

OUR SAVIOR: CRUCIFIED

John 19:23-30, 38-42

In the play *Steel Magnolias* we see the story of a mother who donated a kidney to her daughter who had lost the use of her kidneys. The story ends on a note of sadness in that the daughter eventually died anyway. What Jesus did for us on the Cross goes beyond such sacrifice. Back in the 1950s, during the Korean War, there was a story of Kim, a little Korean boy who lived in an orphanage. One of the other children there was wounded and had lost a lot of blood and a blood transfusion was needed. It was found that Kim had the right blood type and he agreed to give blood to save the life of his little friend. As the blood was being transferred from Kim to the other child, the nurse noticed tears on the boy's face. She was concerned that the needle was hurting him and asked if that were the case. Kim told her that he was not hurting, so she asked what was the matter. He just looked up at her and asked, "When am I going to die?" He thought that he would be giving all his blood to save his friend's life. This is the kind of love that God has for us and yet what Jesus did for us on the Cross goes beyond such sacrifice.

While the mother who donates a kidney and the boy who gives his blood are applauded for their unselfishness, Jesus was jeered, mocked and scorned. He was betrayed, brutally beaten and abused then nailed to a cross that was raised up for all to see. He was crucified between two thieves and thought to be as they were. He was challenged to come down from the cross and save Himself and the irony of it all was that He could have if He had not loved us so much.

The means of death Jesus experienced has significance in what it communicates to us. The Old Testament tells us "cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree." The curse of the law (the soul that sins, it shall die) passed upon Jesus so that we are delivered from it. He was crucified between two criminals and thus was fulfilled the saying "He was reckoned among the transgressors." The number of prophecies fulfilled during the time of our Lord's passion is truly amazing. The most graphic prophecy is the Psalm of the Cross recorded in Psalm 22.

The Jews had caused Pilate much grief with this matter of what to do with Jesus. Pilate was determined to get even by putting a sign on the cross that read "King of the Jews." This situation is somewhat ironic in that Pilate stated the truth though he did not believe it. The sign above Jesus was a not-so-subtle warning to the rest of the Jews of what might happen to them if they got out of line.

Examine the Scripture's Fulfillment – 19:23-24

²³ Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His outer garments and made four parts, a part to every soldier and *also* the tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece. ²⁴ So they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, *to decide* whose it shall be"; *this was* to fulfill the Scripture: "THEY DIVIDED MY OUTER GARMENTS AMONG THEM, AND FOR MY CLOTHING THEY CAST LOTS." John 19:23-24 (NASB95)

The prophecies of the Old Testament were fulfilled in even the seemingly insignificant acts of the Roman soldiers. A thousand years earlier, David had written about the events of the cross and in Psalm 22:18 had recorded exactly what happened when Christ was on the cross.

This is only one of many things that were foreshadowed in the Old Testament that were fulfilled that day. The fact that Jesus had carried the wooden cross beam would point us back to Isaac and Abraham in that Isaac carried the wood for the fire upon which Abraham would offer his promised son. The fact that Simon of Cyrene was drafted to help carry the load, pointed forward to the fact that the Gentiles would be called upon to carry on the work of taking the message of salvation to the world. The crucifixion took place outside the city walls which was in agreement with the way some of the ritual sacrifices were handled. Even the appearance of the

ground upon which the cross was placed (looked like a skull) can be linked to the prophecy in Genesis 3 which predicted that the “seed of the woman” would crush the head (skull) of the serpent.

Starting in Isaiah 52:13 and continuing through all of chapter 53 we can find many statements that are obviously references to Christ and the events of His death and resurrection and the implications and impact on the world. A complete study of these correlations would show that even the most cynical skeptic would be hard pressed to argue that all these are just coincidences. A list of what Isaiah saw is amazing: He will act wisely, He will be raised, lifted up and highly exalted; many were appalled at His appearance – so disfigured by the beatings; He will provide cleansing for the nations; leaders will come to realize what He had accomplished; He was not special in His outward appearance – that would attract people; He was despised and rejected by mankind; He was not respected (esteemed) by those in power; He endured suffering and sorrow; in taking on our sin, many thought He was being punished by God; His body was pierced, He was bruised, and whipped; our iniquity was piled upon Him; He was compliant in His death as a sheep being slaughtered; His grave was with the wicked (nearby the place where criminals were executed) and with the rich (the tomb was owned by a wealthy person); He lived a sinless life (no violence, no deceit); He was an offering for sin; what happened was according to God’s plan; and God was pleased with His offering (as evidenced by the resurrection).

Appreciate the Savior’s Tender Care – 19:25-27

²⁵ Therefore the soldiers did these things. But standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother, and His mother’s sister, Mary the *wife* of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶ When Jesus then saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, “Woman, behold, your son!” ²⁷ Then He said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother!” From that hour the disciple took her into his own *household*. John 19:25-27 (NASB95)

Little did Mary realize 34 years earlier that it would come to this when the angel announced to her she was going to have a son who would be the savior of the world. There were times when she sought Jesus to get Him to come back home because she did not understand what He was doing. However, at the last, she was there, probably confused and hurting because of what was happening to Jesus.

Jesus had promised His disciples He would send another Comforter after He was gone; however, there were other issues that needed to be addressed beyond spiritual concerns. Having someone He could count on to provide for the physical well being of His mother was not to be overlooked.

It is difficult to imagine what it would be like to have to see a family member or friend undergoing the suffering that Jesus was experiencing. Those images would be burned into their memory and I would guess would produce something similar to post traumatic stress disorder. Five people are mentioned as being in close proximity to the cross. In addition to John (who was likely in his early twenties), there were three women named Mary and one named Salome who was the sister of Jesus’ mother and the mother of John. The second Mary was identified with a person named Clopas. It is not certain if she was the wife, mother, or daughter of Clopas. Most translations assume that she was the wife of Clopas. It is uncertain who Clopas was. Some have speculated that he was the brother of Joseph. The third Mary was the person whom Jesus had delivered from being possessed by seven demons. Four of the five people definitely had very close family ties (mother, two aunts and a nephew), while the fifth had experienced a dramatic life-changing experience from her association with Jesus. It is not surprising to find these five feeling compelled and being drawn to where Jesus was in spite of the trauma it produced.

Affirm the Savior's Finished Work – 19:28-30

²⁸ After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the Scripture, said, "I am thirsty." ²⁹ A jar full of sour wine was standing there; so they put a sponge full of the sour wine upon a *branch of hyssop* and brought it up to His mouth. ³⁰ Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit. John 19:28-30 (NASB95)

As previously mentioned, many things that happened at the crucifixion were foretold in the Old Testament scriptures. He was beaten and Isaiah said that by His stripes we are healed. He was crucified between two thieves and we are told that He was counted among the transgressors. His clothes were divided by the soldiers and David prophesied that they would cast lots for his vesture. Even the giving of vinegar for His thirst was foretold (Ps 69:20-21).

Jesus knew these scriptures and knew what they meant. He knew that what was happening was the fulfillment of God's promises. He also knew that what He was doing was the only way to provide salvation for fallen mankind and His love compelled Him to stay on the cross and to take the abuse and scorn that were heaped upon Him. The hours dragged by until about mid-afternoon and then Jesus died.

Just before He died, He declared "victory" in saying "It is finished." It was not that He was saying that the ordeal was just all over with, but that what He came to do was accomplished. He had paid the price to redeem us from slavery to sin, He had defeated Satan and broken his power so that we might sin no more, He was the fulfillment of the sacrificial system as the "spotless Lamb of God." He became the scapegoat in that God laid on Him the iniquity of us all. His shed blood became our atonement as it covers the sins that we have committed. In His death on the Cross we died with Him to sin and to self and are thus made free to have "new life."

The Greek word that is translated as "it is finished" is *tetelestia* and was the word written at the bottom of an invoice or a loan contract when the debt had been paid. In our current usage we would write or say "paid in full."

Show Devotion to the Savior – 19:38-42

³⁸ After these things Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but a secret *one* for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate granted permission. So he came and took away His body. ³⁹ Nicodemus, who had first come to Him by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds *weight*. ⁴⁰ So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen wrappings with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. ⁴¹ Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. ⁴² Therefore because of the Jewish day of preparation, since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there. John 19:38-42 (NASB95)

God provides for His own. The close disciples of Jesus and His family did not have wealth; however, God had prepared the heart of one who did have money to be there when it was needed. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus had witnessed the mock trial of Jesus and had likely felt helpless to do anything about the events that were taking place. We know that Nicodemus had met and talked with Jesus and he was convinced that Jesus was a Godly man. After Jesus died, they did what they could to help. Joseph used his influence to get permission to take the body of Jesus and Nicodemus provided the linen burial clothes and the spices for preparing the body. They placed the body in a new tomb near the place of the crucifixion. Things were likely done in much haste because the day was drawing close to the end and then it would be the Sabbath.

It would seem that it was all over with. It might appear that Jesus failed in His work. It seemed that the cross interrupted a great plan to change the world. We might reach that conclusion if we were to not remember that everything that had happen in Jesus' life up to this point was living fulfillment of the promises of God and those things that were prophesied about

the Messiah. Jesus knew these promises and knew how they applied to Him and He could look past the suffering and death on the cross to the demonstration of His victory over death and hell and the defeat of Satan. This was the hope that was before Him and our participation in this victory with Jesus is also our hope.

Summary

Paul said the cross was a stumbling block to the Jews, foolishness to the Greeks, but it represents the power of God unto salvation for those who are saved. How does what Jesus did on the cross cause us to be saved? We could say that Jesus paid the penalty for sin and we are saved from having to pay that penalty. But there is more to it than this. If we put the teachings of Jesus together with the passion of Jesus, then we can learn something of salvation beyond the obvious escape from the penalty of sin.

Jesus taught “If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.” We have come to associate the idea of “bearing our cross” as coping with the daily problems of living. However, we don’t typically see our cross as having the same effect as the cross of Christ. His cross killed him. We just sort of “cope with” our cross. This kind of thinking is what is embodied in the concept of “cheap grace.” We cannot deal with the issue of the cross we have to bear apart from the cross of Christ. We have to face up to the fact that God’s invitation to “come to Jesus” is an invitation to “come and die.” All the emphasis we typically hear is that we are to come to Jesus so we can live. This is true, but we have to die before we can live. That is, we must die to self and the “old nature” before we can have the “new life” in Christ. On the surface, we think it would be great if we could be born again from above of the Spirit of God without having to die to self! I don’t think so! This condition would have been the situation of Adam and Eve if they had remained in the Garden of Eden and had eaten of the fruit of the tree of life after they had sinned and broken fellowship with God. Man living forever in his fallen nature is the worst kind of cruelty.

Some have attempted to sum up the salvation experience as follows: “If we are born once, then we will die twice. If we are born twice, then we will die once.” The meaning is obvious to most Christian. If the only birth we experience is physical birth, then we will die physically and then experience spiritual death in eternity. However, if we have also experienced a spiritual birth from above, then we will still die physically but will enjoy eternal life with God. What this saying ignores is the “death to self” that must take place before the new birth can happen. So regardless of the situation, we will die twice, however the sequence of how these occur is most important.

The thing Jesus did for us secured eternal salvation for all who have faith in the work He did. If I have faith in what He did as the means of salvation, then I will follow His example and submit myself to the “daily crosses” that assist me in putting the carnal or fleshly nature to death. Many of these crosses (perhaps all of them) are like the cross Jesus had to bear. They are usually unfair, they might even be illegal, and they are unlikely. The unlikely nature of the crosses we are to bear is that we will usually have the power to extract ourselves from the situation. When we are attacked or abused or ridiculed, then we can respond with similar attacks. Jesus could have called ten thousand angels, but He didn’t. How would we have handled the cross of Calvary? More importantly, how do we handle the unfair situations in which we find ourselves today?