

A Physician Looks at the Crucifixion

John 19:16-18, 28-35

Church of the Covenant

Good Friday, April 14, 2017

I. Intro

I was shopping last week and got into a conversation with the clerk. When he found out I was a minister, he told me that he was a “backslider.” He said he doesn’t go to church; he just tries to be a “good person” like the Dalai Lama says.

II. The Problem

No matter how hard we try there is no way any human could ever become a “good person” through their own will power, let alone meet the requirements for being righteous before God, our heavenly Father.

We humans, because of our sinfulness and impurity, were sentenced to be separated from God forever unless something was done on our behalf. Jesus Christ willingly agreed to make the ultimate sacrifice, once for all time, in order to satisfy the requirement that all sin be punished.

Jesus took the punishment that each of us deserved, so that all who believe in him would be forgiven. By dying on the cross, Jesus saved us from our sinful ways and gave us new life in Him. By being crucified, Jesus redeemed us and set us free.

III. How it was accomplished.

How many times per week have you passed by this sculpture of the Crucifixion here in the Commons? Have you ever stopped to consider what Jesus had to endure when he was crucified?

Dr. C. Truman Davis wrote an article titled “*A Physician Testifies about the Crucifixion*” giving a medical explanation of the effect that being crucified would have on the human body. In order to convey the full medical assessment, I am going to read portions of his article for you.

QUOTE:

After the mock trials before Pilate, Herod, and the chief priests, Jesus is handed over to the Roman soldiers to be scourged.

The Roman legionnaire steps forward with the flagellum in his hand. This is a short whip consisting of several strips of heavy leather with two small balls of lead attached near the ends of each. The heavy whip is brought down with full force again and again across Jesus’ shoulders, back, and legs.

The small balls of lead first produce large, deep bruises which are broken open by subsequent blows. Finally the skin of the back is hanging in long ribbons and the entire area is an unrecognizable mass of torn, bleeding tissue. When it is determined by the centurion in charge that the prisoner is near death, the beating is finally stopped.

The half-fainting Jesus is then untied and allowed to slump to the stone pavement, wet with His own blood. The Roman soldiers see a great joke in this provincial Jew claiming to be king. They throw a robe across His shoulders and place a stick in His hand for a scepter.

They still need a crown to make their travesty complete. Flexible branches covered with long thorns (commonly used in bundles for firewood) are plaited into the shape of a crown and this is pressed into His scalp. Again there is copious bleeding, the scalp being one of the most vascular areas of the body.

Finally, the soldiers tire of their sadistic sport and the robe is torn from His back. Already having adhered to the clots of blood and serum in the wounds, its removal causes excruciating pain just as in the careless removal of a surgical bandage.

Jesus is taken to Golgotha where he was crucified between two robbers.

Many of the painters and most of the sculptors of crucifixion, show the nails through the palms of his hands. Historical Roman accounts have established that the nails were driven between the small bones of the wrists and not through the palms. Nails driven through the palms will strip out between the fingers when made to support the weight of the human body.

The left foot is now 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 pain shoots along the fingers and up the arms to explode in the brain.

As Jesus pushes Himself upward to avoid this stretching torment, He places His full weight on the nail through His feet. Again there is the searing agony of the nail tearing through the nerves between the metatarsal bones of the feet. At this point, as the arms fatigue, great waves of cramps sweep over the muscles, knotting them in deep, relentless, throbbing pain. With these cramps comes the inability to push Himself upward. Hanging by his arms, the *pectoral* muscles are paralyzed and the *intercostal* muscles are unable to expand or contract. Air can be drawn into the lungs, but cannot be exhaled. Carbon dioxide builds up in the lungs and in the blood stream. Spasmodically, he is able to push Himself upward to exhale and bring in the life-giving oxygen.

Jesus experienced six hours of limitless pain, cycles of twisting, joint-rending cramps, intermittent partial asphyxiation, searing pain where tissue is torn from His lacerated back as He

moves up and down against the rough timber. Then another agony begins -- a terrible crushing pain deep in the chest as the pericardium slowly fills with serum and begins to compress the heart. The compressed heart is struggling to pump heavy, thick, sluggish blood into the tissue; the tortured lungs are making a frantic effort to gasp in small gulps of air. The markedly dehydrated tissues send their flood of stimuli to the brain.

The common method of ending a crucifixion was by the breaking of the bones of the legs. This prevented the victim from pushing himself upward; thus the tension could not be relieved from the muscles of the chest and rapid suffocation occurred. The legs of the two thieves were broken, but when the soldiers came to Jesus they saw that this was unnecessary.

Apparently, to make doubly sure of death, the legionnaire drove his lance through the fifth interspace between the ribs, upward through the pericardium and into the heart. John 19:34 reports: "*And immediately there came out blood and water.*" That is, there was an escape of water and fluid from the sac surrounding the heart, giving postmortem evidence that Our Lord died not the usual crucifixion death by suffocation, but of heart failure due to shock and constriction of the heart by fluid in the pericardium. ¹ -end of quote

IV. Conclusion.

Jesus was crushed for our iniquities. Jesus died so you and I could be freed from our guilt and the burden of sin. Think of all the sinful things you did just today. Jesus was crushed because I was proud and viewed myself as better than others. Jesus was tortured so you could be forgiven for gossiping. He was nailed to the cross because a mother worried about her children instead of trusting in Him. Jesus took the punishment I deserved for not putting the needs of others before my own. Jesus was pierced because someone looked at a woman with lust in his thoughts. Jesus was flogged to pay the penalty for your anger, your hatred, your refusal to forgive. "*The LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.*"²

V. Our Response.

On this Good Friday, we stand at the foot of the cross and remember what Jesus went through on our behalf. We remember that he was crucified, suffered and died. He was buried in a borrowed grave.

Today we weep, because our sins have caused Jesus our Lord to be tortured and persecuted and nailed to a cross to die.

Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy. Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again, and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy."³

Jesus died for you, so that when you believe and put your trust in Him, you will not perish but will receive the gift of eternal life. Take this opportunity today to confess your sins to God. He will forgive you and cleanse you from all unrighteousness. He will give you new life and a new beginning. Put your trust and faith in Jesus and *know* that

*“By his wounds you have been healed.”*⁴ Amen.

¹ Article: “*A Physician Testifies About the Crucifixion*” by Dr. C. Truman Davis, 1976. Found on two websites: <http://www1.cbn.com/medical-view-of-the-crucifixion-of-jesus-christ> and <https://www.scribd.com/document/57044555/A-Physician-Testifies-About-the-Crucifixion>

² Isaiah 53:6

³ John 16:20,22

⁴ Isaiah 53:4-6