



Crucifixion

The revolution that started on the cross continues today



FULL GOSPEL: CRUCIFIXION

Isaiah 53 NLT

Who has believed our message?

To whom has the Lord revealed his powerful arm?

*My servant grew up in the Lord's presence like a tender green shoot,
like a root in dry ground.*

*There was nothing beautiful or majestic about his appearance,
nothing to attract us to him.*

*He was despised and rejected—
a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief.*

We turned our backs on him and looked the other way.

He was despised, and we did not care.

*Yet it was our weaknesses he carried;
it was our sorrows that weighed him down.*

*And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God,
a punishment for his own sins!*

*But he was pierced for our rebellion,
crushed for our sins.*

*He was beaten so we could be whole.
He was whipped so we could be healed.*

All of us, like sheep, have strayed away.

We have left God's paths to follow our own.

*Yet the Lord laid on him
the sins of us all.*

*He was oppressed and treated harshly,
yet he never said a word.*

*He was led like a lamb to the slaughter.
And as a sheep is silent before the shearers,
he did not open his mouth.*

*Unjustly condemned,
he was led away.*

*No one cared that he died without descendants,
that his life was cut short in midstream.*

*But he was struck down
for the rebellion of my people.*

*He had done no wrong
and had never deceived anyone,*

*But he was buried like a criminal;
he was put in a rich man's grave.*

*But it was the Lord's good plan to crush him
and cause him grief.*

*Yet when his life is made an offering for sin,
 he will have many descendants.
 He will enjoy a long life,
 and the Lord's good plan will prosper in his hands.
 When he sees all that is accomplished by his anguish,
 he will be satisfied.
 And because of his experience,
 my righteous servant will make it possible
 for many to be counted righteous,
 for he will bear all their sins.
 I will give him the honors of a victorious soldier,
 because he exposed himself to death.
 He was counted among the rebels.
 He bore the sins of many and interceded for rebels.*

What happened at the cross?

When we think of the crucifixion and Jesus' work on the cross, a common picture we see is of the "Roman Road": we are sinners, in need of a Savior, and Jesus died on the cross to save us from our sin. It's not a bad start, but it begs us to define properly what "sin" is.

Sin (ἀμαρτία) = "forfeiture because of missing the mark"

In this day and age, the word "sin" alludes to either decadent indulgence or to moral failure, but when you look at the original meaning of the word — this word that was first introduced at the beginning when humanity decided to believe a lie about God that He is not good — this word that often makes the current post-modern culture roll their eyes or the Christian traditionalist cringe with shame — this word that suggests you're doing something wrong —

Sin.

It has very little to do with moral failure and abstinence from particular behaviors. The literal translation of "missing the mark" is not of missing a moral or "right" behavioral mark. Sin means forfeiting your calling - who you are meant to be and what you are meant to do - because you missed the mark. Sin is not about moral failure but of vocational failure. Because we believed a lie about God, we abdicated our calling to partner with Him to have authority over the earth and create goodness around us. Instead, we forfeited our roles (our sense of identity and purpose) to other powers of the world. Sin.

And if we think further about what happened on the cross, Jesus died to save us from our sin — which means that He has destroyed the power of our vocational failure. He means to restore us into what we were meant to be and do — He means to restore us into our identity and purpose. He means to destroy the power of that great lie that God is not good and isn't for our good, that maybe something else is good and for our good instead of God. He means to destroy the power of idolatry.

Why idolatry?

When we think about the ancient world, we think of how different powers of "gods" were worshiped in various cultures - gods of agriculture or weather or fertility or war. And in actuality, it was the belief that any of these things were for my good and is good instead of God. And that sounds like an ancient ideology from an ancient world, but when we think about our own culture today, we can easily see that

idolatry is still at play — the power of the great lie still exists to cause us to forfeit who we are meant to be and what we are meant to do. Idolatry in our culture often lands in three categories: sex, money, power. Look at any city, what we put our resources into, social media or a newsstand magazine - most of our desires boil down to sex, money, or power.

But, wait a minute! I'm a Christian, you say, and I don't have a desire for sex, money, or power! I'm not under the power of sin - I haven't forfeited who I am and what I do to any of those things.

OK, let's paint it a different way.

Jesus died on the cross so that we won't be gripped by the pressures of popularity, productivity, and power. He died on the cross so that God's goodness gets to tell us who we are and what we do instead of the desire to be:

Popular: Having certain relationships, being loved by certain people, being afraid of confrontation or conflict with certain friends or family members, being networked into a certain class of people, not associating myself with others, looking or presenting myself in a certain way to others for fear of what they may think of me or fear of what I may think of myself, unwilling to move towards others in need because they're not of certain relationships

Productive: Being able to be efficient, being driven by accomplishments, feeling an urgency to succeed, disqualifying others because of their incompetence or laziness, believing that I am better than others because I'm a person of competence and capacity, believing I'm unsuccessful because I can't finish something, unwilling to pause my own agenda for others because people are interruptions

Powerful: Having control over my life, having control over other people's lives, gaining positions of influence for the gain of myself and those I choose, having authority or a voice in decision making, being known for my ability to be listened to where my opinion matters a lot, never choosing to appear weak or unable, unwilling to step aside from my role to give others a chance for fear that they may gain more control and say

Popularity, Productivity and Power

Which pressure has a stronger hold over your life?

Which pressure makes you either in big steps or incremental ways tell you a louder story about who you are supposed to be and what you are supposed to do?

Which pressure is making you forfeit your calling and miss your vocational mark?

Which pressure makes you believe a lie that God is not good and is not for your good?

Jesus died on the cross to break the power that sin has over our lives:

A new sort of power will be let loose upon the world, and it will be the power of self-giving love. This is the heart of the revolution that was launched on Good Friday. You cannot defeat the usual sort of power by the usual sort of means. If one force overcomes another, it is still "force" that wins. Rather, at the heart of the victory of God over all the powers of the world there lies self-giving love, which, in obedience to the ancient prophetic vocation, will give its life "as a ransom for many." Exactly as in Isaiah 53, to which that phrase alludes, the death of the one on behalf of the many will be the key by which the powers are overthrown, the kingdom of God ushered in (with the glorious divine Presence seen in plain sight by the watchmen on Jerusalem's walls), the covenant renewed, and creation itself restored to its original purpose. [N. T. Wright]