

Does His Ordeal Humble You?

There are times that definitions are useful. What is an *ordeal*? An ordeal is torture to find the truth. That is the original definition of the word. As the years passed, the word simply meant “truth” since it wasn’t a very good way of finding out the truth. And that is a good definition for what we see here before us in Psalm 22 this evening. We see an ordeal. We see torture. We see it through the eyes of our Savior on the cross. And this evening we walk through these words to see this ordeal: *“I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted away within me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death.”*¹

If we ask the question ‘what was it like for Jesus to be crucified?’, in these words we find the answer. He says: *“I am poured out like water,”*² What happens when you pour out water on pavement in the summer? It steams and evaporates. Jesus can feel the water baking out of him because of the hot sun above him.

He says: *“all my bones are out of joint.”*³ This shows us how crucifixion worked—how it tortured and killed. There is a tug of war that goes on. On the one hand, all his bones are being pulled apart by gravity. And when the bones are pulled apart, he can’t breathe. So, he has to pull his bones back together amid so much pain in order to breathe. This tug of war goes on for hours and hours until he slowly dies.

And that’s exactly what we see pictured in the next words: *“My heart has turned to wax; it has melted away within me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death.”*⁴

The longer the heart goes without oxygen, the more it hardens and feels like hard wax. The more dehydrated Jesus becomes the more his intestines melt inside of him. The more dehydrated he becomes, the more his tongue sticks to the top of his mouth. For there is no moisture to keep it where it belongs. Finally then there is nothing left to endure except death. And as he is there looking down at the people around him, what does he see? *“I can count all my bones; people stare and gloat over me.”*⁵

At first, those below him are men turned into animals. Then he looks down and sees a small group of soldiers. They gamble for Jesus’ clothes. Jesus doesn’t need them anymore. He’s going to be dead soon. They gamble for his clothes—not out of anger, but out of apathy.

My brothers and sisters, it is very important that we see this evening what our Savior sees. It is very important that we see his torturous ordeal. It is very important that we see the uncaring, detached apathy of the soldiers. For, it is so very easy for us to act the same way, isn’t it? Now, can you appreciate the words we sung in the second verse of our hymn?:⁶

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.

Notice what word the writer of the hymnwriter used? *Make*. O Lord, make me see your pain. Make me see my apathy. But, why? Why should I see all this pain and apathy? Make me see it all so that I would be humbled. Make me see it so that I realize that *I* was the one who put you there on that cross. Make me see it so that I can thirst for what you give there on the cross.

¹(Psalms 22:14–15 NIV)

²(Psalms 22:14 NIV)

³(Psalms 22:14 NIV)

⁴(Psalms 22:14–15 NIV)

⁵(Psalms 22:17 NIV)

⁶CW 98, verse 2

Does not his ordeal humble you so that you see your sin? But even more, does not his ordeal humble you so that you sing his sacrifice? When we see our sin, when we are ashamed of our apathy, then we are ready to sing. Then we are ready to rejoice. Why? The hymnwriter says it best:⁷

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!

Jesus' bones were pulled apart *for you*. Jesus' heart and intestines dried out *for you*. Jesus endured all of this to take away your sins. With humble hearts, how can we keep from singing this sacrifice? And yet, our hymnwriter teaches us another important truth from this ordeal:⁸

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.

Whoever sees Jesus like this, pulled, pierced and wasting away for us can never look at life the same. He can never say 'God doesn't know *my* pain.' He can never say 'God will not help me in my pain.' He can never say 'I will get revenge since God isn't fighting for me.' No, we learn humbleness from Jesus. And indeed, we have true peace amid all our pain and sadness.

Does not his ordeal humble you? Does not it humble you so that you see your sin? Does not it humble you so that you sing his sacrifice? Amen.

⁷CW 98, verse 4

⁸CW 98, verse 6