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**WHEN THE CENTURION
AND THOSE WHO WERE WITH HIM
SAW THE EARTHQUAKE AND
ALL THAT HAD HAPPENED**

THEY WERE TERRIFIED,
AND EXCLAIMED,
"SURELY HE WAS THE SON OF GOD!"

The Centurion

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It wasn't the assignment I was hoping for that day. I mean any time you get called in by your commanding officer you're hoping for a better assignment than crucifixion detail. I mean I didn't join the Roman army to do crucifixion detail, right? I mean I was hoping for a better assignment. I was hoping for something that might give me a chance to make rank, a promotion, and a way to show my exploits as a soldier, my leadership capability. Anything but crucifixion detail, right?

I'm a Centurion. I'm over 100 men. I've been going at this for 15 years. I'm career military like my dad and my dad's dad. The last thing I want is crucifixion detail. I mean don't get me wrong. The first couple of times it's neat and all. I mean I've seen just about any way you can put a man on a cross. I've seen where we've put the nails in different places just to see how the body would respond. I've seen us turn it upside down and crucify people that way. I've even seen us light the cross on fire. One time we got so creative we thought we would put dead animal carcasses on top of the cross and the people on it to see if other wild animals would come and ravage the bodies. I've seen it all. I wasn't looking forward to crucifixion detail. I was hoping for something more. I was hoping for something better, but I'm a good soldier. I do what I'm told. They say this is what you're going to do. At that moment, at that time I was thinking this is how it's going to work. I'm going to make sure this crucifixion goes off without a hitch. There will be no problems. It will be ordinary; there will be nothing unusual. It will just go as status quo. It will just be an everyday crucifixion.

That's what I was thinking at the time, but let me be clear. You're not going to believe this story. There was nothing ordinary about that crucifixion. There was nothing ordinary about what took place. I'm even going to go so far as to say there was nothing ordinary about the man being crucified that day.

I'm not even really sure where to start this story. The guy's name was Jesus. I'd heard a lot about him. I mean who hadn't heard a lot about him. If half the

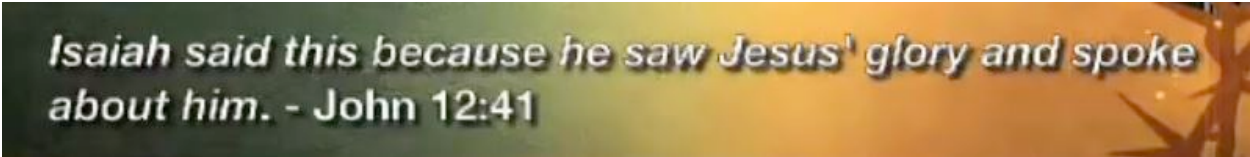
stuff that they said about him was true, the guy was amazing. I mean apparently he had healed people. I had heard rumors of raising people from the dead. I had heard stuff like feeding thousands of people with just very little food. Most of that I didn't give second thought to, but there was this one time a fellow Centurion, a buddy of mine - he comes up and he tells me, I could see the passion in his eyes, he says that this Jesus had healed his son. That made me pause for a moment, but other than that the rest of the stuff you hear, you know, by the time you hear about all of these religious leaders and all the stuff they do, most of its not true. I hadn't given much thought to the man.

I guess I should probably tell you about the first time I saw him. We were stationed in Jerusalem for Passover Week. I don't know a lot about all of the customs of the Jews, but they do all kinds of stuff. Apparently they were in slavery in Egypt and Passover is their celebration of getting out of that. Again, I don't know all the details. You know the Jews they've got a lot of stuff that I don't understand. They could eat certain foods and not eat other foods. They work on some days, don't work on others. They've got all kinds of festivals, but apparently Passover is pretty big because the population of Jerusalem would swell by about 100,000 or so. And it was that Passover Week that I would see Him for the first time. And we were stationed there in Jerusalem just to keep the peace. The Jews don't like us, we don't think too much of them. We're there to make sure there's no revolt. We're there to make sure there's no rebellion. We're there to make sure there's no riot, ruckus, anything like that. We're there to keep the peace. Of course I can't blame them for not liking us. We put that full sized statue of Zeus smack dab in the middle of their temple - that didn't go over real well. I mean it is what it is.

And so we're there, we're making sure we keep the peace. It was Sunday, the start of Passover. The people were coming in. I was just there keeping guard, keeping an eye on things, making sure there were no disturbances. A soldier runs by and says, "We need men on the east side of the city." I grab a few of my guys and we head that way. Sure enough there was a crowd of Jews and they were looking out toward the Mount of Olives. The intensity kind of rose, there was chatter, there was yelling, they were kind of forming these rows, anticipating somebody coming in. And I looked at one of them and I said, "What's the big deal? What's going on?" They said, "Jesus is coming." At that point I recognized that this guy that I had heard so much about is fixing to be in the city, and apparently everybody is all excited about it. Matter of fact, the intensity began to just grow and grow. It was making me nervous. The last thing we wanted was for this to turn into some kind of riot we couldn't control. What really got me all worked up was the fact that some of these people were taking off their cloaks, and they were laying it on the ground as if they're making some sort of red carpet for this man. Then I started to get really

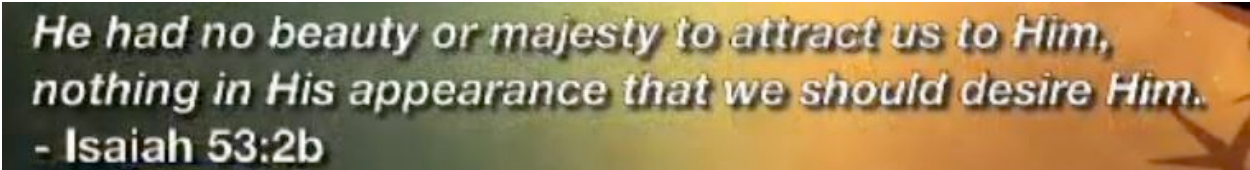
nervous because they were going over to trees and they were grabbing palm branches. And as they broke them off I thought are they going to use them as weapons, are they going to what? And they're waving them around and they're yelling, "Hosanna, Hosanna." I look at one of the Jews and I said, "What does Hosanna mean?" He says it means, "Save us now Lord." Save us now? I grab my sword, I'm clinched up, and I'm like there's not going to be any saving going on today. It just gets more intense. It gets louder, it gets louder. I make eye contact with my men. I'm like we better be ready to step in at any moment. This will not get out of control.

Then all of a sudden right up over this little hill I finally see Him. I lay eyes on Him. (Chuckles) There's no savior. You're not going to believe this. He was riding a donkey. A donkey. This is supposed to be some savior, this is supposed to be your messiah, and this is supposed to be some guy you're waiting on to deliver you and he shows up riding a donkey? I need to give this guy some lessons. This is how you ride in -- you get a real horse, you get in some garb, and some soldier gets you the biggest sword you can find, pop a crown on your head, and do something like that. Don't come in here riding a donkey. This is no savior. He couldn't save himself. Matter of fact I sat back and thought, "Man he wouldn't last one night in the barracks with my men." You want to know what makes it even worse? As he was drawing closer, not only was he on a donkey, but he was crying. Really?



Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus' glory and spoke about him. - John 12:41

This is your savior? This is what you're all worked up about? There was nothing savior-esce about him. Nothing impressive, nothing that you would take notice of. Matter of fact, I thought, "You want him to save you? He couldn't save himself if he needed to." I just thought all the hype is overblown. Just a bunch of hype!



He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to Him, nothing in His appearance that we should desire Him. - Isaiah 53:2b

I didn't really have much interaction with Jesus the rest of the week. There was tension though. It just continued to build in the city, but it does every year at Passover. Some of the Jews believe one thing, the other Jews believe another thing, and the tension rises. But we all know how it plays out. By the end of the week everybody goes their respective ways and the tension and the anxiety dies down. That's the way I thought it was going to work. It turns out there were some people that were so happy Jesus was there. There was the expectation that apparently he was going to be some sort of savior, and then the religious leaders - I think they call them Pharisees and Sadducees, they didn't like the man at all.

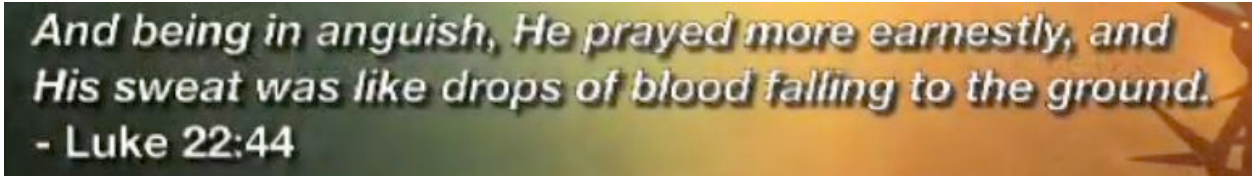
Come to find out they wanted him dead. So you can imagine the tension grew, the tension was just there. Jesus didn't help matters. First rattle out of the box he goes to the temple. When he goes to the temple he's mad at what he sees. I wasn't there, but this is what my guys were telling me. He's overthrowing the money, it's going all over the place. Animals are let go. I mean you talk about making the Pharisees mad; they were hot. And apparently he was teaching stuff that they didn't like, so needless to say throughout the week it was growing, it was growing. But like I said I didn't put a whole lot of stock into it. I thought this is going to pass; Jesus is going to go home, everybody else is going to leave the city and it will be just fine.

It ended up not being just fine. Like I said, that was the only time I really saw him until Friday. I got the orders that I was on crucifixion detail on Thursday, so I began to get my men together, the guys that I trusted the most to help me execute these crucifixions in the most appropriate way, the most timely manner, and the most efficient way possible. So I gathered them together and I was going to get us all going, and we decided that we would enjoy the night life of Jerusalem maybe a little bit too much. It was a late night. Friday morning, and when I saw Friday morning I mean 12:30 in the morning. Commanding officer runs through and says, "We need everybody. Get dressed, get your lanterns, get a torch, get your swords, and get going. We need to make an arrest." I'm just now starting to get some sleep from the night before, but it's time to get dressed. Immediately people are asking, "Who are we arresting? What's the big deal? Why do you need all of us?" The officer says, "We're going to arrest Jesus." Jesus? You mean the guy crying on a donkey just a few days ago? I mean this can't wait until a better time in the morning? I mean it's 12:30. I've got a long day ahead. I'm not really wanting to do this right now, especially for a guy who couldn't hurt anybody.

I do what I'm told, I get dressed, and we get ready to go. All my men are - we don't really know what to think. We head out there, and when I say men, I mean there were a bunch of us. A cohort of us, like 500 plus of us, right. I'm

thinking this is a bit overkill for Jesus. We look like a lynch mob headed out to Gethsemane, right outside the city. You would think we were going to battle or some, you know, take care of a skirmish, but no, we're just to arrest one man because the Jewish officials wanted us to help.

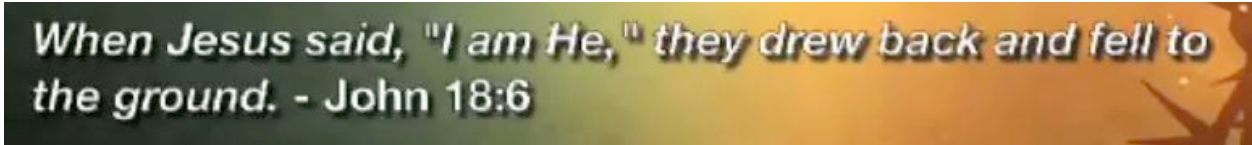
Now listen to me. This is where the story is going to get strange. You're probably not going to believe what I'm fixing to tell you, but we get there and Jesus is standing there waiting on us. He's standing there waiting on us. Not only that, he looks like he is emotionally and physically spent. It looks like he's been sweating. He looks limp. It looks like he's literally been wrestling with somebody. He looks like he couldn't harm a soul. And here we are with swords drawn and torches. Not only that, but it looked like from the light that was cast from the torches - it looked like he had blood that was smeared on his face. Weird.



And being in anguish, He prayed more earnestly, and His sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground. - Luke 22:44

Not only that, he looked spent and completely just there. The guys that were with him, his followers, they looked like they just woke up from a nap. They were worthless. We've got 500 soldiers with swords and we're here to arrest him? You guys could have taken care of this on your own. It was just strange. He was standing there like he was anticipating, like he knew he was going to be arrested, and all my mind could think of was anytime you encounter somebody that knows they're going to be arrested, that knows they're going to be taken into custody, most of the time they're running, they're fleeing, they're hiding, they're leaving the city, but not Jesus. He just stood there like this was part of the plan. Part of the plan.

And this is where it gets strange. We're standing there. Jesus speaks. He says this, "Who are you looking for?" The High Priest says, "We're looking for Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus says this -- I'm not kidding, you've got to believe me. He says, "I am He." The minute he says, "I am", no joke, we fall back and we're on her knees uncontrollably.



When Jesus said, "I am He," they drew back and fell to the ground. - John 18:6

I can see out of my peripheral vision that I'm not the only one who's completely incapacitated right now. I'm down there unable to move. In my brain I'm thinking move a muscle, get up, don't look like a fool stand up. Do something. But I couldn't move and neither could the rest of us.

I know you think I'm crazy, don't you? It happened. As soon as he said, "I am," we fall to the ground. Finally we can begin to move. We weren't really sure what was going on. I look at the rest of the soldiers and their eyes are as big as saucers thinking what just happened. In my mind I was thinking we stayed up too late last night. I should have put that last drink away and gone to bed early because right now I am having hallucinations. But if I thought that was weird, it was only fixing to get weirder.

Oh man, we begin to make our move to arrest him. One of Jesus' followers pulls out a sword. There was a servant there of one of the Jewish officials. He takes that sword, no kidding, and he swipes down and cuts his ear I mean clean off his head. Ear falls to the ground. The servant starts screaming. You know how a head wound is. It's bleeding like crazy. He's yelling, blood is pouring off his arm. We're sitting back saying it's go time. We go in there and Jesus puts his hands up. Listen to me – you've got to believe it. He puts his hands up, he reaches down there, grabs that ear. He doesn't even wipe it off and then he puts it on the man's head. I mean the guy's just sitting there, the blood quits flowing, he quits screaming, he's touching his ear and he's walking backwards. And I'm like what did we just see? You're kidding me? This can't be happening – that's what I was thinking at the moment. This can't be happening. Let's start over, right? Man just waiting there for us, he speaks, we fall backwards, an ear's laying on the ground and he puts it back on. I'm toast. Unable to explain it.

We get the guy arrested. We head back into the city. We leave him with some other soldiers. You know what was strange about it? We get back to the barracks and no one says a word. None of the guys say a word. I mean what were we going to say? We couldn't explain what just happened to us. Roman soldiers aren't knocked backwards just because someone speaks. The best I can recount I've never seen an ear put back on. We just sat there. I was going to try to get a little more sleep. I had a long day ahead of me. By this time it's 2:30, 3:00 in the morning. I lay down on the bunk and you know what – I can't sleep a wink. All I can do is replay what's happened. This man that I saw coming in on a donkey crying just spoke and blew me backwards. I mean I'm just trying to process everything at the moment.

Unable to sleep I finally hear commotion outside. It's about 6:30. Jesus had been bounced around from Jewish trial to Jewish trial. I don't know why they

were meeting in the night. It seems kind of fishy to me, but they were. They finally bring him to Pilot. At 6:30 in the morning Pilot sees him. Again, I'm not really concerned about it. Whatever they do with Jesus is fine. I had the three guys that I was going to be crucifying that day. Three insurrectionists. A couple of them were thieves; the other one was a murderer. His name was Barabbas. He was the one that everyone was most concerned with. About 6:30 or 7 o'clock I'm looking at my guys and I'm saying, "Hey we need to be prepared," and we're going over how this is going to happen through the day

It's about 7:00 or 7:30 that apparently Jesus and the people who had him arrested had made their way back to Pilot, and at this point I start hearing commotion. I start hearing the crowd yell out stuff like, "Barabbas, Barabbas." I didn't really know what to think of it. I'm just sitting back there as I talk to my men. I'm thinking the crowd's getting riled up, this one is going to be a live one today, guys. We've got to be ready to go. Not only that, just a few moments later the crowd even louder is claiming "Crucify him." And at that moment I'm thinking, whew, we've got to be ready. They are going to be watching us closely. This cannot go wrong. We have to make sure everybody is at their post, everything is done exactly the way it should be done so nothing happens out of the ordinary.

As I'm having that conversation with the guys who are going to help me, commanding officer walks in, he looks at me and he says, "There's been a change of plans." I say, "Yes sir?" He said "We're fixing to let Barabbas free." Barabbas, we're fixing to let him go. And then it hits me, oh yeah. It's that silly thing we do once a year to keep the Jews happy. We let one of their prisoners go. Of all the guys we're going to let go we're going to let Barabbas go. My mind, I'm just thinking oh great, whatever, but I'm a good soldier, I'm a good soldier. I do what I'm told so I look at my commanding officer and I say, "That's fine sir. We can do two just as easy as we can do three." He goes, "No, no, no. You'll still be doing three." I said, "Is that right?" He said, "Yes, it will be Jesus." Jesus? I was really hoping I wasn't going to have to mess with him anymore. I was really hoping he was going to be going home and I was done interacting with him, but apparently he's now on tap to be crucified. And I asked the question really simply, "What did he do?" The officer looks at me and says, "Man all I know is they're calling him King of the Jews. That's what we're writing on the inscription. That's it." I'm thinking King of the Jews? That's worthy of being crucified? I could hear some sarcasm, but again at the time I wasn't worried about it. I'm a good soldier. I had three crucifixions to make sure they went off without a hitch. I was ready to go.

A part of me, though, was thinking this: Jesus was just at the wrong place at the wrong time, wasn't he? In my mind as I begin to prep for the scourging, as

we begin to send some guys up to Golgotha, all I could think was, “Man if he hadn’t of rode in on that donkey.” If he had just stayed at home. If he hadn’t caused trouble in the temple and had that crazy teaching. If he had just stayed there, there wouldn’t be the swap for Barabbas for himself. He would be okay. He’s just the victim of being at the wrong place at the wrong time. I feel a little bad, but you know what, I have a job to do, and if they say that’s what we’re going to do, we’re going to crucify him.



So the next step in this whole process was to take him to the stump. The stump has one purpose and one purpose only. It’s just to inflict pain. I have one job when it comes to the stump. My primary responsibility is to make sure they don’t die right here.

That’s it. We take off all their clothes. They wrap their hands and their feet around the stump. We shackle their wrists and their ankles together at the bottom, therefore, their back is completely exposed, and we begin to beat them, yanking flesh off of their body. Again, all I’m supposed to do is to make sure we don’t beat them too much. The Jews would only lash somebody 40 times, but that’s not how us Romans do it. We don’t count. You know how we know when somebody’s had enough? Is when we don’t think they can be revived. You know how we revive them? It’s pretty simple. We take salt water

and we pour it on their back and we shock them back awake. When their eyes begin to roll back into their head that’s when we begin to ask, have they had too much? That’s all we’re supposed to do. Inflict pain, and more pain, and more pain.

You know what’s tricky about the stump though? Most of the time at the stump you hear all kinds of stuff from people. They cuss you, they spit, and if they have any fight in them at all they’ll wiggle around. You know what Jesus did? He didn’t say a word. He didn’t say a word.

He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth...
Isaiah 53:7a

I mean part of me in my heart was thinking you know, what if he would just say something. If he would just talk about how bad we are. If he would just say something against Rome, if he would spit, if he would do something to make it to where this is okay. But he didn't say a word. He just sat there gripping it, taking it, lash after lash after lash after lash and never said a word. It was almost like, just like he was at Gethsemane, expecting it. Knowing it was coming. Strange. The rough part comes once we get him up off the stump. That's when the soldiers take aim. This is their opportunity as they parade him around and get ready to put that cross beam on him. This is where they do their work. They get creative in all kinds of ways to humiliate. They got a little robe there - it wouldn't even barely cover his torso. One of them had taken these thorns and fashioned it into a crown and they just shoved it on his head.

... and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on His head. They put a staff in His right hand and knelt in front of Him and mocked Him.

They were calling him King, they were faking like they were bowing, they were spitting, they were beating, and they were saying all kinds of stuff.

*"Hail, king of the Jews!" they said. They spit on Him, and took the staff and struck Him on the head again and again.
- Matthew 27:29-30*

And I have to admit, I laughed. It was pretty creative. At the time again, all I could think of was wrong place, wrong time. Jesus, sorry man. Sorry.

Again, we had a job to do so I went ahead and headed back up to Golgotha. I needed to make sure that the other posts were in place and the nails and hammer, and all the men knew exactly what needed to happen. Apparently Jesus had some issues carrying his top part of the cross up the hill. We got somebody to help him. At his point we were under time constraints. Crucifixion is normally not just about death. Crucifixion is about more than that. But because we were under time constraints the Jews didn't want the bodies to be hanging on the cross over the weekend. But again, like I said, we're really not that concerned about death and how quickly it comes. This is about a much bigger process. When we Romans do crucifixions we do crucifixions to humiliate you. We do crucifixions to mock you. We do crucifixions to put you in extraordinary pain. We do this so it will last. It will take time, and at the end of the day it's a statement to everyone watching

because it's openly public. This is what happens if you mess with Rome. That's what a crucifixion is. It's not just to kill you. It's to humiliate you and put you through awful pain. And we perfected it. We got Jesus up there. We know exactly where to put the nails in the hollow of the wrists so as not to hit an artery so they won't bleed out. We know where the elbows need to be and what angle so that they can actually still press up to get their breath. We know how to put the feet over each other and at what angle to bend the knees so they can actually support their weight when they go up to get a breath. We know how to do all of that. It's methodical, it's science. We've got this down. We had Jesus up at about nine o'clock in the morning. And I remember we arrested him at one o'clock. It's been a rough day. It's been a rough day.

It's nine o'clock in the morning and at this point and we're thinking everything is going to be fine. Everything ought to go from here on out pretty normal. We just need these guys to die. The first three hours, really the only thing that was strange was what Jesus said. He said a couple of things that just made me pause for a minute. The first one was in the midst of the crowd and one of the thieves, and in the midst of the soldiers gambling as everybody was mocking and saying, "Pull yourself off the cross." One guy was saying, "Hey why don't you save the both of us. Come on man, work your magic." As they were yelling that out at him, as they were humiliating him, as they were gambling for his clothes, Jesus says this - get this, are you ready. I'm not kidding this is what he says. He says, "Father forgive them. They don't know what they're doing." I mean I've heard a lot of stuff from the cross, but I've never heard forgive them. I'm like, I've not done anything wrong. Have I? I'm not the one that deserves to be crucified am I? Forgive me? I mean typically what I hear from the cross is, "I'm sorry, I won't do it again. I'll be faithful to Rome, please pull me off." They're trying to barter for their life. "Man I'll give you everything I own if you'll pull me off of here. I'm sorry, I'll never do it again." I hear a lot of that, but I've never heard anybody say, "Forgive them."

And then not only that, but one of the other guys who he's being crucified with says, "Leave him alone. He's done nothing wrong." And when he said that, that's when I - you just have to start putting the pieces together. Because in my mind I'm like, you know what? I don't think he did anything wrong. I mean this whole King of the Jews thing, that's not much of a sentence or a crime, is it? And then Jesus says this. He looks at him after he says, "Leave him alone, he's done nothing wrong. He doesn't deserve to be up here." Jesus says, "Today you're going to be with me in paradise." At first I didn't even think much about it. I just thought the guy's delusional if he thinks this is paradise. I'd hate to know what he thinks the other place is. But then it just hit me; it hit me like "Jesus thinks he's going somewhere." Like he thinks he's going somewhere after this. Like this is just like a little detour. This is just a stop

along a journey. I just wanted to look up and say, "Jesus you're going nowhere. This is it for you. It is over and you're sure not going to paradise." But all along, just like at Gethsemane as he stood there anticipating, just like as he was being beaten and he took it for a purpose. He knew what he was doing and now on the cross like, I'm headed somewhere, like this isn't the end this isn't it. It was just eerie. Just eerie.

Now is where the story gets even crazier. If you thought the whole falling backwards was crazy, if you thought the ear was crazy. Listen. At noon, at noon, normal day, sun is shining, all of the sudden it goes dark. And when I say dark, I mean it was like somebody snatched the sun out of the air or they drew the curtains to separate heaven and earth or earth and heaven, I'm not sure, but it got dark. And it got dark in a hurry. And it sent people off the hill. They were trying to get home. My soldiers didn't know what to do. I'm feeling around because my eyes hadn't adjusted yet. I'm trying to feel the cross. I'm hoping, I'm waiting to get acclimated to the darkness to see if somebody messing with the people. Are they messing with these guys? What's going on? I'm like you need to get down there and get some torches, get some lanterns so that we can see, ask do we continue on. What are we supposed to do? It's dark, it's crazy, and it's eerie. And on top of that it's quiet. Everybody just kind of quit talking. So we just stood there. Word was continue on, don't stop, we're already in, make it happen. It doesn't matter if it's dark.

I'm sitting back thinking, this isn't adding up. This isn't adding up. Something's got to be different here. Here I was anticipating a drama-free, hassle-free crucifixion and I've gotten anything but that. And then all of a sudden about three hours into it, it just kind of lulled you in. You just got in the darkness and you were lulled into this sense of security, like everything was okay, and then all of a sudden everything changes again. Jesus cries out, **"My God, my God why have you forsaken me?"** You want to know what was so eerie to me about that? It was like Jesus knew him. I mean I've heard guys cry out to God from the cross before, but most of the time that's probably the first time they've ever talked to him. This was like, this was like he knew him. It was like they had talked before. It was strange. You just kind of sat there and felt like there was something going on. Like you were a part of a larger conversation. You were eavesdropping. Then after he says this you could see him press his weight up. You can kind of tell when they are getting toward the end. You could kind of tell. You could feel them gasping, body filling with fluid and blood, as he presses himself up and he gets that last breath he says, **"It is finished."** It's finished. Like he's been doing this for a purpose. I mean it was starting to all come together for me, but at that moment I didn't have a lot of time to process it, because as soon as those words came out of his mouth

not only was it dark, but now all of a sudden Golgotha started to shake. And when I say shake I mean it was shaking crazy. And it was loud, it was intense. <graphic> Can you imagine what it sounds like when boulders are breaking and rocks are cracking? It sounded just horrific and it felt like 10 minutes of shaking. I don't know how long it was, but it shook and shook, and when it finally stopped and we had our bearings and now the darkness was starting to ease off and light was coming back, you look up and Jesus is dead. I don't know about you, but at the time I'm just starting to weigh the evidence. What would you say? What would you say? Am I crazy? You think I'm crazy. What would you say? All I could say was that guy that rode in on a donkey crying, he must be something. Everything that I experienced, the ear, the falling back, the darkness, the shaking, listen -- it happened.

And then it hit me. This guy's not at the wrong place at the wrong time; he meant to be here. He meant to be here. This is on purpose somehow. And my only response - you're going to think I'm crazy - my only response was to look up and say, "This man is the Son of God." What would you have said? I couldn't think of anything else. It was no ordinary man that died that day. It was no ordinary man we hung on that cross and we beat. This was no ordinary man we arrested, and we humiliated. That was no ordinary man. I know you think I'm crazy, don't you? You think I'm crazy. We pulled him down off the cross, we sent him with the folks who were going to bury him.

I just need to let you know that the last two nights I haven't slept a wink. Friday night I got home, my wife looks at me and says, "You're pale as a sheet." I couldn't even explain what had happened. Yesterday was pointless. I couldn't sleep, I couldn't move, I couldn't do anything. Hey listen; just be glad you weren't the cause of his death. Just be glad you didn't drive the nails. I mean, because how would you respond if it were you who did that? If it was you who caused his death? How would you respond? You would be like me; you couldn't sleep, could you? What if it was you who caused his mockery, it was you who caused his humiliation, it was you that cost him lash after lash after lash. How would you respond? I responded the only way I knew how. I went to some of the Jews and I said, "Can you tell me about the person you guys are waiting for? Can you tell me about it?" One of them gave me this passage to read - I'm still trying to make sense of it. They said they had a prophet Isaiah and he wrote this: "He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him. Nothing in his appearance that we should desire him." That's what I thought when I first saw him. Nothing impressive. "He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering like one from whom men hid their faces. He was despised and we esteemed him not. Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions and

crushed for our iniquities.” Can you make sense of that? It says, “By his wounds we are healed. We all like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.” Now listen to this one, you ready? “He was oppressed and afflicted yet he did not open his mouth. He was led like a lamb to the slaughter and as a sheep before her shearers, it’s silent. So he did not open his mouth. I saw it.

Here’s what I’m trying to wrestle with. Surely this isn’t the end. I believe this man was something more than just an ordinary man. I believe he was the Son of God. He talked to God, he addressed him as God. I think he’s got to be the Son of God, he called him Father. So the only thing I can reckon is surely God’s going to do something to reconcile this. Surely God’s going to come into the scene. Surely God’s going to show up and he’s going to make this okay that I’m not going to be on the hook for it. You don’t want to be on the hook for it, do you? Surely God’s going to come in and do something to make this okay. Because right now I feel this big (uses thumb and forefinger to show about an inch). How would you feel? How would you feel? What would your response be? There is one thing, there’s one part of me that’s hopeful. And that hope is this. That God is still working and he is going to make and complete this story. And listen to me, you ready? I know you think I’m crazy, but watch this. When God responds, if he can shake the earth, if he can make it go dark, if he can cause his son to put an ear back on. If he responds, when he responds I will be ready to follow. I will be ready to jump in. I will be willing and ready to take up the cause. I know God won’t be silent on this, but right now I’m left in the midst of how do I respond to being responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

Can I pray? God I, God I just confess that I was a part of it. I confess that it was because of me you suffered and you died. God I don’t even know if I’m asking right, but I ask this. Is that you continue to work and you would make all of this right, and you would make what your Son Jesus went through absolutely worth it. And God my next prayer is for everyone who hears this story, as simple a response as it was that we would all truly be able to say, Jesus Christ is the Son of God. It’s in His name I pray. Amen.