Why Did Jesus Have to Die?

**SUMMARY**

People have been misled by a very deceptive message.

It is one widely accepted by unbelievers and has even begun to appear in some churches. The apostle Paul warned of it in 2 Timothy 4:3 when he said, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine.” This particular false teaching affects our understanding of salvation, our relationships with the Lord, and our eternal destinies. Sadly, many sincere people are being misled simply because they don’t understand the importance of the cross.

We know that God loves everyone, but this wonderful truth has been twisted to mean that He would never limit His grace by claiming Jesus is the only way to be saved. This is why so many falsely believe that if they are good people who believe in God and ask Him for forgiveness, they’ll go to heaven. This message sounds comforting, but human goodness will never be enough. If you want to know what God has said about salvation, you only have to examine His Word. It clearly explains who Christ is, why He had to die, and why you must accept Him as your Savior in order to be reconciled to God.

**SERMON POINTS**

What does this false teaching imply?

If you believe God accepts people based on good behavior, the implications lead you away from the truth of Scripture. It would mean that:

- Christ’s death would be totally unnecessary if you could make yourself acceptable to the Lord.
- If the cross is pointless, it means God made a terrible mistake by allowing His Son to experience an excruciating death.
- Salvation would be possible apart from Christ. He didn’t have to come to earth and die.
- You wouldn’t need to go through Jesus to have a personal relationship with God.
- The Lord could forgive you simply because He loves you.
- The cross should never have been chosen as a symbol of Christianity because it’s just a sign of the needless death of Jesus.
- There is no need to speak or sing about the blood of Christ if it didn’t purchase your salvation.

**Why did Jesus have to die?**

To combat false teaching, we need to understand what the Bible says about the necessity of Christ’s death:

- **Jesus’ death was essential in God’s plan of salvation.** When Christ spoke to Nicodemus about His crucifixion, He said, “Even so must the Son of Man be lifted up” (John 3:14). There was no other option for salvation but the crucifixion. John 3:16 doesn’t say that God so loved the world that He simply forgave us and that nothing more was required. Instead, He did something that would make forgiveness possible—He sent Jesus Christ to pay the penalty for our sins.

- **The death of Christ was necessary to accomplish God’s desires for mankind.** The Lord has some wonderful plans for us that would be impossible without the cross. First, He wants us to be saved and become His children. Once we are, we gain a personal relationship with our heavenly Father and can spend our lives praising Him by living...
righteously. And after our lives on earth are over, the Lord has planned for believers to praise and serve Him eternally in heaven.

- **The Lord’s justice requires payment for sin.** When God created Adam and Eve, He didn’t make them robots who behaved according to their programming. Instead, He gave them the ability to choose obedience. When they decided to violate His instructions, sin entered the world, and the penalty of death—physical, spiritual, and eternal—followed.

Because the Lord is just, He must do what is right. He declared what would happen if Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit: “In the day that you eat from it, you shall surely die” (Gen. 2:17), and He had to uphold it. Offering forgiveness without enforcing punishment would have gone against His Word and nature. In order for Him to remain just, the penalty had to be paid. Since then, every person on earth except Jesus has sinned and is worthy of the punishment of eternal separation from God (Rom. 3:23).

- **Justification is only possible through the blood of Christ.** There is only one way the Lord could both remain just and rescue us from the punishment we deserve. His Son had to come to earth as the God-man, live a perfect life, and die in our place to pay the full price for our sins. Only then could He justify and declare us to be “no longer guilty.” Our salvation has nothing to do with our worthiness; it’s all based on what Jesus did. Now, whoever believes and accepts Christ’s sacrifice on his or her behalf will be saved from God’s wrath (Rom. 5:8-9).

- **Our forgiveness is purchased by the shed blood of Jesus.** Many people think they only need to ask in order to receive God’s forgiveness, but asking doesn’t make your sins go away. Only the blood of Jesus can cleanse us. No one else could have saved us because everyone else’s blood is tainted with sin, but Christ is the pure, spotless Lamb of God (1 Peter 1:18-19).

- **Jesus is our substitute.** Because the Lord can’t overlook sin, we can either bear the punishment ourselves or rely upon God’s appointed substitute. Since Christ was the only person who ever lived a perfect life, He was the only one whose death could pay the penalty for the entire world. When He hung on the cross, the Father placed all the sins of mankind upon Him—past, present, and future—and Jesus bore God’s divine judgment in our place (1 Peter 2:24). Now, all who believe this and trust Christ for salvation are forgiven.

- **It is finished.** When the full payment for sin had been made, Jesus cried out, “It is finished!” (John 19:30). Nothing more was needed for God’s redemptive plan. Only pride causes us to think that we can add anything to it with our good works. Yes, we serve God to express our love and thanksgiving for His grace and mercy, but works could never be enough to save us.

**RESPONSE**

Our Father’s plan is truly amazing. Faith is all that’s required of us. When we acknowledge that Jesus is the Son of God who died in our place and accept Him as our substitute, the Lord forgives us. We enter into a relationship with Him, one that can never be broken. His Spirit comes to live within us; He writes our names in the Lamb’s Book of Life; and heaven becomes our home. We will never have to worry if we are good enough, because our eternal security has been forever guaranteed by Christ’s perfect life and sacrificial death on our behalf.

- Have you considered the negative implications of a works-based salvation? How would you know when you had done enough good works to be worthy of salvation?
- How does it make you feel to know that God’s grace is unconditional and not based on doing good?