

Seven Reflections on The Meaning of the Cross

1. *Christ's death was a free-will choice.*

“No one takes [my life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.” *John 10:18*

“And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem.” *Luke 9:51*

“Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels.” *Matthew 26:53*

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep.” *John 10:11-15*

A plan, from the beginning of time:

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” *John 3:16*

“Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’” *John 14:6*

2. *Christ's death was predicted, 700-1000 years before His birth*

“He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken. He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it was the LORD's will to crush

him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand. After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light [of life] and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.” *Isaiah 53, 3-12*

“I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted within me. My mouth is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death. Dogs surround me, a pack of villains encircles me; they pierce my hands and my feet. All my bones are on display; people stare and gloat over me. They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment.” *Psalms 22, 14-18*.

3. *Christ's death was redemptive*

A redeemer at that time was someone who bought someone else out of slavery. In our case, God purchased us out of our slavery to sin by the death of His Son on the cross. The debt against us is not viewed as simply canceled, but is fully paid.

“It is finished” John 19:30. Greek: *tetelestai*, “paid in full”, an accounting term.

Christ's life is the "ransom" by which the deliverance of people from the servitude of sin and from its consequences (eternal punishment) is secured.

“Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.” *1 Corinthians 6:19-20*

“For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace” *Ephesians 1:4-7*

“For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” *Colossians 1:14*

“For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people.” *1 Timothy 2:5-6*

“While we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.”
Titus 2:13-14

“Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us” *Hebrews 9:12*

“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.”
1 Peter 1: 18-19.

“And they sang a new song, saying: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation.’” *Revelation 5:9*

4. *Christ's death was substitutional*

The punishment Christ received is what we deserve for our sins. We are, in judicial terms, repeat offenders- repeat offenders of God's law. God is just and sin must be dealt with: a punishment must be meted out. But in His Love for us, He sent his son to take the punishment for us.

“But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.” *Isaiah 53, 4-6.*

“and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed” *1 Peter 2:24*

“He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” *2 Cor. 5:21*

“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit.” *1 Peter 3:18*

5. *Christ's death was reconciliational*

Reconciliation: reestablishing relations between former enemies/belligerents
Through Christ's death, God not only reconciles us to Himself, but He also reconciles Jews and Gentiles.

“Now all things *are* of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation” *2 Corinthians 5: 18-19*

“And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight— if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister” *Colossians 1:21-23*

“Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

For He Himself is our peace, who has made both (Jews and Gentiles) one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, *that is*, the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man *from* the two, *thus* making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near.” *Ephesians 2:11-17*

6. *Christ's death is for all people*

“And they sang a new song, saying: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation.’” *Revelation 5:9*

“For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people.” *1 Timothy 2:5-6*

“and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again” *2 Corinthians 5:15*

7. *Christ's death was shameful*

“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree." *Galatians 3:13*

“You must not leave his body on the tree overnight. Be sure to bury him that same day, because anyone who is hung on a tree is under God's curse. You must not

desecrate the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance.”
Deuteronomy 21:23

“In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!” *Phillipians 2: 5-8*

•Crucifixion was a slow, excruciating and shameful death. The victim was stripped naked, nailed to a cross and left to linger slowly dying for hours or even days while passers-by hurled insults and mocked the victim. The scourging, mocking, and crucifixion of Christ should remind us of how God abhors sin, and what He thinks is an appropriate punishment for sin! In a sense, this is the treatment we deserve for our continual breaking of God’s law.

“Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden *His* face from you, so that He will not hear. For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue has muttered perversity.” *Isaiah 59:1-3*

•But it also should remind us that Christ knew the depths of human pain, suffering and shame. He knew rejection, betrayal, mockery, emotional agony, as well as physical suffering. We have a sympathetic high priest:

“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin” *Hebrews 4:15*

“In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, 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 for our sins.” *1 John 4: 9-10*

“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” *Romans 5:8*

Our response to the cross

“One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: ‘Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!’ But the other criminal rebuked him. ‘Do you not fear God,’ he said, ‘since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.’ Then he said, ‘Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.’ Jesus answered him, ‘Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.’” *Luke 23:39-43*

*Some material excerpted from a sermon by Pastor Brian Brodersen, Calvary Chapel,
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