

## Exhortation 20: Christ's Side Pierced – Finished Work

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John 19:34

### I. The Text Opened

#### A. John 19:34

1. Christ's Side is Pierced with a Spear
  - a) "But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water," (John 19:34).
  - b) Of primary concern to the Jewish religious leaders of Jesus' day was observing the Mosaic law, especially as it related to the Sabbath.
    - (1) *As the Ten Commandments prohibited work on the Sabbath, (Exod. 20:8-11), the ongoing debate among the scribes and pharisees centered around what was considered work and what wasn't.*
    - (2) *Carrying a burden was considered work, for example, and would constitute breaking the Sabbath.*
  - c) Jesus was crucified on Friday, commonly referred to in the Gospels as, "Preparation Day," (Mark 15:42), or the day before the Sabbath.
    - (1) *And as the Jewish day began at sundown, only a few hours remained between the point when Christ died and the start of the Sabbath.*
    - (2) *Even in this instance of Jesus' death, it is clearly evident how their ceremonial attempts to keep the law caused them to act.*
      - (a) *"Then the Jews, because it was the day of preparation, so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath, asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away," (John 19:31).*
      - (b) *You might suggest that these religious zealots were so full of ceremonial superstitions, in fact, that they were opposed to even their crosses bearing burdens of the bodies of the dying on the Sabbath!*
  - d) In response to their request, Pilate ordered that the legs of those hanging on the crosses be broken to speed their death by suffocation.
    - (1) *But after breaking the legs of the two thieves, the soldier decided not to break Jesus' legs. Instead he took a spear and pierced his side.*
    - (2) *Though it seemed to him that Jesus was already dead, he must have speared Jesus' side just to be certain, (John 19:32-36).*

### II. The Doctrine from the Text

#### A. Doctrine: None of Christ's Bones Were Broken to Fulfill the Will of God

1. One of God's requirements for the Old Testament Jews' choice of the Passover lamb was that none of its bones be broken, (Num. 9:12).
  - a) So in that beautiful fulfillment of Christ as the Passover Lamb of God, sacrificed on the altar of the cross to pay for the sins of the world, unbeknownst to that soldier, he was carrying out the messianic prophecy of Psalm 34:20, "He keeps all his bones, not one of them is broken."

b) Immediately following his being pierced, as John 19:34 says, “at once there came out blood and water.”

*(1) Here was that “fountain opened to the house of David to cleanse from sin and uncleanness,” (Zech. 13:1) – blood to expiate sin and water to wash away uncleanness. God uses their malice to serve his mercy and our advantage.*

*(2) Whereas they make a wound, he makes a door, an everlasting gate of grace and glory; for God can turn even the fierceness of man into his praise (Psa. 76:10), and the bitterest waters of malice into the wholesome, life-giving streams of his mercies.*

c) That the Lord would not allow his people to be like Thomas that they would not just put in their hand, but also their heart into his wounded side.

*(1) That they would desire they be hid there, as he did his servant Moses when he passed by him in the cleft of the rock, this cleft of the true Rock of the Christian’s refuge, (Psa. 11).*

*(a) So shall he pass by their sins, and they shall see his glory.*

d) Out of his side flowed both blood and water.

*(1) As they flowed together out of his pierced side, so let them ever flow together into the Christian’s wounded soul, both the blood of justification by faith and the water of sanctification by grace.*

e) Those which he has joined, let Christians never think to separate, i.e., water and blood.

*(1) For except he washes them, they can have no share in him, (John 13:8).*

*(2) He is made to them both redemption and sanctification, (1 Cor. 2); so, they cannot participate in the one without the other.*

*(a) For without a life of grace here, they can never enter hereafter into that life of glory.*

f) They ask not only of the blood of his side to expiate their past sins, but of the water too that they do not thirst after such sins again, (John 4).

## B. Christ’s Body is Prepared by Nicodemus, and Joseph Begs for It

1. “And after this Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus. And there also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pound weight. Then they took the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury,” (John 19:38-40).

a) When the name “Joseph” is mentioned in the Bible, we typically think of the Old Testament character who was the favorite son of his father Jacob.

*(1) He is well known not only for his colorful coat, but also for his colorful life and how he served and honored God regardless of the circumstances he found himself in.*

b) Likely the next most familiar character in the Bible named Joseph is the man the virgin Mary was espoused to when she was visited by the angel Gabriel announcing that she had been chosen by God to bear his Son.

*(1) This Joseph was a humble, upright servant of God who listened and obeyed God when he was told to take his young family and flee to Egypt to escape the wrath of King Herod and preserve Jesus’ life.*

c) And though the Joseph referenced in our text here is maybe not as well-known as the first two, as the text explains, he served an equally strategic role, taking care of our Lord’s body after his death.

(1) This Joseph is identified specifically in Scripture as “Joseph of Arimathea,” and the account of what he did for Christ following his death appears in each of the four Gospels: Matthew 27:57-61, Mark 15:42-47, Luke 23:50-54 and John 19:38-42.

d) In Luke’s account, this Joseph is described as a “good and just man” who did not consent to the Sanhedrin’s decision to crucify Christ.

(1) A respected member of the Jewish council, John explains that he secretly followed Christ because he feared the Jews, (John 19:38).

(2) It wasn’t until after Jesus’ death that he openly declared his allegiance to the Lord when he boldly approached Pilate requesting permission to take the Lord’s body from the cross and prepare it for burial; after blood and water flowed.

e) It seems that Joseph’s faith grew stronger through the Savior’s death, for the one he dares scarcely acknowledge amid all the glory of his miracles, he now boldly begs of Pilate.

(1) And though he no doubt experienced a flood of intense emotions as he watched the Lord’s passion and death play out, surely joy triumphed when he was permitted to retrieve his Savior from the wretched grasp of his enemies and the cruel instrument of his death and take him in his trembling arms to a place of safety.

f) But then a mixture of grief and horror must have surely overcome him to see Christ so mangled, so nailed that he could not free his body without first having to widen his wounds.

(1) And when the nails were finally removed, to see him still stuck fast to his jealous cross by his own dried blood and gore.

(2) This experience no doubt broke his heart in two. But at length, love overcame his fears, dried the cheek of his sorrows, strengthened his heart and calmed his soul such that Joseph could finally, gently, bring his Lord down from the rack of his cross to the bed of his grave.

g) At that point Nicodemus came with ointments to anoint Christ’s body for burial.

(1) Nicodemus, who had previously come to Jesus under the cover of darkness seeking answers, had also not dared to publicly own the Gospel for fear of the Law.

(2) But at this point, after blood and water flow, he no longer remains a secret follower, for he too is now ready to make his allegiance known, regardless of the consequences.

h) After no doubt much weeping and sorrow, together they wash and dry his body and anoint the Savior for burial.

(1) As the night draws on, they wrap him in clean linen cloths and take him to Joseph’s tomb, one he previously secured for his own burial.

(2) They laid Jesus to rest in this pristine grave and then rolled a large stone over the entrance.

i) Though neither of these men outwardly followed the Lord during his earthly ministry, something happened at his death that solidified their faith and assured their spirit that this was, indeed, the Messiah, the Son of God.

(1) What they experienced in his death brought new life to their faith and new light to their souls, to the degree that none could doubt their love, devotion, and identification with this Christ of God.

### III. The Text Applied

#### A. Can the same be said of you?

1. How often have you begged for God’s presence, and then turned a deaf ear to his Word, his Spirit, or even his sacraments?

- a) And if you did initially welcome him, how soon have you I choked out the seed of his Word, (Luke 8), and quenched the motions of his Spirit? (1 Thess. 5).
2. God is to burn in your soul, the truth of the resurrection, for he is risen.
- a) Yes, he died, and blood and water flowed from the spear, but he finished his work.
- b) He did not remain in this tomb.
- (1) *"I know that my Redeemer lives," (Job 19:25), and that you too shall see him with your own eyes.*
- (2) *There being lifted up, ask Christ to draw you, to his side, the same side of the spear.*
- (3) *Jesus the Savior is alive, and we know that we shall see him when we die in all his finished work, and glory!*