

What Would You Do at the Cross?

By Kent Heaton

The scene of Jesus' crucifixion was filled with paradoxes. Golgotha was a place of death. It was the seat of execution where criminals were slowly tortured to death for crimes committed. Calvary was not a place of joy but grief filled with the stench of death as past executions still bore witness of man's barbaric ritual of killing. Citizens gathered in a morbid flow of onlookers gawking at the condemned. Imperial Roman soldiers conducted the business of killing in a proficient and gruesome manner. During the crucifixion of Jesus even the religious leaders of the day came to the place of the Skull. In the midst of such chaos and misery a lone figure hung upon a wooden tree seeking to gain power over death, end the fear of man's barbarism against one another and unite the will of God with the heart of man.

Jesus died the most horrible death imagined by man. Contrary to the beautiful scenes painted on the canvas of renowned artist, the event of the death of Jesus was filled with misery, weeping, sadness, death by sight, death by smell, death with the sounds and images of complete desolation. The crowd that milled about the feet of the cross was a mixture of citizens, rulers, soldiers and on both sides of Jesus hung two thieves (Luke 23:35-39).

Luke says the "people stood looking on" as if in a dreadful attraction of what they were seeing unfold. Mary the mother of Jesus (at the cross with John) knew more than anyone what was being done was wrong. Yet the people stood by and said nothing. They were powerless to stop the engine of death managed by the Romans. They were helpless.

The rulers and those that passed by scoffed at Jesus and mocked him saying, "He saved others ... himself he cannot save ... come down from the cross and we will believe you." Their jeering was not filled with love but hatred towards one they acknowledged "saved others." They could not see Jesus as God's Son on that day. In eternity they will face the same one and know that He is the Son of God.

Roman soldiers are trained not only to kill but also to taunt and make fun of those weaker than themselves. They would have given Jesus good sport at their game of killing. Their interest was simply to make him suffer more and scolded him as being the supposed "King of the Jews." How different that day when they stand before the King of Kings and Lord of Lords (Rev. 19:16).

Finally those crucified with Jesus under the same condemnation of death plead with Jesus that if He were the Christ to save himself and the two thieves; selfishness even on a cross. It was not about saving Jesus but the thief wanted to find a way to save himself from certain death. His only interest was himself.

The camera turns to the central theme of this place of death – Jesus Christ. Throughout the whole ordeal of His arrest, trial and death it was never about Himself but others. Now on the cross Jesus looks at the people gathered, the rulers mocking, the soldiers reviling and the thieves cursing and says, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (Luke 23:34). Jesus saw the deeper meaning of His death as being the salvation of the people, the soldiers, the rulers and his fellow victims. Grace was granted to one thief and fifty days later the doors of grace opened to all men (Acts 2).

The Too Small Class

In 1947, a professor at the University of Chicago, Dr. Chanrasekhar, was scheduled to teach an advanced seminar in astrophysics. At the time, he was living in Wisconsin, doing research at the Yerkes astronomical observatory. He planned to commute twice a week for the class, even though it would be held during the harsh winter months.

Registration for the seminar, however, fell far below expectations. Only two students signed up for the class. People expected Dr. Chanrasekhar to cancel, lest he waste his time. But, for the sake of two students, he taught the class, commuting 100 miles, round-trip through back country roads in the dead of winter.

His students, Chen Ning Yang and Tsung-Dao Lee, did their homework. Ten years later, in 1957, they both won the Nobel prize for physics. So did Dr. Chandrasekhar in 1983.

Likewise, for faithful preachers and teachers of God's word, no class is too small.

Isn't It Ironic

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that a fifth grade teacher violated the First Amendment's supposed 'Separation of Church and State' by placing a Bible on his school desk. This 'doctrine of separation' is attributed to Thomas Jefferson. However, it was Thomas Jefferson who, while President, asked that the Bible be used in public schools for their reading curriculum. Jefferson said: 'I have always said, and always will say, that the studious perusal of the sacred volume will make us better citizens.' Isn't it ironic that in the name of Jefferson the very thing he advocated is now being struck down by our judicial system?

Committed or Contented

- Christ is my life OR Christ is part of my life
- I am eager to obey OR I obey as I am moved
- Give sacrificially OR Give as I have left overs
- Active Christian life OR Apathetic comfortable life
- A thirst for knowing God OR Happy with a few facts about God
- Home Bible study OR Daily one minute devotional
- Teach the Bible OR Sit in Bible class
- Fruit bearer OR Picky fruit
- Agent of growth for Christ OR Agent of the Status Quo
- Doctrinal Absolutes OR Doctrine of the Day
- Christianity cannot be a convenient part of Christians' lives, it must be their life.

A Moments Wisdom

- One nice thing about egotists: They don't talk about other people.
- Procrastination is the art of keeping up with yesterday.
- Laughing at our mistakes can lengthen our own life. Laughing at someone else's can shorten it.
- My father taught me how to be a man -- and not by instilling in me a sense of machismo or an agenda of dominance. He taught me that a real man doesn't take, he gives; he doesn't use force, he uses logic; doesn't play the role of trouble-maker, but rather, trouble-shooter; and most importantly, a real man is defined by what's in his heart.