

## "Ironies of the Cross"

When you consider the cross of Jesus Christ, you'll find many surprises. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." Today we're exploring some of the ironies of the cross. Stay tuned.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. In the study of Scripture we seek to understand what the author intended to say in the context in which he said it. We have no desire to add to the word of God, to take away from the words of Scripture. We don't want to read into Scripture something that isn't there or ignore plain truths. We want to listen carefully and hear what God is saying. Thanks for taking time with us today. We'd love to hear from you and want to be a part of your life each week.

God taught us what He wanted us to know in Scripture. And we can usually take Scripture at face value, but this doesn't mean that Scripture doesn't use rhetorical devices to add force to the truth that it conveys. The Scriptures sometimes use irony to express what God wants us to know. An irony takes place when a statement describing an event or circumstance seems to contradict itself. The statement seems deliberately contrary to what one expects from the circumstances. But what appears to be mockery tells the truth. And what appears to be weak is strong. What appears to be cruel provides an example of supreme love.

We owe so much to the Lord Jesus for all that He has done for us. He was punished for our sake, a punishment that He didn't deserve, so that we didn't have to suffer a punishment. A punishment that we did deserve. 1 Peter 3 and verse 18 speaks of His suffering as "the righteous for the unrighteous." We couldn't save ourselves by ourselves and we're wholly dependent upon His gracious sacrifice. Sadly, many have lost sight of how great a sacrifice He made on our behalf. Just like those in the first century, they think nothing of putting Him to death. We pray that you'll think seriously about the cross of Christ.

Now this is an important study on the ironies of the cross, and we offer it free! If you'd like a printed copy and live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to [searchtv@searchtv.org](mailto:searchtv@searchtv.org). Or, you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have materials free on our website at [www.searchtv.org](http://www.searchtv.org) and on YouTube.

We'll now worship in song, we'll read from Mark 15:16 to 20, and explore the ironies of the cross.

Our reading today comes from the gospel according to Mark chapter 15 verses 16 to 20. And this is the story of Jesus with the Roman soldiers just as they were preparing Him to be crucified.

The soldiers took Him away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium), and they called together the whole Roman cohort. They dressed Him up in purple, and after twisting a crown of thorns, they put it on Him; and they began to acclaim Him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" They kept beating His head with a reed, and spitting on Him, and kneeling and bowing before Him. After they had mocked Him, they took the purple robe off Him and put His own garments on Him. And they led Him out to crucify Him.

What a horrible event. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful that You us so much. And we're so sorry that Jesus had to suffer so many things to show that love. And Father help us to love You with all our heart and soul and mind and strength. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

The more I study the cross of Christ, the more I find surprising things. The cross itself was an instrument designed to execute criminals in the most painful and prolonged way. It was cruel beyond measure. Both the Jews and the Romans worked together in order to execute Jesus with unfair trials,

beatings, mocking, scourging, and crucifixion. The apostle Paul explained in Acts 13:27 to 28, "For those who live in Jerusalem, and their rulers, recognizing neither Him nor the utterances of the prophets which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled these by condemning Him. And though they found no ground for putting Him to death, they asked Pilate that He be executed."

Crucifixion was a particularly cruel thing. The law would not allow Roman citizens to be crucified. That was reserved for criminals and slaves. In fact, polite Roman citizens did not even want the word mentioned among them. Seneca, who tutored and advised the Emperor Nero asked, "Can anyone be found who would prefer wasting away in pain dying limb by limb, or letting out his life drop by drop, rather than expiring once for all? Can any man be found willing to be fastened to the accursed tree, long sickly, already deformed, swelling with ugly weals on (his) shoulders and chest, and drawing the breath of life amid long drawn-out agony? He would have many excuses for dying even before mounting the cross." He asked can anyone be found who would suffer on the cross? Yes, the Lord Jesus would suffer.

Jesus endured the cross, despising the shame, for the joy set before Him. Hebrews 12:1 and 2 says, "Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." The shame of the cross was that Jesus was labeled as a criminal before the whole city. He was stripped of His clothes and had to observe the soldiers gambling for them. This, by the way, was a fulfillment of Psalm 22:18, which predicts, that "They divide my garments among them, And for my clothing they cast lots."

While Jesus felt shame for the time He hung upon the cross, (and) He focused on the joy set before Him. One might wonder what joy could Jesus possibly have in enduring the cross? Well, Jesus could see what His sacrifice that day would lead to in the future and in eternity. Death and Hades did not prevent Him from building His church. He could see the souls who would take up their crosses daily and follow Him. He could see the thief on the cross being in Paradise with Him. He could see being on the throne at the right hand of His Father.

In His suffering such a cruel punishment, Jesus showed overwhelming love to those who inflicted the pain and to all sinners. When they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him. But Jesus was saying, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34). While they were taking His life, He was thinking of their souls. Such love is immeasurable. Romans 5:6 to 8 reminds us, that "while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good (the) man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

The Father demonstrated great love when Jesus Christ suffered and died for people who could not save themselves, who never gave godliness a second thought, and were sinners against Him. Would you die a cruel death for someone who never gave a thought about you and someone who had sinned against you?

So determined were the Jewish Council to crucify Jesus that they chose Barabbas to be spared, while they called for Jesus to be crucified. Matthew calls Barabbas a notorious criminal. Mark said he committed murder and was an insurrectionist. John says he was a robber. Well, in contrast to this, Pilate repeatedly told the Jews he could find no fault in Jesus that was worthy of death. Peter said to

the Jewish Council in Acts 3 verses 14 to 15, “But you disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, but put to death the Prince of life, the one whom God raised from the dead, a fact to which we are witnesses.”

The Lord Jesus left heaven to become a man and to die for us. 2 Corinthians 8 verse 9 says, “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.” He left heaven, so you could go to heaven one day. Philippians 2:5 to 8 reminds us, “Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but (He) emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” The Creator of the universe, the Son of God, became human, humbled Himself, became a servant, and obeyed His Father by going to the cross. He sacrificed everything, so you could have the promise of heaven.

It’s insufficient merely to say Jesus died for us, for our sins. Isaiah 53 and verse 5 says, “But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.” Yes, He was wounded, so we could be healed. His stripes healed my sin-sick soul and gave me opportunity to change. He suffered so that you and I could find joy. Because He suffered for our sins, we can find peace in His forgiveness. He was a guilt offering for sins that He didn’t commit, so we could be delivered from the punishment that we deserved.

1 Peter 3 and verse 18 says, “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit.”

Sometimes people have little regard for Jesus Christ. They don’t want to make any commitment to Him, they don’t have time for Him, they don’t care about Him. But He cared for you to the point that He was nailed down, so you could be set free. He graciously paid the ultimate price so that you wouldn’t have to endure the wrath of God for your sins. He didn’t shirk from His determination to do the will of the Father. Have you shirked your duty?

The Scriptures tell of the agonized pleading of the Lord Jesus to be spared from the cross. Matthew 26 verses 37 and 38 tells of Jesus’ great agony in the Garden of Gethsemane: And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and distressed. Then He said to them, “My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me.”

Jesus fell on His face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will” (Matthew 26verse 39). Mark 14:36 describes His prayer, “Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will.” Jesus gave up hope of saving His life physically, so that you could have life spiritually with Him forever.

He gave up hope of saving His life, so you and I could have the hope of heaven. When the crowds came with swords and club or spears to arrest Jesus, you’ll recall that Peter thought he needed to defend Jesus by swinging his sword and cutting off the ear of Malchus, a servant of the high priest. Then the Lord Jesus told Peter in Matthew 26:52 to 54, “Put (up) your sword back into its place; for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword. Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels? How then will the Scriptures be fulfilled, which say that it must happen this way?” Jesus knew that what would happen next to Him, on the cross, was not only the will of the Father but also what had been prophesied in the Old Testament hundreds of years earlier. It had to happen.

The Jewish leaders who watched Jesus on the cross mocked Him as weak and helpless to save Himself. In Matthew 27:41 to 43 they say that: the chief priests, along with these elders and scribes and a, the others, were mocking Him and saying, "He saved others; He cannot save Himself. He is the King of Israel; let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe in Him. "He trusts in GOD; let GOD rescue him now, if he delights in him; for He said, 'I am the Son of God.'" And yet Jesus could have left if He's wanted.

Remember the 12 legions of angles. A legion at full strength is composed of 6,000 soldiers. The Lord Jesus could call upon 72,000 angels to defend Him at any time. Now the angels of God don't lose. They could have destroyed the whole nation to save Jesus. But Jesus realized His death on the cross must happen this way to fulfill the Scriptures. He didn't call on angles. Jesus put the predetermined will of the Father ahead of His own desire to live. He gave up hope of saving His physical life, in order to give you hope of eternal life. He did it out of love for His Father and out of love for you. Jesus would not save Himself, so that He might save you.

It amazes me how the words of those who sent Jesus to the cross were said in mockery but turned out to be true. The Roman soldiers mocked Him for saying that He's a King. As we read in Mark 15:16 to 20, "The soldiers took Him away to the palace (that is, the Praetorium), and they called together the whole Roman cohort. They dressed Him up in purple, and after twisting a crown of thorns, they put it on Him; and they began to acclaim Him, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' They kept beating His head with a reed, and spitting on Him, and kneeling and bowing before Him. And after they had mocked Him, they took the purple robe off Him and put His own garments on Him. And they led Him out to crucify Him." For these soldiers the claim of Jesus, the King of the Jews, was a reason for amusement. But, Jesus was indeed the King of the kings and the Lord of lords (Revelation 19:16).

If Jesus was going to the cross for saying He's the King of the Jews, Pilate wanted that known. John 19:19 to 22 says that, "Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It was written, "Jesus the Nazarene, the King of the Jews." Therefore many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Latin and in Greek. So the chief priests of the Jews were saying to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews'; but that He said (He was King of the Jews), 'I am King of the Jews.' Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written." Ironically, what Pilate wrote is indeed true! Jesus was King. Is Jesus also your Lord and King?

Let's pray together. Oh Father in heaven help us to realize the greatness of our Lord Jesus Christ. The greatness of His love, the greatness of His power, the greatness of His compassion and His gracious forgiveness. And Father help us to devote ourselves to Him as the King of kings and Lord of lords. And to do His will always. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus our Lord. Amen.

I too must deny myself daily to sin and the world if I wish to live eternally with the Lord. The Lord Jesus said in Luke 9:23 and 4 that, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it." Now each day you live, you're making choices as to what really matters. Some value the present to the loss of eternal, while others choose what is eternal. John wrote in 1 John 2 and verse 17, "And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever." To live forever, we must choose, like the Lord Jesus, to do the will of the Father.

Jesus suffered for several hours, so that you might live with Him forever. He wants you to believe in Him, to love Him, and to follow Him. The Lord Jesus said in John 12:32, "And I, if I am lifted up from the

earth, will draw all men to Myself.” Consider how much the Lord Jesus loved you and how He was willing to suffer for you to bring you to God. I pray that this look at the cross will draw you to Him.

To become a Christian, place your trust in the Lord Jesus and believe the gospel. When you do, the love that you’ll have for Jesus will turn your heart away from sin and lead you to live righteously. That’s repentance! If you have believed and repented, confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God and be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins (Acts 2 and verse 38). Please obey the Lord today!

We hope our study about the ironies of the cross causes you consider following the Lord’s way. If you live in the United States and want a free printed copy of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord’s Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to [searchtv@searchtv.org](mailto:searchtv@searchtv.org). Or, you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. There’s also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches in your area at [www.searchtv.org](http://www.searchtv.org). You can watch SEARCH anytime on YouTube! Subscribe to our channel, “SearchTVMinistry.” All one word. And be sure to like the programs you watch; this helps spread the program to others. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now don’t worry, we’re not asking for money. We’re here to help you draw close to God.

Focus your heart on God. Do that by worshiping at church. Everyone needs a church family. And there’s probably a church of Christ near you. If you’re looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we’ll gladly help you find one. Well, we’ll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God’s Word with us and tell a friend about this program. As always we say, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord’s Way.