

Calvary

Calvary was where Jesus achieved the lowest point of human failure. Crucifixion was the most ignominious death possible. It is difficult to imagine how one man could more effectively show his loathing and contempt for another man than by reducing him to crucified carrion—scourging him, subjecting Him to humiliating, brutal farce, and then nailing his naked, bleeding body, battered nearly beyond recognition, to a cross where he could be mocked and spat upon by his enemies, the helpless victim of their filthy insults, the agony of dying extended as long as possible.

Calvary involves all that makes belief in a good and loving God difficult. It epitomized everything that is unreasonable and unfair. Accepting its necessity is difficult; comprehending its horror is impossible. If there's ever a time for asking *Why?*, the cross is it. The question wasn't answered, but the cross was endured. As Dorothy Sayers noted, God "had the honesty and courage to take his own medicine."

Calvary was not a transaction that changed God's attitude toward man but a revelation of God's love for man. God's love eternally predated Calvary (Rev. 13.8). What stands as the greatest symbol of man's hate, even more, is the greatest symbol of God's love.

Calvary shows the reality of Jesus' faith in God. Though deeply troubled by His approaching death (Matt. 26.38, Jn. 12.27) and instinctively shying from it (Matt. 26.39), Jesus put His faith in God. Faith is the way by which we come in contact with ultimate reality, for faith is the path to God. Without it, we will never reach Him. Without it, the most important things worth knowing will never be known.

Calvary shows that the innocent suffer for the guilty. "He hath borne *our* griefs, and carried *our* sorrows . . . He was wounded for *our* transgressions, he was bruised for *our* iniquities: the chastisement of *our* peace was upon him; and with *his* stripes we are healed." What a remarkable insight into the depth of unconditional love. Because love is to be without limit, whenever there is moral and spiritual failure in the one loved, there is suffering in the one who loves. No one sins unto himself; the effect of our sin is beyond our ability to control. Our sin always hurts another; always. Yet, in the alchemy of divine love, the suffering of the innocent is the key ingredient in overcoming that which caused the suffering. Only when we bring this truth into our own hearts and relationships can we *forgive one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*

Calvary was the greatest event in history, but it was the resurrection that proved it so. At Calvary the deck was completely stacked against Christ. He died cursed by God and man. His friends couldn't help; His enemies wouldn't help; the Romans dared not help; Heaven refused to help. The stone was sealed; the tomb was guarded. (It all reminds me of Elijah drenching his altar and sacrifice on Mt. Carmel in order to better flaunt the power of God.) But on the third day, the stone was rolled back, and the grave was empty. The gates of hell had done everything they could do to prevail—but hell was beaten into disgrace by the power of God. It was the resurrection—not the Sermon on the Mount or any other miracle—that ultimately convinced men that Calvary was the sacrifice that made heaven possible. And this thought changed the early disciples to where they believed that they were engaged not merely in a temporary earthly struggle, but in an eternal undertaking in which every event was thereby potentially glorified.

The resurrection's validation of Calvary should change us as well. For ours, you see, is not *mere* hope—we have a *reason* for our hope.

