

Pondering His Passion

When we think of “passion,” we usually think of an intense emotion or feeling about something. The word “passion” comes from the Latin, *passio*, meaning “suffering” or “being acted upon.” That’s what we mean at this time of year when we talk about the Passion of our Lord. About one-third of the Gospels recount Jesus’ Passion, the words and events that describe Jesus’ sufferings during what we now call “Holy Week.” Without question, the Evangelists saw that week as the most important, most significant of Jesus’ entire life and ministry.

***Jesus, I will ponder now On Your holy passion; With Your Spirit me endow For such meditation.
Grant that I in love and faith May the image cherish Of Your suffering, pain, and death
That I may not perish.***

Strange that the Evangelists would highlight such a horrible event. Crucifixion is, without question, the most horrible form of execution ever devised by men. The crucified had to remain conscious in order to keep breathing, and so felt every bit of pain, shame, and agony, exposed to the elements and the ridicule of those watching. We would turn away, but the Scriptures bid us look. Look at Jesus and what he suffered!

***Make me see Your great distress, Anguish, and affliction, Bonds and stripes and wretchedness
And Your crucifixion;
Make me see how scourge and rod, Spear and nails did wound You, How for them You died, O God,
Who with thorns had crowned You.***

“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Matthew 23:34). So Jesus spoke from the cross, as the soldiers who had mocked him and nailed him to the cross now cast lots for his clothing. But this is more than a dramatic show on the part of God, and Jesus’ suffering was not just caused by the soldiers and the Jewish leaders of Jesus’ day. Each and every sinner in history is responsible for the suffering, pain, and death of the Son of God.

***Yet, O Lord, not thus alone Make me see Your passion, But its cause to me make known And its termination.
Ah! I also and my sin Wrought Your deep affliction; This indeed the cause has been Of Your crucifixion.***

My sin? I caused Jesus’ suffering and death? Yes. That’s the honest confession of each and every sinner. Not that Jesus’ death was somebody else’s fault, but that it was *my* fault. This is what the punishment of *my* sin looks like.

***Grant that I Your passion view With repentant grieving. Let me not bring shame to you By unholy living.
How could I refuse to shun ev’ry sinful pleasure Since for me God’s only Son suffered without measure?***

“Return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments” (Joel 2:12-13) True repentance is more than just saying, “I’m sorry.” It means turning away from your sin, changing your life. A repentant sinner comes to hate sin and cannot continue in it. Remember, it was because of your sinful “pleasures” that Jesus had to suffer all this for you.

***If my sins give me alarm And my conscience grieve me, Let Your cross my fear disarm;
Peace of conscience give me.***

Help me see forgiveness won By Your holy passion. If for me He slays His Son, God must have compassion!

Horrible as this view of Jesus’ suffering may make you feel, embrace that horror. This is what God did so that your sin may be forgiven, your guilt removed, your soul washed clean—all by the blood of this Lamb! So, “Return to the LORD, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love” (Joel 2:13).

***Graciously my faith renew; Help me bear my crosses, Learning humbleness from You,
Peace mid pain and losses.***

May I give You love for love! Hear me, O my Savior, That I may in heav’n above Sing Your praise forever.

The Passion of our Lord is more than a past event; it is a present reality. Hold fast to the cross of Christ in your daily life, ponder His suffering, death, and resurrection. What Jesus has done for you is a fact that is with you always, as He is, to the close of this age. Follow Him, learn from Him, for He holds fast to you.