

# The Death of Our Savior

**Text: John 19:17-42**

**Introduction:** I've known all my life that Jesus died to pay for my sin. In fact, I cannot remember a time when I did not know and believe that precious truth.

When I was a small child, I sat in Sunday School and watched as my Sunday School teacher told the story of the crucifixion using a flannel graph. I remember going to Vacation Bible School as a child and hearing about the death of Jesus on the cross to pay for my sin.

I was in high school at Halifax Christian School when Mel Gibson's hit movie *The Passion of the Christ* was released. Our school took a field trip to go and watch the movie at the theater. I remember being struck by the gruesome depiction of Jesus being scourged by Roman soldiers.

I've seen the artistic renderings of Jesus hanging on the cross. I've read each of the Gospel writer's accounts of the crucifixion more times than I can count. I've sung songs about the crucifixion. I've read children's Bible stories about the crucifixion to my kids. I've preached sermons about the crucifixion. I've spent a lot of time being confronted with the reality that Jesus died to pay for my sin. I know that many of you could give similar testimony this morning.

But I know that in my own life, all of this exposure to the crucifixion of Jesus CAN have the effect of desensitizing me to the suffering that my Lord Jesus endured in His crucifixion on my behalf. Perhaps you feel that a bit as well. As Christians, we must guard our hearts against desensitization.

This morning we're looking at the death of Jesus to pay for our sin. We've been making our way through the latter part of John's Gospel. We started with the Farewell Discourse. But now we've come to the crucifixion.

I'm not necessarily against flannel graphs, and movies, and artistic renderings. But it's important that we not lose sight of what God has actually said in His Word concerning the crucifixion of Jesus. Flannel graphs and movies and artistic renderings are not inspired by God. The Bible is inspired by God.

So, we want to know what God has said. And that's where we want to focus our attention this morning. We're in John 19. You can find John 19 beginning on page 851 in the black pew Bible in front of you.

(Read John 19:17-42...Pray)

Jesus died to save sinners. That's the main idea of our text this morning. As we make our way through John 19, we're going to look at seven details John highlights to show that Jesus died to save sinners. The first is...

## **I. The sinners on either side – “Crucified him...with two others” (John 19:17-18).**

The text says... (Read vs. 16b-18)

### **A. After Pilate delivered Jesus over to be crucified, the next thing John tells us is that Jesus “went out, bearing his own cross” (vs. 17a).**

- 1. This is consistent with what we know of Roman practice.**
- 2. Those delivered to be crucified would carry the horizontal cross piece on their back to the place of execution, where the upright beam was already in the ground.**
- 3. Carson writes, “The victim was then made to lie on his back on the ground, where his arms were stretched out and either tied or nailed to the [horizontal beam]. The cross-member was then hoisted up, along with the victim, and fastened to the vertical beam. The victim's feet were tied or nailed to the upright, to which was also sometimes attached a piece of wood that served as a kind of seat that partially supported the body's weight. This was designed to increase the agony, not relieve it” (Carson, 608).**

### **B. We know from verse 17 that the place where Jesus was crucified was called The Place of a Skull, or Golgotha in Aramaic.**

1. **This was a public place where all could see Him.**
2. **We don't know the exact location. Carson states that the most likely site is near the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, just outside the northern wall, and not far from a road.**
3. **What's most important is that in this location, The Place of a Skull, Jesus was crucified.**
  - a. **In the ancient world, crucifixion was always associated with shame and horror.**
  - b. **It was such a brutal practice that no Roman citizen could be crucified without the sanction of the emperor.**
  - c. **After being stripped naked and beaten, the victim could hang in the hot sun for hours or even days.**
  - d. **To breathe, victims of crucifixion had to push with their legs and pull with their arms to keep the chest cavity open and functioning.**
  - e. **Crucifixion was truly a terrible way to die.**
  - f. **But this is exactly what our Lord endured on our behalf. In our place. As our substitute. They crucified Him.**

**C. And with Jesus were two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them (vs. 18).**

1. **All four Gospels report that Jesus was crucified with two others.**
2. **We know that they would have been criminals. Matthew and Mark call them robbers.**
3. **While he doesn't reference it here directly, perhaps John was thinking of Isaiah's prophecy as he mentions those who were crucified with Jesus. Isaiah 53:12 says, "He poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors."**
4. **The Romans probably intended to shame Jesus further by placing Him between two criminals.**
5. **But what we should really see in this is the significance of Christ's atoning work upon the cross.**

6. **Jesus was scoffed at throughout His ministry for associating with sinners. However, as Richard Phillips notes based on Mark 2:17, He came not to call the righteous, but sinners (Phillips, 548).**
7. **Leon Morris writes, "For the writers of the Gospels this was not an insult but the expression of an important truth. Jesus came to save sinners. He died to save them, and the fact that on the cross he hung between people who were obviously grievous sinners graphically illustrated that truth. His death was a death on behalf of sinners, and his position when he died brought that out for those who had eyes to see" (Morris, 658).**
8. **The death of Jesus to save sinners is good news for sinners like you and me. The Bible says that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. We don't measure up. The penalty we deserve for our sin is death. But Jesus took our place. He took our sin on Himself and died as our substitute.**

We've seen the sinners on either side. Next let's look at...

## **II. The sign above His head – "King of the Jews" (John 19:19-22).**

- A. **John tells us that Pilate wrote an inscription and put it on the cross, which read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews" (vs. 19).**
  1. **It was common for a person's crime to be written on a tablet or placard and hung around his neck or carried out in front of him as he made his way to the place of crucifixion.**
  2. **Then when he was actually crucified, the sign would be fastened above his head on the cross.**
  3. **John also tells us that the inscription was written in three languages: Aramaic, Latin, and Greek (vs. 20).**
  4. **As a result, many were able to see it and read it.**
- B. **This upset the Jewish religious leaders (vs. 21).**

1. In fact, they wanted Pilate to change it. They said, “Do not write, ‘The King of the Jews,’ but rather, ‘This man said, I am King of the Jews’” (vs. 21).
2. To which Pilate responded, “What I have written I have written” (vs. 22).
3. This is likely Pilate’s last act of revenge in the case. He has already taunted the Jews with Jesus’ kingship, and he continues that here. Pilate’s refusal to change the sign is not motivated by principle. Rather, it’s intended as a finger in the eye of the Jewish religious leaders.

**C. Despite Pilate’s ulterior motive, there are a couple of reasons why the inscription is significant.**

1. The first is the truth that Jesus was and is the King of the Jews. He was and is Israel’s Messiah. He was and is the fulfillment of God’s promise of a King to sit on David’s throne and reign forever.
2. In fact, not only is Jesus the King of the Jews. As we saw last Sunday, He is King of kings.
3. Carson points out that the trilingual title may serve as a symbol of the proclamation of the kingship of Jesus to the whole world (Carson, 611).
4. Pilate is unwittingly furthering God’s redemptive purposes.
5. The one they crucified. The one they sought to humiliate. The one they sought to exterminate. Is King of kings.

We’ve seen the sinners on either side. We’ve seen the sign above His head. Number 3...

**III. The garments removed from His body – “Let us...cast lots” (John 19:23-24).**

**A. John tells us that the soldiers who crucified Jesus divided His clothes among them (vs. 23-24a). (Read vs. 23-24a)**

1. According to custom, the clothes of an executed criminal became the property of the executioners as a perk.
2. Apparently, there were four soldiers, so they each got something.
3. But then there was the tunic. Since there was no way to divide the tunic in an equitable way, they decided to cast lots for it. The one who cast the winning lot would receive the tunic.

**B. What the soldiers didn’t know about their decision to cast lots for the tunic was that they were doing so according to the divinely ordained plan of God and in fulfillment of OT prophecy.**

1. John alerts us to this reality in the second half of verse 24 where he writes... (Read vs. 24b)
2. This is a quotation from Psalm 22:18 which is understood as one of the Messianic Psalms.
3. David was in distress. In fact, his distress was so significant that he uses the image of an execution scene where the executioners distribute the victim’s clothes to demonstrate the depth of his sense of abandonment.
4. Because David in the OT points forward to Jesus in the NT, John, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit identifies Psalm 22:18 as prophecy concerning Jesus. And here in John 19, as the soldiers cast lots for Jesus’ garments, we see this prophecy being fulfilled.

**C. The point is this: Jesus is the promised Messiah. God is in complete control. Jesus’ death is no accident. Everything is happening exactly as God intends, even down to the very details of what happens to His clothes.**

1. As John is going to say later in the chapter, he is telling you this so that you may believe.
2. What are you going to do with the evidence of hundreds of years old prophecies being fulfilled in the death of Jesus?

3. I'm telling you what you ought to do. Turn from your sin and place your faith in Jesus.
4. He died to pay for your sin. He died to save sinners like you and me.

We've seen the sinners on either side. We've seen the sign above His head. We've seen the garments removed from His body. Now look at...

#### **IV. The women by the cross – “Woman, behold, your son!” (John 19:25-27).**

John continues... (Read vs. 25-27)

- A. We ought not miss the fact that while most of the disciples had deserted Jesus at this point, the women are there with Him at the cross to the very end.
  1. And for that, they are to be commended.
  2. In fact, we'll see next week that it is the women who are the first to discover the empty tomb.
  3. This is a reminder to us of the importance of women in Christ's church. The truth is that the church could not function without the faithful service of women.
  4. We are blessed at Goshen to have many women who serve Jesus and His church so faithfully.
- B. But there's one particular woman who stands out here in John 19. It's Mary the mother of Jesus.
  1. You can imagine the pain that she must have felt as she stood at the foot of Jesus' cross. There was the pain that all of Jesus' followers would have experienced. But for Mary, there was a particular pain as she watched the one to whom she had given birth hang upon a cross.
  2. When Jesus was just a baby, the old man Simeon had prophesied in the temple about this pain that Mary would experience. He said, “A sword will pierce through your own soul also” (Lk. 2:35). And here in John 19, as Jesus is crucified, we see Simeon's prophecy being fulfilled.

3. As we think about the pain that Mary must have felt, John emphasizes the tender care that Jesus shows to Mary even from the cross.
4. Jesus saw her standing nearby. He also saw the one identified by John as “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” We believe this disciple was John himself.
5. And Jesus said to Mary, “Woman, behold, your son!” He then said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother!”

#### **C. A lot has been said about what is going on here in this intimate moment between Jesus, Mary, and John.**

1. A lot of the Roman Catholic understanding of Mary as Co-Redemptrix is built on this interaction.
2. But Jesus' focus seems to be on ensuring that His mother would be cared for after His death.
3. His care for her can and should be understood as Him obeying the 5<sup>th</sup> commandment to honor your father and mother all the way to death. And in this, Jesus is an example to us. We ought to follow His example and seek to honor our father and mother.
4. But you'll notice that Jesus does not address her as mother. He addresses her as woman. Some commentators have speculated that Jesus was seeking to spare Mary the grief of hearing her Son calling on her as His mother. And perhaps that's true. But I think it's more than that. Jesus is alerting Mary to her need to relate to Him not as a mother but as a woman, a descendent of Eve, who needed to trust Him as her Savior.
5. J.C. Ryle writes, “Henceforth she must daily remember, that her first aim must be to live the life of faith as a believing woman, like all other Christian women. Her blessedness did not consist in being related to Christ according to the flesh, but in believing and keeping Christ's Word” (Ryle, 3:51-52).
6. You see, the truth is that Mary is no Co-Redemptrix. It is Jesus who died to pay for our sin. It is Jesus who redeemed us with His blood. Not Mary. She was in the same boat we're in. Sinners who've fallen short of the

**glory of God. Sinners who deserve death because of our sin. Sinners whose only hope is Jesus. Mary needed a Savior just like you and me.**

We've seen the sinners on either side and the sign above His head. We've seen the garments removed from His body and the women by His cross. Now we turn our attention to...

#### **V. The final words He spoke – “It is finished” (Jn. 19:28-30).**

##### **A. John tells us of two more things Jesus said from the cross. The first was “I thirst” (vs. 28). (Read vs. 28-29)**

- 1. Everything to this point has happened exactly according to God's plan. Jesus knew that. He knew the OT Scriptures, and He understood exactly how He was fulfilling them.**
- 2. Included in everything happening according to God's plan is Jesus' obedience to the Father's will. We see that even still in these last moments of Jesus' life as He states His thirst. For John tells us that it was “to fulfill the Scripture” that He said, “I thirst.”**
- 3. John doesn't specifically identify the Scripture that is being fulfilled.**
  - a. It could be Psalm 22:15 where the psalmist's tongue sticks to the roof of his mouth, presumably because he is thirsty.**
  - b. Others have suggested Psalm 42:2 or 63:1 where the psalmist writes, “My soul thirsts for God.”**
  - c. But the most likely reference here is Psalm 69:21 which states, “And for my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink.”**
- 4. It's possible that Jesus knew that by stating His thirst he would trigger the soldiers' effort to give Him some wine vinegar.**
- 5. As Carson writes, “Either way, John wants to make his readers understand that every part of Jesus' passion was not only in the Father's plan of redemption but a consequence of the Son's direct obedience to it” (Carson 619-620).**

##### **B. In verse 30, we read Jesus' final words spoken from the cross: “It is finished” (vs. 30). (Read vs. 30)**

- 1. In the Greek text, it's only one word that Jesus speaks, *tetelestai*. In English, *it is finished*.**
- 2. The point is that Jesus' work was done. He had accomplished what He came to earth to accomplish.**
  - a. Your salvation. My salvation.**
  - b. He came to live the sinless life that you and I could not live.**
  - c. And then He went to the cross and died the death that you and I deserved to die.**
  - d. He died in our place as our substitute. He took our sin on Himself and suffered and died to pay for our sin.**
- 3. You'll notice that John says Jesus “gave up His spirit.” Understand that no one took His life from Him. He laid it down of His own accord.**

We've seen the final words He spoke: It is finished. Now see...

#### **VI. The spear in His side – “Him whom they have pierced” (John 19:31-37).**

John writes... (Read vs. 31-35)

- ##### **A. The normal Roman practice was to leave on the cross until they died those who were crucified.**
- 1. This could often take several days.**
  - 2. But if there was a reason why they needed to speed up a person's death, the soldiers would smash the legs of the victim with an iron mallet.**
  - 3. This would prevent the victim from pushing up with his legs to keep his chest cavity open. The victim would then die of suffocation.**
  - 4. They were going to do this to Jesus, but when they got to Him, they realized that He was already dead (vs. 33).**

**B. So, instead of the normal practice of breaking the victim's legs, one of the soldiers took a spear and stuck it in Jesus' side (vs. 34).**

- 1. John writes that blood and water came out.**
- 2. John emphasizes this to make sure that His reader understands that Jesus really was dead. There's no doubt about it.**
- 3. That becomes especially important as we come to chapter 20. Because some throughout history have tried to argue that Jesus wasn't resurrected. He must have still been alive when they placed Him in the tomb. That's of course a ridiculous assertion that has no relationship to the facts John highlights here in John 19.**
- 4. John is writing so that we may believe. His testimony is true. Jesus really was crucified to pay for our sin. He really did die in our place as our substitute.**

**C. John also highlights that Scripture is fulfilled in the actions of the soldiers (vs. 36-37). (Read vs. 36-37)**

- 1. The first OT reference is Exodus 12:46 and Numbers 9:12 and has to do with the Passover lamb whose bones were not to be broken. The point is that Jesus is our Passover lamb. Where the Passover lamb in the OT was slaughtered as a reminder of God's protection of Israel in the Exodus from Egypt, we know that Jesus was slain for us.**
  - A. 1 Corinthians 5:7 says that "Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed."**
  - B. 1 Peter 1:18-19 says, "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect."**

**2. The other OT reference concerning the spear is Zechariah 12:10.**

- a. The very next chapter of Zechariah begins, "On that day a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and impurity."**
- b. Jesus is that fountain.**
- c. As the hymn writer wrote, "There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins; And sinners, plunged beneath that flood, Lose all their guilty stains."**

Finally, I want you to see...

**VII. The tomb where He was laid – "They laid Jesus there" (John 19:38-42).**

(Read vs. 38-39)

**A. We could spend a lot more time here, but I want you to quickly notice just a few things.**

- 1. Joseph of Arimathea was a follower of Jesus, but secretly. Here he steps out into the open. He's no longer a secret follower of Jesus. In Jesus' time of greatest need, he determines that he cannot deny his Lord. It could have been dangerous for Joseph to associate himself with Jesus at this point. But he's not concerned with that. He's only concerned with ensuring that Jesus receives a proper burial.**
- 2. Next, look at Nicodemus. If you're familiar with John's Gospel at all, you know about Nicodemus. He first encountered Jesus back in chapter 3. It was His conversation with Nicodemus that triggered Jesus' words in John 3:16. We aren't told in John 3 what happened to Nicodemus. Did he believe? Did he determine that the cost of following Jesus was too high? We don't know what transpired with Nicodemus between John 3 and John 19, but John makes clear in chapter 19 that Nicodemus is now a follower of Jesus.**

**B. The last thing I want you to see is the burial of Jesus (vs. 40-42). (Read vs. 40-42)**

- 1. Jesus really was dead, and He really was buried.**
- 2. This is significant because the burial of Jesus is the link between His crucifixion on Friday and His resurrection early Sunday morning.**
- 3. But more on that next time.**

**Conclusion:** The main idea of this text and this sermon is that Jesus died to save sinners. Sinners like you and me.

If you've never turned from your sin, and you've never placed your trust in Jesus, today is the day of salvation for you. You can be made right with God today. If you will simply turn away from your sin and trust in the finished work of Jesus on the cross for you. The Bible says that if you will confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. Won't you trust Him today?

Dear Christian, I hope you're not bored with this message. I hope you never tire of hearing how the Lord Jesus suffered and died to pay for your sin. He took the penalty that you deserve. He took your sin on Himself. He died as your substitute. You deserve death. You deserve separation from God forever in hell. You deserve God's punishment. But Jesus took it on Himself.

What does this mean?

- It means you have the hope of eternal life, Christian. One day you will be with God.
- It also means that today you no longer have to live in the shame and guilt of your sin. It has already been paid for. It has already been forgiven. You've been washed clean. God doesn't look at you and see your sin, Christian. He looks at you and sees the righteousness of Jesus.
- It means that if you, Christian, are caught in sin today, you can confess that sin to God. And He is faithful and just. He will forgive you your sin. And He will cleanse you from all unrighteousness.

- The death of Jesus on your behalf also means that you have direct access to God the Father. You can boldly approach His throne in prayer and receive help in your time of need.

Do you see why you can never grow tired of hearing about the cross of Christ? We can spend a lifetime exploring and experiencing all the implications of Jesus' death in our place.

*O how sweet to trust in Jesus,  
Just to trust His cleansing blood;  
Just in simple faith to plunge me,  
'Neath the healing, cleansing flood.*

*Yes, 'tis sweet to trust in Jesus,  
Just from sin and self to cease;  
Just from Jesus simply taking  
Life, and rest, and joy, and peace.*

*I'm so glad I learned to trust Thee,  
Precious Jesus, Savior, Friend;  
And I know that Thou art with me,  
Wilt be with me to the end.*