

BIBLE STUDY BASED ON CHAPTER TWO
OF THE THINGS HE CARRIED by Stephen Cottrell
“A CROWN OF THORNS”

Read through this chapter slowly and thoughtfully. Open yourself up to what it is saying. Don't hide behind the idea that this could never be you. We have all been guilty at some time in our life of manipulating or bullying others for our own benefit.

We've seen it many times. Groups, almost always groups, having a go at someone who is different. Today it might be a difference of colour, nationality, religion, wealth, or poverty. Nothing works better than making the person an object of ridicule. It is remarkably easy to get others on your side. This was how it was with the Roman soldiers, who were intent on making it a good 'show'; the more cruelty they showed, the better the crowd like it.

The words, *crown of thorns*, roll easily off the tongue but page 13 tells us they used acacia wood, the *barbed wire of the bush* to cause the maximum hurt.

“They had their way with him! ...” Read that and the next paragraph.

- How does the writer portray the cruelty and cynicism of the soldiers?
- Do you think they believed their own rhetoric?

And as for his followers, we read that everyone of them had abandoned him.

- Did that perhaps encourage the soldiers even more?
- What did the crowd, who at any other time would have been moaning and complaining about the occupying forces, respond to them?

“But then the joke reaches the ears of the High Priest. And he isn't laughing.”

- The High Priest and his minions had, on many occasions, wanted to seize Jesus. However, the fear of what the multitudes who followed him might do always held them back.
- Why do you think they were now disturbed by his silence?
- “What I have written, I have written,” Pilate tells them. Do you think that Pilate was being cynical, or was there an element of fear that Jesus really was the Son of God?
- What are your thoughts and feelings about what the taunts of the crowd?

Behold the man upon a cross, My sin upon His shoulders,
Ashamed, I hear my mocking voice
Call out among the scoffers

**It was my sin that held Him there
Until it was accomplished
His dying breath has brought me life
I know that it is finished**

“But there is no other way. ...”

- Try and put into words what God must have been feeling at that time?
- Why was it that Jesus had to die this way?

“The darkness beckons. ...”

- Can we say from our hearts: ***“All hail King Jesus, All hail Emmanuel, ...”***

Read the reflection on page 19 holding, if you can, some holly in your hands. Contemplate all you have read in this chapter.

Read Mark 15:16-20 and answer the questions that follow.

