

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

Why the Cross?

By Heath Rogers

Paul wrote that Jesus *“made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross”* (Phil. 2:7-8). We understand Jesus came to earth to die for our sins because no one else could accomplish this task. He was our only hope. However, didn’t die just any kind of death. He suffered *“the death of the cross.”*

Death by crucifixion was the most physically painful way for a person to die. Suspended from the ground, the weight of the entire body pulling against metal spikes driven through the wrists and the feet, the victim would writhe in pain as he slowly died of asphyxiation.

There was social stigma attached to crucifixion. Roman citizens were not candidates for this means of execution – only slaves and subject peoples. Death by crucifixion was a statement: “This person was not worthy of dying like a man. Neither are the rest of you. Submit to Rome or this will happen to you!”

There was also the emotional suffering that our Lord underwent on the cross. He was betrayed by one disciple, denied by another, and forsaken by the rest. He was mocked and rejected in the same city that just five days earlier had received Him as the Messiah. Imagine what it was like for Jesus to look down from the cross and watch His mother watch Him die (John 19:25-27).

Jesus wouldn’t be executed by the hangman’s noose, the firing squad, or by lethal injection. He came knowing He would be tortured to death on a cross. Why did Jesus willingly die the worst possible death man could endure? Why the cross?

1. To manifest His love for us. This world brings suffering and sorrow to everyone. There are a lot of experiences that can cause us to question God’s love for us. When we are tempted to doubt God’s love, we need look no further than the cross. *“For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us”* (Rom. 5:6-8).

How can we ever doubt God’s love for us if He was willing to give His Only Begotten Son to die for us? “I asked Jesus, ‘How much do you love me?’ ‘This much,’ He answered, and then stretched out His arms – and died.”

2. To leave us a good example. *“For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps”* (1 Pet. 2:21). Jesus went to the cross to pay the price for our sins. However, He also went to leave us a perfect example of obedience, courage, commitment, and self-control. If Jesus could endure the pain and agony of the cross, I can endure in a godly way the struggles that arise in my life.

3. To thwart the schemes of Satan. The world has always rejected God. To prove it, when they were able to get their hands on Him (when God came in the flesh), they killed Him. Jesus on the cross is the world’s opinion of God.

When Christ died on the cross the Jews got rid of Jesus, the world got rid of God, and Satan won - until the resurrection. *“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know – Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it”* (Acts 2:22-24).

Satan had played his trump card – death. However, it was not enough. Jesus rose from the dead victorious over every power Satan had. It was in dying that Jesus actually gained the victory and secured eternal life for mankind.

4. To draw all mankind to Himself. Jesus said of His death on the cross, *“And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself”* (John 12:32). Churches will use all kinds of programs and gimmicks to increase their attendance. What people need most is to know that a Savior has died for them.

Christ on the cross gives us our greatest hope. The love that brought the Son of God from His Father’s side in heaven and nailed Him to a cross is the greatest love anyone will ever know. The message of the cross is universal – transcending time and culture. Everyone needs a Savior; everyone needs assurance of love; everyone needs forgiveness and peace with God. All of this is found at the cross.

5. To demonstrate the awfulness of sin. What has happened to the concept of sin in our world today? Things aren’t called *“sins”* anymore. People aren’t called *“sinners”* anymore. We excuse sinful behavior. Sin is a laughing matter for most. However, sin is as funny as Jesus dying on the cross. I don’t hear God laughing. When we think about the brutal price that Jesus paid for our sins, we see these trespasses in their true light.

We can understand the requirement of death as a penalty for sin (Gen. 2:17; Rom. 6:23). We can understand why Jesus is the only One who could adequately pay this price. Hopefully we can appreciate why He had to die by crucifixion. ■



The Importance of One

By Kyle Campbell

A young man walking along the beach at dawn noticed an old man picking up starfish and tossing them into the sea. It was obvious he was rescuing the starfish before they were baked by the hot summer sun. *“This is a huge beach with hundreds of these starfish,”* the young man sarcastically said. *“How can your efforts make any difference?”* The old man looked at the starfish in his hand and then threw it to safety in the waves. *“It makes a big difference to this one,”* he replied.

We’re all workers in God’s kingdom. And we’re tempted to think that our contributions don’t amount to much in the grand scheme. I’m sure several in the Bible times thought the same.

However, one courageous man defeated a fearsome enemy of the Israelites, an “invincible” giant (1 Sam. 17:48-51). One uncompromising man lifted the blinds for a pagan king to acknowledge the power of God (Dan. 1:18-20). One humble woman disregarded societal shame and disbelief by bearing and raising the Son of God (Luke 2:7). One impetuous man opened the door for the Jews and Gentiles to receive the salvation of God (Acts 2:38-41; 10:44-48). One lonely man kept the faith while he was exiled for Christ (Rev. 1:9).

You are one, but you are important. You are effective. We won’t always act in epic ways, but we can fulfill the Master’s will. ■

Service Times — Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM — Wednesday: 7:00 PM

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