

Jesus suffered/ crucified/ died/ buried?

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[0 : 00] I feel so distant. I feel as if I've done something to hurt him. I know he's angry at me.

I'm really worried about the future of our relationship and I'm sure that we are destined for ruin. Does he really love me? How could he love me? How could he forgive me so that we can continue? Maybe you felt this way about a friend, a husband or a wife, that feeling of concern about the state of your relationship. But have you ever had those thoughts about your relationship with God? God, you really love me. God, I've sinned. I've done all kinds of horrible things. Maybe I'm just too wicked to be a Christian, to be part of your family.

How could you love me when I just continue to rebel and hurt you? Today, we're continuing to look through the words of the Apostles' Creed, what we've been looking through over the last number of weeks, the summary of the Christian faith. And today, we're looking at the words that Jesus suffered under Pontius Pilate, that he was crucified, that he died and was buried. And this suffering is going to show how much God loves us. Now, if you've been here before, if you've been here particularly at Easter, you have likely heard this message about Jesus' crucifixion. But listen well, because this is the heart, this is the very centre of God's good news for us. And to truly understand why Jesus would suffer, we first have to look at where we stand with God. Because God is both a God of wrath and a God of love, of justice and mercy. We need to see what we deserve before this God, before we can truly understand his love for us. So please, let's pray as we have a look at God's Word.

Dear Heavenly Father, I thank you for your Word to us, and that you reveal yourself, and you reveal how much you love us. Father, we are likely to have heard and thought about Jesus' death before, but Lord, we ask that you would strike us anew at how amazing it is that you sent your Son to die for us. Amen.

To say that God loves us is true. He sent Jesus to die for us. But it's a little bit like saying that I love Alyssa, my wife, and I also love donuts. You need to understand the context behind both of them to understand how much love I have for them. You would hope that I have more love for Alyssa, right? Yeah, okay, good. So there's sacrifice and compromise. One love is much deeper, one has lasted for much longer, one is gone in the space of about 10 seconds. We don't fully understand God's love for us displayed on the cross unless we actually understand the context in which it is displayed. The context that shows us how deep his love for us, how much of his wrath is dealt with in the cross. You see, God's wrath in the Bible, it is never out of control.

[3 : 40] His wrath and anger towards us is not self-indulgent. It is not reflexive anger that, say, an angry parent would display. God's wrath is the right and necessary reaction to evil. God's wrath is that of a judge administering punishment fairly. From Romans chapter 2, it says, because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment shall be revealed. The book of Romans paints this terrifying image, particularly the first couple of chapters, where we as people, a group of people made up of individuals, daily make choices and who have stubborn hearts, hearts that like to pursue things that damage us and drag us further away from God, and we are building up wrath of God against us. And he is going to unleash that wrath, not in an uncontrolled way, but as a righteous judge. God's wrath is his response to our sin, setting ourselves in opposition to him as an enemy. Paul paints how bad this picture is in Ephesians 2, all of us have also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh, following its desires and thoughts like the rest we were by nature, deserving of wrath.

All of us. It's frighteningly clear where we stand before God. We have set ourselves up in opposition to God. We have sinned and he stores up this wrath which we deserve and we are due it. See, God deserves far more than just obedience. He deserves more than even filial piety as our heavenly

father.

Yet we have all rejected him. We've not lived up to his perfect standards. We've no way to become better, to improve and to meet his expectations. It leaves us in a terrible position.

It was about two years ago, I got caught doing something terrible. I got caught holding my phone while I was driving. Has anybody else had this happen to them? I don't know if your parents are here, you don't need to put your hand up, that's okay. I was on my way out to a conference, a training conference that was coming up and I was on one of the M roads where the M roads connect with another M road and there's another M road. I think it's the M5, M7, I don't know, M45, whatever that is, the big octopus out west. And I had no idea which exit I needed to take. And so I'd slowed down from 110 to 80 going slower and looking at my phone, which one is it? Is it this one? And I think the police officer first noticed that I was slowing down. I wasn't matching the speed of other traffic, that was my first mistake. Pulls up next to me, looks in, siren on, ticket, demerit points. But don't worry, those demerit points, they're almost clear. And I got done that time. But how many other times have I been holding my phone and I haven't gotten done for it? How many times have I been speeding? How many times have I gotten away with it? The terrifying thing is that God knows every single act of disobedience, of rebellion, every flicker of our heart, every side glance in anger, anger, every lustful look, every inclination of our heart of rebellion.

I grew up in a Christian family and when I was in year seven, it was the mid-90s, I was struck by my position before God. I'd heard the two ways to live presentation of the gospel, that God had made everything and he was the king and deserved to be obeyed and we set up ourselves up in opposition and we deserve death, eternal death, but Jesus comes and takes that death for us.

[7 : 53] And I remember hearing this gospel presentation and being struck with fear. I don't want to be on the bad side of a wrathful and angry God. I don't want to be punished for eternity. I'll get on Jesus' side. And it's important to sit there for a moment, to understand how miserable our lot is in life without Jesus. To understand that we are due the full wrath of God's anger to be poured out on us. I'm thankful that when I came to know God, I had that moment of terror, but I'm even more thankful to God that that is not where I still am.

Because it is a good place to start, but if I'd stayed there, it would have been terrible. A position of fear before God is not the place that we are to stay. Proverbs says that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and fearing God alone is not the gospel. The good news of the gospel is not that we can be saved from an angry God. The good news of the gospel is that God has made a way for salvation. It's called the great exchange, where God exchanges the life of his son for us, where he takes the punishment instead of us. Because apart from Jesus, our condition is miserable and ruinous. We are fearful sinners in the hands of an angry God who is right to punish us.

The wonderful joy of the gospel is the great exchange, that God exchanges his son for us so we can have life. I don't think this is a particularly good deal though. It was just over a year ago, we bought a new tent, this fancy 10-person tent to take our kids camping. We set it up at home in the backyard because, I don't know, has anybody ever sent up a tent? It can be just a little stressful putting up a tent. And we did it in the backyard and Alyssa and I worked like a team. It was really great. We set it up, no problems. The second time we set it up was at the campsite. You mind a beach caravan park? Lovely spot. And here's a photo of what happened. Thanks, Ali. This piece, this trifold piece, held three different poles together, holding all the tension so the tent can stand upright.

And as soon as those poles went in, it just snapped. And you can see Alyssa's response. Oh no! What are we going to do? Don't you worry, Gaffer Tape fixed it. We just wrapped it up with tape. And it functioned. We're going camping again in just over a week's time. And I called up the camping store, still within a year of warranty, and said, oh look, I've got this broken piece. How do I replace the part? And I said, oh, we don't replace parts. Just bring the tent in. We'll just replace the whole thing. So I have this shiny new tent that I'm setting up next week. And it just seemed a little ridiculous. A whole tent likely wasted and thrown out for one small part. God says to us in John 3.16 that he gave his one and only son. And John continues in verse 36 that whoever believes in the son has life. But whoever rejects the son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them. God, when he makes his exchange for us, is for a much worse deal. We aren't just a little bit broken like the one piece of my tent. We are corrupt from our actions to our inmost thoughts. And God willingly sends his son.

[11 : 48] God chooses to send Jesus to go to the cross to exchange his life for ours. We now come to the center of the Apostles' Creed, the center of the gospel itself, that Jesus takes our place, that he exchanges his life for ours. As the Creed says, we believe in a Jesus who suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried.

When it comes to God placing his wrath on Jesus instead of us, so much more is going on than just his death. He also suffers, far more than we realize sometimes. On Jesus' head is all our guilt and shame and our sin. All the wrath that we deserve is placed on Jesus' head. The movie *The Passion of the Christ* came out in 2004. And one of the things it does really well is it depicts Jesus' suffering. Ali, if you want to put this photo up. Jesus is tortured by the Romans. And they were trained in whipping people to within an inch of their life. Ali, you can take that image down now.

That picture should shock us. The Romans tortured Jesus, able to get maximum pain without letting their victims die or go into shock. They had perfected whipping and crucifixion so that the victim would feel every whip and thorn and nail and every ragged breath.

And this Jesus endured. The pain, the contempt, the reviling, having his flesh ripped from his back, being hung up to struggle to breathe and slowly die on the cross. All for us rebellious people.

[13 : 53] His suffering is not accidental, but it was planned. It was deliberately done for us. Isaiah speaks of the suffering servant who would come and save. From Isaiah 53, 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 were healed.

We all like sheep have gone astray. Each of us has turned to our own way and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. Jesus's death was not accidental. He was pierced because of our choices and sin.

He was crushed for us. But because of his wounds we are healed. But as if it's not bad enough, Jesus didn't only suffer physically, he also suffered spiritually on the cross.

He endured God's wrath to purchase the good news of the gospel. He took on God's full wrath.

That's what his suffering on the cross achieves. For several hours, hanging on the cross, he suffered for our eternal sins, satisfying God's wrath once and for all time.

Paul again talks about this in Romans 5. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him? Jesus takes God's wrath and turns it aside from us.

[15 : 37] The full sentence of guilt and punishment is meted out and exhausted. Imagine if you've got a bonfire there and you've got some wood in there and you just dump petrol on it and it just explodes into flame until all of the fuel is burned up. That is what Jesus has taken. God's anger has built and built and stored up for centuries and it gets poured out, directed not to us, but to Jesus in his painful suffering and crucifixion. Romans 6 says that the wages of sin is death. And even though we have earned that wage, Jesus has accepted it. He has paid that cost. It's even more impossible than paying off one mortgage in Sydney. Imagine trying to pay off every single person's mortgage in Sydney. Jesus has paid off the sin of every person. Jesus's death by crucifixion is necessary for us.

It is the only way that we can have forgiveness. Hebrews 9 says that nearly everything needs to be cleansed with blood because without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. Jesus had to die or we couldn't be forgiven. But it couldn't just be a normal death. He couldn't just get mugged one night and accidentally murdered. Jesus couldn't have gotten sick and died. If he was drowned at sea, it wouldn't be a sufficient death. There would be no evidence that God's wrath had been satisfied.

Jesus had to have a death that was in exchange. The guilty set free and the innocent killed. So when Jesus is brought before Pilate on trial, it's clear that he is taking our place.

Pilate declared in John 18, that was read for us, I find no basis for a charge against him, but it is your custom for me to release to you one prisoner at the time of the Passover. Do you want me to release the king of the Jews? They shouted back at him, no, not him. Give us Barabbas. Now Barabbas had taken part in an uprising. Pilate finds Jesus innocent and yet he condemns him. He takes the place of a man called Barabbas who was guilty of an uprising against the government, likely murdering people. The murderer is set free and the innocent dies. An exchange takes place. Jesus chooses to suffer and to die on the cross in our place.

And this is a symbol we still hold to. I've got a tattoo of the cross on my wrist. You can't really see because of my watch these days. Many of us wear cross necklaces. Crosses decorate our homes.

[18 : 44] There's crosses decorating here. There's one just here. There's some up there. If you go up the stairs, there's some stained glass in there. There's a cross depicted in there. We decorate our lives with crosses. The cross was a torture device. But it's how God chose to save us all. It's a symbol of brutality and beauty. It's a symbol of terror and triumph. The cross, which was a torture device, is how God chose to save us all. Ever since Adam first sinned, death has been the consequence. But now the sting of death has been plucked. The cross has defeated death and we need this. We need this because we all stand fearful before death. Living lives just waiting for the time of our own death, whenever that is.

I'm not sure if you saw in the news this week. I believe it was in North Epping. There was a lady having lunch when she was hit by a car and died. We are fragile people.

While we wait for death, death ravages around us. Death has no pity for the young, no mercy for the old. It pays no regard for the good or the beautiful, for the rich or the poor. Death is our enemy and it spreads fear with it. As the coronavirus spreads, so does fear and anxiety, that fear and racism that says anyone could have it, death is coming for me, you stay away. But death is an enemy to be destroyed.

And Jesus has done that in his death at the cross. 1 Corinthians 15 says that death has been swallowed up in victory. He's abolished death and he has brought life. Even though our bodies might still perish, Jesus has destroyed spiritual death and punishment by taking it on the cross. Now death has no sting. We will all be dead a little while before we are raised like Jesus. And Paul says in Romans that it's as if we've already died. We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead, through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. You only have to think of when we do baptisms here. We get a big tank over here. We fill it with water. And what we do is people go down into the water as if they are going down into the grave and come up in a new life. The old life is dead. The new life has begun.

[21 : 43] Because our sin has been crucified at the crucifixion. Our old life has died with him and was buried with him. And when we follow Jesus, our new life starts.

So how much does God love me? When I ask Micah, my nearly three-year-old, how much I love him, he says this much. And it is so true of God that God loves us this much that his son would die on the cross for us. But if we were to just say that Jesus died on the cross, it would give us some idea.

But it's as if we've placed a telescope right up against a painting. Or we've taken someone to a brand new home. And we get to the door and we want to show them around. And we pull out our phone and we say, have a look at my house. And we show them the photos on the phone. God's love is on display in all that Jesus did for us. He not only died, but we who were distant from God, we who were deserving of his wrath and anger and punishment under his eternal curse of death. We were beyond God's blessing. We were slaves of Satan. We were prisoners of sin outside and in our hearts. We were destined for destruction. But God, but God interceded. Jesus took on all the punishment that threatened us. The blood of Jesus has cleansed us of the evil that made us hateful to God. And by his death, took on all of God's wrath and punishment so that now we can have peace with God.

We can have friendship as the church together as a family, able to cry out to God as our father. That is how much God loves me and you. That he makes the great exchange possible. That the son of God, our savior Jesus, would willingly be tortured and suffer and die, having God's wrath poured out on him for us. For me and for you who don't deserve it. Who continue to rebel even today and tomorrow.

[24 : 12] That he would give us enough value to swap the life of his son for us. Our punishment for freedom. This is the heart of the gospel. Let me pray.

Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you so much that you love us enough. That you have made a way for us. That you sent Jesus to not only die, but to suffer.

To brutally take on the wrath and punishment that we deserve from you. And that he died in our place. Lord, we thank you so much for the great exchange.

That we can call you father. We can be your children. And that we can be a family here. Because of all that you have done for us in your son. We thank you so much, Lord.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[25 : 18] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

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