



# The Bruised And Bleeding Back

*“Then he released Barabbas for them; but after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified (Matthew 27:26).*

With a reverent restraint, Matthew (27:26), Mark (15:15), and John (19:1) related that Jesus was scourged. In one of the great Suffering Servant passages, Isaiah prophetically said, “The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5b). Isaiah also wrote in a vivid pictorial prophecy of the passion of Christ, “I gave My back to those who strike Me, and My cheeks to those who pluck out the beard” (Isaiah 50:6). As the hour drew near for Jesus to make His last journey to Jerusalem, He previewed with His apostles what was to take place in that city, including in His list of sufferings how He would be scourged:

... “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things which are written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished. For He will be handed over to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and mistreated and spit upon, and after they have scourged Him, they will kill Him; and the third day He will rise again” (Luke 18:31–33).

Pilate, having been outwitted by crafty and determined priests and rulers, found himself trapped. With him, the issue of right and wrong had been tossed aside. As a public officer, he had a responsibility to provide justice; but he had traded his integrity for peace at any price. His original verdict had been plain enough: “I find no guilt in this man” (Luke 23:4). However, the pressure from the riotous crowd pushed that proper judgment to the background and forced him to concentrate upon on a violent multitude.

In an effort to satisfy the angry mob, he released Barabbas, a man who was guilty of the very crime of which the priests and rulers had accused Jesus. By Pilate’s decree, the guilty man would go free while the innocent One, Jesus, would be crucified.

Pilate had thought of scourging Jesus as a method to regain control of the crowd. He said to them, “Behold, nothing deserving death has been done by Him. Therefore I will punish Him and release Him” (Luke 23:15b, 16). Pilate thought that the sight of Him, with His back pulverized and His body covered with blood, would satisfy their thirst for the execution of this man. He said to them again, “I have found in Him no guilt demanding death; therefore I will punish Him and release Him” (Luke 23:22). Unmoved, they cried, “Crucify, crucify Him!” (Luke 23:21, 23). They continued with their insistence for a crucifixion until Pilate believed he could do nothing but grant their wishes. His final verdict was more of an acquiescence to their demands than anything else. The text says, “And Pilate pronounced sentence that their demand be granted” (Luke 23:24). John wrote, “So he then handed Him over to them to be crucified” (John 19:16). Pilate was not in great favor with Rome, and now he was in danger of losing control of an uprising at Passover time. He could see only one course of action before him: He must give in to the mob’s demand. Consequently, Pilate has been noted by history as one who was condemned by his prisoner.

Pilate ordered that Jesus be scourged as a

preparation for crucifixion. We know enough about this flagellation to know the horror of it. The scourge itself was a cat-o'-nine-tails that was made of leather thongs which had bones and pieces of metal knotted in each strand of leather. So terrible was scourging that a Roman citizen, as a privilege of his citizenship, was exempt from such punishment. So grim and terrible was the scourging Jesus endured that it was prophetically said of Him, "His appearance was marred more than any man." Moffatt's translation says that He was "disfigured till he seemed a man no more" (Isaiah 52:14a).

The Lord was probably stripped and bound to a post with leather straps. Hebrew law limited the number of stripes that one could receive, but Roman law had no such regulations. Cold and callous Roman soldiers applied the scourge until Jesus' back was bruised, lacerated, torn, striped with welts, and caked with blood. Scourging could at times be so severe that it brought death. As we think about it, it is probably better to throw a veil over the more ghastly details of what our Lord experienced, as did the three inspired writers, Matthew, Mark, and John.

*At the scourging and crucifixion of Jesus, we see the surfacing of all the devilish cruelties and hardhearted brutalities of man.* As we consider the awful scene of God's Son being beaten until He wore blood as if it were a coat, we see the merciless character of man. The purest, gentlest, and loveliest soul that has ever walked upon this earth was treated worse than a felon; He was handled as the worst of criminals. The fury of hell created by man's wickedness was brought down upon Him.

*As we consider our Lord's scourging, we see a vivid reminder that Jesus gave His body for our salvation.* He had a body just like ours, and He gave it fully for our sin. When Jesus instituted the supper through which His disciples would remember His death, He broke the bread and gave it to His disciples, saying, "Take, eat; this is My body" (Matthew 26:26). His body was not only crucified for us, but it was also beaten, abused, and traumatized for every sinner.

*In this scourging, we have a reminder that Jesus' sacrifice began before the cross.* When we think of His death, we usually think of His crucifixion. Indeed, the cross is where His death took place,

but it did not start there. It began with His being beaten until He was bleeding and suffering as no one can imagine. His blood began to drain from His body before His hands were ever punctured with nails.

*In His scourging, as never before, we are given a picture of the character of Christ.* Look at His meekness and self-control. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter. As He suffered, He did not sin. No deceit was found in His mouth. "While being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats" (1 Peter 2:22, 23a). Meekly, obediently, and calmly, Jesus submitted His body to the mockery, to the lash, and to the nails for our redemption.

*The scourging of Jesus confronts us anew with what we did to Jesus.* Paul said, "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). Isaiah said, ". . . by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray" (Isaiah 53:5, 6a). A. Fibiger wrote:

Quiet and patient He suffered all this on account of your sins. The bands that bound Him to the post of torment were made from your sins. The whip with which He was whipped was braided out of your sins. Of your sins the crown of thorns was plaited that pierced His holy forehead.<sup>1</sup>

The story of our salvation moves through several stages that must not be missed. It begins in the garden, with sweat like great drops of blood. It continues through Jesus' arrest, with His hands being bound and His face being smitten, and proceeds through the trial, with the mockery that came to Him. This story moves through the scourging, when Jesus' back was shredded by a whip, and finally culminates with the supreme suffering of crucifixion.

Eddie Cloer



*When you think of our Lord's sacrifice for us, yes, think of His hands, feet, and side. Think of the cross, the nails, and the spear; but also think of His back—for, as Isaiah said, "by His scourging we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5).*

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<sup>1</sup>A. Fibiger, *A Study of the Passion of Christ*; quoted in Paul Stromberg Rees, *The Face of Our Lord* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1951), 88.