**BIBLE TALK Radio Broadcast**

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**The Crucifixion of Christ**

The story of the cross was the theme of the apostles’ preaching. Paul said to the church in Corinth, *“For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”* (1 Cor. 2:2). Paul was not out peddling the wisdom of men to impress the world around him, but he was out trying to save souls from their sins by preaching the cross of Christ. Preaching the cross of Christ was the only way man could know how to be saved. The crucifixion of Christ is an essential part of the gospel by which we are saved. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, *“Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you -- unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.”* Notice, Paul gives the reason why Christ died. He died for our sins. He died so that God can be just to forgive us of our sins. When Jesus began His public ministry, John the Baptist saw Jesus coming toward him, and John said, *“Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”* (John 1:29) Under the Law of Moses, lambs were offered as sacrifices for sins. These lambs were just types of the true sacrifice, Jesus Christ. Hebrews 9:26 says that Jesus *“has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.”* This is what Jesus accomplished when He died on the cross. He was offering Himself as a sacrifice for our sins.

Have you ever contemplated what Jesus went through in going to the cross? That is what I want to talk about today. I want to talk about the crucifixion of Christ. I want to talk about what Jesus had to go through for our salvation.

First, let us talk about what Jesus went through just prior to being nailed to the cross. Jesus knew He was going to die on the cross. Several times he spoke to His disciples of His impending death (Matt. 16:21; 17:22-23; 20:17-19; 26:2). Can you imagine the burden of this foreknowledge? This burden weighed heavily upon Him as He came to the garden of Gethsemane with His disciples to pray the night before He was crucified. It says in Matthew 26:37-39, *“And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed. Then He said to them, ‘My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me.’ He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, ‘O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.’”* Jesus was experiencing extreme mental anguish, such emotional pain that it could even bring on physical death. That’s what it means when He said, *“My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death.”* Luke’s account says, *“And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.”* (Luke 22:44) Jesus was about to bear the sins of the world. Paul says in 2 Cor. 5:21 that God made Jesus *“who knew no sin to be sin for us.”* Peter said that Jesus *“bore our sins in His own body on the tree.”* (1 Peter 2:24) I don’t think we can fully comprehend what it meant for the sinless Son of God to bear the sins of man. It brought great sorrow and pain, such pain that he pleaded with the Father that if it was possible to let this cup of suffering pass. But He said, “not as I will, but as You will.”

Immediately after Jesus prayed at Gethsemane an armed mob came to arrest Jesus. Jesus had to endure Judas’ betrayal, His disciples’ abandonment, and Peter’s denial. Those who were His closest companions and faithful followers during His public ministry, now forsook Him and fled, which no doubt, added to His sorrow.

He was brought before Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled. He was falsely accused, unjustly tried by enemies who sought to put Him to death. They concluded that he was guilty of blasphemy and said “He is deserving of death.” Some began to spit in His face and beat Him. *“Others struck Him with the palms of their hands, saying, ‘Prophesy to us, Christ! Who is the one who struck You?’”* (Matt. 26:67-68)

Condemned to death by the Jews, Jesus was taken to Pilate, the Roman governor, the next morning. The Jews accuse Him before Pilate. But Pilate finds no fault in Him. Pilate sends Jesus to Herod where Herod and his soldiers *“treated Him with contempt and mocked Him, arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him back to Pilate.”* (Luke 23:11) Neither Pilate nor Herod found any fault in Jesus worthy of death. Pilate wanted to release Him. This was during the time of the Passover, and the governor was accustomed to releasing to the multitude one prisoner whom they wished during this time. Pilate offered to release either Jesus, or a notable rebel, a robber and murderer by the name of Barabbas. The people requested Barabbas to be released and Jesus to be crucified.

Pilate seeking to appease the murderous mob scourged Jesus and then sought to release Him again. Roman scourging was an extreme and severe punishment. We do not know exactly how Jesus was scourged but I have read that in scourging one or two soldiers would whip or flog the prisoner. The short whip usually used consisted of leather thongs on which were tied small iron balls or sharp pieces of bone. The force of the iron balls would leave deep bruises and the leather and bones would tear into the skin and muscles leaving bloody ribbons or strips of flesh and exposed muscle. Blood loss could leave victims in shock and death could occur under a scourging. Jesus was scourged. We are reminded of what Isaiah, the prophet said over 700 years before Jesus was born, *“But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was* *bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His* *stripes we are healed.”* (Isa. 53:5)

After this the soldiers mocked Him. Mark records, *“And they clothed Him with purple; and they twisted a crown of thorns, put it on His head, and began to salute Him, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’ Then they struck Him on the head with a reed and spat on Him; and bowing the knee, they worshiped Him.”* (Mark. 15:17-19) Pilate again went out and said to the Jews, *“‘Behold, I am bringing Him out to you, that you may know that I find no fault in Him.’ Then Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate said to them, ‘Behold the Man!’”*

Pilate is evidently hoping the Jews will conclude He has suffered enough and will call for His release. But that is not what happened. The text says, “*Therefore, when the chief priests and officers saw Him, they cried out, saying, ‘Crucify Him, crucify Him!’”* (John 19:4-6) Jesus is hated and despised by those of His own nation. Pilate delivered Jesus to them to be crucified.

Concerning crucifixion Wayne Greeson has written, “The Persians are believed to have first used crucifixion, but the Romans developed crucifixion into a cruel tortuous slow death intent on inflicting the most pain and suffering. The term ‘excruciating,’ meaning great agony or torment, comes from the Latin for ‘from, or out of, the cross.’ Roman crucifixion was a painful, public, shameful and notorious death for slaves, insurrectionists, deserting soldiers and the vilest criminals.” Jesus began His crucifixion humiliation as a condemned man forced to carry His own cross. (John 19:17) It also says that they compelled Simon of Cyrene to bear His cross(Matt. 27:32).Probably what happened was, exhaustion and blood-loss left Jesus too weak to bear the weight, and the Romans pulled Simon, a bypasser from the crowd to carry the cross for Him.

They come to Golgotha, which is interpreted to mean “Place of a Skull.” There they crucify Him. Jesus was offered *“wine to drink, mixed with gall.”* (Matt. 27:34) This was a bitter drink of wine mixed with myrrh as a mild analgesic which He tasted and then refused. Evidently, Jesus would not allow His senses to be dulled or His mind to be clouded. He would face and endure the full sufferings of the cross.

Based on what was normally done at a crucifixion, Jesus was stripped and thrown to the ground on His back, His arms outstretched along the patibulum, which is the cross bar, and His hands were nailed. Thus nailed, the crossbar and Jesus were lifted up onto the upright post, which was already in the ground. His legs were bent at the knees, His feet placed one a top the other and then nailed directly to the front of the post. This reminds us of the prophecy of David in Psalm 22:16, *“…They pierced My hands and My feet.”*

Matthew records that *“two robbers were crucified with Him, one on the right and another on the left.”*  (Matt. 27:38). Isaiah prophesied this in Isaiah 53:12, *“He was numbered with the transgressors.”* Above Jesus' head was placed a board or titulus which customarily bore the name and crime of the condemned, but Pilate had written, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews" in Hebrew, Latin and Greek. (John 19:19-22) Roman soldiers stood guard to make sure those who were crucified died and that friends did not remove them before death. These soldiers parted Jesus' garments and cast lots for His tunic. David also prophesied of this in Psalm 22:18, *“They divide My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots.”*

There were those who mocked Jesus as He hung suffering. *“Those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, ‘Aha! You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself, and come down from the cross.”*(Mk 15:29-30) The chief priests with the scribes mocked (Mk. 15:31-32). Those who were crucified with him reviled Him (Mk. 15:32), and also the soldiers mocked Him (Luke 23:36-37).

Death would come slowly as each wound produced searing agony. The weight of His sagging body on the nails sent shooting pain up His arms. To take a breath, Jesus had to push his body up with His legs putting his weight on the nail in His feet causing pain to shoot up His legs. With every breath Jesus' raw bloody back was torn against the rough wood of the poles, pain would shoot up His arms and legs from the spikes, fatigue would cramp and knot His muscles with relentless, throbbing pain.

As the Sabbath was coming at sundown and the Jews did not want the bodies of the men crucified to remain on their crosses, they asked Pilate to hasten their death by breaking their legs. The soldiers broke the legs of the two thieves but not Jesus' legs as they saw He was already dead. But one soldier thrust his spear into Jesus' side and out came blood and water. It had been prophesied that “not one of His bones shall be broken” (Ps. 34:20), and “they shall look on Him whom they pierced.” (Zech. 12:10)

The triumph of Jesus' enemies now seemed complete and their glee was unrestrained. To them, Christ's seeming helplessness reinforced their views of Him, and disproved His claims. But the fact is Jesus was fulfilling His mission. One of the seven statements Jesus said on the cross is “It is finished.” I like what Gene Taylor said about that statement. “‘It is finished’ was not the cry of a defeated martyr but the shout of a triumphant victor for it signified completion. Jesus died with a consciousness that His work was done.” Jesus accomplished His mission to save us.