



Lent



Upon the cross extended,
 See, world, thy Lord suspended,
 Thy Savior yields His breath.
 The Prince of Life from heaven
 Himself hath freely given
 To shame and blows and bitter death.

Who is it that hath bruised Thee?
 Who hath so sore abused Thee
 And caused Thee all Thy woe?
 While we must make confession
 Of sin and dire transgression,
 Thou deeds of evil dost not know.

'Tis I who should be smitten
 My doom should here be written:
 Bound hand and foot in hell.
 The fetters and the scourging,
 The floods around Thee surging,
 'Tis I who have deserved them well.

The load Thou takest on Thee,
 That pressed so sorely on me,
 It crushed me to the ground.
 The cross for me enduring,
 The crown for me securing,
 My healing in Thy wounds is found.

Thy cords of love, my Savior,
 Bind me to Thee forever,
 I am no longer mine.
 To Thee I gladly tender
 All that my life can render
 And all I have to Thee resign.

Thy cross I'll place before me,
 Its saving power be o'er me,
 Wherever I may be;
 Thine innocence revealing,
 Thy love and mercy sealing,
 The pledge of truth and constancy.

How God at our transgression
 To anger gives expression,
 How loud His thunder rolls,
 How fearfully He smiteth,
 How sorely He requiteth—
 All this Thy sufferings teach my soul.

Thy groaning and thy sighing,
 Thy bitter tears and dying,
 With which Thou wast oppress—
 They shall, when life is ending,
 Be guiding and attending
 My way to Thine eternal rest. **Amen.**

It is Lent. The season of Lent is a penitential season. As we focus our attention on how Jesus set His face toward Jerusalem to bear the sin of the world, we also consider our sins for which He suffered and died. Jesus did not die on the cross so that our sins don't matter anymore. No. If that were so, there would be no benefit in hearing and learning about what He accomplished for us. Jesus died on the cross to take away our sin precisely because our sin matters so very much. We ponder His holy passion in order that we might come to know the true magnitude of our sin as well as the great punishment that it deserved.

The desires of our heart separate us from God who gives us life—well, at least the *sinful* desires. But which thoughts are not sinful? Which thoughts do we recall in our hearts and say, “Yes these are they that I hold onto; these are the ones that I do not need God to forgive.”? To be sure, we know what is good and bad. God's law teaches us that. But His law will teach us nothing at all if it is not always at the same time teaching us that we have transgressed it by thought, word, and deed. The moment we are pleased with our own moral success, is the moment that we are pleased with our own righteousness. But the gruesome punishment often horrifically depicted on the cross of Christ teaches us what our righteousness has deserved (Is. 64:6).

Jesus came to die for sinners. Be a sinner. This doesn't mean, go and sin. No. It means that we should not search our heart and behavior in order to find some morsel of goodness to hold onto for dear comfort.

There was no comfort for the sinless One as He suffered for the wickedness that constantly quells from the heart of man; and there is no comfort for him who relies on what he himself has earned.

But there *is* Comfort. Look, dear Christian, at the comfort that is placed before the Son of God as He hung dying for your sins. Look at the comfort that was His from eternity, but for a time of agony and despair was denied Him. Yet it remained His by faith in the promise of Scripture: *“Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices;”* He says, *“My flesh also will rest in hope. For You will not leave My soul in death, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption”* (Ps. 16:9-10).

Eternal glory was Christ’s even while He paid the ultimate price for the sin that no man can fully understand (Ps. 19:12). But it was His not by sight—not while the flowing blood from His crown of thorns blinded Him. It was His by hope in what His Father had promised. And now it is ours, not by sight, but by the hope that Christ’s suffering and death has purchased. We see clearly with eyes of faith alone through the same blood of Christ that has earned for us a crown of glory. But this blood does not blind us. Rather, by it we see clearly the true wages of our sin. And so we also see what our Savior has won for us. As we continue through Lent and through life, repenting of our sins, and placing our only hope in the blood of Christ, so we will also continue to press toward Easter, and the eternal rest that awaits us all. **Amen.**

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