

Why Did Christ Have to Die On the Cross?

Sunday, March 23rd, 1989

1Peter 3:18:

For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.

I want you to open your Bible with me to the Book of First Peter Chapter 3: verse 18. My subject today is: “Why Did Jesus Christ Have To Die On A Cross?” We hear preachers preach about it and people talk about it.

Jesus Christ died on the cross. He suffered an ignominious, painful, terrible death on that cross. My question today is, “Why did Jesus Christ have to die on the cross?”

Here, in First Peter 3:18; it says, “*Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.*” That is the key. He suffered the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but quickened by the Spirit.”

Now, in introducing this message, I want us to look at some things that are clearly revealed in God’s Word. This is very clearly and positively revealed. The first of which is this: If you want to jot these down, you may do so. I’ll give them to you very slowly and clearly.

Here is the first thing that we know beyond a shadow of a doubt. This is clearly revealed in God’s Word; our God is eternal and our God is Almighty. The Scripture says, “*From everlasting to everlasting Thou art God.*”

There are two chapters in Isaiah that you need to read in reference to God’s eternity and God’s sovereignty. This is in Isaiah 45 and 46. He says, in Isaiah 45; “*I am the Lord and there is none else. There is no God beside Me. I formed the light; I create darkness. I make peace and I create evil. I the Lord do all these things.*” God is Almighty! By Him and in Him all things exist.

In Isaiah 46, He says; “*My council shall stand; I will do all My pleasure. I have spoken it; I will bring it to pass. I have purposed it; I will do it.*” It won’t help our situation any to compromise the character of God. The Scripture says, “*Let God be true and every man a liar.*” Whatever your thoughts, your opinions are concerning what God may be, let it be a lie if it compromises the character of God. It is not going to help us and it is not going to improve our situation to compromise the character of God. So, let this be established from the Scriptures.

It is like Nebuchadnezzar the King said when he came to his senses; He said, *“The most high ruleth in the armies of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth and giveth it to whomsoever He will.”* God is eternal from everlasting to everlasting and God is Almighty!

Secondly: Our God is not only eternal and Almighty, our God is Holy. God is Holy. *“Holy and Reverend is His name.”* The chief attribute of the living God is God’s Holiness. The Scripture says, *“God is in His Holy Temple. He commands His Holy angels. He dwelleth in the Holy of Holies between the Cherubims on the mercy seat.”*

When Isaiah saw the Lord, the seraphims around the throne of God cried, *“Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts”*. And the chief priest of Israel, who came into the presence of the Lord on the Day of Atonement, went with the blood sacrifice. He came in with this inscription across his forehead, *“Holiness to the Lord.”* Our God is Holy and He dwells in a light to which no man can approach. Do you see that?

Now, these are things that we know. These are things that are clearly revealed and are established in the Word of God. Our God is eternal; our God is Almighty. Secondly, our God is Holy. *“Holy and Reverend is His name.”* The Holiness of God is indescribable. The Holiness of God is incomprehensible. The Holiness of God by man is unapproachable. *“Who can stand in His Holy presence? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart. Who has never lifted up his soul to vanity and never spoken deceitfully.”* God is Holy!

Thirdly: These things we know. We are sinners. Do you have any doubt about that? If you have any doubt about that, look into the Word of God. If you have any doubt about your sinnerhood, look into your own heart. If you have any doubt about this truth, look into the character of God. When Isaiah saw the character of God and the Holiness of God, he cried; *“I am undone; I am cut off.”*

When Daniel saw the Holiness of God, he said; *“My comeliness melted into corruption.”* When Job saw the Holiness of God he said, *“I abhor myself; I repent in sackcloth and ashes.”*

We are sinners. We are sinners in Adam. *“In Adam all die. By one man, sin entered this world and death by sin. So, death passed upon all men.”*

We are not only sinners in Adam, but we are sinners by birth. David cried, *“In sin my mother conceived me. I was shapen in iniquity. I was brought forth from the womb*

speaking lies.” We are sinners by birth and we are all sinners, for *“All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.”*

God said in Psalm 14, *“He looked down from heaven to see if there were any that did understand.”* He said, *“They have all gone out of the way; they are altogether become filthy and the World is stinking. There is none good, no not one. There is none righteous, no not one. There is none that understandeth. There is none that seeketh after God.”* In fact, God said; *“Every imagination of man’s heart is only evil continually.”*

This sinfulness is a nature. It is not just a deed or action, it is a nature. It is a nature in which all our actions flow. We do what we do because we are what we are. We aren’t what we are because we do what we do. We do what we do, because we are what we are. We are sinners! In the flesh no man can please a Holy God. In the flesh dwelleth no good thing. *“Man at his best state is altogether vanity.”* Now, that is the truth. That is what the Word of God declares.

If you are still with me, let’s go to the fourth thing: Now, this is clearly revealed in the Word of God, our God is Holy, our God is eternal. Our God is Almighty and we are sinners. This nature of sin with which we are born and plagued, this nature of sin which dwells in us, the principle of evil makes it much easier to do evil than to do good. It is easier to think evil than to do good. This nature of sin is impossible to change. I care not what any man may say. It is impossible to change.

Jeremiah the prophet said; *“Can the black man change his skin? Can the leopard change his spots? Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil.”* Paul said; *“The carnal mind, (the natural mind) is enmity against God. It is not subject to the law of God and neither indeed can it be.”* In John 5:40, our Lord said; *“You will not come to me that you might have life. Let another come in his own name and him you will receive. I have come in My Father’s name and you receive Me not.”*

It is “cannot” and “will not.” The carnal mind, the principle of sin, this body and nature of sin is impossible to change. It cannot change and it will not change. *“This is the condemnation, that light is come into this world and men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil.”*

The prophet said, *“Your sins have separated you and your God.”* It is your sins that have separated you and God. That sinful nature is impossible to change. One day, the disciples asked the Lord; *“Who then can be saved?”* He said, *“With men it is impossible.”*

Fifthly: Here is the good news! Almighty God is not only Holy, just and righteous, but “*God is love.*” That is what the Scripture says. It doesn’t say that God is a God of love, it says, “*God is love.*” Just as God is Holy, just as God is righteous, God is love and God is merciful.

One day, Moses said to the Lord; “Lord, show me your glory, your chief glory, your greatest glory. Show me your glory.” Moses had seen a lot of things. He had seen the plague in Egypt. He had seen the divided sea. He had seen the manna on the ground in the morning. He had seen the smitten rock. He had seen all of these things.

He knew in his heart that he had not seen the chief glory of God. This is what he asked, “Lord; show me your chief glory.” This is found in Exodus 33:18 and 19. The Lord replied, “*I will cause My goodness to pass before thee.*” God’s goodness is His glory. He said, “*I will be merciful to whom I will be merciful. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious.*” That is His glory.

In Exodus 34:6-7, the very next chapter, He said; “*The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children’s children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.*”

What are you trying to say preacher? I am saying, God is love, God is merciful and God is gracious. You know, David said in Psalm 130; “*If Thou Lord shouldest mark iniquity, who shall stand?*” Will you or I? If God should charge, mark and hold accountable every sin, every stain and every transgression, who is going to stand or who shall stand?

David didn’t stop there; He said, “*But there is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared.*” In other words, God is merciful and God is love. God’s love, like God’s Holiness must be expressed. God’s love and mercy, like His truth and justice must be expressed; it must be revealed. God must be merciful and God will be.

God has determined, decreed and designed to have a people that will populate heaven in happiness and glory. He has determined to have a people like His Son. In the last line, He says, “*I have proclaimed the Name of the Lord God, the Lord God merciful and gracious, long suffering and abundant in goodness. The Lord God keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and sin.*” But, “*Will by no means clear the guilty.*”

But, you say; “I’m guilty.” Well, I am guilty and so is every other son of Adam. Every human being is guilty. “*All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.*” “*What the*

law saith to them who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped and all the world become guilty before God.” God by no means will clear the guilty.

If God will forgive sin and God will pardon the guilty, then this pardon and this mercy must be accomplished in a way consistent with His Holiness. That is the sixth thing we know beyond a shadow of a doubt. If God shows His love, it will be a Holy love. If God reveals mercy, it will be mercy in agreement with Holiness. If God is gracious, it will be grace that is revealed consistent with His righteousness.

It must be. This is what gave birth to the gospel. This is not complicated it is just so. This is what gave birth to the gospel. This is the good news of the gospel. This is what Moses wrote about. Our Lord said, “Moses wrote of Me.” This gospel of redemption is what Moses wrote about, this gospel of salvation according to the righteousness and Holiness of God.

This is what Abraham saw. This is what made him glad. This is what the angels sang about at Bethlehem when they said, *“We bring you glad tidings of great joy which shall be unto all people. Unto you is born, this day, in the city of David, a Saviour who is Christ the Lord.”* This is what the Bible is all about. It shows how God can be just and yet justify the ungodly. How God can be righteous and truth and yet show His mercy and love and forgiveness to sinners. Now, stay with me; in the fullness of time, in God’s own time, the fullness of God’s grand design was purposed from all eternity. God doesn’t change: He is the same yesterday, today and forever. What God does today He has always done. What God decrees today He has always decreed. He does not change. He never learns anything or forgets anything.

Almighty God, in the fullness of time, when it pleased God, He sent His Son Jesus Christ, His eternal Son, into the world, born of a virgin. He said, *“I’ll give you a sign.”* This is mentioned in Isaiah 7:14, *“The Lord Himself will give you a sign; a virgin shall be with child and she shall bring forth a Son and will call His name Immanuel,”* (God with us).

It says in Isaiah 9:6, *“Unto us a Child is born, a Son is given.”* A child is born but that Son, the eternal, only begotten, well-beloved Son of God who inhabited that body of the virgin, is the eternal Son given. His name shall be called Wonderful. The government shall be upon His shoulders. His name shall be Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

Paul said, *“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.”*

John said, *“He was made flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory.”*

He perfectly obeyed God’s law. He was tempted in all points as we are, yet, never did He sin. This is the thing that we are talking about; He died on a cruel cross and it wasn’t an accident. The Scripture says, *“It pleased God to bruise Him.”* It wasn’t an accident. *“It pleased God to bruise Him. He was smitten of God and afflicted.”*

When Peter talked about His death on the cross in his sermon during the great Pentecost, he said, *“You with wicked hands crucified the Lord of glory. You did what God determined before to be done.”* God is the first cause of all things. He was smitten of God. He said, *“No man takes My life from Me; I lay it down. I have the power to lay it down or take it up.”* He died for our sins according to the Scriptures.

God not only permitted His death, He decreed it. God not only permitted men to crucify His Son, but He was smitten of God and afflicted. He carried out the determinate council and foreknowledge of God and He died. He was taken down from that cross and buried in a tomb. He arose and ascended to glory where He is seated at the right hand of God.

That is the message of the gospel. *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. He that believeth on the Son, hath life. He that believeth not the Son of God shall never see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him. This is the record that God hath given us eternal life and this life is in His Son. He that hath not the Son of God shall never see life. There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.”*

So, this is a fact and this is true and is according to the Word of God. Christ the Lord, Christ the Son of God came to this earth and became a man.

Now, the question rises; *“Why was it necessary for Him to become a man? Why was it necessary for Him to live a perfect life on this earth? Why was it necessary for Him to die on a cross? Why is Jesus Christ and His death on that cross the only way for sinners to come to God?”*

There is no question that is what the Word of God says; *“I am the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh to the Father but by Me.”* *“There is none other name under heaven given among men.”* *“Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid.”* *“I am the door, by me, if any man enter in.”* Why is all of this necessary? Well, I will answer it in a two-fold manner.

The answer is set forth clearly in the Word of God. The Word of God says this in Isaiah 45, God declares, *“Look unto Me and be ye saved.”* We are all familiar with that Scripture. Before He said that, He declared; *“I am a just God and a Saviour.”* I am both. I am just and a Saviour. I am Holy and I am merciful. I am righteous and I am love. How can He be both?

He says in Romans Chapter 3, He set forth Christ Jesus to be a propitiation, a mercy seat, a sin offering and a covering for sin, that God may be just and the justifier of those who believe in Christ. In our text, *“He suffered the just for the unjust that He might bring us to God.”* In Second Corinthians 5:21 it says this, *“Christ who knew no sin was made sin for us in order that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”* Galatians 3:13 says, *“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.”*

In other words, all of these verses of Scripture are saying this; in order for God to be just, Holy and righteous and yet show His mercy, grace and love, our debt had to be paid. His law had to be honored. His justice had to be satisfied. A sinner, a man, had to die. That law being honored and satisfied and that man dying honored the law and satisfied the justice of God.

In other words, learn two words, substitution, God took our place. Learn satisfaction. He honored the law and satisfied God’s justice. Here is an illustration, the second way that I want to deal with this:

Most people think about Daniel and the lion’s den and that is all they know about it. There was a great King named Darius. He had three presidents over his kingdom of which Daniel was one. There were also 120 princes. These other men were jealous of Daniel because he was the favorite of the king.

They came to the king one day and came up with this plan. They said, *“Let’s go to the king and let’s make this proposal that if any man prayed to any God or ask a petition of any man other than the king for 30 days, we’ll throw him in the lion’s den.”*

So, they went to the king and said, *“We want to honor you O king.”* They said, *“Here is what we want you to do. We want you to sign a decree, or a law, that if any man or woman prays to any God or asks a petition of any man accept you for 30 days, we’ll throw him in the lion’s den.”* The king said, *“That’s a good petition and that is a good way to honor me.”* So, he signed the law that the Medes and Persians could not change.

They knew that Daniel would pray. They went down to his house and he was praying. They brought him before the king and said, *“O king, Daniel has already violated your*

decree; it cannot be changed. It is the law and it cannot be changed. You have to throw him in the lion's den."

Well, the king was angry with himself. He was upset with himself and walked the floor all night. He couldn't figure out a way to deliver Daniel. So, he came to him and said, "Daniel, that is the law; I signed it. It cannot be changed and you will have to be thrown in the lion's den. I hope your God will deliver you."

So, he took Daniel and threw him into the lion's den. God did deliver him. Here is the point that I am making. King Darius' law could not be changed. It was an unalterable, unchangeable law signed by the king. When a man violated it he had to suffer the just punishment. Let me tell you this, the laws of the God of heaven (because of His Holiness, justice and righteousness) cannot be changed. They cannot be altered; they are eternal. *"The soul that sinneth, it will die. The wages of sin is death."*

So, you and I have sinned. We have broken God's law and we are guilty. We have to die. The law says that we are guilty and that the curse of the law is upon us. Also, the judgment of God is upon us.

What are we going to do? Are we to be cast into hell or the lion's den of eternity? Oh no, Christ came down here. He was the innocent for the guilty, the just for the unjust. Our Lord Jesus Christ became a man and He did what we couldn't do. He honored God's law. He obeyed God's law. He kept God's law. He did what we couldn't do.

The law said, "We must die." He went to the cross and died. He paid the debt. He satisfied God's justice and satisfied God's law. He didn't die as a reformer. He didn't die as a martyr. He didn't die as an example. He died as a Substitute. Now, God can set us free!

If King Darius had found a substitute, he could have set Daniel free. No substitute was found. The guilty had to die. The reason Christ could die for us was, *"He was numbered with the transgressors."*

He actually bore our guilt and bore our sins and paid for them. Now, God can forgive us, pardon us and set us free because Christ paid the debt, honored justice and satisfied the law. God can be just and justify you. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

That is why He had to die on the cross in order that God may be just and justify you and me.