



“ It’s Friday, But Sunday’s Comin’ ”
(Thanks and apologies to Tony Campolo)

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me” (Psalms 23:4 NIV)

How deep, and how dark, is the valley you are in today?

Are you weighed down by the burden of your circumstances? Do you spend hour after useless hour wishing that things were different? Are you depressed because you have no power to change things? Do you feel you are a victim of “the system,” or “bad luck,” or other people’s malice?

Or are you sometimes overcome by the awful realization of your own guilt? Your history of broken promises, wasted opportunities, secret and confessed sins, strained and broken relationships? Are your failures due largely to your own self-indulgence, laziness, and foolishness, as mine are?

Jesus was in a deep, dark valley, during those days before He died. He knew all about what was coming, and it was awful. Even worse, He didn’t deserve any of it. Jesus was, truly and completely, an innocent man.

Imagine sitting on Death Row, waiting for the final day of your life. Then imagine that you are Jesus, watching as the day of your death comes nearer, knowing you have to suffer, not just death, but the most horrible, agonizing, shameful death that human beings had so far been able to invent.

Imagine your friends, who have sworn to support you no matter what, abandoning you like rats leaving a sinking ship. Imagine being thrown into a deep dungeon for hours, then dragged before a kangaroo court that is just looking for any excuse to convict you.

Imagine being beaten with a whip that has little pieces of bone and rock and metal fastened along the length of its cords. A whip that cuts to the bone with every blow, and can literally strip all the flesh from a man’s back. Imagine that whip hitting your back and

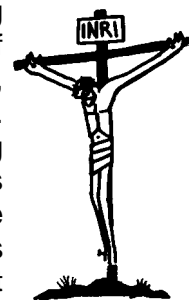


shoulders, wrapping around to your chest and stomach, tearing your flesh again and again, as many as 39 times. Many who suffered such a beating were crippled for life. Some died.

Imagine having men hit you in the face, and spit in your face, and yank out your hair and your beard. Imagine having a crown of sharp thorns forced onto your head—the pain of it, and the blood from a dozen scalp wounds blinding your eyes. Imagine being mocked, laughed at, and knocked down more than once.

Imagine being dragged before Pilate—a scheming politician who will set you free if you say the right words; but you don’t want to be freed, you want to do the Father’s will, even now.

Imagine being forced to carry a heavy timber, and falling under its weight because you are so weakened that you can hardly stand. Imagine being dragged up that infamous hill of execution, being stripped naked, and thrown to the ground. Picture the spikes being hammered through your wrists and your feet, and feel the wrenching agony as the cross is lifted and dropped into its socket in the rock.



And it’s not over. Not yet. Your body still wants to live. You have to struggle to lift yourself up, against the agony in your wrists and feet, and the rasp of the rough wood on your raw back, over and over again, just to take the next desperate breath.

Why should we dwell on the details of the crucifixion? Because it’s important to understand what Jesus went through for you and me. Those pictures of the white-robed Christ hanging on a golden cross, with a wistful look on his beautiful face, are ridiculous. He was not beautiful as He died. He was so horrible to look at that most of us would turn away and vomit if we saw Him.

And then He died. And what did He suffer after He died? St. Paul said, in the letter to the Ephesian Christians, that Jesus descended into

Hell. Did He go there as Conqueror, to set some of the captives free, as many believe? Or did He suffer there the pain of our eternal punishment?

At any rate, Jesus had to go through with it. If He had not suffered for your sins and for my sins!, you and I would have had to suffer our terrible punishment ourselves. To be without God forever, totally lost in eternal, lonely, burning darkness, beyond all hope and all help, and to know it is deserved. If the horror of that punishment is not real to you, you need to read the “Hell” passages of the Bible and meditate on them. We need to understand what we have been spared. And we need to know what those without Christ are doomed to suffer, so that we will feel some urgency about sharing Christ with those who are lost.

So that was Friday, the day the Savior of the world died.

What about His companions? The twelve disciples, and the other men and women who were His friends and followers. What were they doing on Friday and Saturday?

The Bible clearly shows that the others were in the depths of despair. The disciples, all except John, had already run away to hide. Peter denied Jesus three times, cursing and swearing he “did not know the man.” Joseph of Arimathea courageously asked Pilate for His body, and got permission to take it. The women, strong in the face of disaster as women usually are, sadly prepared His body for burial. And then they all hid out, “for fear of the Jews,” and mourned His loss.

Judas Iscariot, sick with horror at the outcome of his treachery, threw away his blood money and went and hanged himself.

Friday, Jesus died.
Saturday, he was dead.

If that were the end of the story, this world would be a hopeless place. Those who had ever heard of Jesus of Nazareth would be few; those who actually followed Him would be pathetic.

But ...
Sunday was comin'!
Sunday was comin'!



The Resurrection of Christ brought on a whole range of emotions in His followers. First there was disbelief. All of them knew for certain He was dead. A few of them had actually seen Him die.

Next came hope. “Can it be true? Do we dare to believe it?” Then came the joy of knowing He actually lived again, and the thrill of seeing Him as He came to be with them. What joy, to know that He truly was the Messiah; that He was victorious over death and the grave! To believe, and finally to begin to understand, all that He had been teaching them.

And that is still not the end of the story. His followers “hung out” in Jerusalem, waiting, as He had commanded, to be filled with “power from on high.”

And it happened. On the day of Pentecost, as they were gathered together and worshiping the Lord, fire fell from the sky, the tongues of flame came down and rested on them, and they were anointed—filled—with the Spirit of the Living God.

And Peter was empowered to stand up immediately and preach what may be the most powerful sermon ever preached!

People have tried to explain away Christ’s death and Resurrection, but there is no other way to account for the transformation of that huddled bunch of timid, defeated Jesus-followers into the dynamic, power-filled New Testament Church that “turned the world upside down.”

Jesus did what He said He would do. He was put to death, and on the third day He rose from the dead. He touched the disciples and gave them fire power, as He promised. He kept His promises.

And He still does.

Are you in a tough place today? Is it “Friday” for you? Or maybe “Thursday,” because you expect things will be worse tomorrow? Or maybe it’s “Saturday,” and you consider yourself as good as dead?

Think of Jesus, and what He suffered for you. Things could be a lot worse—you could be lost. You would be lost, without Him.

Think of Paul—of the whippings he endured; of all the times he was thrown into jail. He could do “all things” because Jesus gave him strength. That same strength is yours for the asking. Ask for it, and receive it by faith.

Today may be your Friday—or Thursday, or Saturday—but your Sunday is comin’, if you want it to. You don’t have to overcome death—Jesus has done it all. Rest in Him—in the knowledge of His victory, and His love for you. God loves you. He really does.

Your friend in Jesus, the Lord—
Brother Roland

Bible Quiz

Below are some verses from the Bible. Can you identify the book from which each one is taken? I'll give you the chapter and verse, and you fill in the name of the book.



(See the Puzzle page for the answers.)

Here's an example:

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life." John 3:16

- For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. _____ 6:23
- "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." _____ 11:28
- Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!" _____ 9:7
- "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." _____ 1:8
- And the tongue is a fire. The tongue is placed among our members as a world of iniquity; it stains the whole body, sets on fire the cycle of nature, and is itself set on fire by hell. _____ 3:6
- Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. _____ 11:1
- Nebuchadnezzar said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants who trusted in him. They disobeyed the king's command and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God." _____ 3:28
- O come, let us sing to the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! _____ 95:1
- From there you will seek the Lord your God, and you will find him if you search after him with all your heart and soul. _____ 4:29
- "I will indeed bless you, and I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of their enemies," _____ 22:17
- "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding." _____ 38:4
- So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God. _____ 4:7
- When the child grew up, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and she took him as her son. She named him Moses, "because", she said, "I drew him out of the water." _____ 2:10
- "We found the prison securely locked and the guards standing at the doors, but when we opened them, we found no one inside." _____ 5:23
- Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me. _____ 3:20
- For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, despicable, hating one another. _____ 3:3
- "Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses." _____ 11:25
- Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. _____ 12:9-10
- But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed. _____ 53:5
- The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. _____ 31:31



“You Shall Receive Power ...”

And the followers of Jesus did receive power when the Holy Spirit came down upon them, and they became power-filled witnesses for His Gospel. That is still happening today to those who will wait for it and receive it. Go read Acts Chapter 2, if you can, before doing the puzzle. Then the phrases will be easier to find. Enjoy!

Puzzle:

M H T D E Z I T P A B A B N P X P V D P Z B O F P G E R C R E T A N S E
 C A T W K S C H R I S T Y A R J R R I H P W Q X G I F T T Y L T G L W C
 N M A R L V N P H P T Y W W A E O G O U A R R L G O O D W I L L L G X R
 D A K K A D S A Q M G K K M I F Q C E M L I G E B X G Z R V N U A X F Q
 R Z R F J E N L I V X P Q L S Y D C M C A V S E C U Q H V D E K D Q C T
 R E W F Q Q E N M G E W W J I K A H Z B B N Y S N E L P M E T E H N I X
 D D I N W X S H D N Y U P O N N B P T G C G S S E E I M U Y M W E W R T
 S T N E T R O P T E B R X C G T F R P E O J L U N M R V Y A X J A N E C
 J P A R W C H E L F V E H E G T U O D E R U O P Z A S O E F F J R Q S U
 F E Q O I O C M N I O E L P O W S M F X R A E I Y P I B U P U X T Y U J
 O R G A Q O S Y Z S J S I L D K G I P V U E Z M Y V G T A S O Y S L R J
 D P V R S S A H R N P E D L K H L S C O P L L A G D T S P R R W A D R O
 I L B T U H I A O H P G W N E I G E B O T T H A N M E J Y Y A N E C E E
 S E J S Y P H P L L H R M S E B M M V G G F O R A F Y D T A G F C R C L
 T X N L E A T O U T Y U O T A A D J J U E W C J P I O R N U S E P C T Y
 R E E T G R T S N M E S O P O T A M I A N S O R T A A S A E I D Y H I L
 I D W N H T A T L Y U P P O H N W O F P E D L G A E M G U D C X I P O I
 B O W E V H M L J T D E R I L E J B Y P R F E I H G E P D S A S H V N E
 U G I P W I T E B D K S R O R I C C Q D A V L E Q S S S H E E D A X A F
 T F N E J A U S N X K V M W S I V Y B G T O H B D N Q Z A Y T J A C E D
 E O E R A N B I J O E N L A I E T E T R I T F Y A S U C Y M L R T Q F O
 M M X P F S W O U G Q O G J E R L X T X O U L I Z P O P J R A I O Y W Z
 X O W R Y Y S E L A M I T E S R E Y I T N K C M S L I F R I D R A H M Z
 Q D E A T H O F J U D A S Q Z O D N T N S O E Y I P N H P A O Z I N X R
 X G O H W A E I K H J R V F Y D I U R E D Y A B U I G M S O Y S A A S E
 H N G T H K F Z N I N E O C L O C K D A S D Y N R K W D H W W E H I S A
 H I Z O Q T Z S Z B Z C C O C P F E P C T A E A H E R T B L O E R A G E
 M K V C X D E I F I C U R C R L M P U S N A R W L F A S K R I L R S T T
 V Z U T R P C M I Y O O R D D I A S A S G E D I Y J R D F M A O L B V I
 E D I S C I P L E S W O E F W C D L I I F D O Y J U D E A J H D T E P H
 G H S G E F T G F L G W W W L D M A E G A S S E M S Q L H E A V E N F F
 J L O O T S T O O F A P U D E S I A R D O G M C K N E V I G R O F P V P

Words:

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|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| AMAZED | DISCIPLES | JESUS OF NAZARETH | PARTHIANS |
| ANGELS | DISTRIBUTE | JEWS | PENTECOST |
| APOSTLES | DREAMS | JOEL | PERPLEXED |
| ARABS | EGYPTIANS | JUDEA | PHRYGIANS |
| ASCENDED | ELAMITES | KINGDOM OF GOD | PORTENTS |
| AWE | ENDS OF THE EARTH | LANGUAGES | POURED OUT |
| BAPTIZED | EXHORTED | LAST DAYS | PRAISING GOD |
| BELIEVED | FELLOWSHIP | LIBYANS | PRAYERS |
| BROKE BREAD | FOOTSTOOL | MATTHIAS CHOSEN | PROMISE |
| CAPPADOCIANS | FORGIVEN | MEDES | PROPHECY |
| CHRIST | GENEROUS | MESOPOTAMIANS | PROSELYTES |
| CORRUPT GENERATION | GIFT | MESSAGE | RECEIVE POWER |
| CRETANS | GLAD HEARTS | MESSIAH | REPENT |
| CRUCIFIED | GOD RAISED UP | MIGHTY WIND | RESURRECTION |
| CUT TO THE HEART | GOOD WILL | NEW WINE | ROMANS |
| DAVID SAYS | HEAVEN | NINE O’CLOCK | SAMARIA |
| DEATH OF JUDAS | HOLY SPIRIT | OLIVET | |
| DEEDS OF POWER | IN HE TEMPLE | PAMPHYLIANS | |

Bible Quiz Answers: 1.Romans 2.Matthew 3.Mark 4.Acts 5.James 6.Hebrews 7.Daniel 8.Psalms 9.Deuteronomy
 10.Genesis 11.Job 12.Galatians 13.Exodus 14.Acts 15.Revelation 16.Titus 17.Mark 18.Romans 19.Isaiah 20.Jeremiah