



Reset
Part 3 – Reset Your Faith
Joe White

[Video plays] The fighting arena called Golgotha and the men who fought there was, without a doubt, the most grueling, the most demanding, the most consequential battleground mankind has ever known. Three crosses, three men, three lives, three stories, three fighters, all fighting to the bitter end. Fighting in the middle of that notorious hill was the one called Jesus, The Messiah, the one who would become like us to give it all to win the souls of men. His requisition was the most demanding, his fearlessness the most daunting, his courage the most unrelenting, and his cause the most compelling.

Fighting on his left was a criminal, a thief, a man of pride, a man committed to fight to the death, to stand his ground, to never give in, to finish as he started. Like many men today, he'll live and die alone with no need for anyone to give him a helping hand. He'll ignore his mistakes. He'll dance away from the sting of guilt. He'll fight until he dies to be his own man.

Fighting on the cross on the right side of Jesus is a different sort of criminal. He was a thief with a personal battle to overcome a shameful past, to overcome his failures, to overcome his fatherlessness. Like many of us in this arena, he had fought so long and lost so much. Battle fatigued and filled with failure, he's ready to throw in the towel, but he would fight to overcome himself and look to the one in the middle who will win for him his final victory.

These three were the challengers, the rocky hillside known as the Skull, and the three Roman crosses that stood there were their challenge. All three men were fighters in every sense of the word. They would give it their all. They would fight their cause to their last breath.

Joe White:

[Portraying the man on the left of Jesus] I will never give in. I will never, ever quit. You can beat me. You can ridicule me. You can kill me. You can crucify me, but I am, and I have always been my own man. I didn't need my father's hand to hold and I need no hand to hold today. No one will take away my independence today. I'll fight you. I'll fight God. I'll fight these Roman guards. I'll fight any man. I am not afraid. As long as I can stand my ground and maintain control, I will win. I will win. I will win. Hey, you up there, if you are the King of the Jews, why don't you come down and save yourself?

[Portraying the man on the right of Jesus] Do you not even fear God? Since we are receiving the same sentence of condemnation. We indeed justly for we get what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.

The war that wages within my heart is far greater than the physical battle I fight as I gasp for my last breath. How can I even look to the one who calls himself the God of Love, the God of Peace, the God of my Salvation. I've never known love. I've never known my own father. My anger over his abandonment and abuse has led me into the darkest valleys and the deepest of sins. When I've tried to do right, I have failed. Oh, how I have failed. And now I fight to lift up my head and look to the only one who could possibly save me. Jesus, can you remember me? When you come into your kingdom, can you remember even me? Can you even remember someone as undeserving as me?

[Portraying Jesus] Yes, yes, I remember thee. Your faith has found a home in my heart. I chose these chains. I paid the price. I paid the debt that you yourself could never pay. These chains are on me so that I could take your chains for all of eternity. I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live even if he dies. Yes, I remember thee. You're my son now. Your faith has found a home in my heart. After this ordeal is over, I am taking you to meet my dad. I'm taking you to my father's house. Yes, today, you shall be with me in Paradise.

[Video plays]

*How deep the Father's love for us
How vast beyond all measure
That He should give His only Son
To make a wretch His treasure*

*How great the pain of searing loss
The Father turns His face away
As wounds which mar the Chosen One
Bring many sons to glory*

*I will not boast in anything
No gifts, no power, no wisdom
But I will boast in Jesus Christ
His death and resurrection*

Joe White: You can look at the hopelessness or you could look at the faith. You can look at the loneliness or you can look at the friendship. You can look into history or you can look into the life. You can look at the future or you can look in the mirror. You can look at the mountain or you can look in the valley. You can look into triumph or you can look into pain. Wherever you look, you'll always find three blood stained crosses standing there, towering high above the earth for all mankind to see.

Crucified in the middle, there is a savior with hands pierced and arms outstretched as if to define the broad expanse of God's boundless love. Crucified on each side of him are two thieves, two men condemned to die, helpless, hopeless. One man is me, one man is you if left to our own devices, caught in a losing battle between flesh and spirit. But, the psalmist lifts our hopelessness when he cries, "In thy presence is the fullness of joy and in thy right hand there are pleasures forever." Because when it all comes down, the only thing that matters is which side of the cross you're on.

The thief on the left was a scoffer. The thief on the right was a believer. The thief on the left clinched his fist, ready to fight. The thief on the right lifted his hands in humility, ready to forebear. The thief on the left lifted his body in self-defense. The thief on the right lifted his body in self-surrender. The thief on the left had a heart that was hard, eyes that were callused, and ears that were closed. The thief on the right had a heart that was open, eyes that were soft, and ears that were ready to listen. The thief on the left said, "I don't deserve to die." The thief on the right said, "I don't deserve to live." The thief on the left was cold and bitter. The thief on the right had faith to barter. The thief on the left spent the night in darkness. The thief on the right spent the night in Paradise. When it all comes down, the only thing that matters is which side of the cross you're on.

Judas denied him and then he ran. Peter denied him and then he repented. Judas crucified himself right-side up on 30 pieces of silver. Peter was crucified upside down on a cross of pure gold. Judas led himself into the arms of Satan. Peter led the world into the arms of God. When it all comes down, the only thing that matters is which side of the cross you're on.

Pontius Pilot raised his voice and the crowd cried for Barabbas. Simon of Cyrene raised himself at his feet and cried, "I'll carry the cross of Jesus!" Mary washed his feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. The Centurion drove nails into his feet and crucified him with his hatred. Mary watched her Savior crucified as the prophecy was fulfilled. The Centurion watched a dead man rise as the prophet fulfilled his destiny. The Roman Guard raised his whip and laid out stripes of blood on the back on an innocent man. Jesus raised his level of commitment and laid your sins in his blood on the Mercy Seat of God. When it all comes down, the only thing that matters is which side of the cross you're on.

One husband tries to control his wife with his strength and his logic. Another husband said, "God, control me by your strength and your logic." One wife tries to change her husband. Another wife says, "Jesus, can you change me?" One man looks in the mirror and sees a lifetime of failure. Another man looks in the mirror and sees an eternity of forgiveness. One woman looks at the future and trembles with anxiety and fear. Another woman looks at God, who holds the future in his hands. One man lives to gain it all. Another man lives to give it all away. One man lives to store his treasures on earth. Another man lives to store his treasures in heaven. One man says, "For me to live is me and to die is loss." Another man says, "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain." When it all comes down, the only thing that matters is which side of the cross you're on.

I hear the echoes in this church every Sunday morning. I hear the echoes of the Word of God and I see the hearts coming in and out of this church Sunday after Sunday. People carrying this certificate of debt into church with the debt going out of the church. Some people come in and they go, "God, I'm not good enough. My certificate of debt... I've done too much. There have been too many things that have gone between me and you in our lifetime. My certificate of debt is too big." And yet, I hear the echoes of Pastor Ted calling out scripture as God, in 2 Peter 3: 9, is patient and slow to anger, not wanting any to perish, but for all to come to repentance. I hear the certificate of debt of the fatherless saying, "God, how can you fill that place in my heart?" And yet the echoes of the scripture in the walls of this church, Psalm 65 and 68, say, "Jesus is the father to the fatherless and he fills that void."

I've seen the faces of hurt coming in and out of this church. People like me and their child who has been hurt and even abused by a strange man. And the hurt sometimes in our heart. We look at the cross and we hear the altar calls and we see the baptismal pool, but the hurt keeps showing up. So often in counseling, I find that the hurt becomes like a motel room in our heart. It's vacant. Satan takes those vacant rooms, where there is porn or where there is sex outside of marriage, whatever you call it. Where there is anger or bitterness toward an abusive dad or an angry or absentee parent. Satan comes into those vacant rooms and he fills those hearts. And yet, men and women, scripture overcomes, scripture keeps crying out.

In Colossians 2: 12- 14, it's written in Jesus' signature. It says that having cancelled out their certificate of debt, consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us, he has taken the certificate of debt and nailed it to the cross. Scripture says that whatever your debt is... And for those of you who've struggled with failure and hurt and abuse as I have, and you've struggled with pain and you struggle with these empty motel rooms in your heart that keep getting filled by different attitudes and different fears and different worries, it says in scripture that that's your dad, that's your dad on that cross. Yes, he was God. Yes, he was man. He was God-man. But that's your dad on that cross calling out your name, clinching your certificate of debt. Scripture says all of it. And it's clear in scripture that his divine blood covers your debt. So, before he dies, he cries to his Father on your behalf, representing the woman he created, representing the man, the teenager that he created. On that cross, he cries on your behalf, "Tetelestai!" Tetelestai was the word he cried which means your debt is paid in full.

As a father of two little girls of my own, ladies, I know on that cross he was calling out your name as he took your certificate of debt. I know he was. Karen, I know he called out your name. Susan, I know he called out your name. Linda, Donna, Melissa, Emily, Elizabeth, Tammy... You name it. Amy, Amanda... You name it. Sarah, Savannah, Michael, Dan, James, Jacob, Jason... You name it. He called out your name. He made you, Brian, Robert, William, Larry, Scott, Chris... He's your dad. That's what father's do. And on that day, fatherless people, people in that church that have been wounded and hurt... On that day, men and women who have empty rooms in your heart that the enemy has taken... On that day, he cleaned out the motel. He cleaned out your heart and he wants to fill it with his Spirit. That's what salvation is.

I remember going to an event just last fall to speak in Houston, Texas. On the airplane, it dawned on me I needed to do a poem. There were some older people in there that morning that needed to hear the old poem. The old poem was The Touch of the Master's Hand. You've heard it. It's a song I think people have sung over the years. That old poem, I knew it needed to be shared.

The Touch of the Master's Hand

*Tw'as battered and scarred, and the auctioneer
thought it scarcely worth his while to waste much time on the old violin,
but held it up with a smile; "What am I bidden, good folks," he cried,
"Who'll start the bidding for me?" "A dollar, a dollar"; then two!" "Only
two? Two dollars, and who'll make it three? Three dollars, once; three
dollars twice; going for three.." But no, from the room, far back, a*

gray-haired man came forward and picked up the bow; Then, wiping the dust from the old violin, and tightening the loose strings, he played a melody pure and sweet as caroling angel sings.

The music ceased, and the auctioneer, with a voice that was quiet and low, said; "What am I bid for the old violin?" And he held it up with the bow. A thousand dollars, and who'll make it two? Two thousand! And who'll make it three? Three thousand, once, three thousand, twice, and going and gone," said he. The people cheered, but some of them cried, "We do not quite understand what changed its worth." Swift came the reply: "The touch of a master's hand."

And many a man with life out of tune, and battered and scarred with sin, Is auctioned cheap to the thoughtless crowd, much like the old violin, A "mess of pottage," a glass of wine; a game - and he travels on. "He is going" once, and "going twice, He's going and almost gone." But the Master comes, and the foolish crowd never can quite understand the worth of a soul and the change that's wrought by the touch of the Master's hand.

So, I walked through the airport looking for an old pawn shop. I began to call. As I walked to get the rental car to go to the banquet to speak, I needed a violin. I asked the information service for a local pawn shop and a pawn shop in the Latino district there, that had been flooded out by the hurricane, came up: Festival Pawn Shop. I called, and they said they would be closed in ten minutes. I rushed to the pawn shop and I walked into this dear place. Me being from South Texas, I felt like I was at home in this Latino place. There were these two wonderful young Latino individuals and they sold me this violin for 99 bucks. They wanted to know why, and I told them the Poem. You felt the Spirit of God in that pawn shop just like I do in this church this morning. You could just feel the Spirit of God touching those two young individuals.

Then this middle-aged woman came up from behind the counter. I hadn't seen her. She goes, "I am the devil. I am Satan. My number is 666." She had these defiant eyes and these four-inch-long fingernails. And she held up like that and she was dead serious about her identity.

I walked over to that woman and I held up my hands and I said, "Como te llamas, amigo."

She said, "Me llamo Maria."

I said, "Me llamo Jose, mucho gusto, Maria." I said to that dear lady as I held out my hand, "Maria, your heart does not belong to Satan. Your heart belongs to Jesus."

She looked at me for like 60 seconds with these very squinted, defiant eyes. She stared into my eyes. I lovingly, like a dad, just looked back into her eyes and said, "Maria, you belong to Jesus. You're Jesus' little girl, Maria." And then after about a long minute, her eyes began to soften. I just stood there looking at her. "Maria, you belong to Jesus."

Just as everyone in this congregation does this morning. You belong to him. He made you. He fashioned you. He doesn't care how much you've sinned. That's why he died. He cares that you're hurting. He cares that that void in your heart that your absentee father left, or your ex-husband or ex-wife left. He cares about that. He cares about your pain, but he's taken all your sin.

A little girl came up to me at camp. She said, "I've been sexually abused."

I said, "So was I as a little boy, but I laid it in a wound of the cross years ago." That little girl, at that time, she laid that abuse on the wound of the cross.

I said, "Maria, your heart belongs to Jesus." And she took my hands and softly she held them, and I began to pray the light into her heart that would chase out the darkness.

Folks, I don't care what empty room is in your motel this morning. I don't care. Branson used to be lit up by no vacancy signs. There were only four motels. Your heart needs to have a no vacancy sign as Christ fills your heart. I don't know what empty room keeps coming in and out of this church every Sunday morning, but today, I ask you and, more importantly, God asks you to become a bond servant of Jesus, to ask him to go ahead and chase the darkness out so that you'll never be a half-hearted follower of Christ again. He would never look at you and say, "You're lukewarm and this is wearing me out. I wish you were hot or cold. I wish you were on the left or the right." So, today, I invite you as a bond servant.

I'll never forget going to Green Bay and then down to Jacksonville and I prayed before these two pregames, "God, what do I take these men." He gave me this vision about 12:30 at night to just bring one chain link in my hand and ask if there was one player... And the words of 2 Chronicle 16:9 were going in and out of my mind that the eyes of the Lord search to and fro throughout this church, seeking to find one man, seeking to find one woman whose heart is completely his.

Reggie White gets up... I held this chain link up. This big left edge rusher, all 336 pounds of this fantastic man, gets up. Reggie walks up and takes this chain link. I can hardly get the words out of my mouth. Reggie takes the chain link out of my hand. I said, "Reggie, how's your chains?" He said, "My chains to Christ are tight." Then here comes the entire Green Bay team that was in that chapel that morning. It happens to teams all over the country as men want to be connected as a bond servant. Not on the left, not in the middle, but fully committed on the right side of the cross with a no vacancy sign on their heart. That Satan has no authority or place in our life anywhere again. That our heart is totally committed to Christ. The motel of our heart is his.

So, today, God asks again for one man, for one woman whose heart is completely his. So, I ask the prayer team to come stand beside me and I invite you, as the song plays. Folks, I ask you not to sing this song until this song becomes a prayer, until the bottom of your heart is able to say, through prayer, "My heart is yours, my heart is yours, take it all, take it all; my life is in your hands." If that man is you, if that woman is you, and wants to be a fully committed bond servant of Christ, and you need to empty out those old motel rooms today, I invite you to come and I invite you to stand and sing this song when this song becomes your prayer. "My heart is yours, take it all, take it all. My life's in your hands."