

Crucified on Calvary

John 19: 17-30

We have considered much in recent weeks concerning the journey Jesus made as He left the Upper Room with the eleven and made His way toward Calvary. This was a time filled with intense emotion, horrific abuse, and unimaginable suffering. He has been betrayed by His own countrymen, condemned to death upon the cross, and scourged mercilessly. Having made His way through Jerusalem, Jesus has been brought to the hill of Golgotha. There He will be crucified at the hands of sinful men for the redemption of mankind.

This passage is difficult to consider. It reveals the extreme abuse and suffering of our Lord, and yet it reveals hope. We must bear in mind, as difficult as this is to consider, the crucifixion of Christ was not some horrible mistake. Granted, an innocent Man was convicted of crimes He had not committed and condemned to death, but it was all within the sovereign will of God. In order for humanity to be forgiven of sin and reconciled to God, Jesus had to die on the cross. Had these events not happened, there would be no atonement for our sin. Jesus fulfilled God's eternal plan of redemption as He bled and died on the cross.

I want to examine our text and consider the [realities](#) they reveal. These verses do not speak of a fable or legend. They record the crucifixion of Christ for the sin of the world. Let's take a few moments to consider: [Crucified on Calvary](#).

I. A Place of Distinction (18-19) – Calvary is certainly a place of distinction. It is impossible to fully grasp the enormity of that place and the event of Jesus' crucifixion. Consider:

A. The Setting (18) – [And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called *the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha*](#): Jesus was led to a hill, just outside Jerusalem, known as Golgotha. This would have been a place that all the people were familiar. The Romans had carried out many crucifixions and Calvary was a hill reserved for such punishment. The rock formations found naturally on Calvary resembled that of a skull. This was a place of suffering and death.

- I have tried to imagine how Jesus felt as He made His way to this place. He was God robed in human flesh. He was with the Father in eternity past, prior to creation. Jesus was there as Calvary's hill was formed. He knew there would come a day when He would offer Himself as the sacrificial atonement for sin on that very spot. Calvary is not just a place where condemned criminals were put to death. It is the place where the sinless Son of God, bore the sin of humanity as He died in our place. The eternal plan of God was about to be fulfilled on this lonely hill outside of Jerusalem.

B. The Sacrifice (18) – *Where they crucified him, and two other with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst.* John simply states: they crucified Him. As Jesus was brought to Calvary, He was placed on the cross and lifted up. This was a very traumatic experience, specifically designed to inflict as much pain and suffering as humanly possible. He was crucified between two other men who were also condemned to death.

- As I read these words, I was again reminded of the great sacrifice Jesus made for all humanity. The other men had committed crimes worthy of death. They were guilty and forced to suffer their just reward. Jesus was innocent of all charges. He was the sovereign God in bodily form. His power, authority, and compassion had been shown time and again, and yet He was rejected by His own people. It was there on Calvary that Jesus suffered in our place. The righteous God took our sin and guilt upon Himself, suffering the righteous judgment we deserved. The Man in the middle made an eternal sacrifice and difference that faithful day!

II. A Place of Opposition (19-22) – The opposition Jesus dealt with leading up to the cross followed Him to Calvary's hill. Notice:

A. The Announcement (19-20) – *And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS.* ^[20] This title then read many of the Jews: *for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city: and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin.* As Jesus was crucified, a plaque was made by Pilate and affixed to the cross. It declared this Man was, Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews. Likely this was written of Pilate to reveal the accusations brought against Jesus. The Jews had presented Him as a man who claimed to be a king, guilty of stirring up trouble against Roman authority.

- We are certain Pilate did not recognize Jesus as the Christ. He was not regarded as the Son of God or King, but Pilate's proclamation revealed truth. Those who had consented to His death never recognized Jesus as the Christ, but God used a pagan governor to proclaim the deity of His Son to those who looked on that day. It was written in each of the common languages so all could read the words inscribed.

B. The Argument (21-22) – *Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews.* ^[22] *Pilate answered, What I have written I have written.* The Jews were unhappy with the title Pilate displayed. They urged him to make a distinction declaring this man merely claimed to be the King of the Jews. This further confirms their opposition and rejection of Jesus. They wanted none to assume that Jesus was their King. Amazingly Pilate refused to make any changes and left the title as it had been written. God saw to it during the crucifixion that testimony was given of Christ regardless of the opposition of the Jews.

- Many continue to voice the same concern and opposition today. They refuse to embrace Jesus as the Christ. They want to emphasize His claims, but refuse to identify with Him. I am thankful that I have embraced Jesus as the Christ, submitting to Him in salvation. The day will come when all who have denied the deity of Christ will bow at His feet and proclaim Him Lord.

III. A Place of Condescension (23-24) – Here we find the actions of the soldiers as they stood at the foot of the cross. Their actions reveal the condescension of Jesus. Consider:

A. The Humility (23) – Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. As Jesus hung upon the cross in shame before the onlookers, soldiers gambled for His garments. He bore the sins of the world, suffering from horrible abuse, and the soldiers add to His shame my gambling for the few possessions He had.

- This is the Son of God, and yet He has no more than a few worldly possessions. He has been stripped of His garments and his accusers don't even have the dignity to offer the few things He does own to those who loved and cared for Him. I am amazed when I consider how our Lord humbled Himself as He became the sacrifice for our sin. He laid aside the glory He possessed with the Father to put on a robe of flesh, and now He hangs before the multitude in open shame. Phil.2:7-8 – 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.

B. The Prophecy (24) – They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did. The actions of the soldiers was actually a fulfillment of prophecy. This was revealed centuries earlier in Psalm 22:18. The life and ministry of Jesus was carried out according to the sovereign will of God and the events of the crucifixion were no exception. Again we are reminded and assured that the crucifixion of Jesus was not a horrible accident or great mistake. These events were planned before the foundation of the world and carried out to the smallest detail. Jesus fulfilled every prophecy concerning His coming as He lived here upon the earth. There can be no doubt He is the Christ, Savior and Lord!

IV. A Place of Devotion (25-27) – As difficult and lonely as the past few hours had been for Jesus, there were a few who followed Him to the cross out of love and devotion. Notice:

A. The Gathering (25) – Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. Most had rejected or abandoned Jesus, but there were faithful women who accompanied Him. We cannot begin to imagine the grief and anguish these felt as they stood before the cross. His mother was likely flooded with memories of His life with her. One can only wonder how much of this Mary actually comprehended until the events began to unfold. Mary Magdalene was there, having been delivered from demon possession. Her devotion to Jesus was unrivaled. John was there, but he was the only disciple who appeared at the cross. These were committed to go as far as they possibly could with Jesus.

- This ought to serve as a challenge for each of us. This was certainly not convenient for them, and there would have been risks involved in publicly identifying with Jesus, but they were undeterred. Most today have trouble identifying with the Lord on Sunday mornings within church services, much less among a hostile, unbelieving world. I pray we will determine to serve the Lord and identify with Him wherever and whenever we can!

B. The Grace (26-27) – When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! ^[27] Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home. In His dying moments, suffering unimaginable pain, Jesus made provision for His mother. He ensured she would be cared for after His departure. His focus remained on the needs of others instead of His present suffering.

- This is a powerful example of the grace and mercy of our Lord. The same grace is offered to all who will look to Him by faith. He made provision for every man as He died upon the cross. He was not there to atone for His sin, but to make the way of redemption for us! The grace of God was put on display for the world to see at Calvary!

V. A Place of Redemption (28-30) – There is much in these final verses. There is a lot that we could consider, but I want to focus on the redemption Jesus secured. Notice:

A. The Triumph (28) – After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. We find an interesting and definitive statement here. Jesus knew all things were now accomplished. The onlookers may have viewed a defeated man, one whose claims had not worked out, a complete failure. However, the perception of the onlookers did not reveal reality. Jesus had known of this moment since before time began. He had fulfilled the plan of God completely up to this point. Jesus knew He had been obedient to the will of God in securing redemption for humanity. Although He was enduring great pain, this was a triumphant moment for Jesus. His faithfulness to the plan had been successful and God was pleased.

- The world would have us believe it's hopeless, but nothing is further from the truth. Jesus fulfilled redemption's plan and secured salvation for us. He was triumphant!

B. The Transaction (30) – *When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.* Here we find the greatest statement ever uttered from human lips. Jesus had completed the work of redemption. He had fulfilled every requirement necessary to purchase our redemption. His sacrifice was complete, and it had been sufficient. He knew the Father was pleased with His work. The sin of mankind had been atoned. His was the final and fulfilling sacrifice. Never again would blood be shed for sin. He provided the means of salvation for humanity in the offering of His sinless body as the sacrificial atonement for sin.

- After proclaiming the work complete, Jesus bowed His head and gave up the ghost. He wasn't murdered on the cross. His life was not taken from Him. He freely gave it, at the time of His choosing, to atone for sin. He willingly laid it down and He powerfully took it up again. His death provided the means of atonement, but He was always in complete control. Having risen triumphant from the grave, He conquered sin and death. Those who belong to Christ in salvation have nothing to fear, not even death! He rose from the grave in resurrection life and all the saved will as well, just as He did!

Conclusion: These verses are difficult to consider. They reveal the awful treatment and suffering our Lord endured. However, they are reason to rejoice as well. This was all carried out in accordance to the will of God. This was all within His plan for our redemption and reconciliation. I am thankful Jesus was willing to bear my sin and take my place. He endured all of this on our behalf. He provided the means of salvation for all who will respond in faith.

This passage is personal for me because I have identified with the Lord. Do you know Christ as your Savior? If not, I urge you to respond to His call for salvation. If you are saved, I pray you will be reminded of all Jesus endured for you. This passage ought to challenge every believer to live a life that honors Christ. He is worthy of our love and devotion!