**Let God Deliver Him**

Based on [Matthew 27:11-54](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Mt27.11-54)

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Sunday of the Passion/Palm Sunday

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The passion, that is the suffering and death of Jesus Christ was in order to make atonement for the sin of the world, making satisfaction to God for our sin, and purchasing and winning us from all sin, death and the power of the devil. Through what the world would call a defeat, God showed his glory. **Palms were waved at Jesus’ entrance into Jerusalem in order to honour and recognize him as their victorious king.** And he was, though not in the way they were thinking. They were thinking he would establish a worldly kingdom. But his kingdom is not of this world. His entrance into Jerusalem was a conquest, a crusade to reclaim a kingdom that had long been captured, occupied and ruled by the devil. Jesus came to battle, not Pilate, or Herod, or the chief priests and scribes. He came to battle sin, death, and the devil, and to win that spiritual victory for the life of the world.

The atonement is the purpose, because his death was a sacrifice for the sin of the world. And this Gospel tells of the circumstances that led to the atoning death of Christ, mainly the humility with which he faced his death. The humility is shown in that he did not seek to save himself, but waited for God, his heavenly Father, to deliver him.

The gospel first mentions that when Jesus was accused by the chief priests and elders, he gave no answer. Pilate tried to provoke him to give a defense, but he did not. First, this shows that Jesus knows their hearts, and, as the proverb says, he does not answer the fool in his folly. He knows that they accuse him, not because he is guilty, but out of envy.

But Jesus knows the real trial is not happening before Pilate, but before his Father in heaven. Could he have answered their accusations, provided a stellar and eloquent defense and made Pilate’s job of aquitting an innocent man easy? Surely. Jesus could have saved himself with his words, but he didn’t…because he was not given the task of saving himself. He was sent by his Father to suffer and die, and it is not Pilate, but his Father, and only his Father who will judge him and deliver him.

Then the crowds choose a Barabas to be released instead of Jesus. Once again, Jesus doesn’t speak or try to prove his righteousness. **Pilate hoped that the crowd’s decency would lead them to ask for a man that they simply did not like instead of one who had committed serious crimes.** It didn’t. But their irrational hatred of Jesus only confirms his righteousness, while exposing the sin of the crowds. It was out of envy they delivered him up, and they would rather crucify the rightous. But God is his witness, not them.

Pilate had realized they want to crucify Jesus on account of envy. He realized they seek to crucify not because they think he’s guilty. They want to crucify him because he is innocent. **But Pilate is unwilling to acquit Jesus and suffer criticism himself.**  Pilate was trying to find a way that he could acquit Jesus without suffering himself. He all but begs Jesus to defend himself, to help him acquit him. He tries to maneuver the crowds to acquit him over Barrabas.

Jesus knew the hearts of all men, and again knew the will of his father. “Put not your trust in princes” said the Psalmist. Earthly leaders can only give you justice if it is popular, if the people will accept it. But it is perverse to allow the crowds to determine truth, and the righteous do not seek justice from from the world. **Jesus would not help Pilate to acquit him, because Pilate is not who he turns to for deliverance.** Instead, Jesus waits upon his heavenly Father to deliver him at the right time. So Pilate, seeing that Jesus would not cooperate in his aquittal delivered him up to be crucified.

At this point Jesus is beyond the hope of earthly help. The authorities had all sent him to the cross, and he appears entirely weak and vulnerable. And the soldiers who had Jesus in custody despised his weakness. **They gathered the whole battalion before him, stripped, mocked, and spit on him.** But Jesus knew that the verdict of sinful men on earth is not bound in heaven. On the contrary, the meek shall inherit the earth, and God favors those who are despised in the world. The stripes inflicted by the unjust are marks of righteousness for those who trust in the Lord. Eventually, the marks on Jesus hands and side, signs of humility in the world, will display his risen glory and the vindication of his Father.

Jesus is then led to Golgotha to be crucified. And there he is further tempted to save himself. They offered him wine to drink mixed with gall. Gall is thought to be either a narcotic which would dull the pain, or else poison which might accelerate his death, or both. But in either case Jesus would not drink it. **He would not “overdose on morphine,”--if you will--and seek premature deliverance from his suffering until God’s will was accomplished.** This is all part of his Father’s plan. His life is in the hands of his Father, who will not abandon him forever, but who will grant death at the right time of his choosing. Jesus does not turn to death for deliverance from suffering, he continues to trust his Father for that.

Satan realizes by now that Jesus will not turn to anyone on earth to help or save him. He will not turn to Pilate for acquittal. He will not accept wine mixed with gall to ease into death. **So next he tempts Jesus as he did in the wilderness, to use his divine status and glory to save himself.** Those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, “You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If you are the son of God, come down from the cross.” But Jesus, though he was in the form of God, did not consider equality with God a thing to be grasped. Instead he trusted his Father to deliver and exalt him.

Then the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him saying “**He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him. For he said, ‘I am the son of God.’**”

In this final temptation, Jesus is tempted by his love for his enemies. They are saying, “**Jesus, you say you are sent from God and whoever believes you will have eternal life. Well we don’t believe you, because here you are dying on the cross. You say God will deliver you well prove it. Come down and we will believe.**”

Satan is crafty, and this is very crafty. How many churches today minimize the unpopular teachings of the bible because they might “offend” people and keep them from believing in Jesus. How many churches are ashamed to be small and weak and think “if we only could prove that God blesses us, then other people will believe our message, and we can save them.” They are tempted to think that they can save people for God.

So Jesus is tempted to come down from the cross by his own power to prove to them that God is trustworthy so that they will believe. In short, their final plea is “**save yourself for our sake, so that by your success we would believe**.” But it is a ruse. No one comes to the Son unless the Father draws him.

Finally, after enduring every temptation of body and soul to save himself, Jesus cries out to his father “**My God, my God why have you forsaken me.**” This is not a cry of unbelief, but belief. It is the beginning of the 22 Psalm, wherein the Psalmist, in his great agony, turns to God for help and trusts in his deliverance. Now that all the temptations have come and Jesus has overcome them--nothing is left undone except this, Jesus asks his Father for help. He doesn’t save himself, but he turns to God to save him. And God does save him, and Jesus yielded up his spirit.

Jesus death is not, though, simply an end to his suffering. There was a power released at the moment of his righteous death. The curtain of the temple was torn in two, the earth shook and the rocks split. The tombs were opened and many were risen from the dead. The power of Jesus death is that he has made atonement between God and man, tearing the curtain that kept them apart. The power of his death is that he has conquered death, as is shown in a ripple effect of some of the dead raised.

The other manifestation of the power of his death was faith. “When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, “Truly this was the Son of God.” The faith in his detractors, which he was tempted to create by coming down from the cross, the father has now created through the cross, and in the pouring out of His Spirit from it creating faith.

And the same faith has been created in you. And so we may lead lives in imitation of Christ, not seeking to save ourselves or to turn to the world for salvation. Christ has already accomplished all things. We simply live obedient lives, trusting that our Heavenly Father will bring about all things for good in his time, until he delivers us from this veil of tears to himself in heaven.