

# CRUCIFIED!

Every Christian knows that Jesus died on the Cross so that his/her sins may be forgiven. However, the fulness of what it entailed for Him is unknown to most. The reality of what the Lord Jesus suffered for us and for the whole of fallen humanity is incomprehensible. But how important it is for us to know and understand! As we write this, we are filled with a sense of both awe and horror. We also feel a sense of inadequacy and a total dependency on the Holy Spirit to help us put it into words. Our prayer is that we, and every believer, may grasp more fully the awful reality of what it took to bring us salvation and how great is the love of God to give Himself for us.

In Bible days the Jewish form of execution was stoning to death (Acts 6:8-60). But, for the Lord Jesus to bring about our salvation, God chose the Roman means of execution. The judgment of crucifixion climaxed with the cross, but there was more involved prior to that. In the case of the Lord Jesus, there were three main realities of His crucifixion which were necessary for Him to suffer as our substitute and representative.

## THE EMOTIONAL REALITY

In order for Him to identify totally with us, Jesus, the eternal Son of God, took on human form,

*“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!” Philippians 2:6-8.*

As Man, he experienced all the emotions we do. Realising what lay ahead as He faced the Cross in the Garden of Gethsemane, He said to the disciples with him...

*“My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death”*  
...then to His Father...

*“...he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, ‘My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will’” Matthew 26:38-39.*

So great was His emotional agony He sweat drops of blood...

*“And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground” Luke 22:44.*

This is medically called “hematohidrosis”, a rare clinical phenomenon, which is “a condition in which capillary blood vessels that feed the sweat glands rupture, causing them to exude blood, occurring under conditions of extreme physical or emotional stress”.

## Three Human Emotional Realities

The Lord would identify with us in three emotional realities which would hurt the very depth of His soul, and bring Him to the point of the Cross. Within these three is every damage to our souls we face in life, the Lord bearing it all on our behalf:

*“For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.... Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” Hebrews 2:17-18; 4:14-16.*

### Betrayal

Judas, one of those chosen to be close to Him in His life and purpose on earth, would betray Him (Matthew 26:14-16).

*“...Jesus...was clearly in anguish of soul, and he added solemnly, ‘I tell you plainly, one of you is going to betray me’” John 13:21 (Phillips).*

The Lord took upon Himself the same hurt of broken relationships which we experience in life. Judas betrayed Him “with a kiss” (Matthew 26:47-49). The Lord’s heart was broken, enabling us to receive comfort and the ability to forgive.

*“Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows...”  
Isaiah 53:4 (KJV).*

*“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God” 2 Corinthians 1:3-4.*

*“Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you” Colossians 3:13.*



## Injustice

Following an unjust and scam trial where many false witnesses had come forward (Matthew 26:39-60), the Sanhedrin then sent Jesus to be tried by the Roman governor, Pilate.

*“Very early in the morning, the chief priests, with the elders, the teachers of the law and the whole Sanhedrin, made their plans. So they bound Jesus, led him away and handed him over to Pilate” Mark 15:1.*

Pilate could find no fault in Him but under the pressure of the Jewish leaders and the crowd, he “washed his hands” of the unjust situation and handed Him over to be crucified.

*“‘What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called the Messiah?’ Pilate asked. They all answered, ‘Crucify him!’ ‘Why? What crime has he committed?’ asked Pilate. But they shouted all the louder, ‘Crucify him!’ When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. ‘I am innocent of this man’s blood,’ he said. ‘It is your responsibility!’” Matthew 27:22-24 (read also Luke 3:1-25).*

As we go through life many things happen to us that seem unjust. Decisions and actions towards us seem unfair - sometimes from family, school or work. Strikes against businesses and demonstrations against government decisions are all human ways attempting to express what is believed to be unfair.

The Lord Jesus identified with us in this human emotional reality so that we could be released from this deep hurt within. In our place, He took upon Himself the worst injustice imaginable.

*“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 its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth”*  
Isaiah 53:7.

## Mockery

The Roman soldiers dressed Him in supposedly “royal robes” with the mockery of a “crown” on His head...

*“They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand. Then they knelt in front of him and mocked him. ‘Hail, king of the Jews!’ they said. They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again”* Matthew 27:28-30.

The soldiers were cutting to the very heart of who Jesus is - the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Many people’s self-esteem is very low, often caused by hurtful words from others and certainly accusations of Satan to their minds and hearts. In His identification with us, the Lord bore these attacks on our behalf, releasing us from the focus on our own self-esteem and bringing us into the wonder that, in the Kingdom of God, we now have Christ-esteem.

*“Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: ‘Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Messiah. For the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down’”* Revelation 12:10.

## The Shame of the Cross

The Lord Jesus knew what lay ahead. He knew the shame that would be involved in going to the Cross. But He was willing because He saw ahead the many who would be brought into the Kingdom of God and relationship with the Father.

*“...For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame...”* Hebrews 12:2.

*“For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings”* Hebrews 2:10.

## THE PHYSICAL REALITY

As well as the awful emotional suffering the Lord went through, He experienced extreme physical suffering.

### ➡ The Crown of Thorns

As well as the mockery the Lord was receiving, the crown of thorns was pressed into His scalp and would have caused much bleeding. Then the soldiers, taking the staff they had given Him in mockery of His authority as King, hit His head over and over again with it (Matthew 27:30). They were hammering the thorns more deeply into His scalp causing agonising pain and much more profuse bleeding.

### ➡ The Flogging

***“...the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified..!” Matthew 20:18-19.***

In *"The Crucifixion of Jesus. The Passion of Christ from a Medical Point of View"*, C. Truman Davis describes what the flogging of the Lord would have been like...

*“The Romans first stripped the victim and tied his hands to a post above his head. The whip (flagellum) was made of several pieces of leather with pieces of bone and lead embedded near the ends. Two men, one on each side of the victim, usually did the flogging. The Jews mercifully limited flogging to a maximum of forty stripes; the Romans had no such limitation...The heavy whip is brought down with full force again and again across Jesus’ shoulders, back, and legs. At first the heavy thongs cut through the skin only. Then, as the blows continue, they cut deeper in the subcutaneous tissues, producing first an oozing of blood from the capillaries and veins of the skin, and finally spurting arterial bleeding from vessels in the underlying muscles...Finally the skin of the back is hanging in long ribbons and the entire area is an unrecognizable mass of torn, bleeding tissue.”*

The lead balls added weight to the whip. These caused deep bruising and contusions as Jesus was struck. The pieces of bone cut into the flesh and, as the beating continued, the resulting cuts were so severe that the skeletal muscles, underlying veins, sinews, and bowels were exposed.

700 years before Christ, the Old Testament prophet, Isaiah, prophesied how the Messiah would be flogged and why...

*“Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.” Isaiah 53:4-5.*

During His three and a half years of ministry to the people, the Lord Jesus healed many. Matthew describes some of these in chapter 8:16-17, expressing the fulfilment of Isaiah’s prophecy...

*“ ...many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick. This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: ‘He took up our infirmities and bore our diseases’”.*



## Carrying the Cross

*“Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha)...” John 19:17.*

The Lord’s physical condition was so bad the soldiers pulled someone in from the crowd to help.

*“As the soldiers led him away, they seized Simon from Cyrene, who was on his way in from the country, and put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus. A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him” Luke 23:26-27.*

The carrying of the cross to the place of crucifixion was very much part of the crucifixion judgment. Crowds would gather all along the way. Not only those who “mourned and wailed”, but those who would spit on the “guilty” man, throw dirt at him and shout much abuse. This would have been happening to Jesus along the way.

## Following the Lord

As His disciples, the Lord has called on us to take up our cross and follow Him.

*“Then he said to them all: ‘Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me’” Luke 9:23 (read through to verse 26 and Luke 14:25-27 for the Lord’s description of a true disciple).*

**It is important to note:** nowhere in the Scripture are we told to crucify ourselves. Jesus was crucified *for us* - a total, complete, finished work. There is nothing needed for us to add. However, as new creations in Christ and as His disciples, we are called to follow the Lord in the life-journey of carrying *our* cross (Luke 14:27). In other words, to be willing to suffer the abuse and persecution of the world against Christ who is in us. So, our journey of carrying our cross is not to do the work of the Cross but *begins* at the revelation of the *finished work* of Jesus on *His Cross*. We then walk in that victory in the midst of the opposition in the world, with a willingness to lay down our lives because of our love for Him and for others. Our aim in life is to see people come to know the wonder of all He has done to bring us salvation.

When Saul was persecuting the believers, throwing them into prison, killing some, the Lord spoke in a clear voice to him...

*“...suddenly a bright light from heaven flashed around me. I fell to the ground and heard a voice say to me, ‘Saul! Saul! Why do you persecute me?’ ‘Who are you, Lord?’ I asked. ‘I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting,’ he replied.”*

Saul was persecuting the people of “the Way” (Acts 9:1-2) - the believers in Christ. In the Lord’s eyes this was persecuting *Him* (John 17:20-23). They were experiencing the “fellowship of His sufferings” (Philippians 3:10).

*“Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”*  
*Matthew 5:10-12 (1 Peter 4:14).*

## **Counted Worthy**

The Early Church rejoiced when they experienced persecution.

*“...They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name”* Acts 5:38-41.

## Modern Day Example

Around the world today, in many nations, Christians are being persecuted for their faith in Christ. But where this is happening, the Body of Christ is growing. The fastest growing church in the world today is the church in Iran. Their emphasis is not planting churches; it is making disciples. A church leader there testifies...

“Efforts by the ayatollahs to destroy Christianity have backfired, but have served to refine and purify the church. What persecution did was destroy the church that were not disciples, and destroy the church that were about converts,” the Iranian church leader noted. “All these church planters found out that converts run away from persecution, but disciples would die for the Lord in persecution.”

“...it is obedience-based discipleship. It is based on the authority of Scripture...This is how people become conformed to the image of Christ and sanctified. They are not just reading the Bible for information. They are reading the Bible to get transformed.”

One Iranian couple had the opportunity to move to the U.S. After living in America for a matter of months, the wife decided she wanted to move back to Iran, telling her surprised husband: “There is a satanic lullaby here. All the Christians are sleepy and I’m feeling sleepy.” She saw that spiritual sleepiness is a greater threat to her faith than persecution.

(Excerpt from Mark Ellis, God Reports)



# THE CRUCIFIXION



No picture depicts the full reality of what happened to the Lord Jesus when He was crucified. Cicero, the ancient writer, described it as being “the cruelest and most hideous punishment possible.”

Isaiah describes Him on the Cross...

*“...his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any human being and his form marred beyond human likeness—” Isaiah 52:14.*

Back in New Testament days everyone knew what crucifixion was like. Today, most of us have no idea. It is very hard to read about...horrific and heart-breaking, but it is so important for us to know and understand what the Lord suffered for us...

What took place physically is described by C. Truman Davis ("Crucifixion of Jesus," pp. 186-187).

“Simon is ordered to place the patibulum (the crosspiece) on the ground and Jesus is quickly thrown backwards with his shoulders against the wood. The legionnaire feels for the depression at the front of the wrist. He drives a heavy, square, wrought-iron nail through the wrist and deep into the wood. Quickly he moves to the other side and repeats the action, being careful not to pull the arms too tightly, but to allow some flexion and movement. The cross is then lifted into place.

The left foot is pressed backward against the right foot, and with both feet extended, toes down, a nail is driven through the arch of each, leaving the knees moderately flexed. The victim is now crucified. As he

slowly sags down with more weight on the nails in the wrists, excruciating, fiery pain shoots along the fingers and up the arms to explode in the brain—the nails in the wrists are putting pressure on the median nerves. As he pushes himself upward to avoid this stretching torment, he places the full weight on the nail through his feet. Again he feels the searing agony of the nail tearing through the nerves between the metatarsal bones of the feet.

At this point, another phenomenon occurs. As the arms fatigue, cramps sweep through the muscles, knotting them in deep, relentless, throbbing pain. With these cramps comes the inability to push himself upward to breathe....Air can be drawn into the lungs but not exhaled. Jesus fights to raise himself in order to get even one small breath. Finally carbon dioxide builds up in the lungs and in the blood stream, and the cramps partially subside. Spasmodically he is able to push himself upward to exhale and bring in life-giving oxygen.

Hours of this limitless pain, cycles of twisting, joint-rending cramps, intermittent partial asphyxiation, searing pain as tissue is torn from his lacerated back as he moves up and down against the rough timber. Then another agony begins a deep, crushing pain deep in the chest as the pericardium slowly fills with serum and begins to compress the heart. It is now almost over—the loss of tissue fluids reached a critical level—the compressed heart is struggling to pump heavy, thick, sluggish blood into the tissues—the tortured lungs are making a frantic effort to gasp in small gulps of air....The body of Jesus is now in extremis, and He can feel the chill of death creeping through his tissues....His mission of atonement has been completed. Finally he can allow His body to die. All this, the Bible records with the simple words, "And they crucified him" (Mark 15:24).

Seeing He had died, instead of breaking his legs to kill Him, the Roman soldier thrust a spear through His side (Psalm 34:20). The sustained rapid heartbeat caused by hypovolemic shock would have resulted in fluid gathering in the sack around Jesus' heart. The spear pierced both lungs and heart and blood and water flowed from His side (John 1:34).

May reality of all the Lord suffered for us fill us with a great sense of gratitude and thanks for His great love in taking the judgment we deserved. As the familiar scripture that every believer knows so well, declares...

***“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” John 3:16.***

# THE SPIRITUAL REALITY

Horrific as the physical suffering of Jesus was, something far more dramatic was happening in the spiritual realm. Everything that every person in the world, through all generations, has done, was being placed on Him...not only their actions but their very hearts and motives! He was crucified as the representative and substitute of each and every one.

*“For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.” 1 Peter 3:18.*

## Full Salvation Accomplished

Every aspect of our sinful life was dealt with by Jesus on the Cross.

### Sin

In Jesus on the Cross, God dealt with two aspects of sin:

#### The sins we have committed

Jesus took into Himself the guilt of every sin ever committed by every individual...yours and mine...everyone's.

*“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us”*

#### The nature of sin within us

*“...I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin...For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it...I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!...Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.” Romans 7:14-25 8:1-2.*

The work of Jesus on the Cross not only dealt with the guilt of our sin - *cancelling* it for us and enabling us to receive forgiveness - but it also dealt with its *power* within us. As Charles Wesley expressed it in his hymn...

“He breaks the power of cancelled sin and sets the prisoner free.”

## **Our Old Self**

*“For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—because anyone who has died has been set free from sin” Romans 6:6-7.*

Our “old self” is made up of three aspects of who we are...

\* Everything we have inherited from Adam in his sin, accumulating down through our generations until we were born into the world.

\* The effects in my life of all the sins I have committed myself.

\* The effects in my innermost being of all the sins others have committed against me -- abuse of every kind that has filled me with unforgiveness, resentment, anger, fear etc.

## **The Curse**

The crown of thorns on Jesus head pictures the curse that is “crowning” sinful humanity (Genesis 3:1-19).

*“Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’)” Galatians 3:13 (NKJV).*

## **Separation from God**

As the full and awful reality of fallen humanity’s condition came upon Jesus, He experienced the full and awful reality of what it meant - total separation from God.

*“About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, ‘Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?’ (which means ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’)” Matthew 27:46 (Psalm 22:1).*

## **“It is Finished!”**

What glorious words! The last words of Jesus on the Cross! It is finished! It is complete!

The word Jesus used - “Tetelestai” - was a term used in accountancy with the meaning “paid in full”! In those days, if someone was in great debt and unable to pay, he would be brought before a judge who would write a list of his debts on parchment. After time, when the debt was fully paid, the judge would write “tetelestai” across the page. He would then give instructions for it to be taken out into the common area for it to be nailed to a tree, so that all those passing by would see that the man’s debts were paid in full. Paul describes this in Colossians 2:13...

*“When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross.”*

## **The Torn Curtain**

*“And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom...” Matthew 27:50-52.*

No one had been permitted to enter through that thick curtain. Beyond it was the glorious presence of a holy, righteous God. Only the High Priest once a year, after much cleansing by the shedding of blood, passed through to represent the nation (Leviticus 16).

On the Cross, Jesus’ body became everything that thick curtain represented -- everything in us that separated us from entering into the presence of God. At the very moment the Lord Jesus cried out “It is finished!” and died, the curtain in the temple was split in two -- from top to bottom. God, Himself, did it! Heaven is open! We are free and able to enter into the presence of God in all His glory.

Hebrews 10:19-22 declares...

*“Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings...”*

## THE RESURRECTION

After three days and three nights the Lord Jesus rose from the dead, totally victorious over the enemy, Satan. Every believer was raised with Him to walk in “newness of life” (Romans 6:4, KJV). “In Christ”...

- \* we are seated with Him at the Father’s right hand (Eph.2:6)
- \* we “a new creation” - all things have become new (2 Cor.5:17)
- \* we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing (Eph.1:3)
- \* we have received the gift of righteousness (Romans 1:17)
- \* we are far above all the power of the Enemy (Ephesians 1:18-23)
- \* God is working in all things for our good (Romans 8:28)
- \* we are a child of God (1 John 3:1)
- \* we have received His Holy Spirit (John 3:7-8; Acts 1:8)
- \* we are growing from glory to glory into His image (2 Cor.3:18)
- \* we are predestined to be like Jesus (Romans 8:29)
- \* we are citizens of Heaven (Philippians 3:20)
- \* we have a glorious hope awaiting us (1 Peter 1:3-5; Heb.11:8-10)

**-- and much, much more --**

Jude sums up the wonder of it all...

***“To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—to the only God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen”*** Jude 24-25.