

*He received 39 stripes because 40 was known to kill a man. They wanted him alive. They held handfuls of his beard and hair and pulled it out by the roots. They wanted him alive. They kicked, punched, and spit on him for hours. Until there wasn't a single spot on his body not covered in blood. They wanted him alive.*

*They shoved a crown of thorns down on his head so harshly it stuck in his skin. They wanted him alive. After hours of being beaten, mocked, whipped, flogged, and tortured, they made him walk with a cross. They made him carry it. A rough piece of wood with splinters digging into fresh wounds. They wanted him alive.*

*They wanted him to feel every ounce of pain they could bring. He had to feel it in order to heal us. Crucifixion was historically one of the cruelest, most tortured deaths a human could face. Hours upon hours of torture. Torture most of us can not mentally think of because the cruelty isn't normal. It isn't something our minds can comprehend.*

*We celebrate Easter with pastel colors, happy children hunting eggs, and chocolate. Truth is, there was absolutely nothing happy about the day Jesus died. It was cruel, bloody, and nasty.*

*He could have stopped all of it. He could have called every angel in heaven to demolish every person standing and shouting "Crucify Him!" He didn't. He knew in order to have a Sunday you have to have a Friday. He knew in order to have joy you have to carry your cross. He felt everything that day.*

*He felt how your heart broke wide open when you had to watch your baby die. He felt how heavy your life was when you were staring down the barrel of a gun wondering if the man you called husband was going to shoot you. He carried the weight of the burden you have felt since your spouse died and life just doesn't seem right since.*

*On that cross he held the rapist and murderers, the sinner and the saint. He leveled every playing field and said ALL of you are worth it. He knew he had to carry the cross. He never promised the cross you carry in this life would not be heavy. His wasn't. His promise is that Sunday is coming.*

*No matter how heavy Friday is. Financially, emotionally, mentally, or physically. Friday is heavy. That cross is weighing you down and you are about to crumble under its weight. His promise was simply this. He won't make you carry it alone. What kind of king would step down from his throne for this?*

*Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God did. For you. He did every bit of it for you and me. Oh yes, it is heavy. So heavy sometimes you do not think you can take one more step. But look up, because Sunday is coming.*