

## 7 Reasons Christ Suffered and Died

By John Piper



“God’s purposes for the world in the death of Jesus are unfathomable,” writes John Piper in his latest book, *The Passion of Jesus Christ: Fifty Reasons Why He Came to Die*. He adds, “Infinitely more important than who killed Jesus is the question: What did God achieve for sinners like us in sending His Son to die?” How vital it is that we grasp-and share-the sovereignly designed purposes behind the Passion of Jesus Christ. Here are seven of them:

### 1. To Achieve His own Resurrection from the Dead.

The death of Christ did not merely precede His resurrection-it was the price that obtained it. The Bible says He was raised not just after the bloodshedding, but by it. The wrath of God was satisfied with the suffering and death of Jesus. The holy curse against sin was fully absorbed. The price of forgiveness was totally paid. The righteousness of God was completely vindicated. All that was left to accomplish was the public declaration of God’s endorsement. This He gave by raising Jesus from the dead. When the Bible says, “If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins” (1 Corinthians 15:17, ESV), The point is not that the resurrection is the price paid for our sins. The point is that the resurrection proves that the death of Jesus is an all-sufficient price.

### 2. To Show His own Love for us.

The death of Christ is not only the demonstration of God’s love (John 3:16), it is also the supreme expression of Christ’s own love for all who receive it as their treasure. The sufferings and death of Christ have to do with me personally. It is my sin that cuts me off from God, not sin in general. I am lost and perishing; all I can do is plead for mercy. Then I see Christ suffering and dying. For whom? Ephesians 5:25 says, “Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.” And John 15:13, “Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends.” And Matthew 20:28, “The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and among the “many”? Can I be one of His “friends”? May I belong to the “church”? And I here the answer, “To all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God” (John 1:12). My heart is swayed, and I embrace the beauty and bounty of Christ as my treasure. And there flows into my heart this great reality-the love of Christ for me.

### 3. In Order to Cancel the Legal Demands of the Law Against us.

What is folly to think that our good deeds may one day outweigh our bad deeds. First, it is not true. Even our good deeds are defective, because we don’t honor God in the way we do them. “Whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.” Without Christ-exalting faith, our deeds will signify nothing but rebellion.

Second, this is simply not the way God saves us. If we are saved from the consequences of our bad deeds, it will not be because they weighed less than our good deeds. There is no salvation by balancing records. There is only salvation by canceling records. The record of our bad deeds (including our defective good deeds), along with the just penalties that each deserves, must be blotted out-not balanced. This is what Christ suffered and died to accomplish (Colossians 2:13). He endured my damnation. He is my only hope. And faith in Him is my only way to God.

#### **4. To Provide the Basis for our Justification and to Complete the Obedience that Becomes our Righteousness.**

To be justified in a courtroom is not the same as being forgiven. Being forgiven implies that I am guilty and my crime is not counted. Being justified implies that I have been tried and found innocent. The verdict of justification does not make a person just. It declares a person just. (The moral change we undergo when we trust Christ is not justification. The Bible usually calls that sanctification-the process of becoming good.) Justification is a declaration that happens in a moment. A verdict: Just! Righteous! In the courtroom of God, we have not kept the law. Therefore, justification, in ordinary terms, is hopeless. Yet, amazingly, because of Christ, the Bible says God “justifies the ungodly” who trust in His grace (Romans 4:5). Christ shed His blood to cancel the guilt of our crime: “We have now been justified by his blood” (Romans 5:9). But canceling our sins is not the same as declaring us righteous. Christ also imputes His righteousness to me. My claim before God is this: “not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ” (Philippians 3:9). Christ fulfilled all righteous perfectly; and then that righteousness was reckoned to be mine, when I trusted in Him. Christ’s death became the basis for our pardon and our perfection.

#### **5. To Obtain for us all Things that are Good for us.**

“He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?” (Romans 8:32). I love the logic of this verse. Not because I love logic, but because I love having my real needs met. The two halves of Romans 8:32 have a stupendously important logical connection. The connection between the two halves is meant to make the second half absolutely certain. If God did the hardest thing of all-namely, give up His own Son to suffering and death-then it is certain that He will do the comparatively easy thing, namely, give us all things with Him. God’s total commitment to give us all things is more sure than the sacrifice of His Son. But what does “give us all things” mean? He will give us all things that are good for us. All things that we really need in order to be conformed to the image of His Son (Romans 8:29). All things we need in order to attain everlasting joy. “In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:12-13, emphasis added). Notice “all things” includes “hungering” and “needing.” God will meet every real need, including the ability to rejoice in

suffering when many felt needs do not get met. The suffering and death of Christ guarantee that God will give us all things that we need to do His will and to give Him glory and to attain everlasting joy.

## **6. To Bring Us to God.**

What is the ultimate good in the Good News? God Himself. Salvation is not good news if it only saves from hell and not from God. Forgiveness is not good news if it only gives relief from guilt and doesn't open the way to God. Justification is not good news if it only makes us legally acceptable to God but doesn't bring fellowship with God. Redemption is not good news if it only liberates us from bondage but doesn't bring us to God. Adoption is not good news if it only puts us in the Father's family but not in His arms. There is no sure evidence that we have a new heart just because we want to escape hell. It doesn't take a new heart to want the psychological relief of forgiveness, or the removal of God's wrath, or the inheritance of God's world. The evidence we have been changed is that we want these things because they bring us to the enjoyment also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God"

## **7. To Give Us Eternal Life.**

In our happiest times we do not want to die. The wish for death rises only when our suffering seems unbearable. What we really want in those times is not death, but relief. We would love for the good times to come again. We would like the pain to go away. We would like to have our loved ones back from the grave. The longing of the human heart is to live and to be happy. God made us that way. "He has put eternity into man's heart" (Ecclesiastes 3:11). We are created in God's image, and God loves life and lives forever. We were made to live forever. And we will. The opposite of eternal life is not annihilation. It is hell. Jesus spoke of it more than anybody, and He made plain that rejection of the eternal life He offered would result not in obliteration, but in the misery of God's wrath: "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him" (John 3:36). And it remains forever. Jesus said, "These things will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life" (Matthew 25:46). All that is good- all that will bring true and lasting happiness- will be preserved and purified and intensified. We will be changed so that we are capable of dimensions of happiness that were inconceivable to us in this life. "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined... God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Corinthians 2:9). For this Christ suffered and died. Why would we not embrace Him as our treasure, and live?