

**Series:** Mark — Summer 2020 Series

**Title:** “Rejection”

**Text:** Mark 15:16-32

**Date:** July 26, 2020

### **Verse 16**

Jesus had already received the customary flogging reserved for those awaiting a death sentence (Mark 15:15). He simply awaited His fate on the cross. Having been officially handed over for crucifixion, a group of soldiers took Him into custody. It was their job to deliver Him to the place of execution. Since it was still early, they didn’t have to be at Golgotha yet. As a result, the soldiers took their prisoner to a secure place in order to pass time. Mark records, “The soldiers led him away into the palace (that is, the governor’s residence) and called the whole company together” (Mark 15:16).

The “soldiers” were likely a group of auxiliary troops assigned to Pilate. Usually, troops assigned to the local prefect were recruited from the non-Jewish population of the region. In total, Pilate probably had a group of about 3,000 available for his service.<sup>1</sup> It is this group of soldiers that now had possession of Jesus.

Once Jesus had been transferred to their oversight, they led Him to “the palace.” Mark clarifies that the place was “the governor’s residence.” The Greek uses a designation that was commonly applied to “the Praetorium.”<sup>2</sup> The building seems to be the one in which the Roman prefect for the province (Pilate) would have lived.<sup>3</sup> It was either Herod’s palace or the famous Tower of Antonia, a fortress Herod had build in order to protect the Temple.<sup>4</sup> The soldiers most likely took Jesus into the courtyard of the structure. The beating Jesus received in this place was a private one, unlike the public flogging He received earlier (15:15).<sup>5</sup>

Roman law did not require another beating for Jesus. He had already received the normal whipping given to those who awaited crucifixion. Most victims of the first flogging were hardly able to stand or walk afterwards.<sup>6</sup> The beating Jesus experienced in our current text was on top of what was normally done. The guards were ordered to simply transport Jesus to the site of the execution. With time to kill, they decided to have some fun.

Notice the way in which the soldiers “called the whole company together.” The language indicates that they summoned every soldier who was on duty at the time. A

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<sup>1</sup> Schnabel, 406.

<sup>2</sup> Brooks, 253.

<sup>3</sup> Robertson, 394.

<sup>4</sup> Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 102.

<sup>5</sup> Schnabel, 405-406.

<sup>6</sup> Schnabel, 406.

“company” constituted a Roman division of soldiers known as a “cohort.”<sup>7</sup> Some think there could have been 500 different men taking place in this particular beating.<sup>8</sup> They had an opportunity to amuse themselves by beating a defenseless man. The scourging in our text was cruel to say the least. Most of the time, the customary flogging was enough to nearly kill a person. Jesus was beaten in fulfillment of His prophecy earlier in Mark. Remember how He told His disciples, “See, we are going up to Jerusalem. The Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death. Then they will hand him over to the Gentiles, and they will mock him, spit on him, flog him, and kill him, and he will rise after three days” (Mark 10:33-34).

On top of fulfilling messianic prophecy, the cruel treatment of Jesus in our text also teaches us an important spiritual lesson. Ryle has correctly commented, “There is a deep meaning in every jot and tittle of his sorrows.”<sup>9</sup> What lessons can be drawn from the way in which the soldiers treated Jesus? Their cruelty underscores the depravity of the human heart. What would motivate the soldiers to mock and beat a poor, hurting, and helpless man who had done nothing wrong? It was their total depravity that led them to brutally beat our Lord. They remind us that, apart from the grace of God, humanity is wicked beyond measure (Genesis 6:5 and Romans 3:10-18). There are no limits to what mankind will do. No sin is off limits for the soul that is estranged from God. Even in receiving a beating, Jesus demonstrated the need for men, women, boys, and girls to “Repent and believe the good news!” (Mark 1:15).

### **Verse 17**

Once inside the courtyard of the royal palace, the soldiers made sport of Jesus. Mark says, “They dressed him in a purple robe, twisted together a crown of thorns, and put it on him” (Mark 15:17). The purple robe was most likely the personal cloak of one of the soldiers. It was probably well-worn and faded. It is doubtful that the purple color was very bright, but it still served its intended purpose.<sup>10</sup> The soldiers used it to mock Jesus’ claims at kingship.

Mark’s record of the crucifixion focuses on the rejection Jesus experienced at the cross. Though others had recognized Him as the Davidic king (Mark 10:47 and 11:10), the masses saw Him as an imposter. Ultimately, it was this precise issue that brought about His arrest and death. We have seen the theme throughout Mark’s gospel. Starting back in Mark 3:6, the gospel writer mentioned how national and religious leaders plotted to have Jesus killed because of the messianic fervor that surrounded His ministry. So we shouldn’t be too surprised to see the cruel treatment He received in our current text.

Knowing Jesus’ claims at kingship (Mark 14:62), the Roman soldiers also dressed Him “in a purple robe” and “crown of thorns.” Many believe the crown was made of what

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<sup>7</sup> Brooks, 253.

<sup>8</sup> Schnabel, 406.

<sup>9</sup> Ryle, 269.

<sup>10</sup> Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 102.

would later be named the “Syrian Christ thorn.”<sup>11</sup> It was a smooth white branch with sharp thorns that were about a tenth of an inch in length. The lucent color of the stalks probably made a good mock-representation of a king’s illustrious crown. The protruding thorns gave the appearance of light emanating from a golden diadem.<sup>12</sup> The soldiers were both cruel and creative in their abuse of Jesus.

### **Verse 18**

Once they had their victim looking hideous in His makeshift royal garb, the soldiers began to mock Him. Mark 15:18 says, “And they began to salute him, ‘Hail, king of the Jews!’” The word translated “salute” was used as a common greeting in the first century. It meant something similar to our “Good day” or “Glad to see you.”<sup>13</sup> The soldiers used it sarcastically to scorn Jesus.

Given the fact that they were bonafide Romans, the soldiers most likely got great delight out of their cruel jokes. Though they were locals, they weren’t Jews. They were well aware of the continual threats against Roman rule by native freedom fighters, and they likely despised Jewish aspirations for sovereign rule. For them, Jesus was just another wannabe zealot. How could a poor man from Nazareth possibly think He could vanquish the world’s largest superpower? From a human perspective, Jesus was a joke.

From a Divine point of view, Jesus was something else. In all of their abuse, the soldiers ironically revealed heavenly truth about their prisoner. Earlier in Mark’s gospel, a band of soldiers mockingly made fun of Jesus’ claims of being a prophet (Mark 14:65). In our current text, the guards spit Jesus for His royal claims. Together, the groups of soldiers unknowingly portray Jesus as both a prophet and king. Even in the midst of recounting Jesus’ darkest hour, Holy Spirit inspired Scripture reminds us that our Lord was more than a man. He was the ultimate prophet who now reigns in the hearts of men and women. One day rule He will over all the earth.

### **Verse 19**

The abuse of Jesus becomes physical in verse 19. Mark tells us, “They were hitting him on the head with a stick and spitting on him. Getting down on their knees, they were paying him homage” (Mark 15:19). The language of verse 19 utilizes several imperfect tense verbs. As a result, it depicts continual action in the past. Mark means to convey the repeated nature of the abuse Jesus experienced.<sup>14</sup> The scene was likely a long and drawn out one. Our Lord underwent cruel maltreatment on for hours. His suffering was a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. In Isaiah, the Suffering Servant proclaimed, “I gave my back to those who beat me, and my cheeks to those who tore out my beard. I did not hide my face from scorn and spitting” (Isaiah 50:6).

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<sup>11</sup> Schnabel, 407.

<sup>12</sup> Schnabel, 407.

<sup>13</sup> Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 102.

<sup>14</sup> Robertson, 394.

Along with hitting Jesus, the soldiers made jest by pretending to pay homage to Him. The word translated “homage” in our text was used of worship to a god or respect given to an earthly ruler. It was commonly used to describe the act of bowing before a monarch.<sup>15</sup> In a world that supported the idea of the divine right of kings, such a show of submission was common. Their routine was a ripoff of the famous coronation ritual for the Caesars.<sup>16</sup> The Roman troops used the gesture in a feigned way in order to mock Jesus.

Ironically, the soldiers did in jest what they should have done in sincerity. Their mock worship actually demonstrated the posture all people ought to have towards Jesus. Scripture says the Lord has given Jesus “the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow—in heaven and on earth and under the earth” (Philippians 2:9-10). You may not have a heart that is openly resistant to Jesus, but do you humbly regard Him as Lord? Have you figuratively bowed the knees of your heart to worship Him? Are you gladly in submission to His Word and His will? Is there any part of your life that rails against Him in disobedience?

Despite the cruelty of the things we see in our passage, Jesus was not a mere victim. It is important to note that the things that happened to Jesus were all under the sovereign control of God the Father. Jesus had been foreordained as a sacrifice for sins (Genesis 3:15; Romans 5:8; and Revelation 13:8). Unbeknownst to the savage soldiers, they were actually fulfilling the teaching of Jesus. He had foretold of His fate on three different occasions (Mark 8:31; 9:31; and 10:33). The men were mere pawns in the hand of a Sovereign God who was purchasing salvation for sinners.

## **Verse 20**

Verse 20 concludes the beating in the Governor’s palace: “After they had mocked him, they stripped him of the purple robe and put his clothes on him” (Mark 15:20). The text indicates that the soldiers stripped Jesus naked back in verse 17 in order to put the purple robe on Him. Now the men strip Him again in order to put his clothes back on Him. Jewish culture and custom were strictly opposed to public nakedness. As a result, they likely wanted Him to be clothed before they paraded Him through the streets to Golgotha.<sup>17</sup> Once at the crucifixion scene, Jesus would be stripped naked again (Mark 15:24). The indignity and shame our Lord encountered was horrific. He endured so much on our behalf.

Jesus’ nakedness points to another important scriptural reality. Remember that Jesus was our substitute in every regard. Since the Garden of Eden, man and woman have been naked in shame and guilt because of sin (Genesis 3:7). Each of us is completely exposed before God because of our fallen nature. When Jesus suffered on our behalf, He embraced the naked shame of our sin. Because of what He has done, we

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<sup>15</sup> Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 202.

<sup>16</sup> Schnabel, 407.

<sup>17</sup> Schnabel, 408.

now have the blessed opportunity of being clothed in the righteousness of Christ. The prophet Isaiah rejoiced in the ministry of the Messiah, saying: "I rejoice greatly in the Lord, I exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation and wrapped me in a robe of righteousness, as a groom wears a turban and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels" (Isaiah 61:10). The book of Revelation speaks of the way in which believers will one day be fully clothed in the righteousness of God during the eternal state (Revelation 19:8).

## **Verse 21**

During a crucifixion, it was prevailing protocol for the condemned criminal to carry his cross to the place of his execution. If he was unable to do so, a reality that was highly plausible when one considers the severe nature of the flogging that usually preceded a crucifixion (Mark 15:15), Roman soldiers would enlist someone to do the deed for the criminal. We see such a scenario in our text. Verse 21 says, "They forced a man coming in from the country, who was passing by, to carry Jesus' cross. He was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus" (Mark 15:21).

Cyrene was in North Africa. Josephus indicates that a colony of Jews lived there during the time of Jesus.<sup>18</sup> Mark notes that Simon had come "from the country." The language refers to the pasture-sides around Jerusalem. It seems Simon had travelled from northern Africa for the Passover. Perhaps his accommodations for the week were in the countryside surrounding the city.<sup>19</sup>

As God's sovereign time schedule would have it, Simon crossed paths with the execution posse at the right time. Seeing the local farmer, and observing Jesus' inability to carry His cross, the soldiers grabbed Simon and made him do the duty. The word translated "force" is a strong one. It indicates that the man was compelled against his wishes.<sup>20</sup> Romans soldiers could force individuals to help with a governmental matter whether one wanted to help or not. Jesus made allusion to this cultural custom in Matthew 5:41.

The "cross" in verse 21 was most likely not the entire structure that was typically used for crucifixion. Normally, the method of execution implemented an upright beam and a horizontal beam. When one was crucified, his or her hands were affixed to the horizontal beam with either nails or ropes.<sup>21</sup> Afterwards the victim was hoisted onto the vertical beam. As the victim was marched to the death penalty site, he or she was made to carry the horizontal portion of the cross.<sup>22</sup> The vertical part stayed at the site in the ground. Thus, Simon only carried the rough and rugged crossbeam.

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<sup>18</sup> Brooks, 256.

<sup>19</sup> Schnabel, 409.

<sup>20</sup> Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 202.

<sup>21</sup> Schnabel, 410.

<sup>22</sup> Schnabel, 410.

It is interesting that Mark mentions Simon's sons by name. Why include such a detail? Many believe the two young men were known within the early Church. As he did with Bartimaeus back in Mark 10:46, Mark here shares the names of the two men because he knew his readership knew them. As Mark's gospel was passed around to different congregations and read, congregants recognized the names of the two brothers.

Paul actually mentions a man named Rufus in his letter to the Romans (Romans 16:13).<sup>23</sup> Could it be that the fateful encounter of Rufus and Alexander's dad on the road to Golgotha had eventually lead to their conversion? Maybe Rufus was a member at the church of Rome. Perhaps Mark mentioned him in his gospel for this reason.<sup>24</sup> If so, Jesus still brought souls unto Himself even in His dying moments.

## **Verse 22**

In verse 22, Jesus and the soldiers arrive at the dreaded death site. Mark says, "They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means Place of the Skull)" (Mark 15:22). Historians accredit the Persians with the invention of crucifixion. In time, the Romans adopted the cruel method of punishment.<sup>25</sup> It served as an effective deterrent against crime and treason, considering the type of suffering it involved. One has noted that crucifixion "was one of the most horrifying forms of execution ever devised."<sup>26</sup> The death involved unfathomable pain and unspeakable shame. In addition, it resulted in a slow, anguishing death. A victim rarely died in short order. Usually, he or she expired over a two or three day period.<sup>27</sup>

Our Lord certainly endured a lot on our behalf. He suffered shame and pain that most of us will never experience. The way in which He died is a reminder of the severity of our sin. Our transgressions required such a price to be paid. We should be grateful for all that Jesus endured on our behalf.

## **Verse 23**

As Jesus was suffering, the soldiers who oversaw the crucifixion tried to alleviate His pain by offering Him an alcoholic beverage. Mark records, "They tried to give him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it" (Mark 15:23). The beverage was a potent concoction. The verbiage of our text indicates it was drugged.<sup>28</sup> Some believe myrrh was used to produce some sort of narcotic effect.<sup>29</sup> Along with wine, both were well-known for pain-

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<sup>23</sup> Schnabel, 409.

<sup>24</sup> Brooks, 256.

<sup>25</sup> Brooks, 255.

<sup>26</sup> Brooks, 255.

<sup>27</sup> Brooks, 256.

<sup>28</sup> Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 202.

<sup>29</sup> Schnabel, 411.

reducing qualities.<sup>30</sup> It seems the soldiers gave the drink to dying victims in order to provide some relief.

According to Jewish tradition, those who suffered were allowed strong drink to ease their pain. Such tradition was based on the teaching of Proverbs 31:6 — “Give beer to one who is dying and wine to one whose life is bitter.” Despite cultural custom, Jesus refused the drink. The original language of the text uses an imperfect tense verb to describe the action. It conveys the idea that the soldiers kept trying to give Jesus wine, but He kept denying their offer.<sup>31</sup> Matthew 27:34 tells us that Jesus tasted the wine initially. He likely refused it after tasting its heightened alcoholic content.

Jesus said no for good reason. It was His mission to suffer as the sinless God-man on behalf of sinful humanity (1 Peter 3:18). He knew a drunken man could not serve as a suitable savior (Ephesians 5:18). He had to endure the pain in order to rescue us from sin and death. He rejected the cup offered by the Roman soldiers in order to drink the cup God had prepared for Him (Mark 14:36).<sup>32</sup> He willingly embraced the horror of the cross on our behalf.

## **Verse 24**

Verse 24 continues the horrific scene. It describes soldiers gambling over Jesus’ possessions: “Then they crucified him and divided his clothes, casting lots for them to decide what each would get” (Mark 15:24). Notice the way in which Jesus’ the act of crucifying Jesus is almost casually mentioned with just a few words — “Then they crucified him.” The language doesn’t capture all of the agony involved in the scene. Crucifixion was a horrific way to die. Normally one expired slowly. The cause of death was asphyxiation. Victims wore out over time, unable to keep their body upright on the cross. The loss of oxygen caused by the hanging posture is what caused death. The more fortunate victims died sooner by cardiac or respiratory arrest.<sup>33</sup>

For Jews in Jesus’ day, such a death was evidence of Divine curse. Jesus embraced such condemnation on our behalf. Because He was accursed of God, we can be blessed by God. Paul said, “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, because it is written, Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree” (Galatians 3:13).

As Jesus struggled to breath, the soldiers gambled for His clothing. They used “lots” to determine who would get what. In the ancient, Jewish world, one cast “lots” to settle disputes (Proverbs 18:18). Romans often used small sticks, pebbles, or sheep bones as die. Sides of the objects were marked with numbers. In a game such as the one

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<sup>30</sup> Brooks, 258.

<sup>31</sup> Robertson, 395.

<sup>32</sup> Schnabel, 412.

<sup>33</sup> Schnabel, 413.

in our text, the gambler who rolled the highest combination of numbers would win what was at stake.<sup>34</sup> After the game was played, the winner got the spoils.

The language of the verse contains middle voice verbs. It intentionally depicts the soldiers scheming to obtain Jesus' clothes for themselves.<sup>35</sup> In the first century, clothes were a lot more valuable than they are today.<sup>36</sup> Soldiers normally had to provide for their outerwear from their own resources, or the cost of a uniform was garnished from their wages.<sup>37</sup> This may explain why the men were so eager to stake a claim on Jesus' possessions. Still, the scene is a wretched one. In their greed, calloused men gambled to make a gain off an innocent man who was suffering a cruel death. Their actions were a fulfilling of prophecy. One of the Messianic Psalms said, "They divided my garments among themselves, and they cast lots for my clothing" (Psalm 22:18).<sup>38</sup>

### **Verse 25**

Verse 25 says, "Now it was nine in the morning when they crucified him" (Mark 15:25). By the Jewish reckoning of time, it was the third hour. Jesus' trial (Mark 15:1) had taken place during the first hour — six o'clock in the morning by our standard (John 18:28). He would die at high noon (Mark 15:33). Darkness would fill the skies until 3:00 pm (Matthew 27:45).

### **Verse 26**

Once Jesus was on the cross, the executioners affixed a placard to the cross. Mark tells us, "The inscription of the charge written against him was: The King of the Jews" (Mark 15:26). Typically, a sign was hung around a criminals neck prior to the crucifixion. He or she was paraded throughout the streets so that all could see the offense for which he or she had been sentenced. Once the victim was crucified, the sign was placed on the cross.<sup>39</sup>

The word translated "charge" was a legal technical term that referred to an official indictment.<sup>40</sup> Treasonous conspiracy against Caesar was the crime for which Jesus was sentenced (John 19:12-16). The sign was thought to be an effective deterrent against future crimes. Those who saw the inscription on Jesus' cross were reminded that treason against the empire would not be tolerated.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 202.

<sup>35</sup> Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 102.

<sup>36</sup> Brooks, 258.

<sup>37</sup> Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 102.

<sup>38</sup> Schnabel, 414.

<sup>39</sup> Brooks, 258.

<sup>40</sup> Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 102.

<sup>41</sup> Schnabel, 414.



### **Verse 27**

Verse 27 tells us that two other men were crucified alongside Jesus: “They crucified two criminals with him, one on his right and one on his left” (Mark 15:27). The word rendered “criminals” is one that was used of thieves or insurrectionists.<sup>42</sup> Apparently, the two men were either guilty of robbery or crimes against the state. Some scholars believe the men were Jewish insurrectionists. They were freedom fighters who wanted to overthrow Roman dominion.<sup>43</sup>

Luke tells us that one of the men was verbally abusive towards Jesus, but the other expressed faith in Jesus as the Messiah (Luke 23:32-43). The appearance of the two men at Jesus’ side was ultimately a fulfillment of ancient prophecy. Isaiah 53:12 spoke of Messiah’s suffering, saying, “Therefore I will give him the many as a portion, and he will receive the mighty as spoil, because he willingly submitted to death, and was counted among the rebels; yet he bore the sin of many and interceded for the rebels.”

### **Verse 28**

The Textus Receptus attempted to bolster the prophetic punch by adding in the following after verse 27: “And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors” (Mark 15:28, KJV). The earliest textual manuscripts of Mark do not include verse 28; as a result, it does not seem that the verse should be in the New Testament.<sup>44</sup> Maybe it was added intentionally or unintentionally by an editor at some point. Whatever the case, it seems best to omit the verse, even though it makes an accurate truth claim. It is for this reason that verse 28 does not appear in most modern translations.

### **Verses 29 and 30**

As if Jesus hadn’t faced enough ridicule for one day, bystanders hurled insults at Him as they passed by the place of punishment. Verses 29 and 30 say, “Those who passed by were yelling insults at him, shaking their heads, and saying, “Ha! The one who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself by coming down from the cross!” (Mark 15:29-30). The people “who passed by” probably contained a mix of Passover pilgrims, everyday folks who were busy with daily duties, and some curious residents who wanted to witness the fate of the famous Galilean preacher who had caused quite a stir in recent days.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 103.

<sup>43</sup> Schnabel, 415.

<sup>44</sup> Brooks, 259.

<sup>45</sup> Schnabel, 416.

The language of the text contains imperfect tense verbs, depicting repeated insults.<sup>46</sup> The insults were a fulfillment of prophecy. In Psalm 22, the Suffering Servant cried, “But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by mankind and despised by people. Everyone who sees me mocks me; they sneer and shake their heads” (Psalm 22:6-7). Isaiah foretold of the way in which the Messiah would endure insults from men, “He was despised and rejected by men, a man of suffering who knew what sickness was. He was like someone people turned away from; he was despised, and we didn’t value him” (Isaiah 53:3). Verses 29-32 detail insults Jesus received from two different groups of people. Interestingly, each of the group’s insults focused on a different aspect of Jesus’ ministry. As with the soldiers from the pre-crucifixion scene (Mark 14:65 and 15:16-20), they unknowingly ridiculed our Lord for his role as prophet, priest, and king.

In verses 29 and 30, the cruel crowd called Jesus’ role as prophet into question. They derailed Him for one of His most famous prophecies. They remembered He had said something about rebuilding the temple in three days (Mark 14:58). They scorned Him because such a feat seemed impossible. However, they were unaware that Jesus’ claim had little to do with the physical temple structure. His words were a reference to His physical body. The prophecy was one concerning His resurrection.

In Mark’s account, Jesus’ bold prediction concerning the temple was probably uttered around the time of the events in Mark 13:1-2. Even after His death, many would remember the Lord’s prophecy. The religious leaders even grasped the meaning behind it. They knew that Jesus’ prediction contained allusions to His physical body, so they tried to prevent a hoax that might make it seem He had come back to life (Matthew 27:62-64).

When one thinks about it, the insult in the last part of verse 30 may have been one of the toughest for Jesus to endure. The people challenged Jesus, saying, “Save yourself by coming down from the cross!” (Mark 15:30b). Remember that our Lord was 100% God and 100% man. He could have easily delivered Himself from the cross (Matthew 26:53). He likely had to exercise self-restraint and a consecrated will in order to withstand the insult from the bystanders.<sup>47</sup> We know He particularly dreaded the mental anguish associated with the cross (Matthew 26:36-46). As the crowd raged, He expressed great meekness and dedication by not responding sinfully to the crowd’s jabs.

### **Verse 31**

In verse 31, another group of people — the religious leaders — insulted Jesus because of His priestly claims. Mark tells us, “In the same way, the chief priests with the scribes were mocking him among themselves and saying, ‘He saved others, but he cannot save himself!’” Notice that the “chief priests” and “scribes” mocked Jesus “among themselves.” The idea is that they weren’t publicly vocal with their ridicule. They privately joked and

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<sup>46</sup> Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 103.

<sup>47</sup> Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 103.

congratulated themselves for Jesus' death.<sup>48</sup> They had been plotting to have Him killed since Mark 3:6 and it seemed that their plan had succeeded. Their words were an affront against Jesus' role as priest. In their mind, our Lord had no ability to intercede on behalf of others, because He couldn't even help Himself.

### **Verse 32**

In verse 32, the religious leaders also question Jesus' role as king, saying, "Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross, so that we may see and believe" (Mark 15:32). Here we see Jesus' role as king being called into question. The religious elite hollered "come down now...so that we may see and believe." Interestingly their words actually contained gospel verbiage. Starting back in Mark 1:15, the Lord had proclaimed, "Repent and believe the good news!" Surely the men had heard Jesus preach. Now they used His very words against Him. Little did they know that they themselves proclaimed the message that could deliver them from eternal damnation. The proud religionists stand as a reminder that hearing gospel summons is not enough to experience salvation. One must humble his or her heart, repent of sin, and receive God's gracious gift.

The last part of verse 32 contains ridicule from one last group of people. Mark says, "Even those who were crucified with him taunted him." In other gospel accounts, we learn that two other men were crucified with Jesus — one to His right and another to His left (Matthew 27:38; Luke 23:32). Mark says nothing about the criminal who expressed faith in Christ (Luke 23:42). He only mentions the fact that insults were hurled at Jesus by "those who were crucified with" Jesus.

One should not see an error in Scripture within our current verse, supposing Mark is in conflict with Luke's account. It could be claimed that Mark presents both criminals as insulting Jesus and Luke presents only one as insulting Jesus. A faulty attempt could be made, on the basis of such a misguided observation, to discredit Scripture. There is no need to find conflict between Mark and Luke's account. Maybe the repentant criminal did hurl insults at Jesus initially before the love of Jesus began to work on his heart. Perhaps Mark's words can be seen as speaking of the two soldiers as a group. Though one did not insult Jesus, taunts did come from the pair. Whatever the case, it is important to note that Scripture is trustworthy.

Furthermore, it is important to see the depths of the hostility Jesus encountered. On top of experiencing horrific physical pain, He endured endless insults from nearly everyone. Religious leaders, soldiers, spectators, casual passersby, and convicted criminals all hurled venomous words His way. The language of verse 32 appears in the imperfect sense. It conveys the idea that repeated insults came from the lips of the other

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<sup>48</sup> Schnabel, 417.

criminals.<sup>49</sup> One has noted that our verse highlights the way in which “Jesus died utterly forsaken and alone.”<sup>50</sup>

Jesus had to endure mistreatment and rejection by everyone in order to effectively pay for our sins. Because of our fallen state, each person is naturally estranged from both God and man. Think back to the Garden of Eden. After Adam and Eve’s transgression, the couple immediately experienced separation from God (Genesis 3:8-10) and each other (Genesis 3:11-13). Sin still produces a similar effect in the lives of men, women, boys, and girls. Because of our inherent sinfulness, we are born into enmity with God and others. At the cross, Jesus had to be rejected by men (Mark 15:16-32) and forsaken by God (Mark 15:34) in order to relationally restore us to God and man. At the cross, Jesus gave us the capacity to experience anew what it means to be made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27). Because of His substitutionary death on our behalf, we now have the ability to rightly relate to God and others (Matthew 22:37-40).

On top of the way in which it provided salvation, Jesus’ death is an example for us in how to face resistance and persecution from the ungodly. Part of Mark’s original intent in writing was most likely to encourage Roman believers who were facing intense persecution.<sup>51</sup> He wanted them to know that they had an example and help in Jesus. Believers of all generations should take heart from Jesus’ passion. The Bible says, “Consider him who endured such hostility from sinners against himself, so that you won’t grow weary and give up” (Hebrews 12:3). Do you feel overwhelmed by the pressures and problems of life? Fix your eyes on the suffering Jesus and you’ll receive strength to carry on. Are you wallowing in the pain of the rude remarks of a friend or family member? Think about what Jesus endured and you’ll be better equipped to carry on. Is a struggle or some form of suffering making you want to quit? Remember how Jesus pressed through on your behalf. In Him you will find comfort and strength for your weary soul.

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<sup>49</sup> Robertson, 396.

<sup>50</sup> Brooks, 260.

<sup>51</sup> Brooks, 252.