be a physical cross for each of us to die on, but there is a Place of the Skull where each of us can go. We can still go to Calvary, to Golgotha. Or we can avoid Calvary, and just maintain all the things that can move people and draw out their compassion and mercy and affect them. We can maintain those things so that, just in case the Lord does not give us what we want, we still have the ability to get it ourselves. That is fine, but that is not going to Calvary. That is not going to Golgotha. And Jesus, bearing His cross, went into the Place of the Skull.

You know, there are people who are silver-tongued orators. There are people who walk into a room of strangers and before too long everybody is gathered around that person. There are good preachers that can really share the Word, and sharing the Word can be their claim to fame. That could be really easy to do because the message needs to get out, which means people have to preach it, but if you are a great speaker, the message and your ability to deliver it can become your claim to fame instead of Christ. But Jesus is our life. He is not just our message. For some people, "Jesus as the message" *is* what they are

about, but that is not what we should be about. Calvary should not be a subject to us. It is a place we go into. We must embrace Golgotha! Drag our cross right there and say, "Plant it here."

"Let us go forth therefore unto to Him without the camp, bearing His reproach" (Hebrews 13:13).

After the punk movement, there came a group that called themselves the "goths." When the goths first came out, their whole thing was to look like skulls. They would wear black capes and their hair was all black and they would have this mascara on their eyes and black finger nails and lips, and there was sort of a white powder they would put on their face. Ok, goths...gothic...GolGOTHa. Skull. That is where the word comes from. In Hebrews 13:13, the scripture talks about going outside the camp with Jesus. Where did Jesus go outside the camp? Golgotha. I think that, in a sense, the goths were trying to go outside the camp. Same with the hippies, and the punk rock movement: there was a desire to go outside the camp, the camp of boring people, for lack of a better way of putting it. They all knew what they were doing. It was like, "Come on, there's got to be something better than this." But with that there came a certain rejection. Mainstream culture rejected them. But they were willing to bear the reproach. Personally, I was a hippie: my hair was long, and people would come up to me all the time saying, "Why don't you get a haircut?" Once, as I was getting on a bus, a lady literally grabbed my hair and yanked me back and yelled, "Why don't you get a haircut?" There was a certain amount of rejection that went with the way you looked and the way you acted, and you were ok with it because you did not want to look like them, act like them, or be of them in any way.

So the goths did not want to be like the rest, and they were willing to bear the reproach, and take on the image of a skull. But even though they looked and acted the part, they were not the true goths. They did not fulfill Hebrews 13:13. The true goths are the ones who go to Golgotha, the ones who, in their being, embrace this skull and say, "I am not going to put forth all the things I could to get my way. I am going to give those things up." That only happens at Calvary, at Golgotha. You might give up some things somewhere else, but to go to this mount, to be a true goth, you have to go *into* the place of Golgotha.

But that has to be your heart's desire. No one can force you to go into that place, and no one should try. It's like John: when Jesus was going to go die the next day, John is laying his head on Jesus' breast. He does not know what is coming, but he is just there, listening to the heartbeat of Jesus. He just loves Jesus. He wants to be with Jesus. So when the cross comes, he cannot lay his head on Jesus' breast when Jesus is hanging there, so he is just there at the foot of the cross. He is right there, as close as he can be, not far away. It was just in his heart to be with Jesus there at Golgotha. His heart was willing. So if there be a willing heart, then become a true goth! With the hippies and the goths and every other group of people that has rebelled against the norm, they were genuinely trying to find some reality outside of what they saw and knew was not reality, but whatever it was, they did not want to have anything to do with it. They were willing to bear the reproach for what they believed in, and it was not even Jesus! To be spat on and have horrible things said about them and even mean things done to them, and yet they were willing. I applaud them! They are better than a lot of Christians. They are willing to live for what they believe!

The true goths, those who will go into Golgotha bearing His reproach, are willing to live this. They are willing to embrace this and enact this is their lives. Again, the word "willing" is the key thing. There is no need to try to force any of this on anybody. If it is not in the heart, then forget it. Anybody can go for a while because of peer pressure or guilt. There are whole churches that stay "together" because of intimidation and peer pressure. Shame on them. Shame on them for using those tactics. What the

Body of Christ needs is for the members to be filled with Jesus, and living for Him, and letting Christ live within us; and when we say "Christ living within us," that means Christ coming forth in you from the Place of the Skull, so that when you reach for that old, trusty thing you always go to in order to get what you want or get out of something, you stop and say, "Wrong! I am not going to use that! What I have I will have by the Lord or I won't have it at all."

Well I believe according to the scriptures we've been reading that the goths (not them, but us), the true goths, are willing to live this. Are willing to enact this in their life, are willing to embrace this and again that's...the word "willing" is the key thing. There's no need to try to force anything on anybody. If it's not in their heart, forget it. They'll go with you for a while because of peer pressure or compunction of guilt or something. You know there are whole churches that stay together because of intimidation and peer pressure and stuff. Shame on them. Shame on them for using those tactics. And if you are one of those who is staying because you think peer pressure, whether it's real or not real, don't stay here! That's silly! I'd rather you be here because God put you here and you want to be here. We don't need to be big, we need to be filled with Jesus. That's all we need. And living for the Lord, and letting Christ live within us, and when we say Christ living within us, that means Christ coming from the Place of the Skull where you've reached for the old, trusty thing of you that always works, but then you say, "Wrong! I am not going to use that! What I have I will have by the Lord or I won't have it at all."

You get to that place that is just willing to give up the surface things. The things a skull has given up. And you are willing to go there and be with Jesus. That is the wording of Hebrews 13:13: we go unto *Him*. I want to be with Jesus! Well, Jesus went into the Place of the Skull. I can just see someone saying, "I want to be with Jesus!" and someone else saying, "Well, Jesus went into the Place of the Skull and I sort of walked around that place and...yeah, you don't want to go there." And the first person says, "I don't care! I want to be with the real Jesus! I don't want religion, I don't want just church-going, I want to find something that works and is real and alive and makes me alive and everybody around me alive, so I want to go unto Jesus!" So they scoff and say, "Well, there it is then, the Place of the Skull. Go on there, stupid." And you think, "Ouch. That hurt. I feel like...I'm bearing reproach." Well, that is what it says! We go unto Him *bearing His reproach*. It is the same reproach, the same suffering, because His suffering was not just physical suffering. For those who go unto to Him, into the Place of the Skull, bearing His reproach, and that is what they want, because they just want the Lord in a pure manner, not watered down or laced with something besides Jesus, but just a pure dose of Jesus, they find Him there and they see the beauty of the Lamb and are blessed to walk in that.

But not everybody wants that. Many people want to maintain their own beauty. And it is not our place to run around trying to rip it off of them. If they are born again, we love them, but that will not stop us from bearing the reproach of going to Jesus in this way, even if they hate it and do not want it and it is an affront to them. This beauty of Christ, in this way, is not an affront to us. We are willing to find an acceptance not based on surface things anymore, but on the eternal. Will there be reproach involved? Yes. Anytime you make a stand for anything, there is reproach. Why not make a stand for something that counts?

Final Prayer

Father, I pray that hearts have heard your Word, and more importantly have heard your heart, and that they sense you and love you and want to go further with you. Father, you see the hearts of those who are reaching out to you, and I know that you love them so much, and I know that you are proud of them for their movements toward you that they do regularly, and this is just another movement like that. So

Lord, the things that they would need, not the flesh, but the things that they would need to embark, not just to carry their cross around wherever they go but actually take in into Golgotha, I pray that you will be the life within them to accomplish this so that it is carried out with ease. Your burden is light. And I pray that you would make the path to Golgotha clear for them. Only your Holy Spirit can truly help them to find the path to Calvary. I pray that faith will come into each one right now. First of all, faith that you are faithful, and that you are an Author *and* Finisher: you do not start something that you do not finish, and you do not deal with their hearts and no plan on finishing it. So I pray that faith will arise in each heart, and that you will reinforce them with all that they need of spiritual substance, and that you will continually strengthen them, not in the flesh but with all might in their inward man, to be able to accomplish what you want, because it is you in us that makes us willing and able to do what you have called us to do. Work willingness into us. Continue to work openness in us. Continue to cause us to be humble, humble enough to bow our knee before the cross at every juncture, at every moment that you bring us there, that we may see the true beauty of Jesus the Lamb: His nature, not just His external. And that we may love Him, and eventually not just love Him on the cross but love Him in the same spirit that is at work in us and love it because it is beauty to us. Father, I pray release of the Holy Spirit upon those who are yours and who so long after you in these ways. Make it real. Make it alive. Make it established so that any reproach that might come will just fall away just like it did for all the generations of kids who bore reproach and just kept on going. Father, why should we not *more* do that? May we be the true goths, in the spirit of what you are trying to communicate. In Jesus' name, amen.