

Part Sixteen

DEATH OF CHRIST

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Did you ever have an almost unbearable job to do, or a very painful ordeal to endure? Yet you went ahead with it willingly, though dreading it, because you knew it had to be done or you loved someone enough to do it? When it was successfully completed, what a triumphant feeling—"That's over, and done right, too!" To have such an experience helps one picture and feel how Jesus went to the cross, willingly after agonizing dread, bore it in all its severity, then said, "It is finished!" (John 19:30).

After the last supper with the disciples and His intercessory prayer in John 17, Jesus made His way to Gethsemane, accompanied by the eleven. Here after His intense prayer He was found by Judas and the mob. The betrayer kissed Jesus. The mob came to take Jesus with swords and clubs; yet they fell backward to the ground when He stepped forward and identified Himself without fear. Jesus was then seized by the officers. Some of the apostles wanted to fight; but Jesus said He could call legions of angels if He wanted to. In the hours that followed Jesus was shuttled from one court to another. His case was heard by Annas, Caiphas, the Sanhedrin, Pilate, Herod, and Pilate again.

To avoid the possibility of interference by the people who believed Jesus to be a prophet the Jewish rulers sought to take Jesus in the night and to get rid of Him as quickly as possible. In their many trials and with many false witnesses the Jews were not able to make a case against Jesus (Matt. 26:59, 60). Finally, the high priest put Jesus under oath to tell whether He was the Son of God, and Jesus solemnly and plainly affirmed that He was. They considered this to be blasphemy, and they made it their "lawful reason" why He must die.

The final disposition of Jesus' case rested with Pilate, for he alone had the right to pronounce the death sentence. The Romans had forbidden the Jews to execute the death sentence (John 18:31). Pilate examined Jesus as thoroughly as he could and said repeatedly that he found no fault in Him. Pilate, realizing that Jesus was innocent, offered the Jewish crowd the choice of Barabbas or Jesus, but the

mob, urged on by the religious leaders, demanded the life of Jesus.

The Jews made much use of Jesus' claim to be a king, although His kingdom was not of this world, and threatened Pilate with political troubles if he did not condemn Jesus. Pilate was not too well acquainted with truth and its obligations, so he tried to speak for Jesus, yet deliver Him up to the wishes of the Jews, and to renounce all responsibility in the matter. He went through the motions of washing his hands of it all, but instead of dismissing the case and freeing the prisoner, he claimed to dismiss the matter by turning Jesus over to the Jews to be crucified.

Jesus Gives His Life

They heaped mockery, ignominy, and mistreatment upon our Lord. They laid upon Him the heavy wooden cross. Jesus started out carrying His own cross, but the effect of the scourging and other abuses made Him weaken under its weight. We cannot determine the exact place of the crucifixion, but it was outside the city; and as they went out the soldiers compelled a passer-by, Simon of Cyrene, to carry the cross (Mark 15:21; Luke 23:26). It is not known why it was called "the place of a skull" (John 19:17). The Latin word for skull, *calvaria*, gives us the word Calvary. A small hill just north of Jerusalem is thought to resemble a skull in appearance and to be a probable location of the crucifixion. Crucifixion was a form of punishment usually reserved for condemned slaves, traitors, or the worst criminals. The one on the cross died a thousand deaths, suffering long and terribly. The two men crucified with Him are described as "thieves" (Matt. 27:38) and "malefactors" (Luke 23:32). At first they joined in the mockery against Jesus; then one repented (Luke 23:39-43).

Matthew says the title on the cross was set over Jesus' head, which is the chief indication that the cross of Christ was of the traditional form with an extended upright beam above the crossarm (Matt. 27:37). The title Pilate had placed on the cross—"Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews"—was written in three languages: Hebrew, Greek and Latin (John 19:19-20). Thousands of Jews were gathered for the Passover from every nation and province where they lived. Hebrew (the Aramaic dialect derived from ancient Hebrew) was no longer known by all of them. Greek was the international language; Latin was the official language of Rome.

Pilate's statement on the sign above Jesus seemed to uphold Jesus' claim and to accuse those who condemned Him, making them traitors.

The sign made the chief priests so uncomfortable that they tried to get Pilate to have it changed. Pilate firmly rejected their request (John 19:21-22). He seems to have been taking vengeance upon them for the bitterness and trouble that they had brought to him. He, too, was uncomfortable.

The crucifixion was performed by a squad of four soldiers. It is not likely that they divided each garment, but they probably made a four-way division of all His clothing—shoes, belt, head covering, and outer robe—perhaps casting lots to see who got each part (Mark 15:24; John 19:23). There was one other garment, a tunic or long shirt worn next to the skin, which was without a seam. It was not convenient to divide and was more valuable in one piece, and so they gambled for it. "That the scripture might be fulfilled" (John 19:24) does not mean that it was the purpose of the soldiers to fulfill prophecies about Jesus. The clause in the original Greek is in the form that is commonly used to express a purpose; and in our English version it is translated literally. Perhaps we should translate our text thus: "They cast lots, so that the Scripture was fulfilled." God predicted events because He knew they would happen; we should not think of Him as forcing men to do evil just because it had been predicted.

At the beginning of the crucifixion, someone had offered Jesus a drink of sour wine mixed with myrrh and gall, but He would not drink it (Matt. 27:34; Mark 15:23). Many believe that it was a stupefying drink provided by merciful people to deaden the pain. His cry, "I thirst" seems to have come after some six hours of suffering on the cross through the heat of the day. Great thirst was one of the worst agonies of crucifixion. Jesus did not say, "I thirst," just because it had been prophesied (John 19:28). A short stick from a bush called hyssop was used to reach Jesus' mouth with the sponge with vinegar on it. The cross was probably not high. Jesus did not refuse to drink as He did the one at the beginning (John 19:29-30). Probably it did not have gall and myrrh in it. It is very likely that even a mouthful of sour wine from a sponge was a real help to relieve His parched throat so that He could speak plainly and loudly the next two utterances.

Matthew and Mark mention a loud cry before He died, which may be the shout of victory: "It is finished!" (Matt. 27:50; Mark 15:37; John 19:30). His sufferings were about to end, but that does not seem to be the main significance of this cry. Prophecy is fulfilled! The law is perfected and abrogated! An age is brought to an end

that a new age may begin. God's eternal purpose has been carried out. He delivered up His spirit unto God. He said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46), and He left the body, and it was dead.

The good shepherd laid down His life for the sheep according to the will of God. He laid it down, no one took it away from Him (John 10:18). Oh, the Jews wanted to take it; and they defiled themselves with the guilt of taking away His life; but they could not have done it without His willingness to go to the cross for us. Of course He submitted willingly to it all because He came into the world to give His life a ransom for sinners (Matt. 20:28).

While He was on the cross, they mocked and derided Him, claiming that He could not come down. He could, but He wouldn't. He stayed on the cross for us. "Not the nails, but His love, held Him there." Oh, what love!

Why did He bear such anguish and pain? The sufferings of crucifixion were real and terrible: the torn flesh, pulled tendons, stretched joints, inflamed sores (from scourging as well as nailing), the burning sun, the great thirst, and who knows how much more. But all of these were not the worst of His sufferings. We cannot know in this life the anguish of Jesus' soul when He felt himself made guilty before God of all the sins of men, when His soul was made to feel the unearthly pangs of the doomed being driven from God to hell. "The earth grew dark with mystery." How long and how great were the sufferings of His soul in that darkness! We can know only that it was enough to serve the sentence of the second death. Why all of this? Because a just sentence was written against you and me, and Jesus loved us enough to want to save us by fulfilling the law's demands in our place. He offered us an opportunity to accept His death as our own and to live a new life in union with Him. "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed" (I Pet. 2:24).

Importance of the Death of Christ

The death of Christ as a willing sacrifice for our sins is a subject all Christians should study—every Lord's Day at the Lord's Supper. It is a basic and indispensable fact of Christianity, the grounds of our redemption, the source of our sanctification. It merits our continual meditation and increasing appreciation. The Lord considered His death the climax of His life on earth, the greatest thing He ever

did; and He requested us to keep it ever before our minds in worship to Him (Luke 22:19, 20; I Cor. 11:23-29).

The death of Christ goes back into the counsels of eternity (I Pet. 1:18-20). It was foretold by the prophets (Ps. 22; Isa. 53; I Pet. 1:11; Luke 24:44-46). Throughout the patriarchal and Jewish dispensations the dying Christ was kept before the world in the institution of animal sacrifices (Gen. 4:4; 8:20; Ex. 12:7-12; 29:38; Lev. 16:24). Of all the great and interesting things that Moses, Elijah, and Christ could have found to talk about on the Mount of Transfiguration, it was the death of Christ that they discussed (Luke 9:28-31). Jesus' death was attended by miraculous phenomena (Matt. 27:45, 50-54). It was to be preached to the whole creation (Mark 16:15; I Cor. 15:1-4). "The doctrine of the cross" is equivalent to the gospel of salvation in Christ, and it is the wisdom of God and the power of God whereby we are saved, in which we stand (I Cor. 1:18, 24; 2:2; 15:1-4).

The theme of heavenly worship is "The Lamb that was slain" (Rev. 5:9-12).

The death of Christ is typified, prophesied, proclaimed, or applied in every part of the scripture. It is one of the essentials that give to the sixty-six books of the Bible their organic unity, making them as one living organism whose lifeblood is the blood of Christ. Anywhere you scratch beneath the surface in the Bible you draw blood, the blood of redemption in the death of Jesus Christ. All that went before that fateful day of crucifixion was in preparation for it. All that comes after it was in order to apply it to us.

All the way through His ministry Jesus knew that the cross was the goal of His life, and He looked forward to it with steadfast courage and willingness (John 2:19-22; 3:14, 16; 6:51; 10:11, 18; 12:32; Matt. 16:21; Luke 24:26). It was God's will that He should be delivered up to die for us (Acts 2:23; John 10:17; Rom. 8:32); it was not "possible" to grant Jesus' request in Gethsemane that this cup might pass from Him (cf. Matt. 26:39).

The Necessity of Christ's Death

Let it not be overlooked, or disregarded, that Christ had to die. There could be no other way. It was no mere matter of convenience, no accident. Certainly He could have escaped from the men who killed Him. But He could not come down from the cross, because of the inner and moral necessities of His own nature and mission. It helps us to understand His death in its deep meaningfulness and

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great value to us, if we study the question: "Why was it necessary for Him to die?"

1. He had to die to fulfill the purpose and promised plan of God; to complete the program begun in all the past ages and dispensations; to make good the word of the prophets and His own teachings; to confirm the truth of His Messiahship (Mark 10:45; Matt. 16:21; John 3:14-17; 12:23-33). All the animal sacrifices, the altars and offerings of the Old Testament were but shadowy promises of the efficacious death of the Christ. "According to the scriptures" He died (I Cor. 15:3); and according to the scriptures He had to die (Luke 24:26, 44-46).

2. He had to die to be true to His own righteousness. He knew He should do good, and to not do it would be sin (James 4:17). He expressed His own perfect character.

3. He had to die to conquer death and bring to nought him that had the power of death, and to free men from the fear of death (Heb. 2:13, 14).

4. He had to die to reveal fully the reality of God's love—the infinite love and grace and longing that God had toward men (John 3:16; 15:13; I John 4:9-11). Love must be "not in word; neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth" (I John 3:18).

5. He had to die to win the hearts of men, to induce us to love God and forsake sin, to reconcile us to God, to break our unbelief and resistance of the righteousness of God. The power of the gospel to regenerate and transform grows out of the cross of Christ, by which I am crucified unto the world and the world is crucified unto me (Gal. 6:14; 2:20; II Cor. 5:14-21).

6. The big reason that summarizes many of these, and more, too, is this: He had to die "for our sins." The wages of sin is death. To take away our sin, He had to take its death, our death, upon Himself (Rom. 4:25; Heb. 9:22; Isa. 53:5, 6, 8; Heb. 2:9; John 1:29; Gal. 1:4, etc.).

7. To demonstrate the righteousness of God—"that he [God] might be just, and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus" (Rom. 3:25, 26). God is a righteous and knowing judge. He cannot merely disregard sin. In order to call us righteous without making God a liar, Jesus took our sins upon Himself and bore the punishment on the condition that we would yield our lives to Him to be identified with Him, being found in Him and He in us by a fellowship of death. On our account he died for sin in love for us, that we might die to sin in love for Him.

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The Lord wants the death of Christ proclaimed—in word and in the Lord's Supper—because the death of Christ so vividly proclaims several lessons which we must not forget: 1. the fact of sin and its severity; 2. the wrath of God against sin; 3. the wages of sin is death; 4. the futility of man's attempts to remove or minimize sin; 5. the nature of sin is selfishness; 6. the nature of righteousness is surrender and self-denial; 7. the only remedy of sin, the blood of Christ; 8. the love of God that seeks and sacrifices not to condemn, but to save us.

The Meaning of the Cross

To Jesus, His death meant pain and sorrow, heaviness and woe, condescension, humiliation and shame, all of which He didn't deserve, and how deeply we cannot imagine! But it also meant glory and exaltation (Phil. 2:5-11)—first shame and suffering, then glory. "For the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame" (Heb. 12:2).

To us it means that He died our death; then our death is past. We are crucified with Christ (Gal. 2:20); it is not ours to live our own lives (Rom. 6:1-11). We died, and the lives we live we must live unto Him (II Cor. 5:14-17). He purchased our lives and must be allowed to live in them to His glory (I Cor. 6:19, 20). It means that if we accept His death for ours and surrender our lives to Him we shall suffer death no more, but He will live in us a manner of life that is good, true, beautiful, full, joyous, and successful—a life triumphant and eternal—partaking of His divine nature (II Pet. 1:3, 4; I John 5:11, 12; 3:1-5). It means for us fellowship in His sufferings and participation in His glory (Phil. 3:10, 11; Rom. 8:17)—for us, too, the cross and then the crown.

For Further Study:

Crawford, C. C. *Sermon Outlines on the Cross of Christ*. Murfreesboro, Tenn.: Dehoff Publishers, 1960. and *The Passion of Our Lord*. Joplin: College Press, 1968. Practical studies.

Denney, James. *The Death of Christ*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1951. Classic work on the Biblical doctrine of the death of Christ.

Morris, Leon. *The Cross in the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1965. Thorough study on the New Testament

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teaching relating to the death of Christ.
Warfield, B. B. *The Person and Work of Christ*. Philadelphia:
Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1950. Pp. 325-530.
Scholarly essays on the work of Christ as redeemer.

"GOD WAS IN CHRIST, RECONCILING"

In Jesus Christ God became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory (John 1:1, 14). The prophet said, "They shall call His name Immanuel"; and Matthew explains that the name means "God with us" (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:23).

The brief records of Jesus' birth report that He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and hence was the Son of God most high (Matt. 1:20; Luke 1:32, 35). By the age twelve He expressed His own consciousness of His special relationship with God, gently correcting Mary, who had spoken of Joseph as His father (Luke 2:48, 49). Still He accepted the obligations and limitations of true humanity, and was subject to His earthly "parents."

When He was baptized, the voice of God said "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The Spirit of God in a visible form descended and rested upon Him. By that sign the prophet John knew that the message he had been given was confirmed, and he testified that Jesus was the Son of God (Luke 3:21, 22; John 1:29-34).

Jesus walked the earth as a man, was hungry, cold, and weary like any man. He was tempted, even as we are, yet without sin. All the while, in His spirit, personality, and character, there was the quality and nature of God. In His coming to earth, He somehow "emptied himself" of certain divine characteristics (Phil. 2:5-8). Nevertheless, He manifested on the earth a truly divine life, work, and purpose. He humbled himself to be a man, but humility is not beneath the dignity of divine excellence; and in all His humility He was still Lord and master.

He Did the Works of God

He was master of the elements. He changed water into wine; stilled a tempest with a word; walked upon the wind-tossed sea; withered a fig tree; multiplied a few loaves and fishes to feed thousands of people; produced a net-breaking catch of fish where none had been found; and sent Peter to find a coin in the mouth of the first fish he caught on a hook.

He was master over death and disease. He called forth Lazarus from the tomb on the fourth day, after the body had begun to decay, still bound hand and foot with graveclothes. He raised two others from the dead before that: Jairus' daughter and a widow's only son.

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He cleansed lepers with a touch; cured paralysis with a word, and even at a distance; made the blind to see; rebuked the burning fever; and granted the cure of a twelve-year hemorrhage for a woman who merely touched the hem of His garment.

He was victor over the forces of wickedness. The demons knew Him and cried out in fear and defiance. He commanded them to be silent and made them come out of their victims. A legion of demons could not resist His authority and power. The devil himself could not deceive or sway Him, but was driven from Him.

Jesus came to earth to serve men and to save them. He did not condemn and destroy, but He knew thoroughly their sinful hearts. He read the minds of friend and foe. He chided the ambitious secret thoughts of His apostles (Mark 9:33-37; 10:41-45; Luke 22:24-30). He knew all along the character and plottings of His betrayer. He answered the unuttered accusations of detractors (Mark 2:6-12), and showed them that He did not blaspheme when He pronounced the forgiveness of sins. He answered the mistaken mental judgments of Simon the Pharisee, and showed that He knew more than Simon expected Him to know about the hearts of those present (Luke 7:36-50). He saw through the motives of pretended praise offered by those who sought to ensnare Him with a question about the tribute money (Matt. 22:15-22). He knew Peter better than Peter knew himself, and predicted his denials specifically (see Matt. 26:33-35 and Luke 22:31-34).

Jesus did not overpower the minds of men, nor overthrow the freedom of their wills. But He completely understood them, and He fitted His words exactly to each one's needs. "He needed not that any one should bear witness concerning man; for he himself knew what was in man" (John 2:25).

The works of Jesus were the works of God, and the power that was in them was God's. The words of Christ were the words of God; His was the wisdom which they displayed. The plans and purposes of Jesus' life were the eternal purposes of God: He carried out God's predetermined plan on schedule. And Jesus' motives were the motives of God. He could truthfully say, "I and my Father are one"; "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father"; and "if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also" (John 10:30; 14:9; 8:19).

He claimed divine appointment in Nazareth's synagogue, on the occasion of His first recorded sermon in Galilee: "This day is this scripture fulfilled . . . The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me . . ." (Luke 4:16-21). He declared His divine

prerogatives in the face of the first fierce opposition of the rulers of Jerusalem, claiming to do all that the Father does; to have power to give life to the dead, to be judge of all men, to be destined to be honored by all men even as the Father is honored (John 5:19-29).

He offered Himself as all that any man needs and as a vital necessity for every man: "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed"; and "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:36, 24). "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). "He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5). "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst"; and "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you" (John 6:35, 53). "Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest . . ." (Matt. 11:27-30).

As a Man among Men

The Christ was also the Son of David, the seed of Abraham; and He usually preferred to speak of himself as the "Son of man." In order that He might be a perfect priest, to make intercession for men, and to inspire the confidence of men, it was fitting that He should be one of them and share in human experience. The word Christ is from the Greek word for the Old Testament word Messiah, which meant "anointed one." Prophets, priests, and kings were anointed; and the Messiah was to combine all three offices in one. As a prophet He was both a faithful messenger of God's word and a perfect representation of God in human form. As a king He was meek and lowly, seeking to serve rather than to be served, but winning the highest devotion and fullest obedience, because He is the king of love. As a priest He is the only one who lived a perfect, sinless life, who is worthy to stand in the presence of God, and who is able to offer the only adequate sacrifice for the sins of others. From His human experience and temptation He is able to know our need perfectly and to be touched with the feeling of our infirmity. Because of His divinity and sinlessness He is able to make full atonement and to abide at the mercy seat of God continually.

The gospel is the story of God, our Creator, living a human life on earth, in which He revealed Himself, expressed His love, accomplished

men's redemption, and brought life and immortality to light for men. It is the story of God with us, in the midst of us, winning and restoring men to himself. He became man that He might make us partakers of His divine nature and share with us His own eternal glory and righteousness.

Reconciling Sinners to Himself

God and men needed to be reconciled to each other, because they were separated by sin. Man's sin caused God to have a true complaint and a just sentence against men. The holiness of God could not accept men for full fellowship and blessing while their guilt remained and while the hearts and lives of men continued to be full of sin. The sinfulness of men caused them to be darkened in their understanding and vain in their reasonings, so that they did not really know God, and did not trust or love Him, but resisted His approaches to them and perverted the revelation that He had made to them.

Jesus understood that the greatest need of all men was to be set free from sin, from its doom, its guilt, its defilement, and its enticing delusion. In order to redeem men and restore them to full fellowship with God, He was willing, not only to associate with sinners, to show them kindness and teach them righteousness, but even to give His own life as a ransom for all.

To accomplish the reconciliation of sinners He had to do two great difficult works. One was to settle the just charge that God had against us by taking our sins upon himself and bearing them in His own body upon the cross, so that God might be just in blotting out the sentence against us on the ground of our union with Christ by faith and new birth in Him. The other was to change our attitudes toward God so that we would love and trust Him, willingly do His bidding, and let Him be the manager and keeper of our lives.

Jesus achieved these purposes of divine grace by accomplishing in His earthly life and ministry certain notable and necessary things. He manifested God's goodness and desire to save men from sin and its consequences. He demonstrated the power of God, showing His ability to do what He promises. He taught and exhibited true righteousness, which made clear man's sinfulness and need for pardon and cleansing from sin. He led men to hunger for righteousness they did not have, and to tremble for sin they had too much of. He himself made the atoning sacrifice for sin and opened up the new and living way of access to God. He took away sin's penalty by bearing it himself, and made it possible for any man to be cleansed and made

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acceptable to God through Him. He loved men until they began to love Him and wanted to let God have full sway in their lives.

He provided a source of spiritual life and overcoming power for men by giving the Holy Spirit of God to dwell in the lives and hearts of men, to bear the fruit of a changed heart and a right spirit before God (John 7:38, 39; 14:23; 3:5; Acts 2:38; Rom. 8:1-11; Gal. 5:16-25). When men accept His death as their own and cease to live unto themselves the old life of self-will, He makes them new creatures by the life of His Spirit within them, living unto Him a life that is reconciled to God (II Cor. 5:14-19).

In His resurrection and other miracles He laid the foundations of faith; He called and prepared the apostles as witnesses to the truth; so that we might have an honest conviction of truth concerning Him to support a lifelong trust able to withstand the winds and currents of thought and emotion. He gave us abundant evidence for making an intelligent, firm and wholehearted commitment unto Him.

Jesus' work of reconciliation was not altogether completed during His life on earth. Much of it was accomplished through His death and resurrection, and even after His ascension into Heaven. But all reconciliation of men with God is accomplished through Jesus Christ—through the finished work of His incarnation, through the effect of His message on those who hear, believe, and obey it.

He has given to us a glorious part in this continuing ministry of reconciliation (II Cor. 5:18-21). We should rejoice in it as Paul did. Let us be faithful and fervent in entreating men on behalf of Christ, beseeching them, "Be ye reconciled unto God."

For Further Study:

See books listed on pages 488 and 489.

NEW LIFE THROUGH ACCEPTING JESUS' DEATH

"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me" (Gal. 2:20).

We need to meditate on the meaning of the cross. Brief periods of meditation during the serving of the Lord's Supper on Sundays are helpful. But also we need to give many an hour to serious meditation on what the cross means in our lives.

Jesus Was Crucified For Us

The idea of sacrifice was not a human invention born of the superstitions and fears of men. God originated sacrifice! All the sacrifices made from the time of Cain and Abel and Adam and Eve until Jesus' death were promissory notes which were paid in full by Jesus' death on the cross. Why were all these sacrifices made? God required them as acts of obedient faith on the part of those who were seeking to please Him (Heb. 10:1-10).

In the Old Testament times God did not attempt to redeem man with the blood of bulls and goats. God did not try one thing and find that it failed. He planned from the beginning to give His Son. The other sacrifices were just the proclamation of the coming sacrifice of His Son. I think the Lord's Supper today does for us exactly what the animal sacrifices did for David, Moses, and Abraham. They both proclaim our sinfulness and need of a sacrifice and proclaim God's provision of a way of redemption. Only the Lord's Supper looks back upon the accomplished redemption by Jesus Christ; the animal sacrifices looked forward unto the sacrifice that would be acceptable unto God. Hebrews 10:6, 7 says that in sacrifices and burnt offerings God had no pleasure, and they were not acceptable unto Him; but He prepared a body for His Son that He might do His will. Jesus came to do God's will; but the old sacrifices did not accomplish God's will. God proclaimed the need of a sacrifice from the beginning. There has never been any way for any man's sin to be forgiven, except through redemptive sacrifice.

How could God be righteous and let Abraham get by with lying like he did? How could God be righteous and let Jacob get by with cheating like he did? (He charged an exorbitant price for a bowl

of bean soup!) How could God be righteous and let David get by with murder like he did? One English philosopher-poet said, "Mercy but murders, pardoning them that kill." Think that through. The judge of all the earth knows right and He must do right. God cannot sit on the bench, so to speak, and have sinners like me brought before Him and say, "He is no sinner." If a judge pronounces the guilty guiltless, then the judge is guilty. God cannot do that! God knows! God is true! God cannot simply say a sinner has not sinned. He cannot ignore sin. It is absolutely morally impossible for God simply to forget about and overlook the sins of men. *How can He be righteous then and forgive sinners?*

God does not condone sin. He does not break His own word. "The soul that sinneth shall surely die" (Ezek. 18:20). He carries it out to the letter. But He provides out of His own heart's generosity, out of His own love and holiness, the means by which we may identify ourselves with the death of Christ, and may receive the gift of life in Christ—a life that is not our own but is dead to self. We come forth from baptism as newborn babes—born in the righteousness of God. Isn't it a tremendous truth which you read in the scriptures, "Him who knew no sin, God made to be sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (II Cor. 5:21). See I Peter 2:24-25; Matthew 20:28; Titus 2:11-14; Romans 3:23-31.

In anguish, in punishment, in torment on the cross, Jesus cries out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46). I think He knew why; but He could not help the cry. Never had Jesus been out of harmony with His Father, out of joyful satisfaction of the Father's good pleasure, and complete devotion to the Father's will. Here in obedience to Him now He suffers as the guilty, suffers for all the guilt of the world. Even the feeling of God's great displeasure and wrath against sin was upon Him. It was almost more than He could bear. Perhaps this actually broke His heart physically. It is more than we can realize that He was willing to die in our place that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him, that we might return unto the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, that we might let Christ put within us a new life, so that God could be just, in the passing over of the sin done aforetime (Rom. 3:25).

All the sins God had not punished yet from the Old Testament times, all the sins He seemed to wink at and to pass over and forgive, the sins of all those who had not been sent to hell made God appear guilty for condoning them, until Jesus' sacrifice fulfilled the purpose of God. At the same time Jesus' death justified them before

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God by faith, and fulfilled the sacrifices by which God had foreshadowed the death of Jesus to them. By obeying in faith the sacrifices, they identified themselves with the death of Jesus. But they did not enter the kingdom the way we do. Though, like John the Baptist, they may be the best ever born of women, they are not up to the standard of the least that are born of the Spirit. We have the special privilege of knowing His death, and receiving the gift of His life.

We Are Crucified with Christ

Why could Jesus die in our place? Why could nothing else be a suitable sacrifice for our sins? Some persons reject the idea that someone could suffer the penalty for another's sins and any kind of justice be made out of it at all. It seems so true that my sin is my sin and nobody else is accountable for it or can bear the punishment of it. How can another take away my guilt from me? How can Jesus' death mean anything to my guilt?

God declares that Christ died for my sins. I must accept His death as the evidence of God's love. I must accept His death as God's provision for my own death as the sentence I deserve and turn my own life over to Jesus. If Jesus gives me His death and I give Him my life, then it is a fair exchange. If I accept His death as mine so that my death is past, then He died my death, and it is no more my life that lives, but Christ lives in me. I am united with Him so that God sees Him in me, because He now lives in me, and sees me in Him. Then you can see how God is just and the justifier of those who have faith in Jesus.

I think that forgiveness of sins by God required something more than the arbitrary or technical transference of guilt from one being to another. This is something that it seems cannot be done in justice. There is no justice in it! But God does not do it that way. Read carefully Romans 3:21-31. Note first that salvation is to those who believe. This is one place where people misunderstand the gospel. They assume that people can be saved in unbelief. The gospel cannot be understood if it is applied to anybody but believers. Christianity cannot be consistently held if even its standards of morality are applied to anyone but believers. You cannot make a community Christian without making individuals believers. That is true from households to nations. International relations can never be on a Christian basis until the individuals who control those nations and conduct those nations are believers in Jesus Christ above all else.

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Paul says, "whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, in his blood, to show his righteousness because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God; for the showing, I say, of his righteousness at this present season: that he might himself be just, and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus" (Rom. 3:25, 26). We do not put faith in the blood, but salvation must be by the means of the blood, through faith.

God himself could not be just, if He merely called a sinner guiltless. He cannot just forget about a man's sin. But by Jesus fulfilling the law of God and by the man being identified with Jesus before God, so that the Spirit of Christ lives in the man, and the death of Christ is accepted by that man on his own part, in a covenant of life and of death, God can justly forgive and forget.

Why is faith required? Why didn't God just make a sacrifice somewhere in the universe and then tell us the sacrifice is made? I had some vague idea like this in the first ten years I remember going to church—that Jesus died for sins; therefore sins don't matter anymore. A lot of people seem to think that Jesus took care of my sins without affecting me in any way. Jesus doesn't take care of your sins unless you die to sin. The sentence of death still applies to you and to me, not simply to Him. It is His death which we accept as our death. Romans 6:1-11 preaches "the doctrine of the cross" in your life:

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid! We who died to sin, how shall we any longer live therein? Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection; knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away, that so we should no longer be in bondage to sin; for he that hath died is justified from sin. But if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him; knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death no more hath dominion over him. For the death that he died, he died unto sin once; but the life he liveth, he liveth unto God. Even so reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus.

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It is not only that Jesus had to be crucified for our salvation; we must be crucified for our salvation by being crucified with Him. We must accept His death as our own death, so that the body of sin is done away and we are no longer under the dominion of sin. So we count ourselves dead unto sin and alive unto God for evermore.

The purpose of Jesus' death was to make salvation available for the whole world (I John 2:3). He "is the Savior of all men, especially of them that believe" (I Tim. 4:10). Yet His death does not accomplish the redemption of the whole world, only of repentant believers who are baptized into Him. That is why baptism is so important. That is why faith in Him is so important. That is why we must preach the gospel. That is what is lacking of the sufferings of Christ which may be "filled up on our part, for the sake of His body the church." In Colossians 1:24 Paul says, "How I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the church."

How could Paul be so bold as to imply that Jesus didn't suffer enough on the cross? Jesus did suffer enough to accomplish the atonement for our redemption; but Jesus' suffering did not carry that redemption to every man. It takes the continuing body of Jesus, the church, to do it. It takes messengers of the cross like Paul, to fill up on their part what is lacking of the sufferings of Christ to reach all men. The message of the cross of Christ is God's plan of redemption for man. But the hearer must make the response of faith so he can receive its benefits.

The sacrifice of Jesus is not effective just because he died. Rather it is effective when you accept it as your death, when you are buried into His death, and when you rise to walk in the newness of life with Christ's Spirit dwelling in you. The scripture plainly says that if the Spirit of Christ does not dwell in you, then you are none of His (Rom. 8:9, 10). It is because of this union with Christ that His death is justly seen as your death, and your life is justly seen as His life, and your life is His liability which He has fully paid on the cross.

We must accept the sentence of death in ourselves. I think God exemplified this in the Old Testament in dealing with the people of Israel, when He gave them a law and a covenant, and told them they would perish if they didn't keep them. They didn't keep His law, and He said the nation of Judah must perish. Then when he had destroyed it, as soon as the sentence was carried out, He could begin to keep His word to bring it to life by grace for the sake of the promises

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He had made. Note how Jeremiah bought a field before the nation was destroyed to show his confidence that God would raise up the nation after the sentence had been carried out (Jer. 32).

We are not in the new covenant if we have to be controlled by laws. If you have to be compelled to give 10% because it is the law of God, you aren't in the new covenant. If you have to be compelled to attend church because it is the law of God, then you are not in the new covenant. The only people that are in Christ are those who believe Him, who love Him, and who work, not by the laws of the old covenant, but in the freedom that is in Christ. They do not use their freedom as an occasion to the flesh, but by the Spirit put to death the deeds of the flesh, and live by faith working through love. Study Galatians 5 on this subject. The flesh cannot be reborn; the flesh must die! That's the point! By flesh we do not mean that the body in and of itself is evil, but we mean the self-will and fleshly mind that does things because I like it, because I want to, because I am the master of my life, because I sit on the throne, because I don't care about God. This must die! This whole attitude must die! The church has a hard time being the church when it is filled with carnal people who have the fleshly mind, who have their will and their way that must be satisfied, and who simply compromise with one another instead of surrendering unto God, unto a newness of life (Rom. 8:5-13; 6:1-11, 17, 18, 20-23).

New Life In Christ

II Corinthians 5:14-17 says, "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died. [If He died our death, our death is past.] He died for all that they should no longer live unto themselves, but unto Him who for their sakes died and rose again. Wherefore we henceforth know no man after the flesh [i.e., from the merely human point of view, because we don't live to exercise our own minds and to have our own feelings and to think our own thoughts and to make our own judgments]." We simply don't have a life of our own anymore. It has been bought with a price, it has been taken over by Jesus, it has entered into His death. Even if we have known Christ (as Paul once mistakenly knew Him) from the human point of view, yet now we know Him so no more. "Wherefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new" [all things are become new]."

Paul describes his new life in Christ: "For I through the law died

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unto the law, that I might live unto God. I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me" (Gal. 2:19, 20). That's the life we live: the life Christ gives to those who open their hearts to Him because they trust Him. They believe in God's judgment and in His grace. They accept the sentence of death upon self for sin; and they accept the gift of new life, which is Christ's life in us in place of our own.

The greatest mistake the Christian can make is to say "It's my life, and I'll live it," because that must reject our salvation. The *only* salvation there is for any sinner, is to give my life up to Jesus and to receive His death for mine. And any time anybody thinks "It's my life, and I'll live it," he has forgotten the cleansing from his old sins. He has forgotten his Savior, he has renounced his Master, and he has immediately taken all his sins upon himself afresh.

We are not saved simply by Jesus' death, but by our union with Jesus' death, by our entering into Jesus' death, by the applying of His death to us, by the reality of the fact that it is "no longer we that live but Christ that lives in us." This does not mean that our salvation depends upon our keeping a tense obligation to law constantly to keep ourselves saved. That is not the idea at all. It just means that with a complete confidence in Jesus, you simply quit running your own life and let Jesus open it up under new management.

The life that we have lived in our own bodies, we lived into an impossible state of debt and bankruptcy and guilt and degradation. But Jesus took the life that we had ruined, He closed out the old account, paying it off, and opened up our lives anew under new management. He lets us work here, and live here, and enjoy the better conditions. But He is the owner and the proprietor of your ears and your hair and your clothes and your car and your nose and your handwriting and everything. He is the proprietor. It is this union with Jesus that makes redemption effective.

I cease to live my sinful life, and I enter into covenant with God into a covenant relationship with Christ. The two lives are blended together and His Spirit fills me, and the guilt is upon Him, and I'm free. My sins are gone! Praise God, my sins are gone, deeper than the deepest sea, never to be remembered anymore because in Christ I've ceased to be. A man does not stand anymore before God in judgment by himself. He will be judged before the judgment bar of Christ according to the deeds done in the body whether they be good

or evil (II Cor. 5:10). His deeds prove the reality of his faith. But we stand in Christ.

The biggest difference between men is whether they are in Christ or not in Christ, not whether they are rich or poor, white or black, modern or ancient, in East or West, educated or uneducated, but *in Christ or not in Christ!* "In Christ there is now no condemnation," Paul says in Romans 8:1 and expands it into a whole glorious chapter of assurance. Those outside of Christ are "without God and without hope in the world" (Eph. 2:12; see Eph. 4:17-19).

That is why our union with Christ is more permanent than marriage, and more significant. When we are joined to Christ, it is the most significant thing that ever happens to us. The sinners who have faith in Jesus can be justified by Him through their faith (Rom. 4 and James 2:14-26). We become a part of Him who becomes righteousness in us, and the requirement of the law is fulfilled in us who walk after the Spirit and not after the flesh. Not that God's law becomes ineffective; it is removed as a law, the ministration of death and condemnation; but the law is really established. "Do we then make the law of none effect through faith? God forbid: nay, we establish the law" (Rom. 3:31). "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom. 8:1-3). What God could not do in the law, in that it was weak depending upon the flesh, He did through the gospel. In Jesus Christ He sent His Son and condemned sin in the flesh, that the requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk after the Spirit and not after the flesh. For the flesh is not subject to the law of God; it is at enmity with God; but ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of Christ (God) dwelleth in you (see Rom. 8:4-11).

Regeneration is essential to the Christian life. We have sometimes concentrated upon baptism to the point of neglect of the regeneration of a man. We do not realize that one cannot just join a church and be saved. We must be born anew to be saved. To emphasize the significance of this, some people have tried to make it an overwhelming emotional experience, which they seek at some point to represent as a miracle from God; and then they minimize obedience to the gospel. On the other hand, we emphasize obedience in baptism and minimize the faith and repentance, the surrender of self, the taking

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up of a new relationship with Christ and the world, through the crucifixion of self. Then from these two extremes we both neglect the combination and reality in which they should unite. Trust and surrender to Christ in our hearts must be united with obedience to His word if we actually have the new life made available through His death.

“When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of Glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss
And pour contempt on all my pride.
Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine
Demands my soul, my life, my all.”

— Isaac Watts

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WAS JESUS CRUCIFIED ON FRIDAY?

When the question, "Was Jesus crucified on Friday?" is raised, it may be hard for you to find a clear and definite statement about it in the Bible. Good Christians may think He had to be in the tomb longer than the time from Friday afternoon to Sunday morning, because of the expression "three days and three nights" in Matthew 12:40.

It doesn't matter too much on what day Jesus was crucified; but it does matter how people use the scriptures and how they trouble the church over such questions. Any view that denies that Jesus ate the Passover meal at the regular time is in direct conflict with the plain statements of fact in three inspired books of the New Testament (Matt. 26:17; Mark 14:12; Luke 22:7). Yet such a view is often taken by people who think that they are upholding the strict accuracy of Jesus' words against centuries of false tradition.

This is merely a question of historic fact, not affecting our obedience to the commands of the Lord, and not essential to our reverent appreciation of Him. It should not be made a "test of fellowship" or source of contention. But as a matter of fact it makes all the better example for a study of how to get the truth of God's Word by considering all the facts and letting the passages which are definite and clear in meaning determine the interpretations of those which are not so sure.

What Does The Bible Say?

This is a Bible study. Get your Bible and read the passages cited. Space will not permit quoting them.

All the Gospels say that Jesus was crucified and buried on the day called the *Preparation*. Read Mark 15:42; Luke 23:54; John 19:14, 31, 42; and Matthew 27:60-62. The word translated *Preparation* was used as a name for the day which we call *Friday*, and it is still the word for Friday in modern Greek.

John 19:14 says, "It was the preparation of the passover." Some have thought that this means the day on which the Passover lamb was prepared; but it can mean simply "Friday of Passover week." Comparison with all the facts will show that this is what it does mean. Beginning with the Passover sacrifice and supper, seven days of unleavened bread were observed; and the entire week was called the

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Passover (see Luke 22:1; John 2:23; 18:39). Mark 15:42 explicitly states, "It was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath." The same meaning is shown in John 19:31. The regular weekly Sabbath was Saturday.

But Which Sabbath?

The first day of unleavened bread might be called a Sabbath, because it was a day of rest according to the law (Lev. 23:7, 8), and so was the seventh, or last, day. Some suggest that the Sabbath immediately following Jesus' death was not Saturday, but the first day of unleavened bread, which could fall on any day of the week.

In the law (Lev. 23:4, 6), the seven days of unleavened bread were counted after the Passover meal, beginning Nisan 15. But all leaven was put out on the day the Passover was prepared, Nisan 14; so the day that the Lamb was killed came in time to be called the first day of unleavened bread. (See Mark 14:12 and Luke 22:7).

But if either of those days—the one just preceding the supper, or the one following it—was actually called a sabbath, still *neither of them could be the Sabbath day that followed the burial of Jesus. For Matthew 26:17-20; Mark 14:12-17; and Luke 22:7-16 all state with absolutely unmistakable clarity that Jesus was alive and eating the Passover supper in the evening following the first day of unleavened bread* when the lamb was sacrificed. If the day following the supper was the day of rest (or special Sabbath) it was still not the day after Jesus was buried, because it was the day of crucifixion.

Therefore, we see that, if there was in that week any day called a Sabbath other than Saturday, it had to be one that was past by the time Jesus was buried, and not the day following His burial. The day of preparation, then, on which He was crucified, could not be any day other than the day before the regular weekly Sabbath which we call Saturday.

One good brother has suggested that the *seventh* day of unleavened bread was the Sabbath which "drew on" as Jesus was buried. That would mean that Jesus was subjected to six or seven days of trials, mockings, and delays between the time He was arrested and the day of crucifixion. The Gospels do not show any intention of indicating that. The trials before the priests and the Sanhedrin were at night and dawn (Luke 22:66); that before Pilate was early (John 18:28); all happened in quick succession.

Moreover, no account gives any hint of more than one Sabbath between the burial of Christ and His resurrection on the first day

of the week. Just turn and read how clearly Friday, Saturday, and Sunday are recorded in Luke 23:43 to 24:1: "And that day was the preparation, and the sabbath drew on. And the women also . . . beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid. And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the sabbath day according to the commandment. Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre." The word Sabbath here is singular.

Properly Read, John Agrees

John's account agrees completely with these statements. John 13:1 does not say that the last supper was before the Passover, but that Jesus knew before the Passover meal that He must depart at this time. John 13:29 does not prove that the Passover meal was to come later. The disciples who supposed that Judas was sent to buy something for the feast may have had in mind the seven-day festival. Or if it was possible at that hour to buy provisions, that might have been for the meal now beginning. In John 13:2 the Greek does not say "supper being ended," but "supper being come."

John 18:28 does not prove that the Pharisees had not eaten the Passover meal, because they called all seven days connected with it "the Passover." Anyway, the Passover meal was eaten at night, and such defilement as they feared in Pilate's hall would end at sunset.

John 19:31 shows plainly that the preparation was the day before the Sabbath. Calling that Sabbath "a high day" does not make it other than a Saturday Sabbath. It only means that it was considered especially sacred because it came in Passover week.

Some who hold to a Thursday crucifixion insist that the Lamb of God had to be killed at the same time the Passover lamb was being killed. This would be Thursday afternoon before the Passover meal that night. Why must this be so? The antitype (Jesus) did not and could not have corresponded with the type (Passover lamb) in every respect. The time of the slaying of the Passover lamb had nothing to do with the time of Christ's death.

"Three Days and Three Nights"

Since the history states so plainly the fact that Jesus was crucified on Friday, it is necessary to take the prophetic figure of speech about the sign of Jonah (Matt. 12:40) as an inexact expression intended to agree with the statement which is made a dozen times, that Jesus arose "on the third day." (See Matt. 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; 27:63, 64;

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Luke 9:22; 18:33; 24:7, 21, 46; Acts 10:40; I Cor. 15:4; and Mark 9:31; 10:34 in the K.J.V.) "After three days" is used in Mark 8:31 (9:31 and 10:34 in A.S.V.) to mean the same as "on the third day." While those do not seem the same to us, it is evident that they did mean the same to the Jews. (See also II Chron. 10:5, 12; Esther 4:16; 5:1; Matt. 27:63, 64). "Three days and three nights" is just a fuller form for saying "after three days"; and both could mean in popular speech the same as "on the third day." Any expression means just what it is used to mean. The facts of the record show with what meaning the expression was used by Jesus. We must not put into it a meaning that will deny or disregard the facts; but the facts must control our interpretation.

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