

IN THIS IS LOVE.

April 10, 2009.

Introduction.

Many things have been said over the centuries to describe the death of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross. But one fact is very clear in God's word. The death of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross was no accident. Please turn to *Acts 2:22-23*. The apostle Peter declared in his sermon on the Day of Pentecost, "Men of Israel, listen to these words : Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know – this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death."

Peter charged the Jews and their leaders with murder when they crucified the Lord Jesus Christ. Peter repeated his charge in *Acts 3:15; 4:10; 5:30*. In *Acts 10:39* Peter told a Gentile audience that the Jews murdered Jesus. In *Acts 7:52* Stephen charged the Jewish religious leaders with betraying and murdering the Lord Jesus. Finally, in *Acts 13:27-28* Paul charged that "those who live in Jerusalem, and their rulers ... though they found no ground for putting Him to death, they asked Pilate that He be executed." In other words, even though the Jewish leaders used Rome's legal covering, they were still guilty of murdering Jesus.

The Jewish religious leaders demanded that the Lord Jesus be executed out of sheer envy, anger and hatred. *Matt.27:18* tells us that Pilate knew the Jews were acting out of envy. *Jn.11:47-53* tells us that the Jewish religious leaders plotted to murder Jesus out of sheer greed and the desire to protect their positions in the nation and before the Romans.

Blinded by the great evils in their own hearts, the Jewish religious leaders did not know that in getting Jesus legally executed they were also carrying out the predetermined plan of God.

The Lord Jesus also fully understood why He came to this earth. In *Matt.16:21* we are told, "From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day." In *Lk.9:51* we are told, "when the days were approaching for His ascension, ... He resolutely set His face to go to Jerusalem."

Crucifixion was the most barbaric and most cruel form of execution every devised by man. Why was it the predetermined plan of God the Father that His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, be executed by crucifixion? I want you to note the words "predetermined plan". They tell us that this was God's set and unchanging plan, will or purpose from eternity. Peter's clear point is that in eternity God the Father willed the legal execution of Jesus, His Son. The second question we must ask is : Why did the Lord Jesus willingly submit Himself to this death? Paul wrote, "He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." (*Phil.2:8*). The answers to the questions before us are two-fold. With the Lord's help I want to open up to you the Biblical answers to the questions.

The Fall Of Mankind.

The first part of the answer is also two-fold : (1) the fall of mankind into sin, and (2) what Jesus accomplished. We begin with the fall of mankind into sin. *Gen.chap.3* documents for us Adam's rebellion against God and fall into sin. *Gen.chap.4* documents for us the first murder. Cain murdered his brother, Abel. The chapter also documents for us Lamech's bigamy and murder of a young boy. By the time we reach *Gen.chap.6* we discover that the moral corruption and deterioration of the world had fallen to a very

frightening level. *Gen.6:5* says, “the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” *Vs.11* adds, “the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence.”

The question that springs into the mind is : **“What happened?”** The answer to this question is made clear in the New Testament. Please turn to *Rom.5:12*. Paul wrote, “through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and so death passed to all men, because all sinned.” Sin gained its entry into this world through Adam’s disobedience to God. When sin came, death also came. But I want you to note now what the verse is saying. Note the words “all sinned.” God is saying to us that when Adam sinned every human being sinned. And every human being yet to be born became a sinner. We must note also that the death that came to Adam also “passed to all men.” The verb **“passed”** tells us that death made its way to each individual member of the human race. The point in this verse is that every human being is a sinner and in a state of death.

Now let me summarize the Biblical picture for you. The Bible clearly teaches that every human being is a sinner. We are born as sinners (*Psa.51:5*) and this is why we sin. We are not born innocent and only become sinners after we commit our first sin. *Psa.58:3* says, “The wicked are estranged from the womb; They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies.” When a baby in a crib tells his first lie, screaming out as if he is some kind of terrible pain or in the clutches of death, he does so because he was born a sinner. *Rom.3:23* says, “for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” *Gal.3:22* says, “the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin.” There are no exceptions here. **“Everyone”** means everyone. The verb “shut up” means shut up on every side with no possibility of escape. You are sin’s prisoner without any possibility of escape. Furthermore, Jesus said you are also sin’s slave. (*Jn.8:34*). From this point onwards, the picture gets worse and worse.

The Bible teaches that sin dwells in your body. (*Rom.7:17, 20*). Sin has corrupted your entire being, your physical body, your mind, your emotions and your will. There is not even one good act that you can do that is not tainted and corrupted by sin. Sin is like a drop of ink dropped in a glass of pure water. Sin is like the worms in a beautiful, ripe, perfect looking guava. This is why God has said, “There is none righteous, not even one; There is none who does good, there is not even one.” (*Rom.3:10, 12*).

People think they are good. And from all appearances, they are. But the Bible says, “man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.” (*1Sam.16:7*). *Jer.17:9* says, “The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately wicked; Who can understand it?” *Vs.10* says, “I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind.” The point here is that the Lord alone understands the great wickedness that hides itself in the heart of men and women. This is the wickedness that revealed itself without restraint in *Gen.6*. This is the kind of unrestrained wickedness we are seeing taking place today.

Rom.8:8 says the sinner “cannot please God.” In the N.T. “cannot” is the word that is used to describe impossible things. Keep this word in mind because we will meet it again. *Rom.8:8* means it is impossible for the sinner to please God. Just as that beautiful but worm-filled guava cannot please you, so too the sinner cannot please God. Have you ever seen someone pick a ripe guava and bite into it and then look at the guava? As a child I have seen it happen and I have also done it – bite first and look after. The look on such a person’s face is what you will call a Kodak moment.

The Bible teaches also that sin alienated you from God and made you an actively hostile enemy of God. *Col.1:21* describes the sinner as “alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds.” *Rom.1:30* describes the sinner as a hater of God. *Jn.14:15* says those who love the Lord obey Him. Sinners do not obey God. This is why they are sinners and described as those who hate God.

Rom.5:12 says when man fell into sin he died. **Eph.2:1** describes the sinner as dead in transgressions and sins. **Rom.6:23** says “the wages of sin is death.” Now what is this death the Bible speaks about? Firstly, it is physical death. Because of sin your body will grow old and decay and die. (**2Cor.4:16**). **Heb.9:27** says you have an appointment with death. Aging and death are two consequences of sin that man will never be able to beat. When I began preparing this sermon on Wednesday, the Worldometer said approximately **116** people were dying every minute in our world. **Heb.9:27** says “it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment.” After you die the next event on your appointment calendar is final judgment before God.

Secondly, the death sin brings is spiritual death. Spiritual death speaks of separation from God. We have noted already **Col.1:21** which says you were alienated or estranged from God. This is the settled condition of your relationship with God as a sinner. And no reconciliation can take place between you and God because **Col.1:21** & **Rom.8:7** say you are actively hostile toward God. You are waging war against God with every act of disobedience to His word.

Spiritual death speaks also of the sinner’s inability of respond to the things of God. **1Cor.2:14** says you “cannot understand” the things of God. Because you cannot understand the things of God you regard the things of God as foolishness and so do not accept them. **1Cor.1:18** says the gospel message of the cross of Christ is foolishness to sinners. **Jn.3:3** says you “cannot see the kingdom of God.” In other words, Jesus is saying that it is impossible for the sinner to see, perceive or understand the kingdom of God.

Finally, **Jn.3:36** says the wrath of God is abiding on the sinner. Picture the wrath of God as a very dark rain-filled cloud. That cloud is hovering over you wherever you go, waiting for the right moment to begin pouring out God’s wrath upon you. **Rom.5:6** says that as a sinner you are helpless. The idea here is that the sinner is altogether helpless. **Eph.2:12** says you are without hope and without God in the world. **Psa.5:4** says, “You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness; No evil dwells with you.” In

other words, the sinner has no hope of entering God's presence in heaven because sin cannot dwell in God's presence.

Altogether helpless, hopeless, without God, and with wrath of God abiding on you, the sinner has only one destination reserved for him – the second death. What is this second death? *Rev.20:14* tells us, "This is the second death, the lake of fire." What is waiting for you as a sinner is, in a word, hell. Jesus described hell as the place of eternal fire and eternal punishment. (*Matt.25:41, 46*).

What Jesus Accomplished?

We turn our attention now from mankind's fall into sin to Jesus coming into this and dying on the cross according to the predetermined plan of God. What did Jesus' coming to this earth and dying on the cross accomplish? Let us keep in mind that Jesus did not come into this world of His own accord. He came because it was His Father's will. Jesus said in *Jn.5:36*, "the Father has sent Me."

Jesus was born into this world as a sinless human being. In order for the Lord Jesus to undo what Adam did and save sinners He had to begin where Adam began – as a sinless human being. He was born a sinless human being and He had to live a sinless life. He lived a perfectly righteous life. Unlike Adam, when He was tempted by Satan, He was not in Eden's perfect environment. He was tempted in a wilderness environment that was hostile to Him.

Jesus asked the Jews, "Which one of you convicts Me of sin?" (*Jn.8:46*). Which one of you can lay a charge of sin against Me and prove that charge? The fact is, if Jesus had committed one sin, He wouldn't have been able to save anyone. He would have needed someone to save Him. In *Lk.1:35* the angel described Jesus as "the holy Child." *Acts 3:14* describes Jesus as "the Holy and Righteous One." *2Cor.5:21* says He "knew no sin." *Heb.4:15* says He was "tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin."

Heb.7:26 describes Him as “holy, innocent, undefiled.” **1Pet.2:22** says He “committed no sin.” **1Jn.3:5** says “in Him there is no sin.”

Now, in outline form let us note some of what Jesus accomplished when He died on the cross. **Rom.6:23** says “the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” In this verse, we have a contrast between death and eternal life. And so, the primary meaning of death must be the very opposite of eternal life. Eternal life is salvation in Christ with the final result of eternal heavenly bliss. Death is no salvation with the final result of eternal punishment. (cf. **Matt.25:46**). The penalty for breaking God’s law is death. When Jesus died for sinners on the cross He experienced and endured the fullness of God’s eternal punishment the sinner must experience and endure. In the mystery of God, from the moment Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane to the moment He cried out, “It is finished” (**Jn.19:30**), and died, Jesus experienced and endured the fullness of God’s eternal punishment reserved for sinners.

Jesus’ death in the place of sinners was a legal transaction. The sinner is a law-breaker. The legal penalty for breaking God’s law is death. The sinner is condemned to die. But Jesus took the sinner’s place and died in his stead. When Jesus died in the sinner’s place, He took the sinners sin, guilt and condemnation. And as **2Cor.5:21** makes clear, the sinner was given Jesus’ righteousness. Clothed in Jesus’ righteousness, the sinner is pronounced righteous and set free. From the standpoint of God’s legal judgment, this is the primary aspect of the sinner’s salvation in Christ.

Eph.2:1 says, “you were dead in your trespasses and sins.” **Vss.4-5** says, “But God, ... even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ.” We saw the sinner was alienated from God and the enemy of God. **Rom.5:10** says, “while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son.” The Biblical picture goes a great step beyond reconciliation. **Gal.4:5** says Christ redeemed us so that we might receive the adoption of sons. **1Jn.3:2** says, “Beloved, now we are the children of God.”

1Tim.1:15 says “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” The sinner who comes to the Lord Jesus Christ, repenting of his sins and putting his trust in Jesus to save him, receives salvation and becomes a child of God. God’s clear promise is this : “Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved.” (*Rom.10:13*). *Jn.1:12* says, “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.”

Christ’s death on the cross accomplished the sinner’s salvation. The sinner who is saved is no longer dead; no longer separated from God; no longer living under the wrath of God; no longer facing God’s judgment and condemnation; no longer facing the eternal wrath of God is the lake of fire; no longer an enemy of God; no longer helpless and hopeless. The sinner who is saved is a new creation in Christ (*2Cor.5:17*), a child of God, and on his way to an inheritance that is imperishable and undefiled and reserved in heaven for him. (*1Pet.1:4*).

The Love Of God.

Why was it the predetermined plan of God the Father that His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, be executed by crucifixion? I stated the answer is two-fold. I have given to you the first part of the answer, the fall of mankind into sin and what Jesus accomplished by His death on behalf of sinners. The second part of the answer is the love of God. It because of God’s love for sinners that it was His predetermined or eternal plan that His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, must die on the cross.

Let me share with you the various passages in God’s word with some brief comments. We begin with the most famous verse, *Jn.3:16*, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.” The verb “**gave**” points to the cross. The word “**so**” points to the astounding degree and manner of God’s love for sinners. The combination of “so ... that” tells us the gift He gave matched His love. He gave His only begotten Son to die

for us. Note the verb that is used as the opposite to receiving eternal life. It is the verb “**perish**”. Those who do not believe in the only begotten Son of God for salvation will perish for all eternity.

Rom.5:8, “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” The verb “demonstrates” has the idea of displaying the proof. Paul’s point is that Christ’s death is a continual reminder of the proof that God loves us, that God loves sinners.

Eph.2:1-3 describes for us the wicked and wretched state we were in as sinners. We were dead men and women; dominated by the world; dictated to by Satan; dedicated to the flesh; and destined for hell. **Vs.4** begins with “But God....” But God intervened and took action to save us. Paul wrote, “But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).” Note carefully the language used to describe God : rich in mercy; great in love. God intervened and acted to save us because He is rich in mercy and because of the greatness of His love. Note carefully, the reasons for God’s intervention and action are in God. The reasons are not in the sinner.

This brings us to **1Jn.4:9-10**, “By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation form our sins.” The verb “manifested” means to reveal and make clear. The word “propitiation” is a word that is not liked very much in our modern world. Some translations of the Bible do not use it. It means to appease or satisfy God’s wrath. Christ death on the cross appeased and satisfied God’s wrath and removed God’s wrath from us. God sent His Son to be the propitiatory sacrifice because He loved us.

John clearly emphasized that we did not love God. He loved us and took the ultimate action to prove His love for us. This is why John wrote in *vs.19*, “We love Him because He first loved us.”

I want to turn your attention now to verses that emphasize Christ’s love for us. In *Jn.15:13* Jesus said to His disciples, “Greater love has no one than this, that one lays down his life for his friends.” *Eph.5:2* says, “Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us.” *Vs.25* says, “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her.” Finally, Paul personalized this love in *Gal.2:20* when he wrote, “the Son of God ... loved me and gave Himself up for me.”

The verb “**gave**” appears three times in these verses. As I noted for you earlier, the verb “**gave**” points to the cross. The proof of Christ’s love for you is that He “**gave**” Himself up for you, He gave Himself to die on the cross for you, that is, as your substitute. Jesus died so that you could live. He took your condemnation so that you could go free, He took your sins so that you could receive His righteousness. He endured your hell so that you could go to His heaven.

Responses.

Now in closing I have two things to say. **Firstly**, if you are not saved, if you do not know Jesus as your Lord and Savior, if your sins have not been forgiven in Christ, if you have no hope of eternal life in Christ, I speak to you. Because of the greatness of His love for sinners, God took action to save sinners. The action cost God very dearly. The price He paid was infinite. The cost of your salvation is the death of God’s only begotten Son. As the Holy Judge, God had to condemn His Son to die and suffer hell itself because of your sins. God had to judge, condemn and carry out the sentence Himself.

What men did to the Lord Jesus as they punished Him and beat Him and then nailed Him to the cross do not compare to the divine wrath He had to endure at His Father's hands for your sins. The cup that made the Lord tremble and sweat drops of blood was not filled with man's wrath. That cup was filled with God's wrath and only the Father and the Son knew the real contents of that fearsome cup.

The infinite and astounding greatness of God's love for you does not end with the death of His Son. The salvation the Son achieved for you is now offered to you freely. **Rom.6:23** says, "the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Your salvation in Christ is God's free gift to you. All you have to do is receive it. All you have to do is bow and say, "*Lord, I want this free gift of salvation in Christ. I am repenting of my sins and putting my trust in Jesus alone to save me.*"

In a real sense sinners are going to an eternal hell because they are spurning God's great love and rejecting God's free gift of salvation for them in Christ. Let me illustrate. Here is a person who needs a bone marrow transplant to save his life. Only one match has been found for that transplant. You say to the person, "*I will pay you any price if you will give me that transplant.*" But the person says to you, "*I will give you the bone marrow as a free gift.*" If you reject this free gift because you insist you must pay, what will happen to you? You will die.

God's salvation for you in Christ is a free gift. If you refuse it, regardless of your reasons, you will die and go to an eternal hell. What will you do with God's free gift of salvation in Christ? That's the question you must answer. Your answer will determine the eternal destiny of your soul. What will your answer be? I plead with you on the behalf of Christ, let your answer be that you will receive from God's hand the free gift of salvation in Christ.

Secondly, I address those who are saved, those who have received from God's hand the free gift of salvation in Christ. You have heard about the greatness of God's love for

you. You have heard of the greatness of Christ's love for you. What is your response to this great love? The hymn-writer wrote :

**“Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were an offering far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.”**

Is this your response?