

CONTRASTS AT CALVARY

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The mind of God is past finding out. His knowledge, understanding, and wisdom are infinite. No person can be his counselor. For a simple creature such as I to have even a hair's breadth in understanding God, seems to be beyond all possibility. But God, in his goodness, gave us his word, by which we can have some knowledge and understanding of who he is and what he expects.

In addition to his word, God gave us *the Word* – Jesus Christ. To us who are saved, *Jesus Christ* is God's wisdom:

But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

(1 Corinthians 1:24).

And when the *greatest mind* executes the *greatest event* hitherto known in the history of mankind, you will find the depth of this wisdom without end. The human mind can only try to understand. We can only “scratch the surface.” And without Jesus Christ, there is no light at all.

When we look back 2,000 years to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, we see this nexus of the power and wisdom of God interacting with his creation. *I contend the gospel of Jesus Christ is the greatest by far of any event in all the history of creation.* It is more important that creation itself – yea, for without the redemption of man, God would have created in vain. Without Jesus Christ’s work, there would be no object for free will. Additionally, although this world will pass away, we know the word of God endures forever.

Second only to the future day of Christ – his second coming – the death, burial and resurrection of our Saviour holds the preeminent place in history as the most glorious, substantial, and magnificent work ever performed. And to us who are saved, it is the single most important event in our lives. Irrespective of whether some people care or not, God, through the passion of Jesus Christ, performed the means to redeem his creation to himself.

God in his infinite wisdom chose a crucifixion – something the Romans did as practice – to manifest himself and his primary work to all mankind. The Romans learned the practice of crucifixion from other people. The Persians under Darius crucified 3,000 Babylonians in the 6th century B.C. Alexander the Great crucified 2,000 people from Tyre. By the time Rome used crucifixion, the practice was common among the Barbarians.

Since 70 B.C. when six thousand crucified slaves lined the Appian Way into Rome itself, and then through decades of using “the most wretched of deaths” as the preferred instrument of capital punishment, we finally come in 32 A.D., to a place called Jerusalem, an apparently insignificant colony of the Great Roman Empire. This desert place in the corner of world is in fact the focus of all creation; and on a hill called *Golgotha* one Wednesday in March, three men are crucified: tortured and killed using “the slaves’ punishment.” Two of the three die for their own crimes, the third – the one in the middle – dies not for any personal fault (for he is without fault), but for the sin of the world.

That center cross was thought to be for a man named Barabbas, but God had a plan that very few understood at the time. Barabbas was released, and in his place the King was placed. He is a perfect King, the Son of God, and a Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. A worthy, spotless, perfect, beautiful, graceful, kind, merciful and gracious Lamb is he. As John Baptist cried out: *Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world (John 1:29).*

At first, this crucifixion seemed a strange way for God to reconcile his enemies to himself. It seemed to be an awful “end” to the life and ministry of a man named Jesus Christ; the God-man called, Master, Rabbi, Saviour. Jesus referred to himself as the True Light, the Good Shepherd, the Water of Life, the Son of God, the Son of Man, and King of Kings.

Even stranger than his birth – when he came as a babe wrapped in swaddling cloth, and was placed in a manger, announced by angels and visited by shepherds – his life now *supposedly* is at an end, as shredded flesh pinned with seven-inch iron nails to olive wood: a grotesque bleeding mass that was unrecognizable to those who knew him. Was this really God’s plan? Undoubtedly.

On history's darkest day, lifted up between heaven and earth for six hours, hanging naked and shamed between man and God on a rugged wooden cross; the Son of God satisfied all the requirements of the Father, fulfilled all the prophecies related to our atonement, gave victory to all who were dead in trespasses in sin, and showed the greatest act of love that could ever be performed. And with gasping breaths as he suffered on that tree, he pleaded with his Father: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do...."

I expect the contrasts we see in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ could fill volumes. There are so many views that show the very worst compared to the very best, I wonder if a human mind could contain them all. In this paper I hope to present a few to you for your kind consideration. This is in no wise an exhaustive list. It is just the overflow of awe.

So, as we look again to Calvary, juxtaposed to one another, we consider these contrasts:

1 The Sinfulness of Man and the Righteousness of God

As Jesus was lifted up between heaven and earth he showed a great contrast: the Righteousness of God above and the sinfulness of man below. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. He came to pay the penalty for our sin, he came to seek and to save that which was lost, and he came to give his life a ransom for many.

Man was exceedingly sinful on that day Jesus was crucified. Of all the great offenses he could commit, killing the Son of God could not be topped. At the crucifixion we see the deep depravity of man to commit *deicide*, somehow thought to be impossible.

Man, left to himself, will follow a path of depravity to its end. Without God's light, man has no moral compass to follow. It is understandable that man will sin as he does so by nature, by choice, and by practice. And as his conscience is seared by continual sin, he will eventually become reprobate – beyond correction. At that point God lets him alone; to continue in the downward spiral of sin until death finally takes his prey. And though it may seem impossible that man could degrade in moral stature so as to attempt to kill God, it came to pass that day when Christ was crucified. Not only was an innocent person killed, but the most beautiful Gift of God was put to the cruelest death. How sinful man behaved that day.

But at the same time we see the supreme righteousness of God. That goodness and perfection of his Being that compelled God to lovingly and graciously give his perfect Son to be made sin for us. How far we are from God without Christ!

For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

2 Corinthians 5:21

And in mercy and forgiveness God condemned not his enemies. He loved his own until the end. Jesus performed perfectly to the last breath the will of God. And this was all done because of God's love toward us. The greatest execution of the righteousness of God is shown at Calvary.

2 The Helplessness of Man and the Power of God

Man is powerless to redeem himself. He cannot pay for his own sins no matter how hard he tries. He cannot purchase a way to heaven, neither can he built a ladder tall enough. There are not enough good works a man can do to pay for sin. Only before a corrupt judge could a criminal hope to be released with all the evidence made manifest.

6 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.

8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 5:6-8

Doing good works bears no payment for sin any more than a murderer would be released from judgment because he did some good deed. *Sin must be paid for.* And the wages of sin is death – and death passes upon all men, *for all have sinned.*

But by the power of God, Jesus both died for our sins and rose from the dead! God did for man what man could not do for himself. God graciously provided for man what man needed. Think of the power of God need to pay for the sins of all creation with the life of a single man. In my mind, I can understand how one man could save a few people from physical death; but the power to save *all men* from eternal damnation? That is indeed power. More power than we could ever find outside of God himself.

That mighty power is offered to all, and it is found in the gospel of Jesus Christ (Romans 1:13). By Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection; the Great God in heaven reaches down his hand to earth and offers to pull man out of his horrible state of sin. And all a man has to do is receive that gift of salvation offered to him.

Unless every man takes what God offers through Jesus Christ, he will forever be unable to find any other way out of his sinful condition. There is no other way but by Jesus Christ. *He* is the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by him (John 14:6).

3 The Hate of the Creation and the Love of the Creator

The Bible tells us that man in his sinful state is at enmity with God. Man is born in sin and must, as Jesus said, be *born again* (John 3). But man is rebellious toward God. Men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil.

When God manifested himself in the flesh as Jesus Christ, he came in love, to show love, and to perform the greatest act of love – the redemption of mankind.

And what did men do when they met their Creator – the one who healed them, fed them, taught them, and showed them the way? They took him, and without restraint beat him, spat upon him, buffeted him, cursed and mocked him, whipped him, placed thorns on his head, beating him with a rod; and then without mercy nailed him to a cross of wood, naked and bleeding ... and then they sat and watched him die.

When one thinks of the strength of God's longsuffering, in that with one word he could have forever eradicated from existence all his enemies; we wonder at the love he has for us, to persevere through all the hate and violence, and continue his suffering until it was finished.

What held Jesus to the cross? It was not the nails. It was his great love for us. He is indeed a friend to his enemies, repaying evil with good, exchanging a curse for a blessing.

The world expressed the greatest hate toward God that day. In return, the Creator expressed the greatest love. These extremes met each other at the cross, and were made manifest for all to see.

4 The Judgment of God for Sin and the Grace of God for Forgiveness

Some have trouble reconciling the righteous judgment of God and his grace and forgiveness.

One preaches God is love, and another preaches God is just. One says God forgives, another says God will judge all sin. God hates sin, but loves his creation. How can both be right? This can only be accomplished through the work of Jesus Christ.

This reconciliation must be understood and accomplished by the cross. For Jesus is *the* propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the world.

That word propitiation means an extreme satisfaction, an abundant appeasement, and over-payment. I give the illustration as follows: Let's say I owe a friend \$10,000,000. It is a debt I owe. However I have no money to pay, and I will never have enough to pay. And besides that, the debt continually increases daily. There is no possible way to pay. Eventually the note is due. I must pay, but there is no way I can do it. Once I realize I cannot pay the debt I owe, I appeal to another Friend – one who sticks closer than a brother. He provides a payment for me, in my stead for \$10,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000. This is an extreme over-payment. It is propitiation, an over-satisfaction of what I owed – and not only for me, but for every person ever born. The Bible says Jesus is the propitiation for *all* sins. Imagine the payment made! At Calvary, not only was the judgment of God over-satisfied, but it was done at no cost to us – the extreme grace of God.

Jesus summed it up as this in John 3:16:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

We see the love of God in giving his Son. We see the judgment of God in giving his Son. We see the grace of God in giving his Son. We see the righteousness of God in giving his Son. We see the mercy of God in giving his Son. We see the dreadfulness of sin because God had to give his Son. We see how much God hates sin in that he gave his Son. We see that there could be no other way to forgiving the debt but by Jesus Christ. For if there could be any other way to merit eternal life, God would not have sent his Son.

5 The Death of a King giving Way to Victory

Often in battle, when the leader is killed the war is lost. The losing army has no leader, loses morale, and flees. The victorious army in turn destroys the other side.

On the cross, it had appeared the King was conquered and that he was dead. But in fact, he was conquering death. He was the victorious one in the battle between good and evil, between God and Satan, and between death and life. It was Satan's head that was bruised on that day. Satan was defeated. Yes, Jesus' heel was bruised that day when it came down hard on Satan's head. But when Christ was crucified, it only *looked* liked Satan won ... and that for only three days.

Though it is no problem for God to overcome the devil by sheer strength alone – we know God is stronger -- in the battle over men's souls Satan had gotten an advantage. He tempted Adam and Eve to sin using their freewill. Mankind was now in the grip of death and separation from his Creator.

If man was to be redeemed, it would have to be by man's freewill choice to be righteous, to choose God's way over Satan's way. And God would also have to provide a just way to forgive the sins of the man who chooses God's way, and at the same time show the terribleness of sin. The disobedience of Adam had to be reversed by the obedience of Christ. Man's disobedience has to be reversed by obedience to the Gospel.

God used the depravity of man and the evil of the devil to work out this great salvation. He used the sin and hate of the devil to bring forth life to all who would now obey the gospel. The most horrible event in history now became the most beautiful event in history. The lowest depths in which man could walk now gave way to fellowship with the Father. With Satan's grip ruined, man can now find his way back to God, and overcome temptation, living that victorious life God had intended for him. God had gotten the victory over the wicked one.

6 The Lion lying down as a Lamb

This, to me, is very impressive; for it shows the immense strength and meekness of God. Imagine the forbearance of God to allow sinful men to mistreat his Son. Imagine the grace of the Saviour, who could have called twelve legions of angels to his rescue. With one word, or a snap of his fingers he could have recompensed – and indeed justly – the men who cried out for his death. He could have easily smitten Pilate with worms. He could have easily called fire from heaven and devoured the Sanhedrin in fire and brimstone. He could have opened the earth and

swallowed up the crowd that cried “crucify him!” He could have smitten the soldiers with the sword of his mouth. But he held his peace.

I read where one angel killed an 185,000 Assyrian warriors as they besieged Jerusalem in Hezekiah’s day (2 Kings 19:35). And then I read where Jesus said he could call twelve legions of angels (Matthew 26:53). If a legion were simply a thousand soldiers, twelve thousand angels each killing 185,000 men amounts to over two billion men dead – *that’s twice the world population in 1800*. Even by exaggerated measurements there was well below 200 million people in 32 A.D. ***Jesus basically revealed that he could easily destroy over ten times the world population if he simple said the word!***

But instead, Jesus allowed the Roman soldiers to place his hands on the cross and to drive nails through them without mercy. Jesus probably moved his hands into position and held them there for the hammer strikes.

Those hands that touched the blind man, the leper, and the little children, were now in position to give the world light, to cleanse the world from is, and to make us children of God. What great strength! What great love! What great control!

7 The Darkest Day showing the Greatest Light

How does a man really know who God is? How does a man know God in a personal way? Every religion has its own ideas of who God is (or, gods are) and how to interact with him (or, them). But all religious vary, and they cannot all be correct. And if one is indeed correct, the others are by definition wrong.

The New Testament reveals to us the true God. This true God is the Creator of all, which includes the human race. Jesus taught us to pray to God, saying, “Our Father.” Then Jesus said that no man comes to the Father but by him.

That is a tremendous statement. For Jesus to say that he *only* is the way to the Father positions all other religions as false. This is a claim that only the Son of God could make. The deception the devil purveys is to keep men blind from this truth. He would like to see all men worshipping anyone or anything else but the Father. In fact, the devil prefers the worship himself. The devil wants man to think of him as god. For that purpose he comes as an angel of light. God calls the devil the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4). And many worship him, both ignorantly and with knowledge.

Many individuals have claimed to be a god or the God. The Greek and Roman religions have their gods. All religions worship something or someone as God. They often have some sort of humanized image of God. Some worship beasts. Some worship spirits. And there are always men claiming to be God. So what separates the Lord Jesus Christ from these charlatans? How do we know he is the true God? What makes his claim credible to the exclusion of all others? Why believe what he says? What proof does Jesus have that he is the way to the Father? The proof, my friend, is Calvary!

No other religion has a complete remedy for sin. Their false gods either ignore sin altogether or give some kind of works-based redemption. Their gods are easily satisfied and persuaded with human effort. They are gods of unholy imagination.

In contrast, Jesus is the true Light of the world. He showed to all that he is like no other. Read what the centurion and others said as they watched the crucified Jesus and experienced the events of that hour (Matthew 27:54):

Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.

This is an amazing revelation. How many crucifixions had this centurion witnessed? How many men had he personally nailed to a cross? How many men had he seen die in this manner? How many reactions to being crucified had he seen and heard from his victims? Surely many had cried, many pleaded, many cursed, many threatened, and I suppose some even laughed and mocked. But this hardened man, who worked his way up in the Roman army by simple guts in battle, a man who upon order could fight and kill with no quarter, a man who likely had little conscience or regard for God or man; says when he saw our Saviour crucified; “Truly, this was the Son of God.” He was able to see it.

The true Light of the world shined brightly at Calvary. Though darkness covered the land for three hours, it was during this time the Light of the world shined his brightest. Jesus proved who he was by his death, burial and resurrection. He did not transfigure himself before the world as he had done before the few apostles on the mount – instead he said, that if he were lifted up, he would draw all men to himself.

In John 3:21, Jesus said, But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God. God’s will is that all come to the Light.

8 The Vanity of Man verses the Passion of God

Many in the crowd that day at Pilate’s hall called out for Jesus to be crucified. They were likely caught up in the crowd’s excitement and as Jesus said, they knew not what they did.

Like many people today, they were not deeply concerned with Jesus. They did not consider diligently the worth of their soul and the end of their life. The human condition was such that they cared more for their belly than for eternal life.

The wicked do not seek after God (Psalm 10:4). They do not seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness (Matthew 6:33). They care more for the pleasure of sin for a season. They are on their way to hell and do not even stop to consider the state of their soul. God is not in their thoughts.

God, in total contrast, reaches down to man to do all that he can to bless him with eternal life. God does not violate a man's free will, so in love he shows him his goodness, hoping to lead sinners to repentance. Read this passage from Isaiah 53 (especially verse 6):

- 1 Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?
- 2 For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.
- 3 He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.
- 4 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.
- 5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.
- 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.
- 7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.
- 8 He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.
- 9 And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.
- 10 Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.
- 11 He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.

Isaiah 53:1-11

That day when Jesus was crucified, most of the people in the world were busy with their own things. But what did it profit them if they gain the whole world, and lose their souls in hell? And, although no man cared for their soul, Jesus did. He suffered immeasurably to provide the way of salvation to all men – even those who called out for his death. He drank from that vile cup (and no one else would have) because of his passion for souls. What a contrast we see – Jesus giving his all for men who did not care.

How many in the crowd that day cheered previously at the triumphal entry of the Lord into Jerusalem? How many were there who ate the fishes and the loaves? How many had seen Jesus' miracles not long before? But is a frenzy of hate they shouted, Crucify him! Crucify him! No wonder Jesus needed not that any should testify of him: for he knew what was in man. He knew many of his disciples would leave at his preaching (John 6:66). He knew the instability of man to be easily influenced by others. He knew they loved vanity more than God. But regardless, he loved us to the end.

Jesus' love and passion for souls caused him to look upon the crowd that day with compassion, and eyes full of light. And though they did not care, our Saviour did. He did not allow their vanity to deter him from the right way. Praise the Lord for his goodness!

9 The Innocent Redeeming the Guilty

Another contrast I see is that of the clean verses the filthy, the just and the unjust, the innocent and the guilty.

We know Jesus is sinless, and he had to be so in order to provide a perfect salvation. And he is *the only* sinless one. He alone is pure, and holy, and lovely, and kind, and gracious, and merciful, and good.

But what of the others that day/ Can anyone say that Judas was blameless? He betrayed Jesus with a kiss for thirty pieces of silver.

Were the priests and elders innocent? They conspired to kill the perfect Son of God. Jesus did them no wrong. In love he warned them to forsake their ways. They instead sought out false witnesses in order to have cause to unjustly kill the Lamb of God.

Was Pilate innocent? He was warned of his wife no have nothing to do with Jesus. He found no fault in him. As a politician, he washed his hands of the whole matter thinking he would have no responsibility in the crucifixion. He offered the choice between Jesus and Barabbas. He asked the crowd what he should do with Jesus. He was a key player in the events of that day.

Were the soldiers blameless? They scourged the beautiful body of our Lord. They spit in his face, buffeted him, and mocked him. They released their frustrations and madness on the Saviour, making fun of the whole thing. They beat Jesus with a rod – on top of a thorny crown they forced on his head. The soldiers nailed Jesus to a cross of wood, hoisted him up, and then cast lots for his vesture. Were they innocent? I think not.

Was Barabbas innocent? No – he was a robber and murderer. He was the one who was supposed to die. Were the other two thieves unjustly crucified? Obviously they were guilty and one even admitted to it. One of the thieves cursed Jesus in his last hours of life.

What of the disciples and women? I do not read, except for Peter's sword attack against Malchus, where they stood up in defense of the Saviour. Most fled and were not to be found. Even zealous Peter denied the Lord thrice.

What a contrast – a motley crew of characters all sinful and in need of forgiveness, all involved that day in the crucifixion, most of them complicit in the Saviour's death. And above all these characters stands forth in purity of holiness, the Son of God, graciously fulfilling the reason why he came: to give his life a ransom for many.

Those that believe not are under condemnation. They are guilty. But Jesus took our condemnation, and condemned sin in his flesh.

16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

John 3:16-19

1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

Romans 8:1-3

What a contrast – Jesus the Perfect nailed to a cross before the sinners, being made sin for us. And then, in great mercy – contrary to all human comprehension, he says, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do....” (Luke 23:34). Amazing! The innocent giving his life for the guilty.

10 The Curse on Mankind being exchanged for the Blessing of God

Mankind is under a curse. That curse is death. That curse came upon man as a result of Adam’s disobedience. When that curse extended to the earth, it brought forth thorns and thistles. Adam had to labor for his bread, tilling the ground. After the flood in Noah’s day mankind received some relief. Things now are easier in the planting and reaping, but the curse still abides. Sickness, deformity, disasters accompany death as participants in the curse.

This curse of death became strong under the law, as God pronounced a curse on those who did not keep the law (Galatians 3:10): For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But see what Paul showed us in verse 13:

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:

Symbolically, when the crown of thorns was placed on our Saviour’s head, he showed he was bearing the curse of mankind. And, in exchange for this curse, we received the blessing. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. What a contrast!

As a result of the first Adam's transgression, the world received a curse. As a result of the second Adam's obedience, we received the blessing – eternal life. And when the King returns, he will make a new heaven and a new earth, one with no more curse. And how did all this happen? Because Jesus became a curse for us. Thank the Lord for his work!

11 The Physical Death of One providing Eternal Life for All.

Six hours of suffering paid for an eternity of sins. The suffering of one man, paid for the sins of all men. How could that be?

Well, sin came upon all because of the *disobedience* one man:

Wherefore, as by one man (Adam) sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.

Romans 5:12

The same law in reverse would allow the second Adam, Jesus Christ, when *obedient* unto death, to pay for the sins of every person. 1 Corinthians 15:22 says: For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

Hebrews 2:9

Think a while about how God accomplished this. The sins of all creation were compacted into one cup for my Saviour to drink. My sins, the wages thereof being death, were put on Christ. Not just my current sins, but all sins past, present and future. If I live to eighty, that's eighty years of my sins. That's a lot of sin. Then add the sins of my family. Then add the sins of my church. Then add the sins of my community. Then add the sins of my state. Then add the sins of my country, and then the world. Six billion people on this globe and their entire lives of sin added together. Then add the lives of all the people who have passed from Adam until now. Then add the lifetime sins of all future lives. That is a lot of sin. Now compact all that death-deserving sin into one cup. Compact all that sin into one suffering. Compact all that sin into six hours! Imagine the intensity.

We have about six billion people on the earth now. It has been estimated that the number of total births since creation is over 100 billion lives, accounting for a normal life cycle.

For a conservative estimate, let's take 50 billion people and 30 years life (Methuselah and David's son with Bathsheba balancing out). That is 1,500 billion years of sins. Inconceivable!

Take 1,500,000,000,000 times 24 hours, and you get 36,000,000,000,000 hours of sins (conservatively).

That is thirty-six trillion hours of sin compressed into six hours of punishment!

Thirty-six trillion hours of lies, murders, fornications, hatred, fear, thefts, drunkenness, rape, abuse, dishonoring of parents, blasphemies, idolatry, unbelief, selfishness, rebellion, and ungodliness; all packed into a vile package for our Saviour to bear. That's high compression that only God could do. God compressed thirty-six trillion hours of sin into a vile cup and gave it to himself to drink. And he drank it!

That one life, which may have looked like a typical human life, had so much life in himself that he could provide not only the payment for sin of one lifetime, but also all men's lifetimes; and then add to it *eternal life* to all who believe. That one life of Jesus Christ was so full and powerful, that it provided for all this in one physical death.

And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;

Ephesians 2:1

So, it is not only the sin that was paid for with Jesus' death, but that death also provided eternal life – and not just for one, but for many. It is beyond human comprehension the value of the life of Jesus Christ. There was so much life in Jesus that he is virtually and infinitely immortal. And had he not died he would still be walking on the earth today as a thirty year old man. The only way he could die, was to put enough sin on him – to make him sin for us – and then crucify him without mercy. And that is what the Father did.

What will a man give in exchange for his soul? What profit is the world in comparison to a soul? And if only one soul is more valuable than the world, that means the value of Jesus' life *is more valuable than an hundred billion worlds!*

What a contrast we see in the value of one life.

12 The Imperfect being Redeemed by the Perfect

Of all people, God should have been "last on the list" for those who should have had to pay for sin. Man is a sinner, and rightly should he pay for his transgressions. How many times does someone have to lie before he is a liar? How many times does a person have to covet before he is covetous? How many times does a man have to kill before he is guilty of murder? You see, *all have sinned.*

Jesus told us if a man lusts after a woman, he is guilty of adultery. Jesus said if a man hates another he is guilty of murder. The bar of righteousness is set too high for man.

The three common responses one has when one is guilty of committing sin, is first, to deny he did it (i.e., lie about it, and say, I didn't do it; or blame someone else). Second, it is to justify it (i.e., say it was necessary, or that it is really not a sin what I did, or, it is not my fault – the devil made me do it). Third, it is to admit (confess) it was sin, and it was wrong, and try to rectify it before God and man.

The sin cannot be undone, but it can be forgiven. It can be washed from the individual. The damage can be restituted for. It can be forsaken, so as not to be repeated. It can be avoided and resisted. This is the manner in which God wants man to deal with sin:

8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

1 John 1:8-10

Most people seek other ways than what God says is the right way to deal with sin. The idea of shifting blame is not new. Adam and Eve did it when confronted in the garden for disobeying God's commandment. Some in the New Testament asked this question when finding a man who was blind from birth: Who did sin, this man or his parents? (As if a babe in the womb could sin so much that he were born blind.)

Even today that thought is prevalent. They say, "I was born that way." Sigmund Freud convinced some to blame their faults on their parents. They say, "That is the way I was raised." Many blame their circumstances, some blame some experience, and a few blame the government for their evil. Flip Wilson blamed the devil. But thank God some blame their own selves, taking right responsibility for their actions and results.

Then there are those that blame God.

But who could justify shifting blame to God? He is holy and without blame. God is perfect.

He gave man life, a perfect environment, and simple rules to live by; all so it would be well with their souls. It was man in *his own rebellion* who chose darkness rather than light.

God gave mankind great liberty, only occasionally interfering with judgment when he went way off course. Yes, he judged in Noah's day, and executed righteous judgment in Babel, Sodom, Gomorrah, Egypt, and Babylon. But how many wicked rulers have been left to their devices? How have the wicked prospered! And in spite of this, God blesses the just and the unjust. God loves his enemies. God has a history of being merciful, longsuffering and being easily entreated.

God is not the cause of the evil in the world – man is. Man chooses to follow the wicked one. If anyone should have paid the cost of sin, it should have been imperfect man.

I could easily understand if certain wicked men had to bear the guilt of the wickedness they caused, and none of us is guiltless, *for all have sinned*.

But Jesus in his goodness became sin for us. Not only was the sin of the world laid upon him, but actually was made sin for us. He bore our sins, and he became sin for us, and then he was condemned for it. As a result, we who receive this gift of God are made the righteousness of God:

For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

2 Corinthians 5:21

But why would God require the innocent to pay for the sins of the guilty? Why would he require the righteous to take the place of the wicked? Because only a perfect Lamb could pay for the sins of mankind. Jesus only is worthy. What a contradiction of sinners against himself. But God in his goodness and love gave the just for the unjust, repaid evil with good, and provided a perfect Lamb for the ungodly.

Man would never be good enough to redeem himself, so God the Father sent God the Son to redeem his creation from sin.

18 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;
19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:
20 Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,
21 Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.

1 Peter 1:18-21

Man was corrupt, and could not do it, no matter how wealthy he was. But Jesus' precious blood was the only thing valuable enough. Colossians 1:14: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins. So God in his goodness, and by his grace, redeemed the imperfect; redeeming them with the perfect Son of God, making the imperfect the righteousness of God.

13 The Stain of Red washing as White as Snow

At the base of that center cross that day we find the blood of the precious Lamb. It flowed from the Saviour's wounds and soaked into the ground. Portions of that blood could be found on the cross, on the hands of those who hammered the nails, and on the shoulders Simon of Cyrene. The trail of Jesus' blood could be traced to Pilate's seat, to the common hall where Jesus was scourged and beaten by Roman soldiers.

The mixture of blood and water was on the tip of that soldier's spear, when he checked whether to break the legs of the Holy One. The leather thongs of Roman scourge were hardened with dried blood from the Saviour's back.

Joseph of Arimathaea probably had Jesus' blood on his hands and clothes as he wrapped the body of Jesus in a clean linen cloth. The head napkin was stained with the blood from the wounds caused by the crown of thorns.

As those who loved Jesus carefully cleaned his body for burial, there were various blood-stained cloths gathered and discarded, no longer being useful. The day of the crucifixion was a very bloody day.

In the Old Testament, when a sacrifice was slain, God required that *all the blood* be poured at the bottom of the altar, after putting some on the horns (Exodus 29:12; Leviticus 4:7, 18, 30, 34). What a necessary action: not just a few pints, but *all the blood* had to be shed. For in the blood is the life

For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.

Leviticus 17:11

That day on the cross, Jesus shed *every last drop* as an atonement for us. Even the small amount of blood left in his side poured forth, followed with water, after his side was pierced by the soldier's spear (John 19:34).

(I have seen what much blood looks like as it falls into a puddle – it is not pretty. It thickens like pudding and stains everything it touches. It takes effort to clean.)

And Calvary's blood, which stained many things that day, is what God uses to wash the sins from our souls. That blood gives us the victory. That blood guarantees eternal life. That holy, royal, perfect, blood of the Lamb of God – though red as red could be – washes us whiter than snow.

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

1 John 1:7

So, why did God require Jesus' blood? Because he loves us:

And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,

Revelation 1:5

Thank God that blood that stains washes our robes white, symbolizing the righteousness of the saints.

And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Revelation 7:14

What a contrast! God used staining blood to wash away the stains of sin.

14 The Blood of Christ being much more precious than Silver or God.

And while on the subject of the blood, what was the worth of that blood that was shed on Golgotha? Humanly speaking, not much.

The chemical and mineral elements in the human body have been calculated to be roughly as follows:

- 65% Oxygen
- 18% Carbon
- 10% Hydrogen
- 3% Nitrogen
- 1.5% Calcium
- 1% Phosphorous
- 0.35% Potassium
- 0.25% Sulfur
- 0.15% Sodium
- 0.15% Chlorine
- 0.05% Magnesium
- 0.0004% Iron
- 0.00004% Iodine
- And trace quantities of fluorine, silicon, manganese, zinc, copper, aluminum, and arsenic.

So, without considering the precious metals in your teeth, all of the above amounts to less than one dollar.

Some say the most valuable asset is the skin, which value the Japanese have calculated. The Imperial State Institute for Nutrition at Tokyo measured the amount of a person's skin, and concluded the average person has fourteen to eighteen square feet of it, varying with a person's shape and weight. Using price of cowhide, which is approximately \$.25 per square foot, the value of an average person's skin is about \$3.50.

So, if we say the total value of a person's body is about \$4.50; what would only the blood be worth? Answer: less than a \$1.00. The soul, however, is worth more than the whole world.

Granted, certain body parts bring in a lot – some pay tens of thousands of dollars for an organ transplant – but the cost is mainly attributed to the medical costs of removing, preserving and transplanting the organ. And in Jesus' day, no such medical procedures were available. And even if they were, the Lord's body was so badly damaged by beating and scourging, I doubt his organs in such condition would have been worth the trouble of transplanting.

Today, blood centers may give a “wino” five bucks and a juice for a pint of Bum's Blood (and that is a bargain for the bum); but back then they had no such industry.

That precious, royal blood of the Lamb, even if it had been collected into usable containers and used for transfusions; would have only benefited the few who had the direct use of the blood. But God had a greater plan for the blood, and gives all who believe a *spiritual transfusion*, making us children of God, born again into the royal bloodline!

So how was blood valued in Jesus' day? Jews (and pagans) understood there was some value in the blood of an animal in sacrifice. But still, how much did they really value that blood? There was always another beast to kill. Jesus mentioned the cost of two sparrows being a farthing – a mite apiece (Matthew 10:29; Mark 12:42). The blood of a sparrow could be bought with a small bronze coin. It is hard to estimate the value of a mite, but it was the smallest valued coin in use, and half of a farthing. In today's money, a farthing is well under a cent.

The Gentiles used the blood of animals when preparing their meals, of such things the church proscribed. But that blood was valued no more than animal meat.

Today, blood from meat processing plants is not generally used for human consumption. It is collected through drains in the processing plants and sent as a byproduct to rendering plants, where it is made into high protein blood meal, and fed to animals. The blood is used this way rather than allow it to become a stench and rodent problem.

Pilate mingled the blood of Galileans in their sacrifices (I think as an insult). A woman had an issue of blood twelve years, whom Christ healed. Publius had a bloody flux and a fever that Paul healed. But who would put but a nominal value on any of that blood? That blood would not bring a price as it was diseased.

Overall, compared to silver or gold, blood holds little value. Even today, world bankers and politicians initiate wars and bloodshed in order to make a little gold and silver. They care not how many men die on a battlefield, as long as their profits are up. Their bombs, and guns, and poisons are used to kill both innocent and guilty; and those weapons of destruction bring in much more money than the blood they shed ever would.

Hundreds of thousands – yea, millions – have died on the battle field for a cause usually related to money. The love of money is the root of all evil. In man's eyes, money is much more valuable than blood. But what is the value of Jesus' blood compared to silver and gold in God's eyes? Very much. Peter says:

18 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;
19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

1 Peter 1:18, 19

The value of Jesus' blood is precious and priceless. It is through that blood that we are redeemed: In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace... (Ephesians 1:7).

Those ten pints of blood, weighing about 11 pounds, is more valuable than tons of gold and megatons of silver. One drop of that precious blood is more valuable than all the wealth in the world. Valuable because it *only* can redeem man from death and hell.

15 Uglyest Gesture and Most Beautiful Gesture

This contrast is similar to # 7. What death is uglier than crucifixion? We have never seen the punishment in practice, but the scriptures describe the horrible suffering of our Saviour.

You see, it was not enough to simply put Jesus to death – God allowed the devil to impose upon the Saviour *all* his wrath, envy, hate, pride, bloodthirstiness, evil, and cruelty that he could; and do it in most shameless and merciless manner conceived. The hounds of hell were let loose on the Son of God to bite and devour. The devils had, for a short time, unrestrained access (only by Jesus' own forbearance) to the vulnerable human form of the mighty God; and they proceeded through human means to inflict maximum pain and torture via the most-cruel method of punishment devised.

The devils saw in the crucifixion their opportunity to “bruise his heel.” How much they despise the righteous God is evident. The crucifixion was their opportunity for revenge. Possibly, they thought this was their way to get even with God himself.

Through the scourging, buffetings, mocking, beatings and the forcing of thorns upon his brow; the wicked shamefully treated their Creator. After compelling Jesus to bear his cross to Golgotha, the stripped him completely naked and pounded spike-like nails through his flesh. And once lifted up between heaven and earth, these workers of iniquity continued to mock and taunt him, and then they watched him die.

How extremely ugly the scene must have been. I am glad I did not see it. Thankfully, we have it described by word and not by actual images, for that would be too much for children of God to bear.

Thank God the Saviour said, “It is finished.” Yes, his crucifixion is finished. His suffering is over. His atonement is complete. It is finished. There is no need to ever repeat it. A sincere *remembrance* is what God expects, and for that cause he instituted the Lord's Supper – to show forth the Lord's death until he comes.

I should think the crucifixion of the God-Man must be the ugliest and most horrendous gesture in all history. But in total contrast, notice the most beautiful gesture by our Lord, when he prayed for his enemies:

Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.

How wonderfully gracious and considerate our Lord is. He is indeed most merciful. To be so forgiving in such suffering shows how good our God is.

Because of those graceful words, I believe all persons involved in the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ have been forgiven for that particular crime. I believe the Father answered his Son's prayer at such a critical moment. The soldiers, Pilate, and the chief priests – yea, and Judas himself – may have to answer for a lot of sins at the judgment, but there will be one sin they are forgiven of: the crucifixion of the Son of God; for who could ever bear that sin. God in his grace laid not this ugliest of all acts to their charge, and shows what a beautiful God we have.

16 His Wounds brought Our Healing

1 Peter 2:24 says: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

I have already described some of the sufferings our Saviour endured when he gave himself an offering for us. It probably seems strange to those hearing for the first time that God chose such an horrible, tortuous death as payment for our sins.

That day the Lord received many wounds – some to the crown of his head, some to his face, some to the hands, some to the feet, and many all over his body. I expect there was no square inch of his body that was not wounded.

But of all the horrible wounds inflicted upon the Saviour's body, God calls attention to the stripes he received when being scourged. These were the worst of all the wounds he received.

Stripes are the whipping marks on a person's body inflicted by an instrument called a scourge. The scourge is applied to the flesh with terrible force. A scourge is similar to a cat-of-nine-tails.

Many have told how that the Romans would take three strips (thongs) of leather, about three to six feet long, connected to a wooden handle; and tie pieces of sharp bone or metal at three-inch intervals along the length of the strips of leather. Often, metal hooks were tied to the end of each of the strips. These would hook the flesh as the lash left the back.

Before the scourging, the offender would be tied to a post, preventing him from fleeing or protecting himself in any way. The binding of the prisoner was such that his back was fully exposed and positioned for whipping.

Then, two soldiers with experience in administering such punishment, would alternately whip with sadistic viciousness their scourges against the back of the offender, striking the body hard with the leather and sharp objects.

Each stroke of the whip was applied to inflict maximum pain and damage. The whipping action was taken full advantage of: pulling the whip back quickly after it has hit with stinging force. As the strips were pulled back, the sharp edges would rip flesh to the bone. Blood would pour to the ground.

This Roman scourging was different than the Jewish type experienced by the Apostle Paul. When Paul was whipped, the number of strokes was thirty-nine – one short of forty. Forty was the judgment amount according to the law (Deuteronomy 25:3), but so as not to chance giving one stroke too many (for one stroke too many meant violating the law), the executor would stop at thirty-nine. But this was a Jewish application (2 Corinthians 11:24, 25). And the Jewish scourge was more of a lashing, still painful and scarring, but not fatal. Rome's method of scourging was far more vicious.

Rome used scourging both as an alternative and as a prelude to crucifixion. Jesus Christ received both. As to the number of strokes, the Roman method was to scourge until just short of death. As experts, they knew how to impose maximum punishment, but still leave the victim alive enough to endure crucifixion. The stronger victims could take more; the weaker ones less. I can say that the Son of God was an excellent specimen of health and strength, for the Lamb had to be perfect and without blemish in every way. As such, he likely endured more scourging than anyone before or after.

The Romans had as a state policy a variety of punishments they could inflict upon transgressors. The different types of punishments inflicted depended on the offence. The Romans used fines (damnum), bonds (vincula), retaliation (talio), infamy (ignominia), banishment (exilium), slavery (servitus), stripes (verbera), and death. And the Romans liked the Coliseum – with the gladiatorial battles and throwing helpless people to the lions. The Roman hand was a very hard.

Crucifixion was generally not used for Roman citizens: it was reserved for slaves. (Paul, a Roman citizen, you remember, was most likely beheaded – death by the sword.) But of all these punishments that Rome inflicted, the worst punishment by far was crucifixion: *because it took hours to die.*

Scourging and crucifixion was determined for our Saviour. It was the most painful, shameful, and horrible way to die.

As Jesus was scourged, the witnesses could not help but gasp with each stroke. After a Roman scourging the victim looked like a bleeding mass of flesh. With wounds, not just on the back, but also on the sides, chest, neck, buttocks, groin and legs. Muscle, bone and ligaments became visible in those stripes. Jesus had become unrecognizable to those who knew him.

So, of all the punishments the Lord Jesus Christ endured, why was scourging so necessary? Because his stripes healed us from the awful effects of sin. Read Isaiah 53:5:

But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

By each painful and lacerating stroke of the scourge, we were brought healing. This healing we received gives us bodily health (3 John 1:2), mental health (2 Timothy 1:7), and most importantly, a purified soul and pure heart (1 Peter 1:22).

God wants his children whole and healthy, prospering even as their soul prospers. It is by his stripes that we are healed. What a contrast. And why is that so? Why was this the way of the Great Physician? Why did it take Jesus' bodily damage to bring us health?

Look at it this way: in the same way the payment of wicked sin required a righteous death, and through Jesus' righteous death we get eternal life; similarly, through the bodily wounds, bruises and stripes Jesus received, we are healed. The third law of physics claims for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. Christ did not merit this bodily punishment as he was innocent. Those stripes created a surplus payment – a “pay-forward.” We are the ones who are guilty and who justly deserved that punishment. But it was paid for by Christ. Consequently, when we receive his work for our justification, we are healed.

Now, some believers don't take advantage of this healing. They live in defeat. But that is not God's fault. He has provided the way for victory. See my paper *Victory over the Wicked One*.

And in respect to the lost – those who have not received the Saviour – they will suffer for their own sins (Luke 12:47).

But remember, God is not willing that any should perish, but all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9).

17 Jesus' Poverty made Many Rich

In the New Testament we find this verse:

For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

2 Corinthians 8:9

When Jesus came to us, he came in human form as the Son of Man. This human form experienced certain infirmities (weaknesses). One of which, was the ability to die while bearing our sins. Jesus, as the perfect Servant, graciously gave his life for ours.

For God to leave the portals of glory, where he is continually worshipped and glorified, surrounded with perfection and honour, and be made in the likeness of men, and to willingly be bound by certain human limitations; is indeed considered poverty. Furthermore, to give up his omniscience, and “learn” obedience by the things that he suffered (Hebrews 5:8); is true poverty.

For God to put on a robe of human flesh, leaving behind his eternality, and position himself so that he could suffer beyond measure and die a shameful death; is indeed poverty.

Jesus was found worthy of the shepherds at his birth, and of the wise men a while later; but to the world he was not considered valuable, for he was just another Jew born in Bethlehem. He was found worthy to those disciples who followed him, and to the people who were healed and blessed by his work, but to most people he was just another man.

And those who bare the body of Jesus and buried him in that tomb, cared for him as a precious Gift; but to most people he was just another victim of crucifixion. To those who did not know him, now that he is *dead* he has little value.

This is but a small sample of the poverty our God experienced when the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us.

And through Jesus' death, we who believe "gain" eternal life. This is great riches! Through Jesus' poverty we were made rich. We realized the value of one soul is more than the gain of the whole world.

And in that future life, we will reign with Jesus as kings and priests (Revelation 1:6). We will be rewarded by Jesus himself. We will wear crowns of silver, gold and precious stones if we are faithful to serve him here on earth.

Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.

Colossians 3:24

This wealth is considered being "rich toward God." Some lay up earthly treasures, but that is not true riches:

So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

Luke 12:21

This inheritance includes the earth, the kingdom of God, and this inheritance is reserved in heaven for us who believe.

Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

Matthew 5:5

Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

Matthew 25:34

To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,

1 Peter 1:4

In the meantime, while we serve here on earth waiting for the revelation of Jesus Christ, God supplies all our need because of what Jesus did.

He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

Romans 8:32

But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.
Ephesians 4:19

So, we who believe are rich children of the King. We are heirs to eternal life and a heavenly kingdom. We will have New Jerusalem as our eternal home and live forever with the Lord Jesus Christ. And how are all these riches bestowed on us who believe? It was through the poverty of Christ as he hung on a cross two thousand years ago.

18 Nails making us Free

Typically, nails are used to affix one thing to another. Carpenters use nails to hold studs and sheathing in place; hence the phrase, “that thing is nailed down.” In normal usage, we do not use nails to free something. Maybe we would use a hammer or pry-bar, but not nails.

When Jesus hung on the cross, probably many feet above the earth (for they needed a hyssop reed to offer him a sponge filled with vinegar – Matthew 27:48) nails held his body from falling.

Nails in his hands and feet painfully fixed his naked body to an old rugged cross for all to see. He was lifted up as the serpent was in the wilderness. He was not tied to the cross with ropes, for the scriptures make no mention of this – he was nailed.

The Roman soldiers simply and brutally hammered those spike-like iron nails through the flesh and ligaments of our Lord’s hands and feet, without breaking a single bone; and set them deep into the olive wood, so that there would be no chance of failure. The entire weight of that blood-soaked Lamb of God hung for six hours to that tree, while the life drained drop by drop from his gasping, convulsing, suffering body; infallibly secured by those rusty nails, until it was finished.

Those nails indeed held secure, for God would only do this once: he would allow no chance of failure. His blessed Son was to die and suffer for all mankind. This event was most important. The whole plan depended on the Lamb being crucified. All events in the life of our Saviour led to this point, for it was for this reason he came. He came to die! Yes, those nails *had* to hold – and hold they did. They held as firm as the foundations of the earth. They moved not a hair’s breadth while the Son of God paid the price and ransomed the world to himself.

And I thank God for those nails: for it is by those nails that I am made free from the law of sin and death.

13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;

14 Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;

15 And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

Colossians 2:13-15

My old man is crucified with Christ, so I am no longer in bondage, to serve sin.

Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

Romans 6:6

I have been called unto liberty. My liberty in Christ is not liberty to sin, but to love.

13 For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Galatians 5:13, 14

By those nails I am made free. Free from sin, from death, from the law, from the power of sin, and from the grasp of the devil; and free to love as God would have to do.

19 Debasement bringing Exaltation, Shame bringing Glory

Who can imagine a more shameful scenario: a perfect man mocked, beaten, humiliated, spat upon, and then nailed naked for the world to see, on an old rugged cross of wood?

What debasement! What mistreatment! What shame our Saviour had to endure for us!

The awfulness of the crucifixion is beyond imagination. Not only was it a long, painful death; but added to it was the shame of being stripped, mocked, and openly shown to the world in that poor, suffering state.

Of the many people who died that death; how many of them wept in agony, cried out in pain, spoke in madness, or cursed in distress? How many begged for mercy? How many cried out in fear? How many spoke words of hate and threatening?

How many were disgraced in this manner? As a slave's punishment, the cross was a humiliating way to end a life of servitude.

And all the while, in a most shameful state, the victim hears the jeers and scoffing of the observers. Those who enjoyed seeing another man suffer offered their cruel mockings. To Christ they said, "Let him come down and we will believe." They mocked saying, "He saved others, let him save himself."

Jesus sees his mother Mary suffer as only a mother could: watching her lovely Son, who nursed from her breast, who was circumcised according to the law of Moses, who served her faithfully without complaint or correction, always going the second mile; dies the death of scoundrels, thieves, murderers, and slaves.

There was indeed physical pain, more than any human could endure; but added to that was the pain of heartbreak – loving those who hated him. Added to that was the pain of seeing those closest to him weep in distress and disappointment. Added to that was the natural body struggling to stay alive with gasping breaths. Added to that was the shame and sin of all mankind put on him. And in that most horrible state, when Christ indeed became sin for us, he experiences his Father forsaking him – *My God, my God; why hast thou forsaken me?!*

What total debasement of the Son of God was accomplished on the cross of Golgotha, when the Light of the world was, for only an instant, extinguished.

But as God looked upon his Son, God was pleased. God was highly exalting Jesus Christ. God was so pleased with the obedience of his Son. God in heaven watched intently as his glorious Son fulfilled his will to save all mankind.

And so promising him that all things were to be delivered to him, God in heaven declares that Jesus is worthy. Worthy is the Lamb! Jesus is magnified above all else. For the Father loveth the Son and has given him all things (John 3:35)! He alone is preeminent. He alone has the keys to hell and death! He alone is the Alpha and Omega, and the beginning and the end! And so the Holy Ghost does not speak of himself, but he glorifies the Son (John 16:14). From the deepest valley to the highest mountain top, our Saviour is exalted forever!

Look at the mind that was in Jesus:

5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:
6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:
7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:
8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.
9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:

Philippians 2:5-9

Jesus was fulfilling the precept to humble ourselves:

I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

Luke 18:14

In the crucifixion, we see not only the greatest humbling, but also the greatest exaltation.

We know how Jesus was humbled, but how is he exalted? Allow me to say that he is now seated at the right hand of the Father. All things are delivered to him. He is preeminent in the church. He has inherited all things. He is called King of kings, and Lord of lords. He is worshipped in heaven and on earth. He only is worthy to open the book (Revelation 5).

In heaven the angels cease not to glorify the Son. On earth, there are hundreds of millions of people who praise the Saviour. Churches around the world sing praises, preach the word, and proclaim the greatness of Jesus Christ.

On any given day, how many people on earth are preaching Jesus Christ? How many sing his praise? How many song-writers, book-writers, preachers, musicians, parents, children, and other Christians exalt the Saviour even as we speak?

I have preached twenty-five years. That is nearly 25,000 messages preached, and every one in honor of the Lord Jesus Christ. And I am only one. With hundreds of thousands of preachers how many messages have been preached over the last 2,000 years? How many songs of praise? Jesus, like no other, is highly exalted. And when we see him face to face, that exaltation will continue in even greater degree. We shall say with the heavenly chorus: Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing (Revelation 5:12).

20 Bruising of the Heel and the Bruising of the Head

I mentioned this briefly in point # 5 above.

In Genesis 3:15, when cursing the serpent, God said this to him:

And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

Since that time six thousand years ago there has been enmity between the devil and the men who follow God. Having enmity means having mutual hate and animosity. There is a state of enmity between the devil and man – for he hates those made in God’s image. But there is also enmity between God and lost man because of his sin.

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

Romans 8:7

In addition, there is enmity between God’s righteous seed and the devil’s seed. Notice what Jesus said in John to the wicked *religious* Jews:

37 I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you.

38 I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father.

39 They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham.

40 But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham.

41 Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God.

42 Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me.

43 Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word.

44 Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

45 And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not.

John 8:37-45

Those religious Pharisees, although they claimed to be sons of Abraham, hated Jesus and sought to kill him. Jesus reveals to them that they are really of their father the devil, not of Abraham. These men from the synagogue of Satan were at enmity with Jesus – the two seeds fulfilling what God promised in Genesis 3: the seed of the serpent at enmity with the seed of the woman (Jesus). Women have no seed, for that comes by man; but the virgin-born Son of God, came from the seed of the woman, as he had no human father. Jesus' Father is God.

Then we, who by faith are Abraham's seed (Galatians 3:29), are called sons of God (John 1:12; 1 John 3:1, 2; Romans 8:14, 19; Philippians 2:15). We are of the same seed as Jesus Christ, being born again by the word of God (1 Peter 1:23).

Jesus is the Word of God (John 1:1) and God's Seed (1 John 3:9), born of the Spirit. The seed is the word of God (Luke 8:11), and the Seed is the Word of God. We, who are *born again*, are born similarly (but spiritually, by the Spirit – John 3) by the word of God (the Gospel). Now we are brethren as sons of God and joint heirs with Christ.

Before being saved we were at enmity with God. Jesus abolished in his flesh the enmity between man and God. The opposite of enmity can be thought of as peace and reconciliation.

15 Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace;

16 And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:

Ephesians 2:15, 16

God abolished this enmity between man and himself by bruising Jesus Christ:

5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

10 Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

Isaiah 53:5, 10

This *offering* of Jesus was not bruised before the sacrifice, for he is a perfect, spotless Lamb. It was on the cross of Calvary that Jesus was bruised. Jesus fulfilled the law in respect to his sacrifice.

Ye shall not offer unto the LORD that which is bruised, or crushed, or broken, or cut; neither shall ye make any offering thereof in your land.

Leviticus 22:24

Considering these verses, note how the crucifixion of Jesus Christ was according to God's plan. God allowed his Son to be crucified. God allowed Satan to bruise him as an offering. But the crucifixion, although very terrible, was only a bruising of the heel to the Son of God. Jesus indeed died and was buried, but he gloriously rose from dead three days later!

That is why the bruising was only to his heel and temporary – not unto permanent death. And symbolically, as Jesus was bruised in the heel, he was bruised *condemning the devil*. Jesus' heel was bruised that day, but the devil's head was bruised forever. *Jesus bruised his heel crushing the devil's head!*

By the crucifixion, Jesus got victory for us over the devil and his power. And shortly in the future, we will see that complete and permanent victory over the devil forever, as did Jesus. We were bruised, but Jesus saved us. And we, with Jesus, will bruise the devil and see him cast down forever:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,

Luke 4:18

And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

Romans 16:20

In summary, because of Calvary, Jesus was bruised for us. We who were bruised are saved, and the devil's head is bruised forever. And we who follow Jesus will enjoy this victory the Lord promised us. And, brethren, we are going to see this *shortly!*

21 One Saved and One Lost

This is the most important contrast for you to consider, dear reader.

On the other two crosses that day, one on each side of the Saviour, we see contrasted two men. One man was lost; the other had the promise he would be with Jesus in paradise.

39 And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.

40 But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?

41 And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.

42 And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.

43 And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.

Luke 23:39-43

One man believed and asked for mercy; the other bore his own sins.

I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.

John 8:24

The lost man said, “If thou be Christ”; showing he did not believe. By what was said and the manner in which it was said, the other malefactor *rebukes* him, saying, “Dost thou not fear God?”

It was obvious one feared God and did not. One used the term *Lord*, showing he believed. The other did not believe. One was concerned only with the physical, railing on Jesus, not fearing what was shortly coming to pass – his death and judgment; the other looked for God’s kingdom. One doubted who Jesus was; the other knew Jesus had done nothing amiss.

Both were under the same condemnation, but only one reached out to Jesus Christ. Both were sinners, but only one looked to Jesus with the right heart. That man knew he justly received the due reward for his actions. He knew he had sinned and was reaping. He looked to Jesus for the mercy of God; saying, “remember me.” And our Saviour, even in his last moments, reaches out to save that soul. What a beautiful example of selflessness and love. Jesus, even in his suffering state, had compassion on the lost.

Many times when we are in difficult situations, soul-winning is not in our thoughts. We are so selfish to only think of ourselves and how we can relieve the burden. What we ought to do is seek God’s grace to endure patiently and thankfully, and look for opportunities to lead sinners to salvation. This is a lesson for all of us.

The Bible says, *All have sinned* (Romans 3:23). You, dear reader, are in the same predicament of those malefactors. They were guilty and under condemnation. So are you without Christ.

And in this life, you will make a choice to either believe or not believe. You will either think of temporal things or things eternal. You will either disrespect Jesus Christ or call him Lord.

Notice the response to those who heard the great Apostle Paul in Acts 28:

23 And when they had appointed him [Paul] a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening.

24 And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not.
25 And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers,
26 Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive:
27 For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.
28 Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it.

You see the response to the preaching of God's word? Some believe, and some do not. Even with the great testimony of the Apostle Paul, some did not believe.

And do you see the response of God? God goes elsewhere.

If you do not receive the word of God, God will not continue to cast his pearls before swine. He will shake off the dust of his feet as a testimony and go to those who will hear. God will not always strive with man. Today, if you have a heart for the Saviour, make sure you believe on him. Make sure you receive him as your personal Saviour.

9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.
10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Romans 10:9, 10

Which of the two malefactors do you identify with? Which one are you? Do you know you have eternal life? This author wrote a paper entitled; *How You Know You are Saved*. I recommend you read it. For God wants you to be sure and secure in your salvation.

If you doubt your salvation, now is time to settle the issue. Today is the day of salvation.

Allow me to leave you with one more verse. Jesus on the cross saved us from the wrath to come. Without Jesus, man is condemned. Here are the words of Jesus:

He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

John 3:36

The End.