

Preacher's Pen points

Excruciating

Take a moment to reflect on this commonly used word. In English the word “excruciating” is an adjective meaning “causing intense physical or mental pain; agonizing” or “intense or extreme”. Perhaps someone who has suffered an injury will say, “The pain was excruciating”. And sometimes when someone is describing work it may be said, “The task requires excruciating attention to detail”.

Origins of the Word

What is not apparent in this English word is its origin. This word traces its way back to the Latin language. It is composed of two parts, “ex”, used to intensify a verb, and “cruciare” meaning to “torture” or “crucify”. Hidden in the word is the Latin word “crucis” or “cruis”, the Romans’ word for “cross”. Our word “excruciate” is derived from the experience of those who suffered crucifixion. The pain of that event was so intense that no current word available seemed adequate to describe it; thus the Romans found it necessary to coin a new word to describe the experience!

Surprising Silence!

Somehow when we read the Gospels we expect the writers to remind us of how painful the experience of crucifixion was. Yet not once do they report to us how Jesus reacted to the pain of His torture. Perhaps knowing that their readers would be familiar with the horrid experience they felt it unnecessary to describe the physical affects of crucifixion. Or, perhaps their love and regard for

the Lord’s dignity made them reticent to speak about whatever physical or verbal manifestations of pain he expressed. Instead they reported the passion almost without passion. Yet, is there any doubt in your mind that the memories of that event would have moved them to tears for the remainder of their lives?

The Stress of the Gospel & the Epistles

It interesting to notice that the stress in the writings of the apostles is not upon the pain of the cross as much as the shame of the cross. And their reminders of Jesus’ suffering and death are



focused upon the meaning of that event for sinners. They spoke of how His suffering brought about the forgiveness of sins: *“and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.”* (1 Pet. 2:24). They spoke about how His suffering perfected Him as our high

priest: *“For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings.”* (Heb. 2:10).

As for the nature of Jesus’ sufferings, the gospel writers simply reported what happened and left it to the reader’s experience or imagination to fill out the picture of His sufferings. Today, while we remember what Jesus did for us in His death upon the cross, let us also not forget the nature of His pain. It was excruciating!

—Johnny Felker (www.truthchasers.com)