

WHY CALVARY?

By Dale DuVerney

Have you ever wondered to yourself, “**Why did God chose to use Calvary for the atoning work of Jesus?**” Truly the Cross of Calvary’s hill was one of the cruelest acts to ever be inflicted on any one person. Why did Jesus have to suffer so? There were certainly other ways for Jesus to have been killed, why choose Calvary?

I think it best for us to begin in a few of the prophetic scenes in the Bible that look to the coming Christ. We begin in the Garden with man’s sin. Adam and Eve had violated the law of God regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 3:1ff). They were subject to the law of sin and death - you sin, you die (Romans 8:2; 1 Corinthians 15:56). But, God had a plan by which He would keep them from having to die, spiritually. He would send One to deal a deathblow to Satan and atone for the sin of Adam (and every sin-stained soul) - but it would bruise the heel of the One sent (Genesis 3:15; cf. Isaiah 53:10). The inspired psalmist brought us to that cruel scene - the bruising of Jesus - to the very foot of the cross: “*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? ... All those who see Me ridicule Me; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, “He trusted in the LORD, let Him rescue Him; let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!” ... dogs have surrounded Me; the congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me... They divide My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots. They pierced My hands and My feet...*” (Psalm 22:1ff). Isaiah painted a “Polaroid” picture of the scene when He wrote the 53rd chapter of the book that bears his name. The **Suffering Servant** was willing to come, and though rejected he took our place - offering Himself on our behalf. But, why Calvary?

Man Needed A Perfect Sacrifice

The blood of animals was shed to clothe man, sacrificed because of man’s sin (Genesis 3). If it was just a matter of modesty, those fig leaves could have covered the whole body. It was more than modesty. Fig leaves could cover the body but they could not cover the sin! Substitutionary sacrifice had to be made! Animals were instituted as a sacrifice to atone for man’s sins. Later, Israel was commanded to make offerings which would serve as a reminder of their sin year after year (Hebrews 10:1-10). In the reminder of their sins, they would ever look for the One who would come and take away their sins once and for all. The reminder of their sins would show the insufficiency of animal sacrifices for sins and the need for a lasting sacrifice (Hebrews 10:4). Without the shedding of blood of a Perfect sacrifice there would have been no remission of sin, thus no salvation. (Mat. 26:26-28).

Friends, it took the cross to satisfy the **justice** of God. When perfect man Adam fell, it would take a perfect sacrifice to satisfy the justice of God. Notice what the apostle wrote to the Roman church:

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned (For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man’s offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many.
(Romans 5:12-15).

Jesus died literally in Adam's stead! Adam and Eve should have died a violent death at the very moment they sinned, but God had already planned for the event of their disobedience. By offering for that one man and woman, God made the sacrifice for all men, for all time (cf. Hebrews 7:27; 9:28). The inspired Paul elaborated on this point when he wrote: “. . . we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:20-21). Why was the Christ made the sin offering for man? Because man could not do it! It was man's only hope for forgiveness, justification and redemption. This Christ did willingly with nothing to gain for Himself except us.

The concept of substitution is hard for our minds to get around! We need to realize that every man who ever sinned deserved to die a cruel violent death, therefore any substitute would have to endure the same. Since all men eventually sin, all men are subject to the penalty (Rom. 3:23; 6:23). Our Lord suffered the cruelest form of punishment known to man because we deserved it ourselves! All this he did freely, for you and for me. “*Jesus...the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God*” (Heb. 12:2; cf. also Romans 5:6-8).

***Man Needed An Example Of Sacrifice
Jesus Demonstrated Through His Sacrifice The Need For Our Own Self-Sacrifice***

When Paul wrote to the Philippian church of the need for Christians to care for one another he used the ultimate example, Jesus! Notice what the inspired apostle wrote:

Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.
(Philippians 2:3-8)

Though Jesus was God, he **made** of himself no reputation, came in the likeness of man and obeyed God to the point of death, dying on the cross! Peter also wrote of the example Jesus set: “*For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps*” (1 Peter 2:21). His is an example of love, obedience and sacrifice for others! Are we not called to be living sacrifices for God (Galatians 2:20; Romans 12:1-2)? If we are following Christ’s example, we too would be obedient to God, even if it meant dying for our faith (Revelation 2:10). Those in the first century were at time put in the position of having to lay down their lives for the brethren (1 John 3:16). In dying to self we are following the perfect example of the Christ (cf. Romans 6:1-7; Luke 9:23).

The cross was the most humiliating way for one to die during this period of time. The cross was a symbol of criminal justice. It was always used as a public example! One came away from the scene with a fear thinking - “I will not be that man!” In the case of Christ, it was the innocent dying for the criminal. Just think of the symbolism of the release of Barabbas in the place of the Christ, the guilty for the guiltless! (Matthew 27:17-26).

Humility and self-denial is a very hard thing for most people to accomplish. Seldom will one be willing to take the "back seat" to others. Most often our very nature has been trained to take control of every situation that we might be praised and glorified. Some have the, "THAT’S NOT FAIR" attitude about life. Not so with Jesus. He took our place, he suffered on our behalf, the guiltless for the guilty, the sinless for the sinful! Jesus set the ultimate example of humility and self denial. He left the throne of glory in the richest of palaces, to come and live a poor existence. Have we not shed tears as we sang the song “Ivory Palaces,” putting into song the sentiments of this very thought? The apostle Paul wrote: “*For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.*” (2 Cor. 8:9). Just think of his love as he cried out for God’s forgiveness for those who would eventually kill him (Matt. 23:37).

Brethren, the Lord expects no less from us! We are told to let this very mind to dwell in us (Phil. 2:5ff). Think of the example Jesus set in John 13:12-17 as before His betrayal, trial, scourging and crucifixion he washed the disciples feet! Jesus said: “*If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me*” (Luke 9:23). Literally, “Let a man keep on crucifying himself.” How could we think of doing less than our Savior. Jesus set the standard for all to follow; and stated (Rev. 2:10).

***Man Needed To See How Evil Sin Is
It Took The Cross For Man To See How Evil His Own Personal Sin Really Is***

Man tends to rely upon himself and his own intellect to make choices he determines best for his path. However, "...the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps" (Jeremiah 10:23). The psalmist stated: "*The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, and He delights in his way*" (Psalm 37:23). Because most men do not open God's word he has a very hard time seeing his own sin (cf. James 1:22-25). Brethren and friends, we need to start with ourselves; our sins brought forth the necessity of the cross. One can easily read his own name in the text as he reads Isaiah 53:3-5. Everything Jesus endured was for you and me!

The violence and evil of man's heart is seen in the crucifixion---man killing his God. Those on the day of Pentecost felt the impact of their sin (Acts 2:36-42). We have had a "front row view" to the crucifixion in this study! We must realize it was our sin that held Jesus to the cross not the rusty nails nor the men who drove the nails through his flesh. One should easily see the love of God in the crucifixion (John 3:16; Romans 5:6-8). Truly greater love hath no man... (John 15:13).

Many of both that day and present day view God as some far away being who could care less what is going on with His creation. Some dare to think: "Surely God is too great and powerful to care what happens to me." However, the Bible teaches that God is near to every one of us (Acts 17:27). We are told even the hairs of our head are numbered (Matthew 10:30). Surely God loves each one of us dearly! God loved man enough that even when Christ was crucified He did not crush man into infinity. Emotionally speaking, how would you feel? Jesus spat upon, mocked, slapped around, beaten, and even had the hairs of his beard plucked out! Would any of us allow that to happen to our child with no reaction? Would we allow someone to do that to our child with no response? But God did---Christ did. Romans 5:8 takes on even more special meaning to us: "*But God commended his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*" How can man accuse God of not caring? What more could God have done?

Conclusion

Why Calvary? Why did Jesus die on the cross? Why did he endure the suffering? Why did he bear the humiliation? Why did he allow the violence of man to be perpetrated against him? He did it because of His desire to have all men saved by coming to a knowledge and obedience to the truth. Will you continue to reject His gift? Will you continue to be lost and without hope? Or will you come to His grace this very hour? Obey the author of your salvation by confessing your faith that He is the Christ (Matthew 10:32-33), repent of every sin past and present (Luke 13:3-5) and be baptized into the Christ for the forgiveness of your sins past that you may be added by the Lord to His church (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38, 41, 47).

Christian, will you continue to be lax in your service to him? May we never forget the price that was paid for us: "*For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's*" (1 Cor. 6:20). With all that He has done for you, will you not this day determine in your mind: "All to Jesus I surrender!"