

# Crucified

Luke 23

This week is about **PERSPECTIVE**. Today we study the cross of Jesus - which puts everything in life and history into its proper perspective. Next week we will celebrate the resurrection of Jesus - which illustrates the power available for all who believe in Him - the Risen Lord.

## **Addressing a Problem**

1. Perspective
2. Power
3. Plan

If you have **a problem** the first thing you need is ***a clear perspective*** to understand the situation. The second thing you need is ***the power to make changes*** and do something. Then you need ***a plan*** to take steps toward addressing the problem. But diagnosis must always precede prescription. You have to see things clearly before you can begin to address any problem.

## **Addressing a Problem**

1. Perspective - The Cross
2. Power - The Resurrection
3. Plan - The Holy Spirit

Today we will get perspective at the cross of Christ. **Imagine you are lost in the woods**. Jesus' suffering and death is like ***a flashlight*** to help you see where you are and where you need to go. Next week we will see the power that is available for us who believe - the very power of the resurrection! That is like ***an energy bar***, providing the strength to get going with the light you can see. And then we will study how the Holy Spirit guides our every step, providing ***a map for us to follow*** as His plan for us unfolds.

***Whatever your problem is right now***, let me assure you of this: a clear perspective on that problem begins right here in Luke 23. If you have a problem - **come to the cross of Jesus Christ**. Step into the light of His grace and love!

- If your **marriage** is in trouble, this is the place to start - come to the cross!
- If your **kids** are in trouble, the starting point to finding hope for them is right here - at the cross.
- If you are filled with **fear** - come to the cross.
- If you are plagued by **guilt and shame** - come to the one place where you can find forgiveness and grace.
- If you are **haunted by your past** - the cross is the place of new beginning.s
- If you are **hurting and grieving** - this is where you can begin to understand the cost of sin and the infinite price that was paid for it.

- If **your life is hard** - come to the cross to see the greatest suffering of all time.
- If **you are suffering** and struggling to believe that God loves you - look long and hard right here at the cross of Christ.

**This is where to find PERSPECTIVE.** A pastor friend of mine does this exercise whenever a couple comes to him for marriage counseling. They are bickering back and forth about who is more at fault, all of their disappointed expectations, all of their desires and love languages and “needs.” And he stops them and says look at the Bible in some place like Romans 3. He brings them to the cross and says, hold on: ***“Why did Jesus have to die?”***

They hem and haw and say how they’re not theologians but eventually they say, “because of sin.” **“Because of WHOSE sin?”** “Because of our sin.” “Because of YOUR sin?” “Well, because of HER sin - for sure... ok because of MY sin.”

So your sin was so bad that the righteous Son of God had to DIE? Couldn’t he have just gotten a really severe beating? “No. He had to die.” “Why?” **“Because the wages of sin is death.”**

Ah. Here is the beginning of PERSPECTIVE.

### **Perspective**

#### 1. What do you deserve?

So much relational conflict - especially in marriage - is based on the idea that you DESERVE something from your spouse; that you are entitled to a certain level of love or respect or service or whatever.

- What is the source of **anger**? It is the idea that you deserve better than you got.
- What is the source of deep and abiding **sadness**? It is the disappointment that you didn’t experience what you thought you would have and should have.
- Where do **bitterness and resentment** come from? Someone or something let you down - you expected a better outcome and it didn’t happen.

***But what do we all ACTUALLY DESERVE?*** “The wages of sin is... DEATH.”

The cross of Jesus shows us what we actually deserve. There is no better place to gain clarity on life than right here at Calvary.

- If this were **YOUR TRIAL** - what would the accusation be? Jesus was innocent of all charges but you and I would not be.
- If this were **YOUR JUDGMENT** - what would the verdict be? Guilty.
- If this were **YOUR SENTENCE** - what would your outcome be? Death.

***Physical death - yes.*** But more than that. That’s why the Bible shows us Jesus’ suffering in so much of its grim detail. Jesus was not just led to a guillotine and beheaded. He was brutally beaten. He was mocked and abused. He was stripped of all of his dignity and elevated publicly

for all passersby to see his shame. He was executed in the most painful and humiliating way. The sky turned black. The earth shook. **Jesus did not just die.** He was cut off from the Father. He was cast out. **He was condemned to hell.**

### Perspective

1. What do you deserve?
2. What has God given you in Christ?

**So the cross suddenly opens our eyes to the truth.** In this one scene we gain perspective. What you deserve is death and eternal suffering under the just condemnation of a righteous God. But Jesus suffered all of that FOR YOU so instead of judgment you get forgiveness, instead of instead of death you get life in Him, instead of an eternity of agony and isolation you get eternal joy in perfect fellowship with God and other believers. **Instead of the hell you deserve, God has given you heaven - through the CROSS OF CHRIST.**

At this point many couples find themselves weeping. Now the pastor doesn't have to spend three weeks sorting out who is more at fault and guiding them to some mutually agreeable compromises - a process that will never be totally satisfying to either party. The only way to resolve conflict in marriage - or to resolve any conflict - is for **both people to drop the charges against the other** because they realize that is precisely what God has done for them.

**He did not press charges against you** - charges that would be infinitely more serious than your charges against each other. He couldn't totally drop the charges because a penalty had to be paid - so He redirected the charge against you and placed it against His own Son. And there on the cross Jesus paid took your place. Jesus paid it all. Oh the wonderful cross!

### Here is the Gospel:

#### **Jesus Offers to take your Place**

**"While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."** Romans 5:8

Do you see how this changes our focus and perspective completely? What did we deserve? Death and hell. Eternal suffering under God's wrath. What does God offer us in Christ? Jesus died for you. He stepped into your place. He took your verdict of condemnation. He suffered your punishment - and mine. Christ died for us. **He is the all sufficient Savior!**

This is why Luke features **Barabbas** in the crucifixion account - because **he represents ALL OF US.** The most obvious exchange in Luke 23 is how Jesus takes the place of Barabbas. Barabbas was a notorious murderer and leader of riots and insurrection. If anyone in this situation deserved a public and painful execution it was Barabbas. **He was absolutely guilty.**

In contrast, **Jesus was totally innocent.** Three times Pilate protested to the Jewish leaders and then to the crowds, "I find no guilt in this man!" The Roman centurion overseeing the crucifixion

went on record to say, "Certainly this man was innocent." Even the thief next to Jesus was clear headed enough to perceive, "This man has done nothing wrong!"

And yet the crowds called for Jesus to be crucified and Barabbas to be released. It was the grossest miscarriage of justice in history. **The innocent one was condemned. The murderer was set free.** And that is precisely what happened for each of us. We, like Barabbas, are totally guilty. We have no defense to make, no hope of escaping that verdict. And yet Jesus, the righteous One, offers to take our place. That is the wonderful truth of the Gospel. "Christ died for us."

Now let's look more closely at the **three trades Jesus offers** through the cross:

### **Jesus Offers to take your Place**

1. Trade your Guilt for His Goodness
2. Trade your Conflict for His Connection
3. Trade your Punishment for His Peace

**The Gospel is the ultimate exchange.** We trade our guilt for Jesus' goodness. We trade our conflict and estrangement with God for Jesus' fellowship and perfect connection with the Father. And we trade our deserved punishment in hell for Jesus' inheritance of peace and glory in heaven. All of this made possible by the cross of Jesus Christ.

But notice - this is an OFFER. **It is an INVITATION.** It does not apply to anyone automatically. Jesus offers salvation and eternal life to anyone who will come to him in faith. But you have to come. ***Come to the cross!*** Fall on your knees and call on Jesus to forgive you for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved!"

Here is the first trade Jesus offers:

#### **1. Trade your Guilt for His Goodness**

"Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, 'I find **no guilt** in this man.'" Luke 23:4

***The Jewish leaders had Jesus arrested*** because of their increasing jealousy of his popularity and their growing fear that he was leading the nation away from them (which was true). But they did not have the authority to execute anyone under Roman rule so they brought Jesus to Pilate, the Roman Governor of the region. They lined up different people to accuse Jesus but the testimonies didn't match up and it was all religious stuff that Pilate quickly perceived did not warrant the death penalty. After sending Jesus to Herod, the ruler responsible for Jesus' hometown - that investigation produced no new information so Pilate concluded in verse 14:

#### **1. Trade your Guilt for His Goodness**

"After examining him before you, behold, ***I did not find this man guilty*** of any of the charges against him. Neither did Herod." Luke 23:14-15

But the Jewish leaders were not interested in the truth, they were out for blood. So they whipped the crowd into a frenzy to demand that Jesus be crucified. Verse 23 says, **“And their voices prevailed.”** Pilate let the crowds override his clear judgment and verse 25:

### **1. Trade your Guilt for His Goodness**

“He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, for whom they asked, but he delivered Jesus over to their will.” Luke 23:25

**Put yourself in the place of Barabbas.** You were sitting on death row. You could see the crosses on the hill from your cell. You knew that it was your day. There was no escape. No hope. This was the end. But then, suddenly, the guards open your cell and drag you out into the light of day. Your chains fall to the ground and as you raise your hand against the bright sun you haven’t seen for a long time you realize - you’re free!

**Barabbas was guilty** of inciting rebellion, of treason against Rome. He was guilty of murder on multiple counts. His death was scheduled for that very day. But in a sudden twist of fate he was released and Jesus was sent out to be crucified.

**Do you realize that was you?** That was me? We were guilty of treason against God. We were all convicted of all kinds of sins against the holy God of heaven. But Jesus offers to take that guilt upon Himself and to go to the cross in your place. The innocent One, the Righteous One - offers His goodness to you. Have you accepted that gift? Have you made this exchange?

Do you see how this provides **such important perspective** on everything else in life?

- Has someone else sinned against you? Sure. Lots of people probably.
- Has someone hurt you? Are they guilty of some crime against you? Maybe.
- But how does their guilt before you compare to YOUR GUILT before God?

Whatever you have experienced at the hands of men - hear this - **you deserve INFINITELY WORSE at the hands of God.** Infinitely worse. Why? Because your crimes are against GOD. That is treason against the Crown. You were guilty of idolatry, rebellion, blasphemy, and all manner of other sins against God. And so was I. But listen to the words of Jesus:

### **1. Trade your Guilt for His Goodness**

“There they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and the other on his left. And Jesus said, **“Father, forgive them,** for they do not know what they are doing.” Luke 23:33-34

Here are **two more criminals** next to Jesus - more people for us to relate to. Both criminals, Matthew tells us in his gospel, joined the crowd in mocking Jesus. **So Jesus’ words are for all of us.** “Father forgive them.” He said that for the Jews, for the Romans, for the thieves, for Barabbas, for you and for me. “Father... Forgive them!”

**To be forgiven is to be set free**; to have your debt paid; to have your guilt erased. Pastor Colin Smith says this beautifully on Open the Bible.org

### **1. Trade your Guilt for His Goodness**

“And Jesus said, **“Father, forgive them.”** Luke 23:34

“Jesus carried your sins into his death so that you would not carry them into yours.” Colin Smith

“Father, forgive them.” This is what Jesus achieved for us on the cross - the way for us to trade our guilt for His goodness - our sin for His righteousness. Oh, come to the cross! **Let Jesus carry your sin away from you as far as the east is from the west!** And if you have already made this trade then rejoice that Jesus has carried your sins into his death - so you are free from them! You WILL NOT carry those sins into your death. Instead, the believer in Jesus goes into death forgiven - washed clean and dressed in the righteousness of Christ! Here is the second trade:

### **2. Trade your Conflict for His Connection**

“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Luke 23:34

Even on the cross, Jesus cried out to His Father. The greatest agony for Jesus on the cross was not the physical suffering but the spiritual separation from the Father. The beatings and blood and gruesome details of the crucifixion with the long nails and the crown of thorns are all symbolic of **the spiritual HELL Jesus endured** as the sins of mankind covered Him and blotted Him out of fellowship with God the Father.

### **2. Trade your Conflict for His Connection**

“And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, ‘Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?’ which means, ‘My God, my God, **why have you forsaken me?**’” Mark 15:34

Darkness covered the land from the sixth hour until the ninth hour - that is **from noon until 3 pm**. When the sun would normally be at its strongest all of its light was blotted out. At the end of this stretch of darkness and suffering Jesus cried out as One Forsaken.

Remember, as the eternal Son of God **Jesus enjoyed PERFECT FELLOWSHIP with God** the Father through God the Spirit. Forever. For eternity past and into eternity future Father, Son and Holy Spirit enjoy perfect unity, harmony, peace and love. Jesus said, “I and the Father are One.”

But on the cross that relationship was severed. Jesus was cut off. The Father turned His face away. **The Triune God was fractured** in those moments **while Jesus BECAME SIN FOR US**.

That cry of being forsaken by the Father is **what all of us deserve**. “The wages of sin is death,” in the sense not only of physical death but of spiritual death, which is pictured as being under the just wrath of God - being judged an ENEMY of God.

## **2. Trade your Conflict for His Connection**

“For if while we were **enemies** we were **reconciled to God** by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.” Romans 5:10

**All of us start out as enemies of God.** No one starts out in neutral. There is no Switzerland in relation to God. You are either citizens in His Kingdom or you are God’s enemies - in a deep and personal conflict with God. The good news of Jesus is that there is a MEDIATOR who has provided a path to RECONCILIATION!

He offers this trade! Trade your conflict with God for Jesus’ perfect connection with the Father. Trade your hostility for peace. Trade your status as an enemy of God to become a CHILD OF GOD! Only One Person can make this offer - the Son of God who died to pay the price for our rebellion.

This is what the crucifixion of Jesus shows us. We are not just misguided children who need some education. If that had been the case Jesus could have come and just taught us principles, write a few books and fly back to heaven. What the cross shows us is that we need more than education. **We need TRANSFORMATION.**

C.S. Lewis says it this way:

“Fallen man is not simply an imperfect creature who needs improvement: he is a rebel who must lay down his arms... This process of surrender - this movement full speed astern - is what Christians call repentance.” C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

That is HOW we make this trade - first in ***the surrender of repentance*** and then in the commitment of faith by which we establish our allegiance to God as our One True King. Repentance admits our treason against Him. Faith is your personal commitment to worship and serve only Him from now on. It is the falling to your knees before the King you have offended and begging Him to forgive you and take you into His service.

Because of the cross, we can trade our guilt for Jesus’ goodness; our conflict with God for Jesus’ connection with the Father. And third: We can trade our punishment for His peace.

## **3. Trade your Punishment for His Peace**

“There was **darkness over the whole land**... while the sun’s light failed. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two.” Luke 23:44-45

While Jesus was forsaken, the whole world experienced the severity of the moment as the light of the sun was blotted out. As in the ninth plague on Egypt when **TOTAL DARKNESS** covered the land and you couldn’t see your own hand in front of your face - so for three hours as Jesus hung on the cross, there was total darkness.

Darkness is one of several horrifying symbols of hell in the Bible. To be “cast into outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth” is a vivid description of the suffering appointed for all who refuse to believe in Jesus. Hell is also pictured as **fiery torment** - and the devil’s final destiny is called the Lake of Fire.

On the cross, **Jesus endured hell for us**. That is the ultimate punishment you and I deserve. Even death itself is a symbol of the ultimate punishment we all deserve - to be crushed under the weight of your own sin FOREVER. Buried in it.

To lighten the mood just a little - I think one of the best modern pictures of hell is in the **Pirates of the Caribbean** when Captain Jack is in Davy Jones’ Locker.

[Please include both pics in one slide if possible - I got them from here:

<https://www.dga.org/Craft/DGAQ/All-Articles/1602-Spring-2016/Shot-to-Remember-Pirates-of-the-Caribbean.aspx>]





Captain Jack is stranded - apparently alone - with one half of a peanut. He is on a ship but it is stuck in a vast desert of dry salt or sand - no water anywhere in view. What a picture of desolation!

But then we see that Jack is not alone - as another Jack emerges with a musket:

[Please include both pics on one slide]



Captain Jack's torment is to be trapped on a waterless boat with HIMSELF - forever. That is his hell. And that will be everyone's hell - **to be stuck with your own sin for eternity** - to have your selfishness and anger, your sadness and bitterness all caving in on you ad nauseum to infinite. Fire is just a symbol of pain that we can relate to. Burns are incredibly painful. But there are pains that run much deeper than the burn from a flame. There is a deep and internal, inescapable pain of knowing you are guilty, knowing your shame - and being unable to get free from it. That is the true suffering of hell. Unending REGRET. Back to the Bible:

### **3. Trade your Punishment for His Peace**

“There was **darkness over the whole land...** while the sun’s light failed. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two.” Luke 23:44-45

Jesus offers to take that eternal misery that you and I deserve - to endure that darkness, to suffer that flaming agony of the wrath and condemnation of God. That is what he suffered on the cross. And the earth groaned in the darkness as thunder rolled and the ground trembled. Matthew adds these details:

### **3. Trade your Punishment for His Peace**

“And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split.” Matthew 27:51

The fact that **the curtain in the temple** was torn from the TOP shows **this was an act of God**. That curtain was six inches thick - the richest fabric money could buy in those days. It was unrippable. This was the curtain that separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place.

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-veil-was-torn-in-two>

Only the high priest was allowed behind this veil and only on the Day of Atonement and with the blood of a holy sacrifice. **The curtain represented SEPARATION** to protect people from the holy presence of God. To enter God’s presence meant death - as several people in the Old Testament learned the hard way.

Now, catch this detail. The curtain was made of fine blue, purple and scarlet fabric - with CHERUBIM carefully embroidered into it. So it was **a wall of Angelic separation** from the holy presence of God - which reminds us of the Garden of Eden after Adam and Eve were thrown out. An angel with a flaming sword was sent to guard the entrance and keep the now sinful couple out of God’s paradise and away from His holy presence. In their condition in sin, had they gone back into God’s presence they would have died immediately.

But when Jesus breathed his last breath, the curtain was torn in two. It was irreparably damaged. And in that moment **the way back into the presence of God was opened**. The ultimate sacrifice had been made - the blood of the Lamb of God had been shed. The flaming sword of God’s justice fell on Jesus and in that killing stroke, the angel’s blade was broken and the way back into paradise was opened.

And there is the third invitation - trade your punishment for His peace. Come to the cross where Jesus endured the hell you deserve and He will lead you into heaven. Listen to the words **Jesus spoke to the thief** beside him who called on Him in faith:

### **3. Trade your Punishment for His Peace**

“And he said to him, ‘Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.’” Luke 23:43

***That criminal on the brink of hell just moments later found himself in heaven with Jesus.*** How was that possible? He heard Jesus' words from the cross including those precious words, "Father, forgive them." And he must have wondered if that forgiveness was available to him. Do you wonder that today?

All the thief said was, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." It was a cry of simple faith. Have you called on Jesus to save you?

Jesus offers this amazing exchange.

### **Jesus Offers to take your Place**

1. Trade your Guilt for His Goodness
2. Trade your Conflict for His Connection
3. Trade your Punishment for His Peace

**He will take your guilt upon Himself.** He died to pay for your sins and mine. He will take your sin and shame and give you His righteousness. ***He will fill you with all of His goodness.*** "God made Him who had no sin to BE SIN for us that in Him we might become the RIGHTEOUSNESS of God" (2 Cor. 5:21).

Not only that, **Jesus will take your conflict with God and give you His perfect fellowship** with the Father. You can be RECONCILED with God through Jesus, the One Mediator between a holy God and a rebellious people. Lay down your arms in repentance and bow your knee to Jesus in faith!

Finally, you can **trade your punishment for the peace of Jesus Christ.** Jesus paid it all! Though we were enemies of God deserving nothing but death and hell and eternal suffering, Jesus endured all of that for us on the cross as the perfect, once for all sacrifice for sin. And through that one sacrifice the curtain was torn and the way into heaven was opened. Won't you come in?

Oh brother, sister, friend - ***come to the cross!*** This is the place to find hope, to find healing. This is the gateway to a whole new life. Whatever you are going through, whatever problem you are facing - this is the place to start. Come to the cross of Christ. ***For our hope, our salvation is in CHRIST ALONE!***

Let's pray and then sing that great gospel anthem together.