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*"Preaching The Same Truth We Preached Before Kentucky Was A State"*

### CALVARY

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*"And when they were come to a place called Calvary, there they crucified Him"—Luke 23:33.*

**C**ALVARY is the anglicized Latin for the Greek word *Kranion*, and means a skull. Golgotha is the Hebrew equivalent, and also means "a skull." Matthew, Mark and John call the place Golgotha, while Luke calls it Calvary.

CALVARY as the place where Christ Jesus was crucified cannot be certainly identified. The traditional site of the crucifixion is the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which is inside the wall of the city of Jerusalem; however, according to Scripture, Jesus was crucified outside the city. John says the place was "nigh to the city," thus outside the city. "For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate" (Heb. 13:11, 12). Prevailing archeological opinion is that the wall today is where it was in Jesus' day.

AT CALVARY we see God at His best and man at his worst. There we see the love of God and the hatred of man. There we see the *Good* made sin, that the bad might be made righteous. There we see Divine pity and human cruelty. There we see Divine suffering and human derision. There we see benighted sinners mocking the benignant Saviour. There we see Divine wisdom and human insanity. As a human deed the crucifixion of the sinless Son of God was the foulest crime ever committed; as a Divine Act it was the most gracious and benevolent thing God ever did, when He lay the iniquity of us all on His dear Son. Viewed as a human deed of unspeakable wickedness, there is no hope of salvation in the cross; viewed as the act of God in making His Son to be sin for us, there is hope for the chief of sinners. Hallelujah for the cross!

#### I. WHY CHRIST SUFFERED

THE DEATH OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS WAS THE FULFILMENT OF COVENANT OBLIGATIONS. At Calvary Christ was doing what

He had eternally covenanted to do. Several Scriptures suggest the thought that back in eternity, there was a council of the Godhead in which was discussed the destiny of man yet to be created in the image of God and allowed to sin and fall into ruin. In this discussion love prevailed without dishonour to Divine holiness and justice. In this council the Father took the place of Lawgiver in order to uphold the claims of justice; the Son took the place of Redeemer in order to satisfy the claims of justice; and the Holy Spirit took the place of Promoter in order to guarantee success to the Divine plan of human redemption. To state the matter in a different fashion: The Father *prescribed* the remedy for human guilt; the Son *provided* the remedy; and the Holy Spirit *applies* the remedy to the human soul in His work of regeneration.

Wherefore, we read that Jesus was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8). We also read that He was the surety of the better covenant (Heb. 7:22). As the Surety for His people He was under sacred obligation to answer for them and receive at the hand of Divine justice all that sinners deserve. And so we find the risen Christ, on the resurrection morning, saying to the two bewildered disciples as they walked to Emmaus: "O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory?" (Luke 24:25, 26). The only possible ground of obligation on the part of Christ to die for sinners was that He had agreed to be their Surety. He was under no obligation to agree to suretyship, but when He had given His promise, He was under sacred obligation to perform His covenant promise. Having promised to perform the work of human redemption, He was commissioned by the Father to perform this mighty task. Speaking of His approaching death, Christ said, "This commandment have I received of my Father" (John 10:18c). Hear Him as He speaks in prophecy: "I delight to

do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart" (Psa. 40:8). This prophecy became history at Calvary. And in doing God's will He was "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:8).

The death of Christ was an accomplishment. On the one hand it was the tragedy of tragedies; on the other hand it was the triumph of all triumphs.

While man was sinning, Christ was saving. On the Mount of Transfiguration, "His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as light." Moses and Elijah came and talked to Him about His decease (exodus) which He should accomplish at Jerusalem (Luke 9:31). The death of Christ was His own voluntary act. "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again." (John 10:18). Power to die! How amazing! The greatest of all miracles! Jesus had both the authority and ability to die and rise again. Hallelujah, what a Saviour! How gloriously safe are all who trust Him! Such a truth should rout all our doubts; yea, make one ashamed that he ever doubted either the willingness or ability of Jesus Christ to save.

The death of Christ was the completion of His earthly mission. In His high priestly prayer, Jesus acknowledges that all authority had been given Him of His Father over all flesh, in order to give eternal life to as many as had been given Him (John 17:2). He also says, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (John 17:4). And while on the cross in the next to His last utterance, He said, "It is finished" (John 19:30). On the cross Christ was delivered for our offences, and on the third day was raised for our justification.

The death of Christ was in fulfilment of the Scriptures. It was neither accidental nor incidental. In his sermon at Antioch in Pisidia, Paul said, "For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew Him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every Sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning Him" (Acts 13:27). Peter at Pentecost said that the death of Christ was according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, and that with wicked hands they crucified Him (Acts 2:23). A little later Peter and John, released from court, reported to their own company the ill treatment they had received because they had healed the lame man in the name of Jesus, and how they had been charged not to speak any more in His name. Whereupon, the brethren lifted up their voices in prayer to God, saying, "For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, For to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done" (Acts 4:27).

This raises a difficult question for some. How could men be charged with wickedness in doing what God had determined to be done? Were these men mere automatons mechanically and forcibly performing the will of God? By no means. They were acting as free mortal agents, doing just what they wanted to do. There was no compulsion — no external force compelling them to slay Jesus. They were giving outward expression to an inward feeling. God was not causing them to sin; He was

only controlling them in their sinning. He did not put evil in their hearts; the evil was already there.

However, God did not allow their evil hearts to operate in a way to break the Scriptures or thwart His redemptive plan. God is never the causitive agent in sin, but He is always the controlling agent; otherwise, there would be no comfort in Romans 8:28. God puts no evil in the human heart, but He does not allow it to dethrone Him. That men sin is from and of themselves, but in sinning they do one thing rather than another is of God who divides the darkness as He pleases. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee; the remainder of wrath shalt Thou restrain" (Psa. 76:10).

Both Divine wisdom and human ignorance met at the cross. Paul says that if the rulers of this world had known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory (1 Cor. 2:8). And Peter says that it was through ignorance they had killed the Christ (Acts 3:17). And Jesus Himself prayed, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." Let not the reader draw the wrong conclusion from this prayer. Jesus was not absolving them on the ground of ignorance. If no blame was attached to what they did, there would have been no need of forgiveness. It is in ignorance that people today reject Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, thus crucifying the Son of God afresh; and yet they are to blame for their rejection. See Rom. 10:3 and Eph. 4:18. The only ground of forgiveness is the redemptive death of Christ, and the only way of forgiveness is to trust Him.

Not saved are we by trying,  
From self can come no aid;  
'Tis on the blood relying,  
Once for our ransom paid.  
'Tis looking unto Jesus,  
The holy one and just;  
'Tis His great work that saves us —  
It is not try, but trust.

## II. WHAT CHRIST SUFFERED

THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST HAVE BEEN DEPICTED IN DRAMA, IN SERMON, AND IN SONG. Christ suffered in body and in soul. He suffered at the hands of men, Satan, and God. His sufferings are indescribable; there is no line that can fathom the depths of the sufferings of the Son of God. He suffered while He lived; the cross was but the climax of His sufferings.

When the fulness of time had come — when the hour had arrived for His coming to this earth — the Lord of glory laid aside His heavenly garments and became clothed in the likeness of sinful flesh. The pearly gates swung open and "out of the ivory palaces into the world of woe," He came. One dark night, in a humble village, in a dirty ox-stall, with no tender nurse, no good physician, no kind neighbours to greet Him, He came. Born of a virgin, amid stamping steers, and crunching camels. Born in poverty, He lived in poverty. No place for His tired head while He lived; He was buried in a borrowed tomb. Why such poverty? He who was rich, for our sakes became poor that we through His poverty might be rich. What does it all mean? The Son of God was on the way to market to redeem lost souls.

When nearing the end of the dark rough road, with the time of Calvary approaching, He went

into the garden to pray. While disciples dozed, His soul was exceeding sorrowful unto death. While they took their rest, He anticipated the sufferings of the cross, and sweat as it were great drops of blood. Why all this? He was on the way to market to redeem lost sinners.

He was betrayed by Judas, denied by Peter, forsaken by disciples, arrested by a wild mob, dragged before unjust judges, accused by false witnesses, crowned with thorns, and mocked by soldiers who hailed Him as king.

He was reviled, spit upon, slapped in the face, beat on the back until His blood puddled and congealed on the stone pavement. "And as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth" (Isa. 53:6).

Bruce Barton, some years ago, when writing about Jesus, said that the Bible idea of Jesus as a lamb was always abhorrent to him. Samson, David, and Daniel were strong men while Jesus was a lamb. Barton did not seem to know that Jesus is called the lamb because He was to be a sacrifice for sin, and not because He was a weakling. He is also called a lion. He came the first time to be the passover lamb sacrificing for us. He will come the second time as a lion to judge.

Out of Jerusalem He was led bearing a heavy piece of timber in the form of a cross. When He fainted Simon, a Cyrenian, was seized and compelled to carry the cross. When the procession reached the place of a skull, they nailed Jesus to that piece of wood.

Christ suffered the kind of death that denoted a curse. Paul said, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Gal. 3:13). Crucifixion was Rome's punishment for slaves and abject criminals. It was the most agonizing and ignominious death a cruel age could devise. Nails were driven through the hands and feet, and the victim was left hanging there in agony, starvation, awful thirst, and excruciating convulsions of pain.

With swelling wounds, dripping blood, throbbing head, parched lips, galloping pulse, stretching tendons, and terrible thirst, the sinless Son of God hangs on the cross until the curtain of darkness is drawn, and He enters that indescribable period of suffering as God lays on Him the iniquity of us all — until God, the just Judge of all the earth collects from Him our sin-debt — until He cries out in awful agony, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" What does it all mean? Christ had arrived at sin's slave market and was now paying the price of our redemption.

When Edison died, President Hoover, as a tribute to the great wizard of light, had the lights of the nation turned off for two minutes. And when Jesus Christ, the Creator of light, died on the cross, God turned the lights of the world off for three hours, not as a tribute, but as a testimony against Him who was in the sinner's place.

The price was paid in full. Justice cried, "It is enough," and Jesus cried, "It is finished." Nothing left for the poor sinner to pay. You can't add anything to a finished work.

Some call this the gospel of gore and the religion of the butcher shop. But when they have had their say, it remains forever true, that without shedding of blood is no remission.

From the cross the Saviour uttered seven distinct sayings. The first three, spoken between the third and sixth hour, concerned others; the last four, spoken in quick succession at the ninth hour, concerned Himself. Following the cry of anguish, He cried, "I thirst." This was not a cry for water, but that the Scripture might be fulfilled (Psa. 69:21 and John 19:28). What reverence for the word of God! All that was written of Him must be fulfilled.

"I thirst." This must mean more than physical thirst. Christ was now suffering what His soul had anticipated in Gethsemane, and what He prayed to be delivered from, if possible. He was now suffering the second death for His people — suffering what they would have suffered eternally — suffering separation from God — suffering what had been predicted by Jeremiah: "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow, . . . wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of His fierce anger" (Lam. 1:12, 13).

### III. FOR WHOM CHRIST SUFFERED

Using the language of Scripture, Christ "suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18). "Christ died for the ungodly." ". . . While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Christ died for sinners without respect to race, color, or class. The Gospel is to be preached to men as sinners with the assurance that any sinner who comes to Christ will be saved. Did not Jesus say, ". . . him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37b). No sinner has to discover that he is an elect sinner before coming to Christ. And those who have come to Him for salvation may be assured they are of the elect. It is not here denied that there are Scriptural limitations in connection with the death of Christ, but these limitations have to do with the design and not with the sufficiency of His death. We place no limits to the value of His precious blood. No sinner need fear that He did not purchase enough salvation to go around for all who will trust Him.

In the character of Shepherd Christ died for His sheep. "The good shepherd giveth His life for the sheep." — "I lay down my life for the sheep." But no sinner has to know that he is a sheep before trusting Christ; it is the other way round: he must trust Christ before he can know that he is one of Christ's sheep. The gospel is a Divine proclamation of good news to sinners, rather than a doctrinal statement as to the extent of the atonement. "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17).

"And while the lamp holds out to burn  
The vilest sinner may return."

