

Scourged!

Sparkling Gems – Rick Renner

<http://www.renner.org/healing/scourged/>

Mat 27:26 ...And when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.

What was it like for a prisoner to be scourged in New Testament times? From what materials was a scourge made? How did it feel when the straps of a scourge whipped across a person's back and body? What effects did a scourging have on the human body?

Matthew 27:26 tells us that Pilate "had scourged Jesus" before he delivered Him to be crucified, so we need to understand what it meant to be "scourged." The word "scourged" is the Greek word *phragello*, and it was one of the most horrific words used in the ancient world because of the terrible images that immediately came to mind when a person heard this word. Let me tell you a little about the process of scourging and what it did to the human body. I believe this explanation is important so you can understand more completely what Jesus endured before He was taken to be crucified.

When a decision was made to scourge an individual, the victim was first stripped completely naked so his entire flesh would be open and uncovered to the beating action of the torturer's whip. Then the victim was bound to a two-foot-high scourging post. His hands were tied over his head to a metal ring, and his wrists were securely shackled to the metal ring to restrain his body from movement. When in this locked position, the victim couldn't wiggle or move, trying to avoid or dodge the lashes that were being laid across his back.

Romans were professionals at scourging; they took special delight in the fact that they were the "best" at punishing a victim with this brutal act. Once the victim was harnessed to the post and stretched over it, the Roman soldier began to put him through unimaginable torture. One writer notes that the mere anticipation of the first blow caused the victim's body to grow rigid, the muscles to knot in his stomach, the color to drain from his cheeks, and his lips to draw tight against his teeth as he waited for the first sadistic blow that would begin the tearing open of his body.

The scourge itself consisted of a short, wooden handle with several 18- to 24-inch-long straps of leather protruding from it. The ends of these pieces of leather were equipped with sharp, rugged pieces of metal, wire, glass, and jagged fragments of bone. This was considered to be one of the most feared and deadly weapons of the Roman world. It was so ghastly that the mere threat of scourging could calm a crowd or bend the will of the

strongest rebel. Not even the most hardened criminal wanted to be submitted to the vicious beating of a Roman scourge.

Most often, two torturers were utilized to carry out this punishment, simultaneously lashing the victim from both sides. As these dual whips struck the victim, the leather straps with their jagged, sharp, cutting objects descended and extended over his entire back. Each piece of metal, wire, bone, or glass cut deeply through the victim's skin and into his flesh, shredding his muscles and sinews.

Every time the whip pounded across the victim, those straps of leather curled tortuously around his torso, biting painfully and deeply into the skin of his abdomen and upper chest. As each stroke lacerated the sufferer, he tried to thrash about but was unable to move because his wrists were held so firmly to the metal ring above his head. Helpless to escape the whip, he would scream for mercy that this anguish might come to an end.

Every time the torturers struck a victim, the straps of leather attached to the wooden handle would cause multiple lashes as the pieces of metal, glass, wire, and bone sank into the flesh and then raked across the victim's body. Then the torturer would jerk back, pulling hard in order to tear whole pieces of human flesh from the body. The victim's back, buttocks, back of the legs, stomach, upper chest, and face would soon be disfigured by the slashing blows of the whip.

Historical records describe a victim's back as being so mutilated after a Roman scourging that his spine would actually be exposed. Others recorded how the bowels of a victim would actually spill out through the open wounds created by the whip. The Early Church historian Eusebius wrote: "The veins were laid bare, and the very muscles, sinews, and bowels of the victim were open to exposure."

The Roman torturer would so aggressively strike his victim that he wouldn't even take the time to untangle the bloody, flesh-filled straps as he lashed the whip across the victim's mangled body over and over again. If the scourging wasn't stopped, the slicing of the whip would eventually flay the victim's flesh off his body.

With so many blood vessels sliced open by the whip, the victim would begin to experience a profuse loss of blood and bodily fluids. The heart would pump harder and harder, struggling to get blood to the parts of the body that were profusely bleeding. But it was like pumping water through an open water hydrant; there was nothing left to stop the blood from pouring through the victim's open wounds.

This loss of blood caused the victim's blood pressure to drop drastically. Because of the massive loss of bodily fluids, he would experience excruciating thirst, often fainting from the pain and eventually going into shock. Frequently the victim's heartbeat would become so irregular that he would go into cardiac arrest.

This was a Roman scourging.

According to Jewish law in Deuteronomy 25:3, the Jews were permitted to give forty lashes to a victim, but because the fortieth lash usually proved fatal, the number of lashes given was reduced to thirty-nine, as Paul noted in Second Corinthians 11:24. But the Romans had no limit to the number of lashes they could give a victim, and the scourging Jesus experienced was at the hands of Romans, not Jews. Therefore, it is entirely possible that when the torturer pulled out his scourge to beat Jesus, he may have laid more than forty lashes across His body. In fact, this is even probable in light of the explosive outrage the Jews felt for Jesus and the terrible mocking He had already suffered at the hands of Roman soldiers.

So when the Bible tells us that Jesus was scourged, we now know exactly what type of beating that Jesus received that night. What toll did the cruel Roman whip exact on Jesus' body? The New Testament doesn't tell us exactly what Jesus looked like after He was scourged, but Isaiah 52:14 says, "As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men."

If we take this scripture literally for what it says, we can conclude that Jesus' physical body was marred nearly beyond recognition. As appalling as this sounds, it was only the overture to what was to follow. Matthew 27:26 continues to tell us, "...and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified." This scourging was only the preparation for Jesus' crucifixion!

Every time I think about the scourging Jesus received that day, I think of the promise God makes to us in Isaiah 53:5. This verse says, "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." In this verse, God declares that the price for our healing would be paid by those stripes that were laid across Jesus' back.

In **First Peter 2:24**, the apostle Peter quoted Isaiah 53:5. He told his readers, "...By whose stripes ye were healed." The word **"stripes"** used in this verse is **molopsi**, which describes a full-body bruise. It refers to a terrible lashing that draws blood and that produces discoloration and swelling of the entire body. **When Peter wrote this verse, he wasn't speaking by revelation but by memory, for he vividly remembered what**

happened to Jesus that night and what His physical appearance looked like after His scourging.

After graphically reminding us of the beating, bleeding, and bruising that Jesus endured, Peter jubilantly declared that it was by these same stripes that we are “healed.” The word “healed” is the Greek word *iaomai* — a word that clearly refers to physical healing, as it is a word borrowed from the medical term to describe the physical healing or curing of the human body.

For those who think this promise refers to spiritual healing only, the Greek word emphatically speaks of the healing of a physical condition. This is a real promise of bodily healing that belongs to all who have been washed in the blood of Jesus Christ!

Jesus’ broken body was the payment God demanded to guarantee our physical healing! Just as Jesus willfully took our sins and died on the Cross in our place, He also willfully took our sicknesses and pains on Himself when they tied Him to the scourging post and laid those lashes across His body. That horrific scourging paid for our healing!

If you need healing in your body, you have every right to go to God and ask for healing to come flooding into your system. **It’s time for you to dig in your heels and hold fast to the promise of God’s Word, releasing your faith for the healing that belongs to you.** (I encourage you to read the Sparkling Gem for March 23, for it discusses your legal right to ask God to give you what He has promised).

Jesus went through this agony for you, so don’t let the devil tell you that it’s God’s will for you to be sick or weakly. Considering the pain Jesus endured to bear your sicknesses that day, isn’t that enough evidence to convince you how much He wants you to be physically well?

My Confession for Today

I boldly confess that I am healed by the stripes of Jesus Christ. The agony He endured was for me and my health. I don’t have to be sick; I don’t have to be weak; and I don’t have to live at the mercy of affliction anymore. The stripes on Jesus’ body were for me, so today I release my faith and commit that I will not be satisfied with anything less than God’s best — divine healing and health every day of my life!

I declare this by faith in Jesus’ name!
