

The Absurdity of Insufficiency in the Light of the Cross



THE ABSURDITY OF INSUFFICIENCY IN THE LIGHT OF THE HORRORS OF CROSS

On the Absurdity of a Sufficient-but-Not-Efficient Atonement

Stand, for a moment, at the place of scourging. Do not avert your eyes. A man is tied to a post—stripped, exposed, utterly without defence. In this case, He is not merely a man. He is the eternal Word of God made flesh, the One who spoke galaxies into existence, the One before whom seraphim veil their faces and cry *Holy, Holy, Holy*. The One before whom mighty angels capable of single handedly destroying armies numbering in the tens of thousands, bow before and shout accolades of praise to – this is the man tied to the whipping post. He is about to be brutalized beyond recognition. By the time it is over, His appearance will be “marred more than any man – beyond human semblance” according to Isaiah (Isaiah 52:14). He will endure all of this with redeeming purpose – there will be nothing abstract or merely possible in His suffering – it will be horrifically actual – and its results will likewise be not merely potential or possible, but actual and accomplished. Two Roman lictors – professionally trained torturers - take their positions. Each holds a flagrum - a short-handled whip fitted with multiple leather thongs, their ends embedded with jagged bone and lead. They begin...mercilessly. Their job is not merely to inflict pain but to *scourge* the body in the process. A

No one knows for certain how many lashes He endured. Jewish law required no more than 40 lashes, but not with a flagrum, with a “regular” leather whip. But these were Romans, not Jews and were not subject to that law nor to that style of whip. Dozens and dozens of times they struck His entire body from His shoulders to His feet. Each strike initially impacts like a rock causing immediate soft tissue, deep bruising. The more lashes He receives – and there would undoubtedly be overlap in the same areas – His skin tears open and the lashes now cut into the muscle underneath. The ends of the whip rip through subcutaneous tissue, exposing the raw underlayer of a body. Truly, Isaiah’s description would be fulfilled in the horrifically literal way. Ancient historians

who witnessed Roman scourging describe victims whose veins, muscles, sinews, and entrails lay open to the horrified gaze of onlookers. Many never survived it. Upon hearing the sentence of scourging, those ancient historians record that hardened criminals came undone emotionally at the thought, filled with dread and horror and awful anxiety at what was to come. This was not mere punishment. It was methodical, state-sanctioned, barbaric destruction of the human body—administered to the Author of life itself.

Before the scourging, they had already beaten His face with fists and rods. They had mercilessly plucked out sections of His beard. They had blindfolded Him, struck Him, and mocked Him: *“Prophesy! Who hit you?”* After the scourging, they had woven a “crown” or “cap” of thorns from a regional thorn bush—and driven it onto His skull with blows from a reed. Blood ran into His eyes, His beard, His mouth. The shock, blood loss and dehydration that follows such torture would be immense. That He survived this leg of this particular “race” was itself nigh miraculous. That He was able to stand – let alone walk – after enduring such brutality is almost at the point of defying logic. After all of this, they nailed His shattered body to a rugged, not nicely sanded Roman cross, where He hung for six hours in a form of suffering so unprecedented that the Latin language had to invent a word to describe it: *excruciatius*—“out of the cross.” From where we get the word “excruciating.” The Romans created a new category of agony that had no prior name, because they had created the agony itself. Now, a grotesquely disfigured, pulverized man impaled by spikes to a rough hewn cross, His fatigued body distending in ways that make His bones dislocate, hangs and suffers – and all of this is still not enough – because the soldiers and the Pharisees continue to mock Him.

Now hear what the synergist says about all of this.

In the light of all of this – along comes the synergist who says that *this* suffering—the scourging, the thorns, the nails, the full weight of the Father’s wrath against sin poured out upon the only sinless man who ever lived—was ***not enough in and of itself*** to secure salvation. *Something else must be added to it* – not from the Lord who endured such

horror nor the Father who required such a price – but from a *sinner*.

Sure, it was ‘*sufficient*’, they concede - sufficient in some abstract, theoretical, hypothetical sense. Sufficient the way a cheque is sufficient even if no one ever cashes it. Sufficient the way a medicine is sufficient even if the dying patient refuses to take it. But not *efficient* – *not until* the sinner actualizes that suffering for themselves. And this sinner who now supposedly holds the power of veto is at the moment of decision, spiritually dead in trespasses and sins, blind, hostile to God, unable to submit to His law. This sinner in *this* state – for the synergist insists the sinner is *not regenerate until after* they produce faith in this suffering, “accept it” and thereby subjectively actualise its objective benefits – holds the executive power of Veto here. They alone from the graveyard of their own darkened understanding, corrupted moral center, limited reason and fallen will, decide to activate or actualise it. *So, the infinite God by His own power and will endures the most horrific suffering imaginable to make an infinitely valuable payment – but makes it contingent on the finite veto of the sinner it was endured to save.* Is this in any way – by any standard – reasonable, credible or accurate?

Read that again. The blood of God Incarnate, endured torture that would have killed any other man before the first nail was driven, sits in a cosmic holding pattern—waiting for “permission” from the *sinful* creature to do what the Creator intended it to do by means of that torture. The cross, on this scheme, is not a triumph. It is a mere proposal. It is not an accomplishment – it is an offer. A divine hand extended that may, in the end, be extended in vain for billions. The Son of God was scourged, pierced, and crushed—and at least in theory - it might save no one. It all depends on *us* – utterly fallen, ruined, corrupted in and by sin – in a single, devastating word “*dead in trespasses and sins.*”

This is not theology. This is absurdity dressed in pious language.

Consider the sheer disproportion.

On one side of the scale: the voluntary, substitutionary suffering of the second Person of the Trinity no less, sustaining His physical life by His divine will which enabled Him to experience *more* pain and trauma than *any* man - as Isaiah said. The God/Man purposely allowed His physical form to experience *greater*—not lesser—pain, surpassing all natural limits of death that ordinarily would have taken His life much earlier. However, because He is the author of life, He alone determined the precise moment of His own death—an ability unique to Him and possessed by no other person. Why so? *Because* bearing in His body the *full* penal, substitutionary weight of divine justice against *every* sin of every soul for whom He died, He *had* to endure until the end. *Not merely the end when physical life could endure no more and finally just gave out on its own – not even close. But until the very last drop of ‘the cup of the Father’ which the Father had given Him to drink was consumed. Only then would He allow His physical life to expire – not one millisecond prior!*

On the other side: the “decision” of a fallen human sinner – “a *wretched man*” that Scripture describes as enslaved, blind, dead, deaf and at enmity with the very God whose grace is supposedly free to accept or reject with a simple choice. And who at the moment of decision is not yet regenerate, thus, yet “dead in their sins,” still “a slave to sin,” still “at enmity with God” – openly hostile to Him. The Son of God endured all He did to then leave it up to one in such a state. The synergist says it is the *second* – from the wretched sinner – not the first from the infinitely worthy eternal Son, which is *the* determining factor. That the scale tips not on the side of the eternal Word in human flesh’s *unthinkable* agony, but on the side of the *sinful* creature’s choice. That the transaction which shook the cosmos, darkened the sun, and split the temple veil from top to bottom remains *incomplete*—pending ratification from the wretches utterly contaminated by sin below.

If this is true, **then** the Father watched His Son brutalised, broken, and slain—and at least in theory, it may all have been for nothing. The Son may have endured the full fury of the Father’s wrath against sin and failed to save a single soul. Per synergistic theology – this was at least theoretically possible! Sure, the Father foreknew many would believe and be saved most of them will admit – but this does not solve the enormity of

the problem *because* they insist all this was not endured *only* for the those the Father foreknew would be saved, but also and *equally for all those the Father knew would perish!* In this view, the Triune God - the Father who required the price, the Son who paid every agonizing drop of it to the uttermost, the Spirit who alone regenerates, illuminates and empowers the heart to see know and believe - remains at this point ultimately nothing more than a spectator; a posture that, whatever its intentions, leaves Him waiting upon the *sinful* creature's 'permission' to finish what began in Gethsemane, progressed to the scourging, and culminated in the horrors of Calvary itself.

No. A thousand times, no! "*It is finished!*" was not a prayer request. It was a thunderous declaration of accomplished fact. It reverberated through the corridors of eternity. It shook the giant pearl gates of heaven itself. It echoed off the streets of gold so pure it is transparent. It resounded to the very emerald throne Of the living God Himself – who in hearing those words was *satisfied* – meaning His holy and righteous indignation against sin which deserved His righteous wrath was satisfied. His justice required a payment. It could not be swept under the carpet. Payment *must* be made – His holiness and justice demanded it and to deny that would be to deny His own immutable nature. So, in His wisdom and mercy, He devised a plan whereby He Himself would “provide a lamb”. The Hebrew language will permit a nuanced but powerful change in the sentence when Abraham responded to Isaac’s question “where is the lamb for the sacrifice?” It will allow the reading “God will provide *Himself* the Lamb” not merely “God Himself will provide the lamb.” The declaration of accomplished redemption the eternal Logos spoke the moment before He “gave up” His own spirit, hushed mighty archangels. It silenced the cherubim and seraphim. It shook the foundations of the nether realm to its very foundations so terribly the gates of hell itself were dislodged by the power of it. Then the eternal Son fell asleep in the arms of His Father as He uttered the practical equivalent of a child’s calm, trusting bedtime prayer – “Into Your hands I commit My spirit.” With that, He bowed His head and died – at the moment of His choosing, not the moment when the laws of physics and the limitations of the body demanded death.

Conclusion

The Lamb of God by all of this did not merely make salvation *possible*. He saved His people from their sins (Matthew 1:21). Every lash had a name written on it – those the Father would give Him from every nation, tribe and tongue (John 6:37, 44, 65; 17:2, 20-24; Rev 5:9). Every thorn, every nail, every drop of blood accomplished “*to the uttermost*” the redemption of every soul the Father had given to the Son before the foundation of the world (Rom 8:33-34; 1 Peter 1:2; Eph 1:1-11; 2 Tim 1:9; 1 Cor 2:7). Not one of them will be lost. Not one drop was wasted. The cross did not create a possibility. It secured an *inevitability!*

To stand at the foot of that cross, to see the bones exposed through flayed skin, to watch the Son of God writhe in unimaginable agony enduring all He did and then to say, “Yes, but it depends on whether *I* accept it”, is not humility. *It is the most breathtaking arrogance ever clothed in the language of devotion I can even imagine.* It takes the most horrific act of self-giving love in the history of the universe and subordinates its efficacy to the veto power of the very rebels it was designed to save.

“No one takes My life from Me. I lay it down of Myself.”

— John 10:18

SOLI DEO GLORIA

© 2026 THE SOLA MATTER.COM