

Crumbs – Good News for the Diaspora!

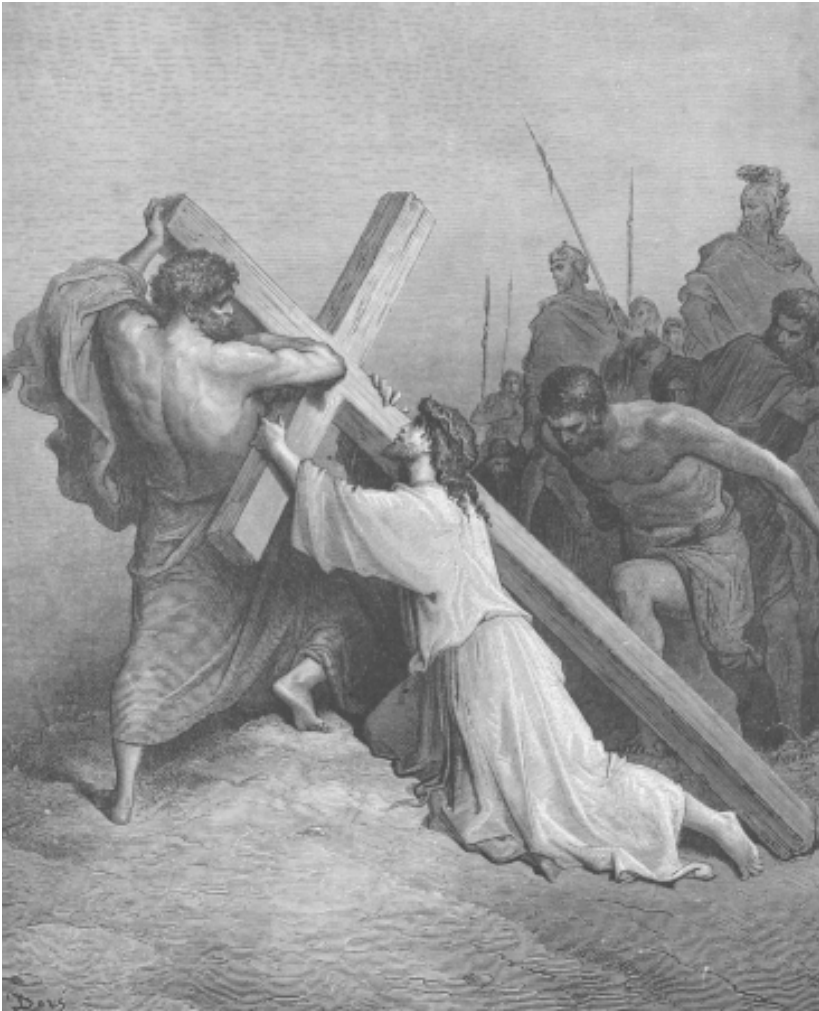


Illustration: Christ Fainting under the Cross

A Devotional for the Week of the Fifth Sunday in Lent.

SUNDAY.

And they shall mourn for Him as one mourneth for His only son. – Ephesians 6:11.

Now the soldiers, under the command of a captain, took off the scarlet mock-robe from Jesus, and put His own raiment on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him. And He bore His cross. And it seems that He collapsed under the burden of His cross. For they met a man coming out of the country, Simon, of Cyrene in Africa, the father of Alexander and Rufus, well-known Christians of later days – him they compelled to bear Jesus' cross, and he bore it after Jesus. And there followed Him a great multitude of the people, and of women who bewailed and lamented Him. But Jesus, turning unto them, said: "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming in which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps that never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be clone in the dry?"

Thus Jesus foretold the great and terrible doom that was to come upon the Jewish people, the dry tree, because it rejected the Savior, the green branch. And He desired not tears of human pity, but tears of repentance. Tears of repentance are tears of the faith which knows that Jesus bore our sin and our penalty for us, tears, therefore, of contrite sorrow and of a grateful believing heart. Such tears the prophet foretells, saying: "And they shall mourn for Him as one mourneth for his only son." God grant unto us the Spirit of grace and of prayer so to view and so to mourn Jesus.

PRAYER. – Alas my Lord and Savior, of myself I am in no way sufficient or able to meditate properly and beneficially upon Your holy Passion. Therefore I pray You to have mercy upon me, and to give me the Spirit of grace and of prayer that I may know that You did suffer because of my sin, to redeem me therefrom, and to make me righteous before God and eternally blessed, to the end that

I may truly mourn for my sin, and thank You with a joyful heart for having so graciously saved me. Amen.

Hymn 212.

COME to Calvary's holy mountain, | Sinners ruined by the fall;
Here a pure and healing fountain | Flows to you, to me, to all;
In a full perpetual tide, | Opened when our Savior died.

Come in poverty and meanness, | Come defiled, without, within;
From infection and uncleanness, | From the leprosy of sin,
Wash your robes and make them white; | Ye shall walk with God in light.

Come in sorrow and contrition, | Wounded, impotent, and blind;
Here the guilty free remission. | Here the troubled peace, may find;
Health this fountain will restore; | He that drinks shall thirst no more.

He that drinks shall live forever; | 'Tis a soul-renewing flood;
God is faithful; God will never | Break His covenant of blood,
Signed when our Redeemer died, | Sealed when He was glorified.

MONDAY.

Father, forgiven them; for they know not what they do.
– Luke 23:24.

Two malefactors were also led away with Jesus to be executed. And they brought Jesus to a place called Calvary, in Hebrew, Golgotha, which, being interpreted, is, *The Place of a Skull*. That was the place of execution, a hill near Jerusalem. And they gave Him vinegar to drink, or wine mingled with myrrh, mixed with gall, to partly benumb His senses. But when He tasted thereof He would not drink it. And they crucified Him, and the two malefactors with Him, one on the right hand and the other on the left, and Jesus in the midst. And the scripture was fulfilled which says: "And He was numbered with the transgressors." According to Jewish reckoning of time it was the third hour when they crucified Him, nine o'clock in the morning. Then said Jesus: "*Father, forgive them, – for they know not what they do.*"

This was Jesus' first thought, His first word, His prayer on the cross: "Father, forgive them!" For this was the reason why He so willingly died the death on the cross: He wanted to obtain the forgiveness of sins for us sinners and save us. This prayer refers to all of us. It referred also to His tormentors. And being the true Advocate with the Father, He kindly added: "For they know not what they do." The soldiers, blind heathen, knew Him not, and realized not what terrible sin they were committing. Likewise the multitude of the people, and even many of the elders, were not yet hardened, but did all this in ignorance, in the ignorance of unbelief. Ah, Father, forgive them; do not visit them with swift punishment; convert them; draw them to Me, that my death may give life to them too! Behold, they are blind; open their eyes unto saving knowledge! Such was Jesus' prayer. – But whosoever knowingly hardens himself against Jesus forfeits the grace of this intercessory prayer of Jesus, and will be eternally lost.

PRAYER. – O Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, I give thanks to You for Your suffering upon the cross, whereby I have been redeemed. I thank You for Your intercession, by virtue of which I have been converted to You. I thank You for the love in which You so dearly love me, a sinner, and draw me to You in faith. I thank You that You have merited forgiveness of sin for me, and asked it to be granted to me, yes, have actually given and appropriated it to me. Continue to pray for me, my Savior, that I may continue in the faith and be saved. Amen, You will assuredly do this. Amen.

Hymn 203, 1.

O LAMB of God most holy,
Upon the cursed tree slain;
E'er patient, meek and lowly,
Though heaped with hate and disdain,
All sins Thou borest for us,
Else had despair reigned o'er us,
Have mercy on us, O Jesus!

TUESDAY.

If these should hold their pace, the stones would immediately cry out. – Luke 19:40.

Pilate wrote a title, a superscription briefly telling what Jesus was accused of, and placed it on the cross above His head. It read thus: "JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS." This title was read by many of the Jews; for the place where Jesus was crucified was near to the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate: "Write not: 'The King of the Jews,' but that He said: I am the King of the Jews." Pilate answered: "What I have written I have written."

– Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also His coat. Now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore among themselves: "Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be," that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith: "They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots." (Psalm 22:18.) And sitting down, they watched Him there. These things the soldiers did; and the people stood beholding.

Did not one among the people lift his voice to confess Jesus? None. Not one of His disciples? None; most of them had fled. Then the stones must cry out. The superscription of godless Pilate proclaimed in three languages that Jesus was the Savior. For "King of the Jews" was a familiar term applied to the Messiah, the Christ, the Savior. And the blind soldiers who divided His garments and cast lots for His coat visibly fulfilled the great and wonderful prophecy concerning the crucifixion of the Messiah which was and is still to be read in Psalm 22. Christian, open heart and lips to confess Christ the Crucified as your Savior!

PRAYER. – Savior, O Savior, help me lest I shun the shame of Your cross! Help me loudly, freely, and publicly to confess You to be my dear Savior and the only Savior of the world. Most certainly,

You did regard neither shame nor death to save me; You will confess me, a miserable sinner, to be Your own in the presence of Your Father and all the holy angels. Create, then, in me, O my Lord and Savior, that fruit of the lips which consists in giving thanks to Your name. Amen.

Hymn 91, 4-6.

Ashamed of Jesus! That dear Friend
On whom my hopes of heaven depend!
No; when I blush, be this my shame,
That I no more revere His name.

Ashamed of Jesus! yes, I may,
When I've no guilt to wash away,
No tear to wipe, no good to crave,
No fears to quell, no soul to save.

Till then – nor is my boasting vain –
Till then I boast a Savior slain;
And oh, may this my glory be,
That Christ is not ashamed of me.

WEDNESDAY.

The Lord hath been mindful of us. – Luke 23:18.

There stood by the cross of Jesus His mother. It is needless to say what sword now pierced her soul. And there stood Mary, the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. John also stood there. When Jesus saw His mother, and the disciple standing by whom He loved, He said to His mother: "*Woman, behold thy son!*" Then He said to the disciple: "*Behold thy mother!*" And from that hour the disciple took her unto his own house.

– Even in the midst of His suffering and death the Savior did not forget His poor mother. He was mindful of her and provided for her. This is a lesson for children who have parents that are

unprovided for. But what is it the Savior once said? He said: "Who is my mother or my brethren?" And He looked round about on them that sat about Him and said: "Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother and my sister and mother." (Mark 3:33-35.) He calls us, who according to God's will believe in Him and are His own and follow Him, His brethren and sisters and mothers. And He is mindful of us. "The Lord hath been mindful of us." When we are in need, He is most lovingly mindful of us, and He provides for us. "And as He was in humiliation, so is He still in exaltation." He is still the same kind Savior. Let every one comfort himself with this, and cast all his cares upon Him!

PRAYER. – Your loving heart, O my Savior, is mindful also of me. This I know, in this I rejoice, herewith I comfort myself, and for this I give thanks to You. Yes, You are mindful of us and will bless us, both small and great. Though we should lose all things, yet will we not lose You. Help me, Lord Jesus, to be and remain Your own; then all will be well in time and eternity. And likewise grant me grace that I, who am Your own, may consider all others who are Yours to be my brethren and sisters and fathers and mothers, and that to the best of my ability I may help them when in need, as You, dear Savior, would have me do. Amen.

Hymn 198, 8. 9.

O mighty King, no time can dim Thy glory!
How shall I spread abroad Thy wondrous story?
How shall I find some worthy gifts to proffer?
What dare I offer?

For vainly doth our human wisdom ponder
Thy woes, Thy mercy still transcends our wonder,
O how should I do aught that could delight Thee!
Can I requite Thee?

THURSDAY.

But I am a worm and no man, a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head saying, He trusted in the Lord that He would deliver Him; let Him deliver Him, seeing that He delighted in Him.

– *Psalm 22:6-8.*

Thus did the Savior, the Messiah, by the mouth of David, foretell His own suffering. See how it all was fulfilled! They that passed by the cross railed on Him, wagging their heads and saying: "Ah, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save Thyself! If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross." Likewise the chief priests, mocking among themselves with the scribes and elders, together with the people, said: "He saved others; Himself He cannot save! If He be Christ, the King of the Jews, the Chosen of God, let Him save Himself and descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe. He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, I am the Son of God." The thieves also who were crucified with Him cast the same thing in His teeth and reviled Him. And the soldiers also mocked Him, coming to Him, offering Him vinegar, and saying: "If Thou be the King of the Jews, save Thyself!"

– Thus from every quarter scorn and derision was poured out upon the Righteous One in His bitter suffering. He suffered this for us. And now we sinners are to be hailed by God with none but kindest greetings, and be received with highest honors. But while we live here below, let us go forth unto our Savior, who still is continually reviled, and let us freely confess His name and bear His reproach. May He Himself help us to do so!

PRAYER. – Lord Jesus, the reproach which I, a miserable sinner, have deserved has fallen on You, for You did bear my sin. And the sublime honor and glory which belongs to You shall be my portion. I glorify You for such mercy! Grant that in faith I may grasp

this and hold fast to it. Bestow upon me Your Holy Spirit that unafraid I may take my stand with You, gladly bearing Your reproach. O Lord, my only salvation! Amen.

Hymn 87, 5.

I leave Thee not: shall I forsake salvation?
No, Jesus, no! | Thou shalt not go;
Mine still Thou art, to free from condemnation.
After this fleeting night
Thy presence brings me light
Whose ray my soul hath sought;
Shall I forsake salvation?
I leave Thee not, I leave Thee not!

FRIDAY.

Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with Me in paradise.
– Luke 23:43.

One of the malefactors crucified with Jesus railed on Him persistently, saying: "If Thou be Christ, save Thyself and us!" But the other one had experienced a great change. He rebuked his companion and said: "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds. But this man hath done nothing amiss." And he said unto Jesus: "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom!" And Jesus said unto him: "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise."

– O precious word of our Redeemer! It shows that Jesus receives the very worst of sinners if they come to Him. It shows that Jesus receives them though they come to Him in the last hour, after a long life of sin. It shows that Jesus gives them the same blessedness which He gives to the greatest saint, and He gives it at once, without an intervening purgatory. Let every one comfort himself herewith! - And this whole delightful story shows how alone a man may come to

true faith in the Savior: by seeing and hearing Christ Crucified, as we may do now in His Word. And it shows what fruits faith brings forth at once: true sorrow for sin, childlike trust in Jesus, a blessed hope in death, a bold and cheerful confession of Jesus, and penitent patience in cross and affliction. May all here take a lesson! - Christian, be like that malefactor who repented in his last hour. And do you not believe that had his life been spared him a while longer, he would have renounced his former life of sin and followed Jesus? Most certainly. Then you do so! May God help you!

PRAYER. – O Jesus, grant to me the mercy which You did grant the thief. Not that I am worthy of it, but grant it because You love to show mercy. Remember me for Your saving mercy's sake. Forgive me my great and numerous sins. Let me belong to Your Kingdom of Grace. When my last hour comes, receive me into paradise. Give me true knowledge of You through the preaching of Your cross. Give to me at all times repentance to salvation, firm confidence in You, sure hope of eternal life, a new heart and courage to cheerfully confess Your name, to serve You, and to suffer patiently. Have mercy on me, O Jesus! Amen.

Hymn 200, 1. 2.

There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Immanuel's veins,
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.

The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day;
And there have I, as vile as he,
Washed all my sins away.

SATURDAY.

Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? – Matthew 27:46.

And when the sixth hour was come, at noon, the sun was darkened, and there was a darkness over all the land until the ninth hour, until three o'clock in the afternoon. This was no eclipse of the sun such as we know of, for it was the time of the full moon. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice: "*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?*" which is, being interpreted: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Some of those that stood there, when they heard that, said: "He calleth Elias"

– That must have been a gruesome darkness in those three hours! What did Jesus all go through in those three hours? No one knows, nor does Scripture tell. So much, however, is certain that in those three hours Jesus was forsaken by God. We know this from the cry He uttered. To be forsaken by God-no living man can comprehend what that is. In body and soul was Jesus forsaken of God. That was the curse of hell and the pain of hell. He who was made to be sin for us was made also a curse for us. (Galatians 3:13.)

Then, just then, Satan must have seen his opportunity. He summoned all his forces for a last desperate attack upon Jesus, in order to get Him into his power and to ruin Him. More than this we cannot say. Terrible ! Inconceivable! But the Savior overcame it all. All the onslaughts against Him came to naught. And thus He redeemed us from the power of the devil and from eternal damnation. We who in faith are His own shall never experience what it means to be forsaken by God. No; God, for Jesus' sake, receives us into His full fatherly favor. And what that means we shall perceive and enjoy and experience in the blessed life to come.

PRAYER. – My Lord and Savior, I thank You that You were forsaken by God in order that I might not be eternally forsaken by Him. My Heavenly Father, for the sake of Christ, whom You did make a curse for me, do receive me and do bless me with the infinite fullness of Your blessings. God Holy Ghost – Spirit of the Father and of the Son – let me apprehend these mercies in true faith, until in the regeneration of blissful eternity I shall fully comprehend all things and extol You for them eternally. Amen.

Hymn 207, 6.

The fifth, "My God, my God, O why
Forsake me?" Hark, the awful cry!
Lord, Thou was here forsaken,
That we might be received on high;
Let this hope not be shaken.

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