

Strength for Today

“Now the centurion, and those who were with him . . . became very frightened and said, ‘Truly this was the Son of God!’” (Matthew 27:54).

The testimony of the soldiers after Jesus’ crucifixion demonstrates the sufficiency of His death for all sinners.

Most of the time our daily activities are dictated by the routine responsibilities of our jobs. That’s how it was for the Roman soldiers who stood at the foot of the cross when Jesus gave up His life. They were there simply out of duty, to make sure the crucifixion was carried out properly and without interference.

The soldiers probably had little knowledge of Judaism and had not heard of Jesus before, unless it was by hearsay. Therefore, they really had no idea why the Jewish leaders and most of the crowd were so intent on killing Him. To these anonymous soldiers, Christ’s claims to be the Son of God and a king seemed equally ludicrous and harmless.

The darkness and the earthquake, however, radically changed their attitudes. Their emotional fear produced by those events quickly turned to reverential awe for who Jesus was. They sensed that the natural phenomena had a supernatural origin and suddenly realized that Jesus was indeed the Son of God.

Jesus’ gracious and profound words, spoken from the cross and before Pilate, and His humble, selfless demeanor worked on the soldiers’ hearts. But it was the ministry of the Holy Spirit that ultimately convinced them to confess Christ’s deity.

The declaration “Truly this was the Son of God!” proclaimed by the centurion (see also Mark 15:39) on behalf of himself and his men, was for the soldiers a profession of faith in Christ. Although that testimony was uttered by someone else after Jesus had died, it became in essence His final testimony from the cross. It also offers us compelling proof that His grace can extend to all sinners, even to those who helped put Him to death. In John 12:32 Jesus announced, “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.”

Suggestions for Prayer

Pray for someone today who needs salvation—perhaps someone whom you quit praying for because you thought it unlikely they would ever respond to the gospel.

For Further Study

Read Mark 10:17-27.

- The young man was outwardly a prime candidate for salvation, in contrast to the Roman soldiers. What kept him outside the kingdom?
- What do verses 26-27 teach about the nature of salvation?

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