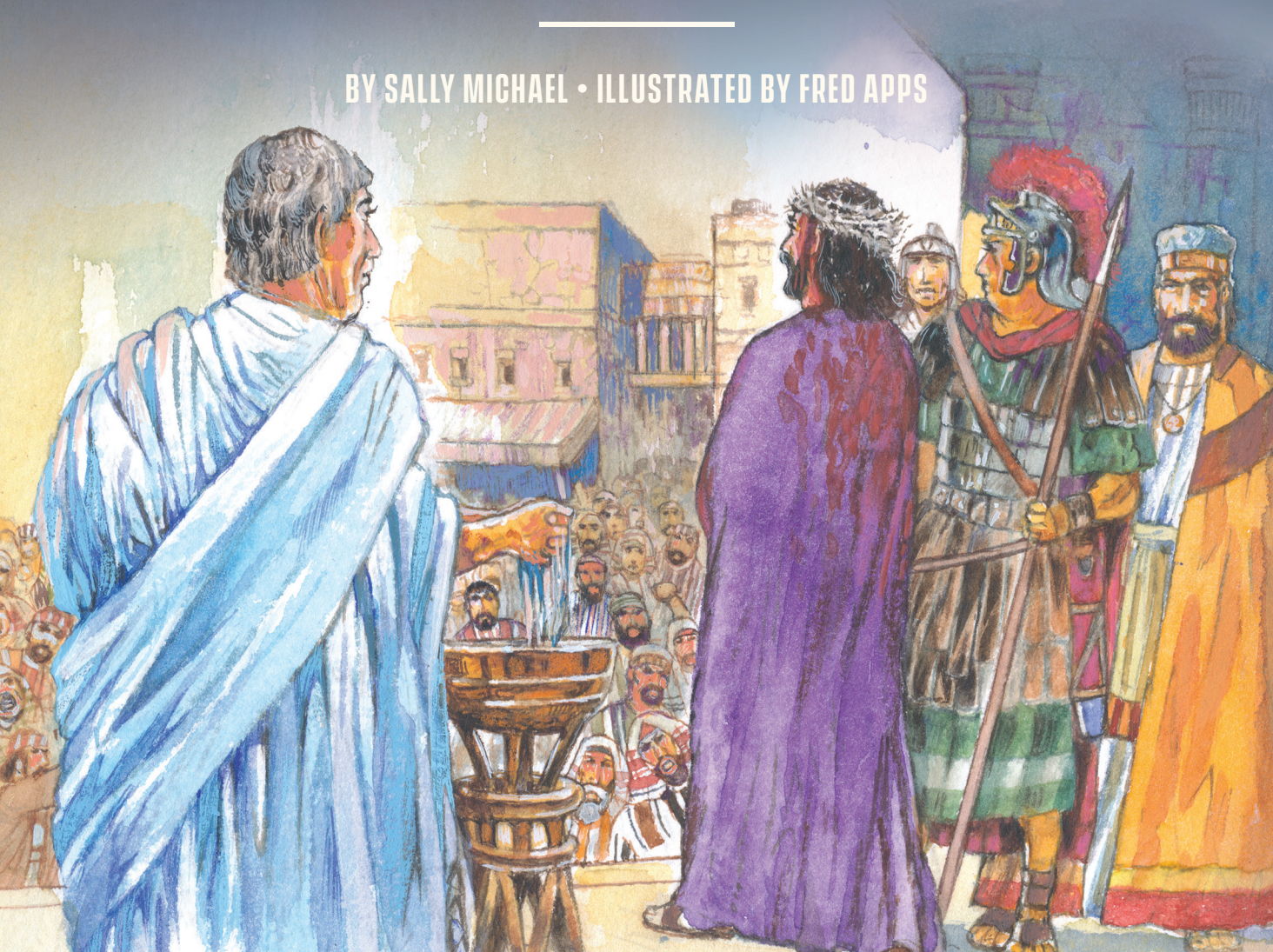


Truth:78

JESUS DIES FOR SINNERS

AN EXCERPT FROM MORE THAN A STORY

BY SALLY MICHAEL • ILLUSTRATED BY FRED APPS



A NOTE TO PARENTS

We can never fully grasp the extreme necessity of the cross or the profound depth of love, sacrifice, and forgiveness represented by the cross. If we as adults have this difficulty, imagine how difficult it is for our children. The meaning of Easter for children is even more confused by our culture's preoccupation with Easter bunnies, decorated eggs, overflowing baskets of candy, Easter egg hunts, and bright spring flowers, all of which detract from the sober reality of what happened on the cross and why it needed to happen.

In an effort to acquaint children with the sober realities and the glorious grace of Jesus' work on the cross, Truth78 is offering two chapters from *More Than a Story: New Testament* so that your family and especially your children might gain a fuller understanding and deeper appreciation of what our Savior endured on our behalf.

Though you are not receiving the complete story of our redemption, perhaps these chapters may stir in your children a desire not to trivialize this season and to focus on the greater things that lead to eternal life. Perhaps they may rejoice more fully in the resurrection of Jesus who accomplished our redemption and perfectly fulfilled the Father's plan from before the beginning of time.

May the Lord give you a refreshed appreciation for the salvation purchased by Jesus as you guide your children through Good Friday and Easter Sunday.

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

(1 Peter 2:24, ESV)

May you and your family have a blessed Easter,


Sally Michael

CHAPTER 126

“CRUCIFY HIM!”

Jesus Is Put on Trial—Matthew 27:1-33; Mark 15:1-22;
Luke 23:1-31; John 18:28-19:17

...“My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.” (John 18:36)

It was now early Friday morning, the day of Passover, and Jesus had been up the entire night before—eating the Passover meal with His disciples, praying in the garden, being arrested, and being condemned to death by the Jewish council. Now the whole group of Jewish leaders brought Jesus to the home of Pilate, the Roman governor. *Why do you think they went to see Pilate?*

The Jewish leaders did not have the authority or the right to put someone to death. They needed the Roman governor to order that. But when the leaders got to Pilate’s home, they would not go inside. *Do you know why they would not go inside?* Pilate was a Gentile, so if the religious leaders went inside Pilate’s house, they would be “unclean.” *What is so utterly foolish about this?*

The Jewish leaders were worried about being unclean or impure and unable to approach a Holy God by simply going into a Gentile home...while they were *plotting the death of Jesus!* Which is the greater offense to God? They could not see their great sin of hatred, envy, rebellion, and murder. No wonder Jesus called them blind guides. Jesus had once said to them, *“You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!”* A gnat is a very tiny bug. The Pharisees and scribes were so concerned about keeping the “gnats” of the law—the less important parts of the law. But they “swallowed camels”—they disobeyed the great or “weightier” commands like justice, mercy, and faithfulness. They not only did this themselves but, as teachers and leaders, they were leading the Jews to live the same way.

When Pilate came outside, the Jewish leaders started accusing Jesus of wanting to overthrow the government and be king. So Pilate asked Jesus, “Are you the king of the Jews?” Jesus answered, “You have said so.” *Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, “I find no fault in this man.”* But the Jews would not give up. They made up all kinds of lies about Jesus. But Pilate found a way out of having to decide about Jesus. Since Jesus was from Galilee, he sent Jesus to Herod, who ruled over Galilee. *Do you remember who this Herod was?* He was the man who had John the Baptist beheaded.



Herod was actually glad to see Jesus because he had heard about Jesus and was hoping Jesus would do some miracles. *What was wrong with Herod's thinking?* Jesus was not some kind of magician performing miracles to entertain people. **Jesus' miracles were signs that He is the all-powerful God.** The signs were to show that Jesus was more than a man. He was God in the form of man. Herod asked Jesus many questions, but Jesus would not answer him. The Jewish leaders accused Jesus "vehemently." *Do you know what "vehemently" means?* It means fiercely. They were getting bolder and angrier, and they wanted to make sure Jesus was put to death!

Herod and his soldiers mocked Jesus and sent Him back to Pilate. Again, Pilate told the crowd that Jesus had done nothing deserving death. He would punish Jesus and let Him go. But the crowd was not satisfied. So Pilate questioned Jesus again—"What have you done? Are you the King of the Jews?"

Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world." (John 18:36)

It was a tradition that during the feast of the Passover the governor would set one prisoner free. Pilate was nervous. His wife had sent him a message saying that she had been troubled by a dream. Her dream warned her that Jesus was innocent. So Pilate offered to release either Jesus or Barabbas. He knew the Jewish leaders had accused Jesus because they were envious that people were following Jesus. But Barabbas was a well-known thief and a murderer. Surely, Jesus would be released, and Pilate would be rid of this problem. *But they all cried out together, "Away with this man, and release to us Barabbas."*

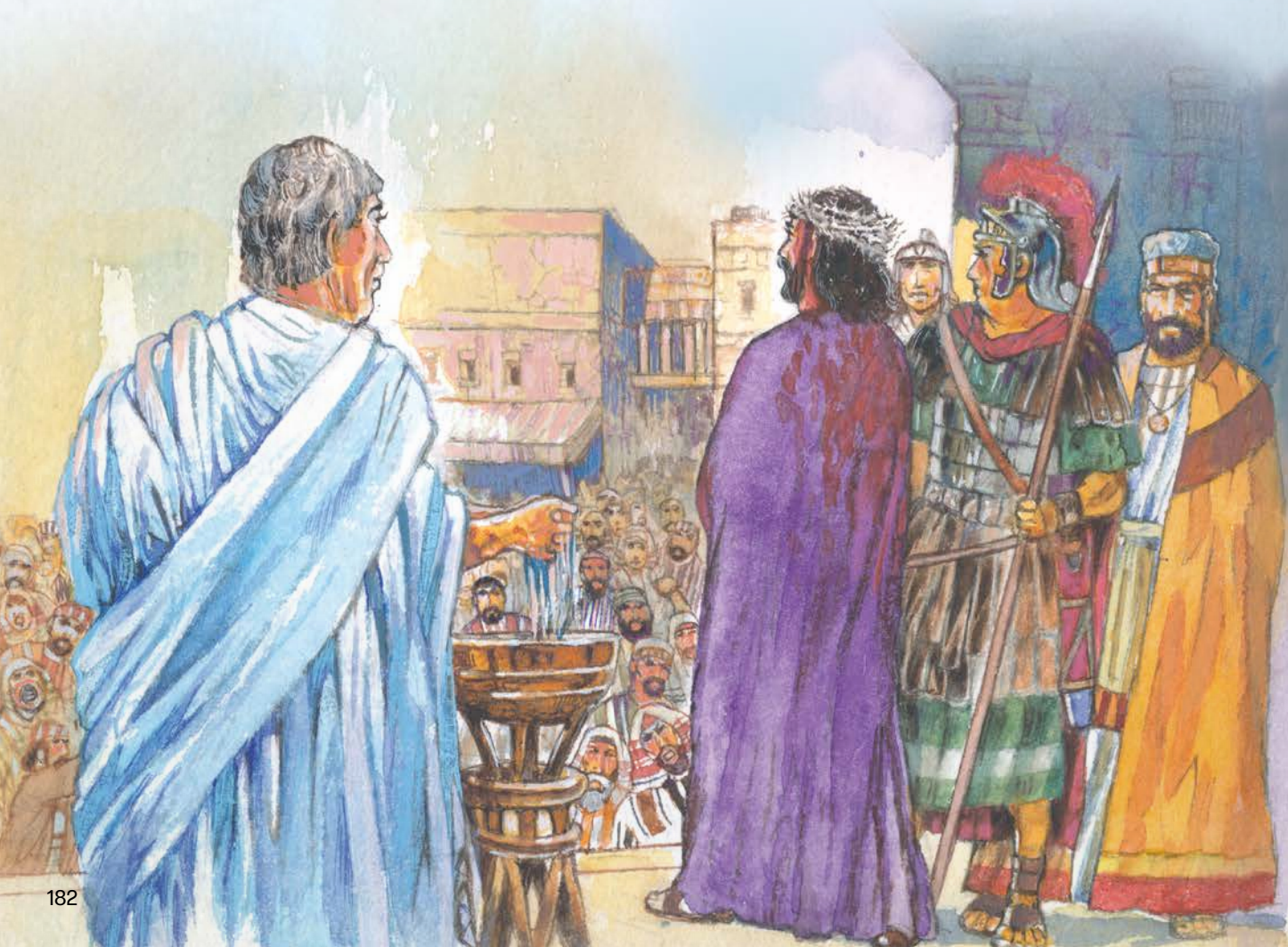


Then Pilate had Jesus whipped. The whips had jagged pieces of metal in them. The soldiers twisted a vine of thorns together to make a crown for Jesus. They pushed the crown onto Jesus' head and dressed him in a purple robe. They spit on Him and mocked Him. *They came up to him saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and struck him with their hands.* Then Pilate brought Jesus out to the Jews. Surely, they would be satisfied when they saw that Jesus had been punished, Pilate announced to the crowd, *"See, I am bringing him out to you that you may know that I find no guilt in him"...*When the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out, *"Crucify him, crucify him!"*

Pilate brought Jesus inside again and questioned Him. But Jesus didn't answer Pilate. *So Pilate said to him, "You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?" Jesus answered him, "You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above."* Pilate was not in charge. **God is sovereign over all things.** Nothing that happens is outside of God's purposes, and nothing can stop God's plan. No governor, king, or ruler is greater than God...and any power they have has been given to them by God.

Pilate went out to the people again. He was hoping to release Jesus. But the Jews were determined to crucify Jesus. They said that if Pilate released Jesus, he was not a friend of Caesar, the emperor of Rome. The crowd was getting out of control, screaming at Pilate to crucify Jesus.

So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves." And all the people answered, "His blood be on us and on our children!"...So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified. (Matthew 27:24-25; Mark 15:15)



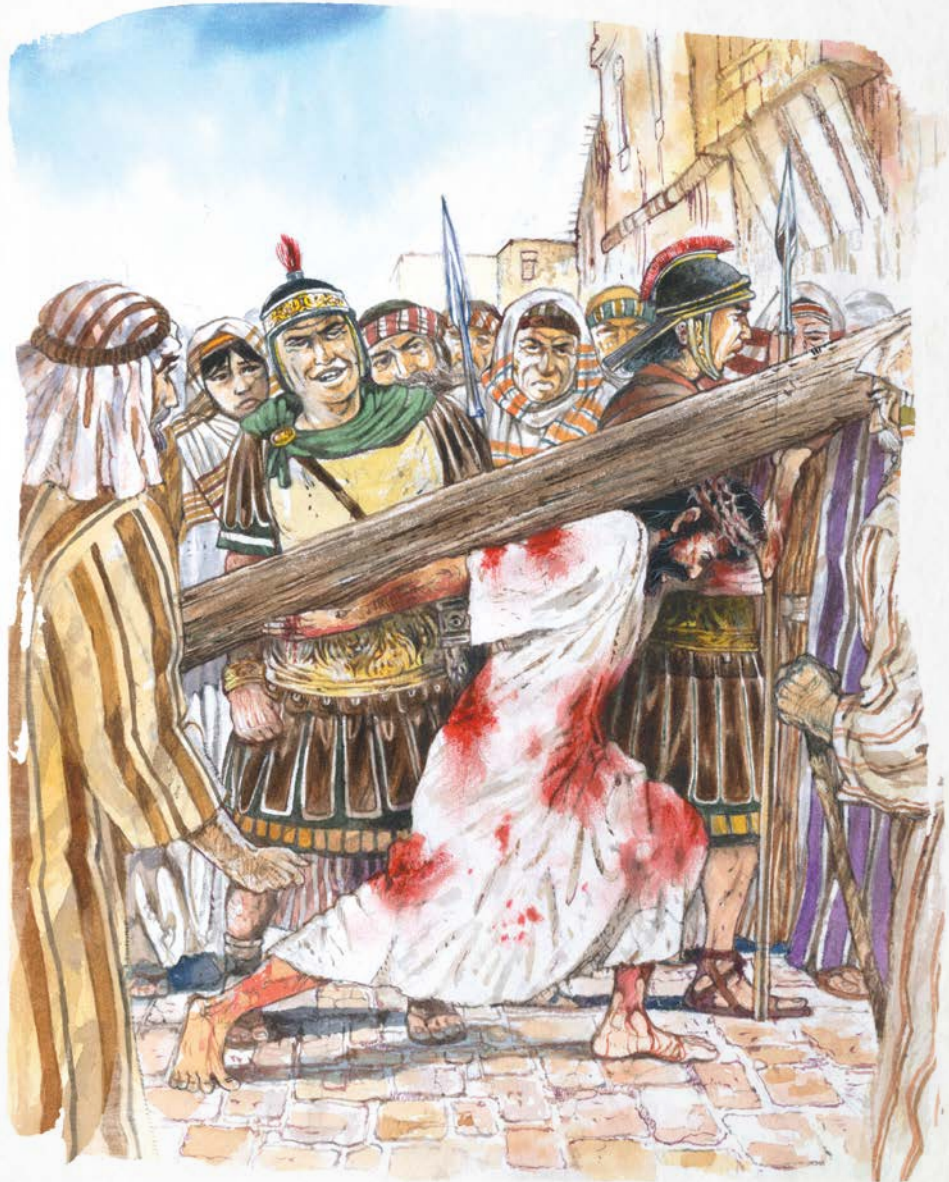
Pilate knew Jesus was innocent...but he was afraid of the crowd. He wanted to please them rather than do what he knew was right. So he sent an innocent man, the Son of God, to be killed. The soldiers took Jesus inside and *began to salute him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" And they were striking his head with a reed and spitting on him...And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. And they led him out to crucify him.* The sinless Jesus was being put to death for a crime He did not commit, for evils He did not do, and for sins that were not His own.

He went out, bearing his own cross. At some point, the soldiers grabbed a man named Simon of Cyrene and forced him to carry the cross behind Jesus to a place called Golgotha. A great crowd of people followed Jesus, including women who were crying for Jesus. Jesus turned to them and said, *"Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children."* Jesus warned them that days of greater persecution were coming. His message of repentance and faith had been rejected when He spoke it in person. It would be rejected even more when He was not in person on earth.

Just like the trip Abraham and Isaac took up Mount Moriah, so another Father brought His Son to be the sacrifice for sin. God gave Abraham a substitute ram to take Isaac's place, but

God's Son was the sacrificial lamb who was the substitute for man's sin.

Who put Jesus on the cross? Was it Pilate? Or the Jews? Or Satan? God did. God planned the cross and permitted evil men to kill His Son. But it was our sin that made the cross necessary.



Unless you truly trust in Jesus' payment for your sin on the cross, you will bear the punishment for your sin. Have you come to Jesus, the spotless Lamb of God, for the forgiveness of your sin?

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:6)

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. (1 Peter 2:24)

THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE

What does this chapter tell us about God?

Talk about and apply the **biblical truths** in **bold** text. Make them personal and apply them to what is happening in your family, church, community, or the world today.

Explain John 18:36.

What is so wrong about the religious leaders being envious of Jesus? (Make sure your child understands not only the sin of envy, but also the sins of not believing in Jesus and treasuring the kingdom of this world more than the Kingdom of God. The religious leaders should have rejoiced that people were following Jesus—that the Son's ministry was fruitful, and people were believing in Christ.)

Talk About: *He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. (1 Peter 2:24)*

What sin do you see in the Jews? In Pilate? In the soldiers? In yourself?

Pray: Thank Jesus for enduring shame and suffering for sinners. Confess your sin. Thank God that He is a forgiving God.

Think About: *How did my sin put Jesus on the cross?*

MAN OF SORROWS

Isaiah 53

Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? ²For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. ³He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. ⁴Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. ⁵But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. ⁶All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. ⁷He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. ⁸By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? ⁹And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. ¹⁰Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. ¹¹Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. ¹²Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.

FATHER, FORGIVE THEM

Jesus Is Crucified—Matthew 27:34-44;
Mark 15:23-32; Luke 23:32-43; John 19:18-27

And Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” (Luke 23:34a)

Why did Jesus have to die?

Suppose there was a very cute, cuddly little puppy...and someone started kicking the puppy over and over. The puppy was yelping with pain and fear, but the person kept kicking the puppy until it lay bleeding and unmoving on the ground. *How would you feel?*

You would feel so angry at the cruel, harsh, sinful treatment of the puppy. **It is right to be angry at sin and cruelty.** But the meanness that you would see is a very, very, very tiny, itty-bitty part of all the sin that God sees. And the anger that you would feel is a very, very, very weak anger compared to God’s fierce anger—His wrath—that He feels toward sin. **God is holy, and He cannot tolerate sin.** There has to be punishment for rebelling against God and breaking God’s good and loving commands. God could punish every person for his sin...but He chose to provide a sin-bearer for His people—for those who would trust in Jesus. God paid for those sins Himself by pouring out His wrath on His Son. **Jesus died to receive the punishment sinners deserve. Jesus, who kept all of God’s righteous Laws, didn’t deserve punishment...but He willingly died for the sins of His people—for those who would trust in Him.**

Jesus was taken with two other men, men who were criminals, to a place called Golgotha or Calvary to be crucified.²⁰ The soldiers stretched Jesus’ arms out on the cross. Then they took nails and drove them in His hands near His wrists. What excruciating pain this must have been for Jesus! Then they took His feet and nailed them to the cross, causing even more extreme pain. A sign written by Pilate was hung on the cross in three languages saying, “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.” The crowd around Jesus was made up of soldiers, religious rulers, Jews, Gentiles, men, women, children...and Jesus’ followers, too. How differently the people in the crowd must have felt. Some were angry; others were mocking; some were probably scared; and surely, some were crying. Jesus looked down on it all. *What did Jesus see as He looked down from the cross?*

The soldiers took Jesus’ clothes and divided them into four parts—one part for each soldier. But His tunic, the inner garment, was woven in one piece so the soldiers decided to “cast lots” (like rolling dice) to see who would win it. This was to fulfill the Old Testament Scripture, “*They*

divided my garments among them and for my clothing they cast lots."

Jesus was in agonizing pain, sacrificing Himself for sinners, and the soldiers ignored His suffering. They were more interested in His clothing.

The crowd spit out many insults at Jesus. *"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!"* The chief priests, scribes, and elders mocked Him. *"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.'"*

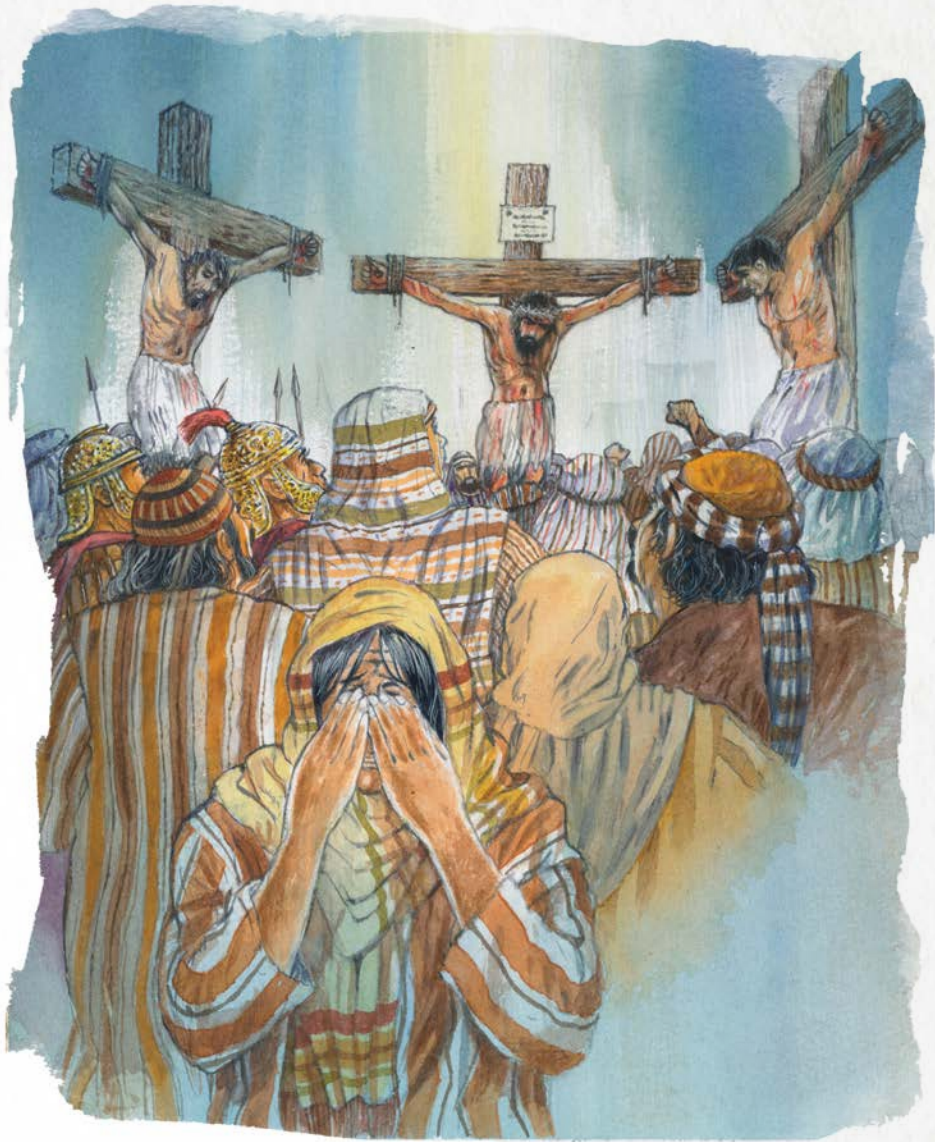
Jesus could have broken

loose from the cross; He could have called thousands of angels to wipe those people out; He could have stopped the mocking in one second. But He didn't.

Can you imagine what it must have been like for Jesus to hear all the mocking and insults, knowing He could stop it...but instead He endured it all? Jesus looked down on all this—the cruelty, the insults, the disrespect, the greed, the envy, the hatred...and He said, *"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."* Jesus' response was love! Jesus' response was forgiveness! Jesus' response was to pray for others!

Even one of the criminals hanging beside Jesus insulted Him saying, *"Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!"* This man, in his last hours of life, was hatefully sinning. But the other criminal scolded him.

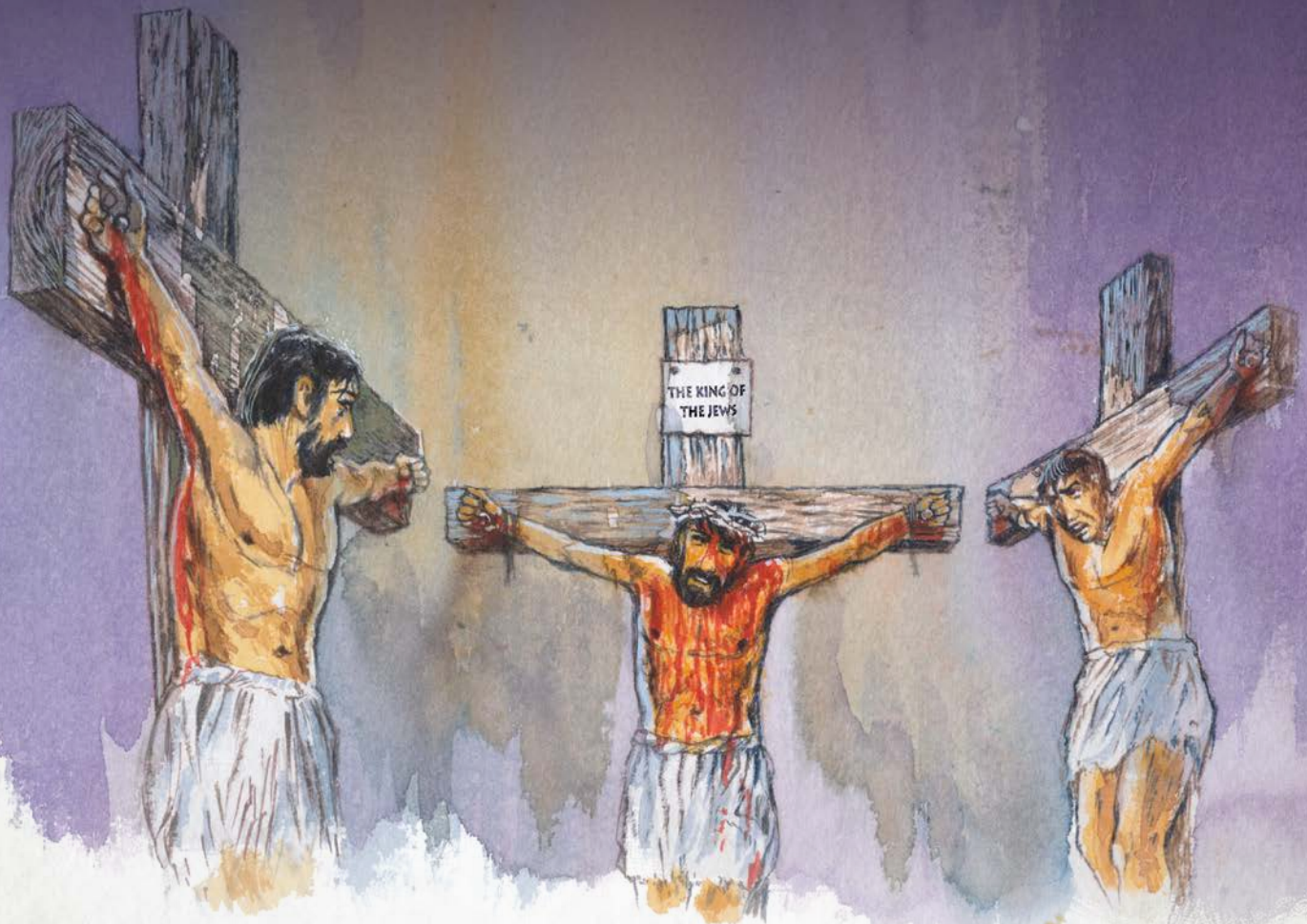
"Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing



wrong." And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise." (Luke 23:40-43)

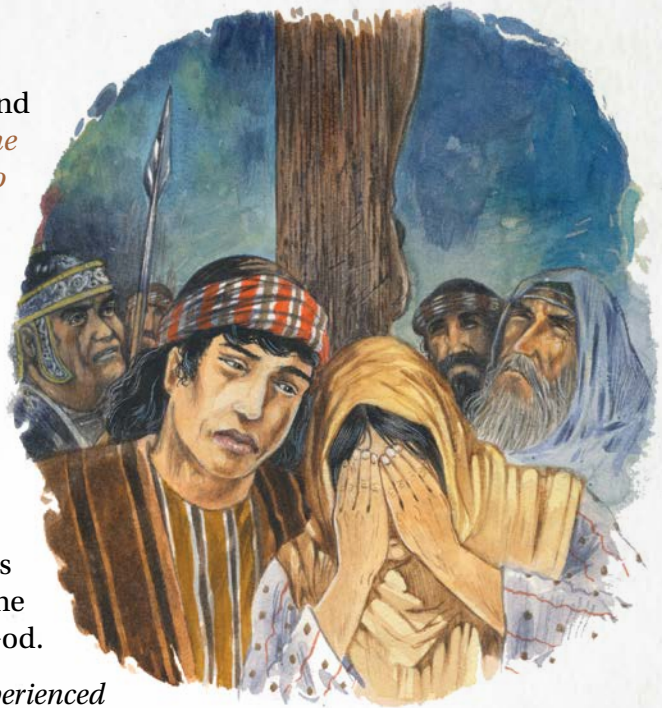
Jesus willingly forgives anyone who comes to Him in faith. Even a criminal who repents at the end of his life finds forgiveness from Jesus. Jesus spoke truthfully when He had said, "I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness."

Jesus saw something else when He looked down from the cross. He saw His mother, His aunt, another woman, and Mary Magdalene. How heartbroken they must have been. Jesus, whom they loved, was nailed to a cross dying! He was bleeding from the thorns pierced into His head and the nails driven into His feet and hands. He was bruised and bleeding from the beatings He had endured. He was insulted and mocked. How they must have grieved to see Jesus on the cross.



Jesus also saw the disciple John, His trusted and beloved friend. *When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son!” Then he said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother!” And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.* Even in His time of greatest agony, Jesus cared about others.

The physical suffering that Jesus felt on the cross was extremely painful. The emotional sadness He felt in seeing His followers mourning and others sinfully mock and reject Him was agonizing. But there was an even greater suffering that Jesus experienced on the cross—the agony of bearing the sin of His people and experiencing the wrath of God.



We can't even begin to imagine the suffering Jesus experienced on the cross. Jesus endured the cross to take the punishment God's sinful people deserved. You, too, are a sinner in need of God's forgiveness. What are the sins that separate you from a holy God? Have you trusted in Jesus for the forgiveness of your sin and received the promise of eternal life?

But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. (Isaiah 53:5)

THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE

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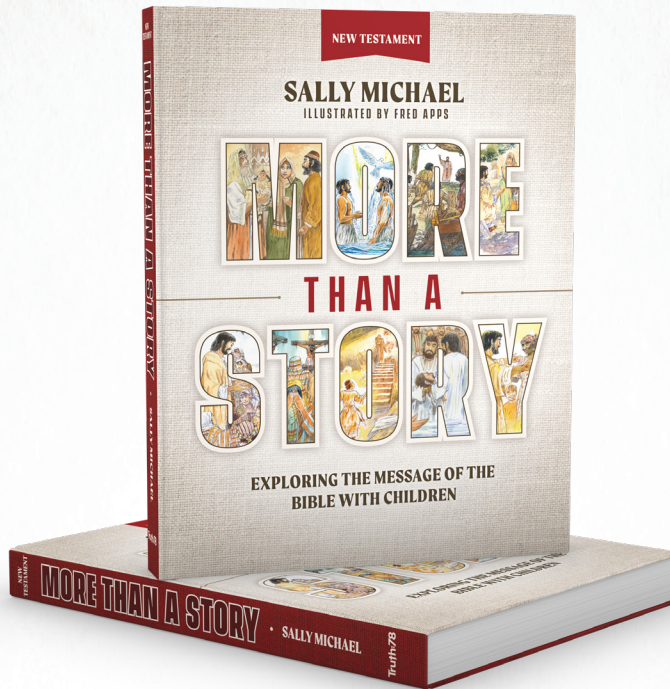
Does sin make you angry? Explain. Why does God have the right to be angry at sin and punish sinners?

Talk About: *But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. (Isaiah 53:5)*

What is the consequence of not accepting Jesus as your sin-bearer and Savior? Explain.

Pray: Thank Jesus for dying on the cross. Confess your sin and ask Jesus to give you a heart of faith.

Think About: *How can I tell if I am trusting in Jesus as my Savior?*



More Than a Story: New Testament is a new kind of Bible resource for children (ages 6-12)—taking them on a chronological journey through the Bible with a God-centered, gospel-focused, discipleship-oriented, theologically grounded perspective.

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