

## Why Did Jesus Christ Die On a Cross?

Sunday, March 27<sup>th</sup>, 1988

### 1 Peter 3:18

*“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.”*

I want you to open your Bible with me to 1 Peter Chapter 3, verse 18. My subject today is, “WHY DID JESUS CHRIST HAVE TO DIE ON THE CROSS?” We read in the Bible and we hear preachers preach about it and people talk about it. Jesus Christ died on the cross. He suffered an ignominious, painful, terrible death on that cross. My question today is, “Why did Jesus Christ have to die on the cross?”

Here, in 1 Peter 3:18, it says; *“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust that He might bring us to God.”* That is the key! *“He suffered, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.”*

Now, in introducing this message, I want us to look at some things clearly revealed in God’s Word. I want us to look at some things that are very positively and clearly revealed. If you want to jot these down, you may do so. I will give them to you very slowly and clearly. Here is the first thing we know, beyond a shadow of a doubt, and is clearly revealed in God’s Word, that our God is Eternal and our God is Almighty.

The Scripture says, *“From everlasting to everlasting Thou art God.”* There are two Chapters in Isaiah that you need to read in reference to God’s Eternality and God’s Sovereignty and that is in Isaiah 45 and 46. He says, in Isaiah 45, *“I am the Lord and there is none else. There is no God beside Me. I formed the light; I create darkness; I make peace; I create evil; I the Lord do all these things.”* God is Almighty! By Him and in Him, all things exist.

Isaiah 46 says, *“My council shall stand; I will do all My pleasure. I have spoken it; I will bring it to pass. I have purposed it; I will do it.”* It won’t help our situation any to compromise the character of God. The Scripture says, *“Let God be true and every man a liar.”*

Whatever your thoughts or opinion concerning God may be, let it be a lie if it compromises the character of God. It is not going to help us; it is not going to improve our situation to compromise the character of God. So, let this be established from the Scriptures.

This is like what Nebadchadnezzar the king said, when he came to his senses, he said; *“The most high ruleth in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth and giveth it to whomsoever He will.”* God is eternal from everlasting to everlasting and God is Almighty.

All right, second, our God is not only eternal and Almighty but our God is Holy. God is Holy, *“Holy and Reverend is His name.”* The chief attribute of the living God is His Holiness. The Scripture says, *“God is in His Holy Temple; He commands His Holy angels; He dwelleth in the Holy of Holies between the cherubim on the mercy seat.”* When Isaiah saw the Lord, he said; *“The Seraphim around the throne of God cried, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts.”*

The chief priest of Israel who came into the presence of the Lord on the Day of Atonement with the blood sacrifice, came in with this inscription across his forehead; *“Holiness to the Lord.”* Our God is Holy and *“He dwells in a light to which no man can approach.”* Do you see that?

These are things that we know. These are things that are clearly revealed and established in the Word of God. First, our God is Eternal and our God is Almighty. And secondly, our God is Holy, *“Holy and Reverend is His name.”*

The Holiness of God is indescribable. The Holiness of God is incomprehensible. The Holiness of God makes Him unapproachable by man. *“Who can stand in His Holy presence, he that hath clean hands and a pure heart who has never lifted up his soul to vanity and never spoken deceitfully?”* God is Holy!

Third, we know we are sinners. Do you have any doubt about that? If you have any doubt about that look into the Word of God. If you have any doubt about your sinner hood, look into your own heart. If you have any doubt about this truth, look at the character of God.

When Isaiah saw the character of God and the Holiness of God, he cried; *“I am undone; I am cut off.”* When Daniel saw the Holiness of God, he said; *“My comeliness melted into corruption.”* When Job saw the Holiness of God he said, *“I abhor myself; I repent in sackcloth and ashes.”*

We are sinners, not only in Adam, but we are sinners by birth. David cried, *“In sin, my mother conceived me. I was shapen in iniquity; I was brought forth from the womb*

*speaking lies.” We are sinners by birth and all of us are sinners, “For all have sinned and come short of the Glory of God.”*

God said in Psalm 14 *“He looked down from heaven to see if there were any that did understand.”* He said, *“They are all gone out of the way; they are altogether become filthy (this word “filthy” means stinking). There is none good, no not one. There is none righteous, no not one. There is none that understandeth; there is none that seeketh after God.”* In fact, the Lord God said; *“Every imagination of man’s heart is only evil continually.”*

This sinfulness is a nature. This sinfulness is not only a deed, it is not just an action, but it is a nature. It is a nature from which all of our actions flow. We do what we do because we are what we are. We aren’t what we are because we do what we do, we do what we do, because we are what we are; we are sinners. In the flesh, no man can please a Holy God. *“In the flesh dwelleth no good thing. Man at his best state is altogether vanity.”* Now, that’s the truth! That is what the Word of God declares.

If you are still with me, let’s go to the fourth thing. This is clearly revealed in the Word of God. Our God is Holy, our God is Eternal, our God is Almighty, and we are sinners. This nature of sin with which we are born, this nature of sin of which we are plagued, and this nature of sin that dwells within us, is impossible to change. The principle of evil makes it much easier to do evil than to do good. This nature makes it easier to think evil, than to think good and this nature of sin, is impossible to change.

I care not what any man may say; it is impossible to change. Jeremiah the prophet said that. He said, *“Can the black man change his skin? Can the leopard change his spots? Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil.”* Paul said, *“The carnal mind, (the natural) mind is enmity against God; it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed, can it be.”*

In John 5:40 our Lord said, *“You will not come to Me that you might have life. Let another come in his own name, and him you will receive. I have come in My Father’s name and you receive Me not.”* It is cannot and will not. The carnal mind and the principle of sin, this body of sin, this nature of sin, is impossible to change. It cannot change and it will not change.

*“This is the condemnation, that light has come into this world and men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil.”* The prophet said, *“Your sins have separated you and your God.”* It is your sins that have separated you and God. That

sinful nature is impossible to change. One day, the disciples asked the Lord; *“Well, who then can be saved?”* He said, *“With men it is impossible.”*

All right, here is the fifth thing. Here is the good news, Almighty God is not only Holy, Just and Righteous, but *“God is love.”* That is what the Scripture says; it does not say, *“God is a God of love; it says, “God is love.”* Just as God is Holy, just as God is Righteous, God is love and God is merciful.

One day, Moses said to the Lord; *“Lord, show me your glory.”* Show me Your chief Glory, Your greatest Glory; *“Show me your glory.”* Moses saw all of these things, the plagues in Egypt, the sea divided, the manna on the ground in the morning, and the smitten rock.

He knew in his heart that he had not seen the chief glory of God. This is what he asked, *“Lord, show me your (chief) glory.”* This is found in Exodus Chapter 33, verses 18 and 19. The Lord replied, *“I will cause My Goodness to pass before thee.”* God’s Goodness is His glory. He said, *“I will be merciful to whom I will be merciful. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious.”* That is my glory.

In Exodus 34:6-7, the very next chapter, it says, *“The LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth. Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty.”* Yes, He is holy and righteous, but merciful and gracious.

What are you saying preacher? I’m saying that God is love, God is merciful, and God is gracious. David said in Psalm 130 *“If Thou Lord, shouldest mark iniquity, who shall stand?”* Will you or me? If God should charge and mark and hold accountable every sin and every stain and transgression, who is going to stand and who shall stand?

David didn’t stop there. He said, *“But; there is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared.”* In other words, God is merciful and God is love. God’s love (like His Holiness) must be expressed. God’s love and mercy (like His truth and justice) must be expressed and it must be revealed. God must be merciful (and God will be).

He has determined and decreed and designed to have a people that will populate heaven in happiness and glory. He has determined to have a people like His dear Son. God is merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in goodness, but He, *“Will by no means clear the guilty.”*

You are guilty, and so am I, and so is every other son of Adam. Every human being is guilty. *“All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. What the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped and all the world become guilty before God. God will by no means clear the guilty.”* If God will forgive sin and God will pardon the guilty, then this pardon and this mercy must be done, must be accomplished in a way consistent with His holiness.

Here is the sixth thing that we know, beyond the shadow of a doubt. If God shows His love, it will be a holy love. If God reveals mercy, it will be a mercy in agreement with Holiness. If God is gracious, it will be grace revealed and consistent with His righteousness. It must be!

This is what gave birth to the Gospel. This is not complicated, this is just so. This is what gave birth to the Gospel and this is the good news of the Gospel. This is what Moses wrote about. Our Lord said, *“Moses wrote of Me.”* Moses wrote about this Gospel of redemption, this Gospel of salvation according to the righteousness and holiness of God.

This is what Abraham saw. This is what made him glad. This is what the angels sang about at Bethlehem when they said, *“We bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people. Unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.”*

This is what the Bible is all about, it is about how God can be Just and yet justify the ungodly. The Bible is all about how God can be righteous and truth and yet show His mercy, love, and forgiveness to sinners. In the fullness of the time, in God’s own time, in the fullness of God’s grand design which was purposed from all eternity, (when it pleased God), sent His Son Jesus Christ, His Eternal Son into the world, born of a virgin.

God doesn’t change, *“He is the same yesterday, today and forever.”* What God does today He has always done. What God decrees today He has always decreed. He does not change. He never learns anything, or forgets anything. Almighty God, in the fullness of time, (when it pleased God), He sent His Son Jesus Christ His Eternal Son into the world born of a virgin.”

He said, *“I’ll give you a sign”* (this is in Isaiah 7:14), *“The Lord Himself will give you a sign; a virgin will be with child and she shall bring forth a son and call His name Immanuel (God with us).”* He said in Isaiah 9:6-7, *“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of*

*Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.*” That child is born, that Son, the Eternal only begotten well beloved Son of God, who inhabited that body of the virgin’s child is given.

Paul said, *“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.”*

John says. *“He was made flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory”* He perfectly obeyed God’s Law, *“He was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin.”* He died on a cross. This is the thing that we are talking about, He died on a cruel cross.

Dying on a cross was not an accident. The Word says, *“It pleased God to bruise Him.”* It was not an accident. *“It pleased God to bruise Him. He was smitten of God and afflicted.”* When Peter talked about His death on the cross, on the Day of Pentecost, that great sermon, said; *“You with wicked hands have crucified the Lord of glory, but you did what God determined before to be done.”* God is the first cause of all things. He was smitten of God.

He said, *“No man takes My life from Me; I lay it down. I have the power to lay it down and to take it up.”* He died. God not only permitted His death; He decreed it. God not only permitted men to crucify His Son but *“He was smitten of God and afflicted.”* He was carrying out the *“Determinate council and foreknowledge of God.”* He died!

He was taken down from that cross and was buried in a tomb. He arose, and ascended to glory where He is seated at the right hand of God. That is the message of the Gospel. *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. He that believeth on the Son hath life; he that believeth not the Son of God shall never see life but the wrath of God abideth on him. This is the record that God hath given us eternal life and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son of God hath life and he that hath not the Son of God shall never see life. There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.”*

So, this is a fact, this is true and it is according to the Word of God. Christ the Lord, Christ the Son of God, came to this earth and became a Man. Now, the question rises, why was it necessary for Him to become a Man? Why was it necessary for Him to live a perfect life upon this earth? Why was it necessary for Him to die upon a cross? Why is Jesus Christ and His death on that cross, the only way for sinners to come to God?

There is no question; that is what the Word of God says. *“I am the way the truth and the life and no man cometh to the Father, but by Me. None other name under heaven given*

*among men. Other foundation can no man lay that is laid. I'm the door, by Me, if any man enter in.*" Why is all of this necessary?

Well, I will answer it in a two-fold manner. First of all, the answer is set forth clearly in the Word of God. The Word of God says this in Isaiah 45, *Look unto Me and be ye saved*, we are all familiar with that Scripture. But He also He declared; *"I am a Just God and a Saviour."* I am both; I am Just and I am a Saviour. I am holy and I am merciful. I am righteous and I am love. He is both. How can He be both?

He said in Romans Chapter 3, *"He set forth Christ Jesus to be propitiation, (a mercy seat, a sin offering and a covering for sin) that God may be Just and the Justifier of those who believe on Christ."* In our text, *"He suffered the Just for the unjust that He might bring us to God."*

In Second Corinthians 5:21, the Scripture says this; *"Christ, who knew no sin was made sin for us, in order that we might be made the Righteousness of God in Him."* Galatians 3:13 says this, *"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us."* In other words, all of these verses of Scripture are saying this, in order for God to be just, holy and righteous, and yet show His mercy, grace, and love, our debt had to be paid. His Law had to be honored. His justice had to be satisfied. A sinner (a man, the God-Man) had to die.

That Man dying honored that Law and satisfied the justice of God. In other words (and learn these two words); substitution (Christ took our place) and satisfaction (He honored the Law and satisfied God's Justice).

Here is an illustration: This is the second way that I want to deal with it. Most people think of Daniel and the lion's den and that is all they know about it.

There was a great king named Darius. He had three presidents over his kingdom of which Daniel was one. He had 120 princes. These other men were jealous of Daniel because he was the favorite of the king.

These men came into the kingdom one day and made up a plan. They said, "Let's go to the king and let's propose that if any man pray to any god, or ask a petition of any man other than the king for 30 days, then that man will be thrown into the lion's den."

So, they went to the king and said, "We want to honor you O king." They said, "Here is what we want you to do. We want you to sign a decree (a law), that if any man or

woman prays to any God or asks a petition of any man, except you for 30 days, we will throw him in the lion's den."

The king said, "That is a good petition; that is a good way to honor me." So, he signed the law. He signed the law of the Meades and the Persians, which could not be changed. They knew that Daniel would pray. They went down to his house and found him praying. So, they brought him before the king and said, "O king, Daniel has already violated the decree, and it can't be changed. It is a law and it can't be changed. You have to throw him in the lion's den."

Well, the king was angry and upset with himself. He walked the floor all night. He couldn't figure out a way to deliver Daniel. He came to him and said, "Daniel; that is the law; I signed it and it can't be changed; you will have to be thrown in the lion's den and I hope that your God will deliver you."

So, he took Daniel and threw him in the lion's den. Did you know that God did deliver him? Here is the point that I am trying to make, King Darius' law could not be changed. His law was an unalterable, unchangeable law signed by the king. When a man violated it, he had to suffer the just punishment.

Let me tell you this, the Laws of the God of Heaven, because of His holiness and justice and righteousness, cannot be changed. They cannot be altered. They are Eternal and *"The soul that sinneth it will die. The wages of sin is death."*

So, you and I have sinned. We have broken God's Law and we are guilty. We have to die. The Law says that we are guilty and the curse of the Law is upon us and the judgment of God is upon us. What are we going to do? Are we to be cast into hell into the lion's den of eternity? Oh no!

Christ came down here, the innocent for the guilty, the Just for the unjust. Our Lord Jesus Christ became a man and he did what we couldn't do; He honored God's Law; He obeyed God's Law and He kept God's Law. He did what we couldn't do. The Law said, "We must die." He went to the cross and died. He paid the debt and He satisfied God's justice and satisfied God's Law.

He didn't die as a reformer; He didn't die as a martyr. If King Darius could have found a substitute, then he could have set Daniel free. No substitute was found. The guilty had to die. The reason Christ could die was that *"He was numbered with the transgressors."* He actually bore our guilt and bore our sin and paid for them. Now God can forgive us,

pardon us, and set us free because Christ has paid the debt, honored Justice, satisfied the Law and God can be Just and justify you.

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. That is why He had to die on the cross, in order that God may be Just and justify you and me.