

What Held Jesus to the Cross?

By Dr. Lee Roberson

"If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross." Matthew 27:40.

"And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, "And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. if thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. "Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, "He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. "He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God. "The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth." Matthew 27:39-44.

The Bible definitely tells us what held Jesus to the cross. It was not simply nails, though He was nailed to the cross. The Son of God, with power to raise the dead, heal the sick, make the blind to see, still the storm-tossed sea, surely had power to step down from a cross, even though He was nailed to it.

It was not human weakness which bound Him to the cross, for He said regarding His life, "No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down; I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." John 10 :18.

It was not because He was friendless that He stayed on the cross. In the garden of Gethsemane, when Peter drew his sword and began to battle in defense of the Master, Jesus said, "Thinkest thou not that I cannot now say to my Father, and He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels." The twelve legions of angels were still available when Jesus was on the cross.

What then is the answer to the question, What held Jesus to the cross? Here is the answer.

I. HIS LOVE FOR US HELD HIM TO THE CROSS.

Jesus said nothing and did nothing when the scoffers passed by reviling Him and wagging their heads. They called to mind a statement that He had made regarding His death and resurrection. He had said that if they destroyed the temple, He would raise it up in three days, He was speaking of Himself, but they thought He spoke of the temple in Jerusalem; therefore, they said, "Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross."

The chief priests, the scribes, and the elders also came by and said, "He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him."

Surely these taunting statements were enough to try the soul, even of the Son of God. He did not come down from the cross, for His love for a lost mankind held Him to the cross.

Many verses declare this great truth unto us. Jesus said, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Paul tells us in Galatians 2:20 that the Son of God loved us, and gave Himself for us. John tells us in I John 3:16, "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."

There are three things I would like to say about the love of Christ.

First, His love was unusual. It is an ordinary, everyday thing for us to love those who love us, but Jesus loved those who hated Him. "But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:8.

Jesus loved His enemies, and even on the cross, He said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." The love of Christ was unusual, and this is the love that He beseeches us to have for our fellowman.

The story is told of Peter Miller, a plain Baptist preacher of Ephrata, Pennsylvania, in the days of the Revolutionary War. Near his church lived a man who abused the pastor to the last limit. The man became involved in treason, and was arrested and sentenced to be hanged. The old preacher started out on foot, and walked the whole seventy miles to Philadelphia, that he might plead for the man's life. Washington heard his plea, but he said, "No, your plea for your friend cannot be granted."

"My friend !" said the preacher, "He is the worst enemy I have !" "What !" said Washington. "You have walked nearly seventy miles to save the life of an enemy. That puts the matter in a different light. I will grant the pardon."

That is what makes the love of Christ unusual. He loved His enemies, and this love bound Him to the cross.

Secondly, His love was unending. "Now, before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end."

Sometimes even the love of a mother for her child fails. Occasionally even a father may turn against his own son, but the love of Jesus never fails. It continued to the cross beyond the cross, and abounds unto us today. His love bound Him to the cruel tree.

Thirdly, His love was unselfish. Man had nothing to give to Jesus that He did not have already. All things belong to Him. The silver and the gold, the cattle upon a thousand hills, and yet, the Saviour died in our behalf.

It always seems like a foolish thing to beg people to receive Jesus, when the giving must be all on His side. All we can do is surrender ourselves. There is nothing in a material way that we can give to God that He does not already have. All things are His by act of creation, and yet, the Son of God condescended to die for us, and His unselfish love bound Him to the cross of Calvary. It

is a rare and beautiful thing to see people give and love when nothing can be given to them in return.

The Sunday School Times tells the story of a group of dirty, ragged, poor children who were waiting in a mission one afternoon for their teacher and leader to arrive. They were children from the poorest homes. Most of them were hungry. All of them were familiar with hardships. As they sat waiting, a boy appeared leading by the hand two children, a little more forlorn looking than the others. The leader of the group jumped up and said, "Hey, fellows, these kids ain't got nobody to take care of them. They sleeps in a box, and ain't had nothing to eat today. Can't we do something for 'em?"

The crowd stared at the newcomers, and then one boy suggested, "Let's take up a collection," and they did. Grimy hands plunged into the recesses of tattered garments for pennies, and the collection was taken. The result? - seven cents. A large committee was appointed to go to the nearest bakery, and invest the funds. Some small cakes were bought, and these were put into the hands of the two poor, hungry children. The rest of the dirty, ragged boys and girls gathered around to watch the two little ones eat their cakes. They were giving unselfishly.

When Jesus died upon the cross, bound by the divine love for poor, lost sinful mankind, His love was unselfish.

II. HIS SUBMISSION TO GOD'S WILL HELD HIM TO THE CROSS.

The bitter, angry mob, especially the religious leaders told Him to come down from the cross if He were the Son of God. One of the malefactors railed on Him, saying, "If thou be Christ, save thyself and us."

In the common parlance of today, they were saying, "If you are not a liar and a hypocrite, come down from the cross. If you are such a big person, if you are what you claim to be, then show us by coming down from the cross." But Jesus could not come down, for His submission to God's will bound Him to the rugged cross.

Let me pause here to make this plea. May our lives be so submissive to the will of God that we will be unable to do anything but say, "Thy will be done." May our submission to His holy will bind us to separated living, to soul-winning, to consecrated service, to liberal giving, to earnest praying. May our submission to the Father's will bind us to do His divine purpose and plan for our lives.

Jesus said, "Lo, I come to do thy will." It was the will of God that He should die for sinful mankind. It was the will of God that He should enter into the holy of holies, and there make one sacrifice for sin forever. It was the Father's will that He should pour out His blood upon Calvary's hill. Jesus was submissive to the will of God.

III. OUR SINS HELD HIM TO THE CROSS.

The trail of sin from the Garden of Eden to the present time is a bloody and tragic one. Sin separates men from God, just as it drove the first pair from the garden. Sin brings shame. Adam and Eve sought to hide from God. Sinners are still ashamed, and try to hide their sins - therefore, men love darkness rather than light. Sin brings sorrow. See it for yourself. The life of sin will end in sorrow. The home of sin will end in sorrow. Sin brings suffering. All of the world's suffering came about because of sin. Mental anguish, physical suffering, all come from sin. But the crowning act of sin's dastardly career came in the death of Christ. But let us not stand back and say, "Shame on you, sin, for crucifying the Saviour." For let us remember it was our sins which nailed Him and held Him to the cross."

"But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed".

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way: and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Isaiah 53: 5,6

[1] He bore our sins to satisfy the law of God. God's law says, "The soul that sinneth it shall die." "The wages of sin is death." Because of our sins, we deserve the penalty of death and Hell, but Christ came and died in our place. He satisfied the law of God. God accepted His death as payment for our sins.

"Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. Who his own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree that we being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness, by whose stripes ye were healed."

[2] He took our sins that He might bear them away from us. John announced the ministry of Jesus by saying, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." Just as the priest in Leviticus could lay his hands upon the head of a live goat and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, and send him away into the wilderness, so did Jesus bear our sins that He might bear them away from us.

The picture is also given in the Passover scene of the Lamb slain, and the blood put upon the door posts. Jesus is our sacrificial Lamb. His blood covers our sins, and releases us from the penalty of hell. John writes, "And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sin, and in him is no sin." I John 3:5

[3] He bore our sins in His own body on the tree that He might bring us unto God. The redemptive work of Jesus is to take out of this world a people for His name. The whole world will not be saved, but some will be saved, and with them God is going to abide forever.

Yes, your sins and mine bound Him to the cross. Christ was fully conscious that only His death could satisfy the law of God, bear away our sins, and bring us unto the Heavenly Father.

Therefore, though men scoffed at Him and accused Him of lying and hypocrisy, He stayed on the cross, bound by our sins, to the tree.

There is but one way open to the fair minded person who realizes that his sins nailed Jesus to the cross, and that is to receive Jesus as Saviour. He died that you might live. You cannot live without Him.

A big, brawny cultured athlete was once asked why the word "mother" was so sacred to him. In reply, he told how, when he was born, the doctor told his father that either the mother or the child must die. The doctor said, "Decide quickly, so that I can go to work." The young athlete said, "My mother overheard what the doctor said, and putting her arms around my father, said to him, "I will die. Let my baby live." My mother passed away. She gave her life for me, but her supreme sacrifice has enobled my whole being, and has endeared all mothers to me. Only Christ, my Saviour, could have done more.

Come to Jesus today and live. Let Him plunge all your sins in the fountain filled with blood. Let Him write your name upon the Lamb's book of life. Let Him keep you in the hollow of His hand. Receive Him as Saviour, and know the blessedness of salvation.

*"I'll go to Jesus, though my sin, like mountains round me close, I know His courts,
I'll enter in, whatever may oppose;*

*Prostrate I'll lie before His throne, and there my guilt confess, I'll tell Him I'm a
wretch undone, without His sovereign grace.*

*I can but perish if I go. I am resolved to try, For if I stay away, I know I must
forever die."*