

## **How God intervenes in our lives: Down the Via Dolorosa**

The VIA DOLOROSA - the way of sorrows — is the route taken by our Lord Jesus from the Garden of Gethsemane to the cross. From the very beginning, people have walked a way of sorrows and have depended on God's help and intervention. Although Adam and Eve were created in God's likeness and image, when sin entered they found the road of sorrows. Christ came into this world to make it possible for us to find relief and exit from that way of sorrows. This is one of the most meaningful blessings for our lives.

It was Sunday when Jesus entered Jerusalem in triumph on a colt. People filled the streets coming to Jerusalem for Passover. When they saw Him, everyone started waving palm branches and cried out: "*Hosanna, blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord.*" It appears that everyone knew that Jesus was the Messiah. This was the week before Christ's crucifixion.

- **Thursday of this week, the Lord ate the Passover meal with His disciples, Matthew 26:17-30.** When He shared the bread with them, He said, "This is My body which is broken for you," and He said, "The cup is the new covenant in My blood." Then Judas left the meal to finalize his betrayal of Jesus.
- **After they went to the Mount of Olives, Jesus said all of them would stumble and fall away from Him that night.** Peter said it would never happen, but Jesus said before the rooster crowed at dawn, he would deny Him three times.

### **I want to show you the Via Dolorosa.**

The ancient streets of Jerusalem were destroyed several years after the crucifixion by the Roman army. It is impossible to locate the exact route of the Via Dolorosa.

- **Jesus was with His disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane on the night that He began walking the VIA DOLOROSA - the Way of sorrows.** The text tells us that Jesus became very sorrowful.
- **While in the garden in the cover of night, Judas and a company of armed men came to take Jesus.** Judas came up to Jesus and betrayed Him with a kiss, and the Lord told him, "*Do what you came to do.*" Then Jesus was taken by the crowd with swords and clubs.
- **That night Jesus was brought before the Sanhedrin to be tried before the High Priest.** They questioned Him, "*If you are the Messiah, tell us*" but He replied, "*If I tell you, you would not believe.*" The Jesus said, "*From this time on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God.*" They asked, "*Are you then the Son of God?*" Jesus said, "*You say that I am.*" Then they condemned Him of blasphemy.
- **While Jesus was being spat on and struck before the High Priest, Peter stood outside in the courtyard.** Just as Jesus had said, before the rooster crowed twice, Peter denied the Lord three times, (Matthew 26:34, 75).
- **Friday morning, the chief priests, elders and scribes bound Jesus and delivered Him to Pilate.** During this time, Jesus was accused by many false witnesses. Then Pilate, wanting to please the people, released Barabbas and handed Jesus over to be crucified, (Mark 15:1-5, 15).
- **After condemning Jesus to be crucified, they led Him away to the Praetorium where they scourged Him.** Soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on His head and clothed Him with a purple cloak. They struck Him with a reed on His head, spit upon Him, mocked and stripped Him and led Him out, (John 19:1-3). Pilate said, "*I find no fault or*

*guilt in Him,*” but the chief priest and officers cried, *“Crucify Him, Crucify Him!”* (John 19:6-11). Wanting to please the people, Pilate released Barabbas and delivered Jesus to be crucified.

- **“And He bearing His cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha” (John 19:17).**
- **Mark 15:21, tells us, they compelled Simon of Cyrene to carry His cross.**
- **A large crowd of people followed Jesus, including many women who were mourning and lamenting for Him, (Luke 23:27-31).** Jesus told them *“do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and your children.”* Then He said days of great trouble were coming.
- **When they came to Golgotha, they crucified Him along with two criminals — one on His right, the other on His left, (Luke 23:33-34).** While hanging on the cross, Jesus promised the thief on the cross, *“Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise,”* (Luke 23:39-43).
- **Then Jesus spoke to His mother and his mother’s sister, and Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala, (John 19:25-27).** Jesus saw the disciple whom He loved, and He said to His mother, *“Woman, behold, your son.”* Then He told the disciple, *“Behold, your mother.”* From that hour John took her into his home.
- **It was about noon when darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour, (Luke 23:44-46).** The veil in the temple was torn down the middle. Then Jesus cried out with a loud voice, *“Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!”* And having said this, He breathed His last.
- **Then Joseph of Arimathea went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus, (Matthew 27:57-60).** Joseph wrapped the body in a clean linen cloth and laid it in his own new tomb and rolled a great stone over the entrance of the tomb.

### **I want to show you how God intervenes in our lives down the Way of sorrows.**

Many of us have been down a road of sorrows. We have experienced heart break, sorrows and grief. I want to show you God’s plan for the end of that road and how God wants to intervene in this journey.

### **The Via Dolorosa (the way of sorrows) did not begin in Jerusalem.**

- **The way of sorrows began in the book of Genesis when Adam and Eve disobeyed God.**

They had been living in perfect harmony with God in Paradise. They had a genuine and free access to the presence of God. God would come down in the cool of the day and walk with them in the garden. They enjoyed warm intimate fellowship with God Almighty.

Adam and Eve entered the way of sorrows when they listened to the voice of Satan through the serpent and questioned God's authority and word. It did not appear to be a gigantic step or a terrible thing to do. Their hearts were deceived by cunning and lying words. As soon as they ate the forbidden fruit, Adam and Eve entered the way of sorrows.

### **Once entered, man never escaped the way of sorrows.**

- **On the way of sorrows, Cain killed Abel his brother.**

The way of sorrows was filled with many stumbling stones. Within the first eleven chapters of Genesis, humanity became so vile that God was forced to bring judgment.

**Genesis 6:5 NIV** The LORD saw how great man’s wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.

Many evil people have moments when they do good. It is hard to imagine the world being full of people who only had evil thoughts and tendencies all the time.

- **The way of sorrows brought man to the brink of destruction, but God provided a way of escape for Noah and his family.**

Had God not intervened, the way of sorrows would have totally destroyed man.

- **We know Abraham was a man of great faith in God.**

We are inclined to think that people of great faith have few troubles, burdens, and sorrows. However, people of great faith and trust in God face real life difficulties and circumstances. All along his journey, Abraham had many sorrows and trials.

**Genesis 12:1-2 NIV** The LORD had said to Abram, “Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.”

God was calling him away from everything he knew. He was to leave his people and homeland and never go back. Can you feel the heartache and heaviness of a man in a strange land? It is so easy to look at God’s promise to bless him and forget the path that brought him to that blessing. Abraham and Sarah waited many long years before they began to see the hope of God’s promise come true. Their faith was tested all along a way of sorrows. Decades passed without a sign of God’s promise coming true.

Finally, when Isaac was born, Abraham and Sarah rejoiced. Once again, God tested Abraham.

- **Abraham had to go up a way of sorrows to Mount Moriah.**

**Genesis 22:2 NIV** Then God said, “Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about.”

Can you imagine the heavy load that was laid on Abraham and the sorrow in Sarah’s heart? **God was leading Abraham down the way of sorrows.**

**Many notable people traveled this way of sorrows.**

- **Moses walked the way of sorrows when he left Egypt.**

Moses fled from Egypt after a miserable failure. It took 40 years for him to find a place of hope and purpose. Then God sent him back into Egypt with a burdened heart for the suffering of his people. God told Moses to tell Pharaoh that all of Egypt’s first born would die. Moses walked the way of sorrows when he left Egypt with a rebellious people. Often Moses was heavy with the sorrows of Israel. On the mountain with God, Moses’ heart was broken when God told him about the sin of the people in the valley.

- **Joseph knew the way of sorrows.**

As a young man, he was given dreams of blessing and honor. He would rule, be blessed, and be a blessing. Joseph did not know that he had to go down the way of sorrows to become the premier of Egypt. Throughout the events of his life, you can feel his heartbreak and disappointment. His family didn't believe him and his brothers wanted to kill him. He was sold into slavery and lived in a foreign land as a slave. He struggled to live a Godly life before ungodly people. He constantly resisted temptation. He was unjustly thrown into prison and was mistreated by those he helped. When he finally came into the blessing that God promised, he had to face his brothers. You see his tears and sorrow, and ultimately the joy.

**The way of sorrows is filled with people.**

- **Joshua walked the way of sorrows as he led the people into the Promised Land.** He went from battle to battle.
- **During the 21 chapters of the Judges, the Israelites walked down the way of sorrows.**
- **In Ruth, three women walked the way of sorrows.** All three women lost their loved ones and possessions and were burdened and filled with grief.

**The Old Testament is full of people headed down this rocky road of sorrows.**

- **When we come into the New Testament the Via Dolorosa is fully developed.**

**The world had been in darkness 400 years.**

From the time of Malachi in 400 BC to John the Baptist in about 25 AD, there was no prophet of God in Israel. Many dramatic changes took place during that period.

- Israel had been under **Persian** control from 532 to 332 BC.
- Then **Alexander the Great** defeated **Darius of Persia** and brought the Jews under the Grecian rule.
- After Alexander, Judea was ruled by a **series of successors** and their world became very worldly, humanistic, and ungodly.
- The **Syrian, Antiochus Epiphanies** committed many abominable acts against the Jews.
- His wickedness led to the **Jewish Maccabean** revolt which was a time of war, violence, and hidden conflict.
- The Jews ruled until **Pompey of Rome** conquered Israel.

These dark ages were filled with many sorrows. When Christ appeared, hope was almost gone. Jesus arrived just in time.

**Galatians 4:4-5 NLT** But when the right time came, God sent His Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. God sent Him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that He could adopt us as His very own children.

**Christ came at the right time.**

- He was born of a virgin and lived in obscurity.
- Though tempted in all ways as a man, He lived a sinless life.
- He performed many miracles, signs, and wonders.
- He raised the dead, cleansed lepers, and healed the sick and diseased.
- He stilled troubled water and walked on the raging sea.
- He did so many miracles that no one could record them.

**Then Jesus walked down the Via Dolorosa.**

**Isaiah 53:3-6 NKJV** He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

**Jesus came to this world to walk down the Via Dolorosa. Why the Way of sorrows?**

- After Adam and Eve, God made a promise.
- Noah received a promise of God's intervention.
- God told Abraham and Sarah His plan.
- Isaac had hope.

- David looked forward to the day the Messiah would come.
- Ruth hoped for the reward.
- Along the way, momentary reprieves came as God blessed men.

### **Why the Via Dolorosa? Why did Jesus have to go down the way of sorrows?**

- If you want to know, you have to go to the cross.
- At the cross, we see the pain and agony.
- At the cross, the sun turns to darkness.
- At the cross, the blood is running down.
- At the cross, Jesus died for your sins.

### **The way of sorrows ends at the cross.**

Are you walking down your own Via Dolorosa? Is your life burdened, troubled, and tried? Have you despaired of life? Do you feel you have reached the end of your hope?

Jesus is here for you! He will help you now! He has the keys for your victory! All you have to do is put your trust in Him.

At the end of the Via Dolorosa was a cross. At the end of the Via Dolorosa is a garden tomb. The tomb was a place of death and new hope. The tomb is empty today for Christ has conquered.

Next Sunday is Easter Sunday, and we celebrate the victory that Christ gained for us.

**You can come to Christ and find the end to your way of sorrows.**