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DYING TO SAVE

In the play "Steel Magnolias" we see the story of a mother who donated a kidney to her daughter who has 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 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 ask 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 friends 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 at, mocked and scorned. He was brutally beaten and abuse then nailed to a cross that was raised up for all to see. He was crucified between two thieves and thought 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.

JOHN 19:28-30 So 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 believed 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 was 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 it 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 broke 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".

JOHN 19:31-37 This was a special time for the Jews. The Sabbath of the Passover time would be a time when the Jews did not want any hideous sights around Jerusalem to spoil the special holiday spirit. They wanted the bodies out of sight before the Sabbath day began and so they used their influence to get it done. After all, appearance was more important than fact to these that were so shallow that they could not recognize what they had done. The men that were being crucified were not being very cooperative, they were taking too long to die. To speed up the process, the Roman would break the legs so that the person could not support his weight and this would cause an early death because of restricted breathing. We are talking about brutality to human beings that most of us have trouble even imagining. It takes a lot of force to break a man's leg. When they came to Jesus to break His legs, they found that He had already died and so they did not break His legs. But just for good measure they did thrust a spear into His side and it apparently punctured the sac the surrounds the heart. That would explain the "water and the blood". Even after His death, we can see that God was

still in control. Events that were unfolding were in accordance with the inspired scriptures. It was prophesied that "no bone would be broken" (Ex 12:46, Num 9:12, Ps 34:20) and that He would be pierced (Zech 12:10).

JOHN 19:38-42 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 Arimathaea 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.