

The King's Chastisement

Matthew 27:27-31

Michael Felkins

Grand Avenue Baptist Church

Ames, Iowa

March 23, 2025

As we come to vv. 27-31, we need to remember what we see happening to Jesus in this text. I briefly mentioned this last Sunday, but Jesus is taking the cup of the wine of God's wrath and drinking it. This morning, the cup of God's wrath is at His lips, and the wrath is beginning to flow. In this text, we see physical brutality toward Jesus, but the main focus of the text is the mocking of the true King – Jesus.

Jesus told us this would happen, didn't He? In Matthew 20:18-19 Jesus predicted He would be mocked:

"See, we are going up to Jerusalem. And the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death ¹⁹ and deliver him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified, and he will be raised on the third day."

We are witnessing His prediction come true. The religious leaders had mocked Him earlier, but here, the Gentiles are now part of the mocking and flogging of Jesus.

Friends, our Lord endured incomprehensible mockery as He was being chastised and crucified on the cross. The great irony is that the One mocked is the only hope for sinful men. Here's the main point of the text: *Christ, our King, humbly endured the mockery and scorn of men to bring them into a relationship with God.*

I have three points to help us walk through our text. First, the humiliation of our King. Second, the mocking of our King. Third, the submission of our King. Let's walk through this text and ask the Holy Spirit to help us apply it to our lives.

I. The Humiliation of Our King (v. 27-28)

Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the whole battalion before him. ²⁸ And they stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him.

The first stage of Jesus' chastisement was His public humiliation. After Pilate pronounced his judgment on Jesus, He was taken into the Praetorium. In there, He was surrounded by a battalion of soldiers. It would have been hundreds of soldiers. They were not there to protect His rights and ensure His dignity. Instead, it was the exact opposite. These guys were there to strip Jesus of His humanity and His dignity. They were the brute squad—professional torturers. They specialized in beating people to a pulp and torturing them to the point of death. Sometimes, they killed the person. These men enjoyed beating people; even if you were found innocent, you still would receive a beating and be mocked.

First, v. 27 says they stripped Jesus of His clothes, which symbolized stripping Him of His dignity. He would have been stripped naked, and to a Jew, this was incredibly shameful and humiliating. Clothing was a sign of honor, so to be stripped naked was extremely disgraceful.

Next, they took a scarlet robe, which was most likely a faded Roman soldier's cape and placed it on Him. These men were engaged in a cruel game where they dressed Jesus as a king so they could mock Him.

Their whole goal was to reduce Jesus to a shell of a human being. They knew He had called Himself a King, and so in order to show Him that He was not a King, they humiliated him by mocking Him, stripping Him naked, and dressing Him up as a joke.

These men loved to humiliate leaders. Humiliation was not only part of their job, but with the Roman soldiers it was what they did to defeated leaders and generals. They were giving Jesus the treatment of a high-ranking general who had been defeated and captured in battle.

Instead of treating their captives with dignity, Roman soldiers would strip the captives of their uniforms and parade them through the streets so that people would laugh and insult them. That was how they treated Jesus.

Let's apply vv. 27-28: To begin to understand how to apply this text, we must go back to Isaiah 53. Verses 3-4 tell us why Jesus was humiliated and shamed as our King:

He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. . . ⁴ Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.

First, Jesus endured the shame of being stripped of His dignity in order to carry the humiliation and shame of our sin. There was a massive redemptive act occurring in the humiliation of our Savior. You see, it is our sin and shame that separates us from God, and it had to be removed.

So, when Jesus was being stripped naked and humiliated, He was drinking the cup of God's wrath. He took on our sin and shame. He was humiliated for us because of our sin. It was our sin that brought shame and humiliation on Jesus. The soldiers were simply the tools to do the work of showing us the shame and humiliation of our sins.

Listen closely here: As people, we struggle with the shame and humiliation of our sins. *We either have too much shame or have too little shame.*

For example, the people of ancient Israel didn't have enough shame. They didn't understand the depth of shame they should have had because of their sin. So, God did radical things to help them understand the depth of the shame of their sin.

For example, one time, God sent the prophet Isaiah to walk around naked for three years and preach against the shame of the sins of God's people. The people lacked any shame for their sins, so He shamed them through Isaiah the prophet. Just imagine a naked preacher who was going around preaching against sin and the shame it brings. He was an object lesson to them.

This sounds crazy to us, and it was crazy to the people of Israel, who thought nakedness was shameful. However, the problem was the people didn't understand that they should feel great shame for their sins. They did not grasp the gravity of the situation. They simply didn't get it. They were not ashamed of their sin against God.

Listen, we are the same as they were. We don't understand the shame of our sin against God. We just go on sinning and never consider the shame of our sin.

How do we tenderize our hearts so that we feel the shame of our sin? First, we must be born again by the Holy Spirit of God. This creates a new heart so that we feel the proper shame for our sins.

Second, even as Christians, we will struggle to feel shame for our sins. So, we must keep reading texts like this and get our hearts and minds around what Jesus did by being humiliated in our place because of our sins. We need to see and feel our Savior's shame and humiliation as He was stripped naked and humiliated for us. We should meditate on the humiliation He endured for us so that we properly feel the shame of our sins.

Second, others feel too much shame. Here's what I mean: Some of us understand we have sinned, and we simply wallow in our shame and beat ourselves up. We feel the shame of our sins and receive the Lord's forgiveness, yet we also punish ourselves for our sins by wallowing in the shame. Some of us might even want the Roman soldiers to come and humiliate and shame us for our sins. What is the answer for those who wallow in their shame?

The answer for both groups is the gospel. When I say gospel, I mean we are focusing on a particular part of Christ's redemptive work, as we see in this text. So, the part of the gospel where we see Jesus' shame and humiliation does two things for us as we struggle with too little shame for sin or too much shame for sin.

- First, for those of us who don't get the depth of our sin and feel very little shame, we look to what Jesus endured because of our sin. We let the horror of what was done to Him because of our sins tenderize our hearts afresh.
- Secondly, for those of us who wallow in our sin and shame, the gospel reminds us, in texts like this, that Jesus took that sin and shame for us. He paid for it, so we do not have to do self-condemnation or self-flagellation in order to pay for our sins. Our King took that humiliation for us. He has already paid for it. I want to keep drilling down into the humiliation of our King and the shame He endured for more

application.

Have you ever been humiliated and shamed? Most of us have in some way and at some point in life. Whether you have been humiliated in public or in private, it is not a good feeling. It is most certainly one of those experiences that sticks with you and can even shape your life.

There is something about shame and humiliation that is more than an emotional experience. Have you ever noticed the body language of a prideful person? They have a haughty body language. Likewise, a person who feels shame and humiliation has a body language. This person's body language is usually downcast. He or she will drop his or her head and eyes and slump over. A person filled with shame usually looks downward and won't lift their eyes.

Yet, shame is not only an emotional experience that affects the whole person; it is also a spiritual experience. When we are filled with shame, our confidence is rocked or even non-existent. We don't want to see others, nor do we want to come to God.

However, it is to God that we need to go. The problem is we will want to avoid God. Like Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, after they sinned, we will want to hide from God because of our sin and shame.

Have you ever been there? Has your sin ever made you want to hide from God? Mine has. I remember a time in my life when I had gotten so far away from God I wondered how in the world He could love me. I remember going to church and walking down the aisle at the end of the service and thinking everyone would see me, laugh at me, and reject me. I remember thinking the roof of this building would fall in on me before I made it to the pastor.

Everything I thought was wrong. Everything I thought was based in shame. Now, should I have been ashamed for my sin? Yes! I should have been ashamed, but I needed to take that shame and humiliation to Jesus, the King, who was humiliated and shamed in my place because of my sin.

Friends, because of what Jesus endured for us, we have a high priest in Jesus who we can take our sin and shame and gives us confidence to come into the presence of God. Listen to Hebrews 4:14-5:2,

Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. ^{5:1} For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. ² He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness.

Friends, the writer of Hebrews is telling us that because of what Jesus has endured for us, we can come boldly and confidently to God and know He will deal gently with us even in our sin and shame. We don't have to

hide from God. He will not humiliate us because Jesus was humiliated in our place for our sin. Jesus took our sin and humiliation.

If you are like me, it took me a while to get used to not feeling shame and humiliation of my sin. I had to be reminded over and over that, yes, my sin was shameful, but Jesus took it from me and gave me His righteousness so I can confidently come before God. It may take you a while, too, but by faith, you need to believe it.

Here's one more practical application that results from Jesus being shamed and humiliated in our place because of our sins. It means when others try to humiliate you and heap shame upon you, you can take that to Jesus too, and know that He understands because He was humiliated and shamed.

Jesus will remind you that when He went to the grave, He buried your sin and shame there, so don't look for it or dig around in your heart and mind for it because it is gone. Brother and sister, He calls us to live in the richness of His love, grace, and full acceptance as His child because He has made us righteous in the eyes of God.

II. The Mocking of Our King (v. 29-30)

Mocking individuals and groups of people is very popular today. No generation in history has ever escaped mockery. Mocking people has always been a popular sport among junior high boys. I've been the victim of mocking, and I've done my share of it as well.

With the advent of social media, mocking others has been taken to a whole new level. Mocking others is big business. You will see it in political ads and interviews. There are websites that are entirely dedicated to mocking. Athletes call it "*trash talk*," and we laugh at hearing the taunts toward opposing players. Politicians call it "*campaigning*," and we cheer when our candidate scores a verbal blow on his opponent.

I don't know if you have ever been mocked or made fun of for who you are, something you have done, or for some other reason, but it can be a painful experience.

The saying we learn as kids says, "*Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.*" Unfortunately, this is not true. Words can be very painful and have the power to shape and even destroy our lives.

Many of us here today have been wounded by cruel, mocking words that were said to us when we were still young and impressionable. Some of us have been deeply wounded by mocking words that were said to us at a vulnerable moment.

Some of us have even been mocked for our faith in Jesus. You may have heard someone refer to you as a "*Bible Thumper*," "*A goody two shoes*," or "*a Christian who is a church-goer*."

Regardless of how you have been mocked, Jesus understands what it is like, for He was mocked right up to the point He died.

Let's consider how Jesus was mocked in vv. 29-30. As we read it, you need to know v. 29 is the key verse in our text because the soldiers are mocking Jesus' Kingship:

And twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on his head and put a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!"³⁰ And they spit on him and took the reed and struck him on the head.

Let's unpack the soldiers mocking of Jesus' Kingship. First, they twisted together a crown of thorns. The crown of thorns is a painful and ironic symbol of kingship because Jesus wore the crown of the curse of sin.

Remember, in the Garden of Eden, after Adam and Eve sinned, God pronounced a curse on Adam. In Genesis 3:17-18, He told Adam because he had disobeyed God and sinned:

Cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;¹⁸ thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field.

Jesus wore the curse of our sin as His crown. This was what the crown of thorns represented.

Next, v. 29 says they put a reed in His hand. This reed represented a weak substitute for a royal scepter. They mocked His true authority as King. Then, as a cruel mocking joke, they bowed in fake worship. Most likely, they mimicked the way people honored Caesar by saying, “*Hail Caesar!*”

To add insult to injury, these soldiers, though they were Roman soldiers, most likely came from the district of Syria and were conscripted into service. As boys, these men would have grown up alongside the Jews and likely had an intense hatred for the Jewish people. The bottom line is that they enjoyed the opportunity to mock a man who was accused of being the King of the Jews.

As they mocked Jesus, they all spat in His face. We know that in those times, as now, spitting in someone’s face was the most deplorable insult. And we also know that Jews considered the spit of non-Jews, or Gentiles, to be especially unclean. Here is the Lord of Glory, the only begotten Son of God, being spat upon by these pagan soldiers.

In addition to the mocking and being spat upon, Jesus was kicked, punched, and hit with clubs. The other gospels tell us the soldiers also had beaten Him with a cat-o-nine tail. This was a whip that contained long strips of leather with small metal spikes and bone shards tied into the leather. It was designed to inflict maximum pain. When they hit a person with it, it drove the shards of metal and bone deep into the flesh. Then, it was pulled off in such a way that it ripped the flesh to the bone. Sometimes, it was done to the point where the internal organs of some prisoners were exposed.

Also, they would have beaten Jesus’ face black and blue. His eyes would have almost been swollen shut. His nose would have been broken, and most likely, He was missing a few teeth. Needless to say, by this point, he hardly looked human. He didn’t look like a King but more like a walking corpse. The brute squad was indeed brutal.

However, there is irony in the mocking of Jesus. The irony is not on Jesus but on the soldiers. The irony is that Jesus was truly the King. The man they mocked as a king – was King.

Notice how Matthew put truth in the mouths of the words of the mocking soldiers. They bowed before Him and said, “*Hail, King of the Jews.*” Friends, He was the King. It was more truth than they knew, for these soldiers were *mindless mockers* pretending to worship Jesus.¹

Consider all that they did to Him and how, through it, Jesus purchased grace for us. They gave Him a cane scepter and cursed Him that we might be honored and blessed.² They defiled Him by spitting on Him so that we may stand pure and unstained before God (John Calvin). Jesus took the beating from the soldiers in order to fulfill Isaiah’s prophecy in Isaiah 50:6,

I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard; I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting.

Jesus was mocked and shamed, but it was all to redeem God’s people from their sins. Everything that happened to Jesus was by design and for our redemption.

Now, if this were the only application we made, it would be enough. However, I want to unpack this even more.

First of all, the world still mocks Jesus today. Through media, politics, and even false religions, they do all they can to deny His Kingship. You don’t have to look far to see or hear someone making a parody of Jesus or defining Jesus as less than the true King who is truly God and truly man. The world not only mocks Jesus but those who follow Him as well. Jesus is not physically here, so the next best thing to mock are His disciples—Christians. Jesus told us that if we follow Him, we will be treated like Him, so we should be prepared to be mocked if we follow Him.

¹ Phil Newton, *Sermon: The Son Mocked*, September 4, 2005.

² J. Ligon Duncan, *Sermon: Jesus Mocked*, January 11, 2000.

Secondly, *some people mindlessly profess Christ but do not honor Him as the King of Kings*. This is a type of mocking of our King. Think about it: Have you ever followed a lesser version of Jesus that fits your comfort rather than His true identity and authority as the King of Kings? Have you ever mocked Jesus by justifying and minimizing your sin? This essentially is what we do when we just blow sin off as if it is no big deal because Jesus won't care. We mock Jesus when we treat our sins this way.

Third, *do you bow before Jesus in genuine worship or in empty, pretend worship?* The soldiers were *mindless mockers* who bowed before Jesus. Friends, let's be very careful that we do not mock Jesus in pretend worship. Beware of simply going through the motions of worship and not truly worshipping Jesus, our King. Pretend worship minimizes His true authority in our lives. So, beware of *mindlessly worshiping Jesus*.

III. The Submission of Our King (v. 31)

And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him and led him away to crucify him.

After they had mocked Him and done all kinds of horrific acts to Him, the robe He was wearing was removed. By this time, because the robe was saturated with blood, the blood had possibly dried some to when it was removed, it reopened His wounds.

Then they put the original robe he was wearing back on Him. Scholars tell us that criminals were usually marched to the cross completely naked, but in this case, they covered Jesus, possibly to avoid offending the Jewish public.

Friends, as Jesus was led away to be crucified – He did not resist. He was like a lamb that was led to the slaughter. Even though He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, He submitted to His Father's will to fulfill His mission to save sinners. Isaiah 53:5-7 says:

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. ⁶ 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. ⁷ He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter.

This passage not only points to the reality of the physical sufferings that Jesus underwent on the cross, but it also points to the *vicarious* nature of Jesus' sufferings.

Vicarious means that Jesus suffered for us. He suffered on behalf of us. He suffered in our place. He suffered as our substitute. So, when we say His sufferings were vicarious, we mean that His sufferings were done in our place and on our behalf.

Friends, our Savior's sufferings on the way to the cross were deliberate and absolutely for us. It's not enough for us to contemplate the excruciating nature of His physical and emotional suffering. We must also understand that His suffering was according to God's grand redemptive plan to save sinners. It was for us.

Conclusion: Let me close with the words of the Apostle John. After a criminal was humiliated, spit on, mocked, beaten, and scourged with a cat-on-nine tail, many of them died, but not Jesus. After He had all of these things done to Him, it was as if Pilate was amazed that Jesus was alive. He brought Him out to the people, and in John 19:5, Pilate said:

"Behold the man!"

Friends, I say to you – Behold your Lord and your God, for that is who Jesus is! I pray you are trusting in Jesus today for your salvation.