

## FOUNDATIONS: What Christians Should Believe

4 April 2012

*SALVATION: How God Makes Rebels His Children*

Part 7

**Context:** In our ongoing study through our church's confession of faith,<sup>1</sup> we are currently discussing the doctrine of salvation.<sup>2</sup> Thus far we have learned what it means to be saved, how salvation is wholly of grace, and how salvation is only and always mediated through Jesus Christ, who is fully God and fully man. Tonight we will consider the significance of the manner of Jesus' death by discussing the phrase from our doctrinal statement, "by the shedding of His blood in His death."

**Salvation:** *We believe that the salvation of sinners is divinely initiated and wholly of grace through the mediatorial offices of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Who, by appointment of the Father, voluntarily took upon Himself our nature, yet without sin, and honored the divine law by His obedience, thus qualifying Himself to be our Savior; that by the shedding of His blood in His death He fully satisfied the just demands of a holy and righteous God regarding sin; that His sacrifice consisted not in setting us an example by his death as a martyr, but was a voluntary substitution of Himself in the sinner's place, the Just dying for the unjust, Christ bearing our sins in His own body on the tree; that having risen from the dead He is now enthroned in Heaven; He is in every way qualified to be a suitable, compassionate and all-sufficient Savior. We believe that faith in Jesus Christ is the only condition of salvation. Repentance is a change of mind and purpose toward God prompted by the Holy Spirit and is an integral part of saving faith.*

**Bible Reading:** Mark 15:16-39

### Discussion:

- I. What does it mean that salvation is wholly of grace? How might you explain this concept to a young child?
- II. What does it mean that salvation comes through Jesus our mediator? How might you explain this concept to someone without any previous biblical knowledge?
- III. Why is it important to believe that Jesus is 100% God? Why is it important to believe that Jesus is also 100% man? Can you think of scripture passages that teach both Jesus' natures?
- IV. Based on what you know of the Bible, what is significant about the way in which Jesus died? For example, could God's plan of redemption have been accomplished if Jesus had been executed through drowning or by being hanged with a rope?

### Study:

- I. The historical fact of Jesus' bloody death:
  - A. Jesus died by crucifixion, which is widely recognized as a horrific means of execution.<sup>3</sup> The mostly or entirely naked victim's hands and feet were nailed with large iron spikes to a cross of wood, whereby the person then hanged, oftentimes in the hot Middle Eastern sun, until he or she suffocated under his or her own weight. Death by crucifixion usually took hours (sometimes days) and was universally recognized as a shameful, humiliating death reserved for terrorists and violent criminals.

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<sup>1</sup> For a complete copy of our church's confession of faith, visit our website ([www.trinitybaptistmuncie.org](http://www.trinitybaptistmuncie.org)) and look under the "We Believe" category. We will attempt to put all the previous notes from this series on the church website in the not too distant future.

<sup>2</sup> If you would like to go deeper in the study of the doctrine of salvation, we recommend the following resources: For an introductory study, see *What is the Gospel?* by Greg Gilbert (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010); for a more intermediate consideration, consider *The Truth of the Cross* by RC Sproul (Lake Mary, FL: Reformation Trust, 2007); for a challenging yet rewarding study, check out *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* by John Murray (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955).

<sup>3</sup> For a scholarly but rightly disturbing study of death by crucifixion, see *Crucifixion: In the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross* by Martin Hengel (Philadelphia: Augsburg Fortress, 1977).

1. Matthew 27:22 – Pilate said to them, “Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?” They all said, “Let him be crucified!” And he said, “Why, what evil has he done?” But they shouted all the more, “Let him be crucified!”<sup>4</sup>
  2. Mark 15:24-25 – And they crucified him and divided his garments among them, casting lots for them, to decide what each should take. And it was the third hour when they crucified him.
- B. The secular (i.e., non-Christian) view of death by crucifixion is well-attested in ancient documents. Consider the following examples:
1. Writing on the horror of crucifixion, Roman philosopher Seneca (4 BC – 65 AD) said:
 

“Can anyone be found who would prefer wasting away in pain dying limb by limb, or letting out his life drop by drop, rather than expiring once for all? Can any man be found willing to be fastened to the accursed tree, long sickly, already deformed, swelling with ugly weals on shoulders and chest, and drawing the breath of life amid long-drawn-out agony? He would have many excuses for dying even before mounting the cross.”<sup>5</sup>
  2. Roman statesman Cicero (106 – 43 BC) said about the term “cross”:
 

“The very word ‘cross’ should be far removed not only from the person of a Roman citizen but from his thoughts, his eyes and his ears.”<sup>6</sup>
- C. In Jesus’ case, His crucifixion was preceded by a form of punishment called scourging. When someone was scourged, the executioner would use a short whip with multiple cords (sometimes known as a “cat-o-nine-tails”). Entwined into the cords of this whip would be shards of glass, bits of broken bone, or twisted metal barbs (similar to barbed wire). The victim’s hands were then bound to a short post driven into the ground. The executioner would then thrash the victim’s naked back a specified number of times (e.g., “40 lashes”). Scourging would result in massive blood loss and tissue damage, sometimes exposing bones and internal organs. Though scourging was generally a form of corporal punishment, it was not uncommon for the scourged victim to die from the ordeal (or consequent complications). Jesus’ scourging prior to His carrying the crossbeam to Golgotha and then crucifixion explains why He died after only three hours on the cross (Matthew 27:45ff.).<sup>7</sup>
1. Luke 23:22 – A third time he said to them, “Why, what evil has he done? I have found in him no guilt deserving death. I will therefore punish and release him.”
  2. Mark 15:15 – So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.
- D. By the conclusion of Jesus’ crucifixion, His body would have been not much more than a disgusting heap of bloody, torn flesh and exposed bones. His face would have looked ghastly due to the crown of thorns pressed into His scalp (Matthew 27:29), the soldiers beating him in the face with a staff (Mark 15:19), and parts of His beard torn out by the roots (Isaiah 50:6). His wrists and ankles would have had large, sagging holes in them, due to the punctures by the crucifixion spikes which suspended Jesus’ body between heaven and earth. Due to the scourging, His back probably resembled uncooked ground hamburger. His side would have a large spear wound, due to the soldiers piercing His heart (John 19:34). His entire body would have been caked with dried blood, saliva, and perhaps other bodily fluids. No wonder the Prophet Isaiah predicted about the Messiah:

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<sup>4</sup>Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

<sup>5</sup>Cited in Hengel, *Crucifixion*, 30-31.

<sup>6</sup>Cited, *ibid.*, 42.

<sup>7</sup>For a fascinating medical study examining why Jesus died physically, see the article “On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ” by William D. Edwards, MD; Wesley J. Gabel, MDiv; Floyd E. Hosmer, MS, AMI in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, vol. 255, No. 11 (March 21, 1986), available numerous places on the internet.

Isaiah 52:14 – His appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind.

- E. It is important to emphasize that Jesus did truly die. Though He remained the God-man, and thus His divine nature continued to exist, His physical body “gave up the ghost.” He did not merely faint, He did not pretend to be dead, He did not enter into some temporary coma; Jesus literally died. His corpse was embalmed in the customary Jewish manner by Joseph of Arimathea, wrapped in linen burial cloths, placed in a stone tomb, and a stone was rolled in front of the tomb to prevent anyone from entering (or, perhaps, leaving?). Jesus’ dead body would lie on that cold, stone slab until something very peculiar happened the following Sunday morning (more about that later).
  1. Mark 15:37 – And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, “Truly this man was the Son of God!”
  2. Luke 23:50ff. – There was a man named Joseph, from the Jewish town of Arimathea. He was a member of the council, a good and righteous man, who had not consented to their decision and action; and he was looking for the kingdom of God. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then he took it down and wrapped it in a linen shroud and laid him in a tomb cut in stone, where no one had ever yet been laid. It was the day of Preparation, and the Sabbath was beginning. The women who had come with him from Galilee followed and saw the tomb and how his body was laid. Then they returned and prepared spices and ointments.

## II. The theological significance of Jesus’ bloody death:

- A. To understand the significance of the shedding of Jesus’ blood, some familiarity with the Old Testament is essential.<sup>8</sup>
  1. From the very first moments after the fall of Adam and Eve into sin, God desired humans to worship Him through bloody sacrifices. A healthy, “clean” animal (e.g., a sheep, goat, bull, etc.) was selected, its neck slit, and then its blood poured out on an altar. Usually the animal’s body was then consumed in a fire on the altar:
    - a. Genesis 3:7, 21 – Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths... And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.
    - b. Genesis 4:4 – Abel... brought [an offering] of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering.
    - c. Genesis 8:20 – Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar.
    - d. Genesis 22:7-8 – Isaac said to his father Abraham, “My father!” And he said, “Here I am, my son.” He said, “Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” Abraham said, “God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.” So they went both of them together.
  2. Consistently, God tied these bloody sacrifices to the sins of the worshipper and the necessity of atonement for their sin:
    - a. Exodus 30:10 – Aaron [the priest] shall make atonement on its horns once a year. With the blood of the sin offering of atonement shall make atonement for it once in the year throughout your generations. It is most holy to the LORD.

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<sup>8</sup> The longer I study the Bible, the more I am convinced that understanding the Old Testament is essential for rightly understanding just about every topic or theme in the New Testament.

- b. Leviticus 8:15 – And he killed it, and Moses took the blood, and with his finger put it on the horns of the altar around it and purified the altar and poured out the blood at the base of the altar and consecrated it to make atonement for it.
  3. Presumably, God intended the worshipper to draw a connection between the blood sacrifice and the guilt of sin. The worshipper would feel a bit of grief over killing the innocent animal, be disgusted by the smell and sight of the blood, realize that his or her sins made this necessary, and conclude that sin is so heinous that it cannot be atoned for without the shedding of blood. Pastor Vaughan Roberts helpfully reflects on this idea when he writes:
 

“In this [the Passover sacrifice and the Exodus], the great act of God’s salvation in the Old Testament era, the Israelites are being taught an important principle: God saves by substitution. His people deserve to die for their sins, but another dies instead. We are being prepared for a greater act of deliverance, of which the Passover is only a shadow.”<sup>9</sup>
  4. The thoughtful Old Testament saint would realize that the blood of bulls and goats was not an actual atonement for sin. First, it is illogical to think that an animal can actually pay for the sins of a human. Second, if the animal truly paid for the worshipper’s sins, why then were the sacrifices repeated endlessly, year after year? Therefore, the animal sacrifices must have been provisional and pointed toward a greater, ultimate sacrifice for sins.
    - a. Psalm 51:16-17 – For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.
    - b. Hebrews 10:1-4 – For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near. Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins? But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.
- B. The New Testament interprets the shedding of Jesus’ as the ultimate blood sacrifice, forever reconciling those of us who trust in Jesus, back to God.<sup>10</sup> While sinful men murdered Jesus, somehow behind the scenes, God was counting the shedding of Jesus blood as the necessary punishment to purchase our forgiveness:
  - a. John 1:29 – The next day he [i.e., John the Baptist] saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”
  - b. 1 John 1:7 – The blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.
  - c. 1 Corinthians 5:7 – For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.
  - d. 1 Peter 1:18 – You were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.
  - e. Revelation 1:7 – To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood.
  - f. Revelation 7:14 – They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

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<sup>9</sup> *God’s Big Picture: Tracing the Storyline of the Bible* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 66. This is a very helpful resource for getting a quick overview of the entire message of the Bible.

<sup>10</sup> Sometime in your Christian life you should study in detail the New Testament’s teaching on the significance of Jesus’ blood. Unfortunately, there has been a good bit of misunderstanding and bad teaching surrounding this concept. A great place to start would be the brief book *His Blood Works: The Meaning of the Word “Blood” in Scripture* by Alan Stibbs (Ross-Shire, Christian Focus: 2011).

- C. Jesus' shed blood recalls that Old Testament principle of *salvation through substitution*. In a very real sense, what Jesus endured in His crucifixion is a graphic picture of what you and I deserve for our sins. I deserve to suffocate in my own blood on the cross; I deserve to be beaten and mocked and hanged naked in public; I deserve to be forsaken by God and damned. But the message of the Gospel is that Jesus died as my substitutionary sacrifice.
1. On the cross, Jesus "suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18).
  2. As Jesus bled and died, "he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:5-6).
- D. Ultimately, the fact that Jesus died as a substitutionary sacrifice sets His death apart as completely unique. Throughout world history, thousands of people have been crucified, some of whom hanged on crosses far longer than Jesus did. It is even possible to conceive of a human enduring more physical pain than Jesus endured on the cross. But no one's death atoned for sin like Jesus did. His death is completely unique because of the spiritual facet of His suffering. During those three hours of suffering on the cross, Jesus absorbed the wrath of God; He suffered far more than any sinner ever will in hell. In a very real sense, Jesus endured the hell we deserve while on the cross before He died, something far worse than physical sufferings. It is just like commentator William Hendriksen wrote:

"In the case of Jesus the emphasis should not be placed on the physical torture which he endured. It has been said that only the damned in hell know what Jesus suffered when he died on the cross. In a sense this is true, for they, too, suffer eternal death. One should add, however, that they have never been in heaven. The Son of God, on the other hand, descended from the regions of infinite delight in the closest possible fellowship with his Father to the abysmal depths of hell."<sup>11</sup>

### III. The practical ramifications of Jesus' bloody death:

- A. Jesus' bloody death helps us see the horrible evil of sin.
1. All true Christians recognize sin as an evil offense against God. Yet fully appreciating how bad sin truly is can be a challenge. We easily view certain sins as wicked while excusing other sins as tolerable. We might be appalled by the behavior of the child molester yet remain indifferent toward our own sinful discontent or laziness.
  2. Jesus' bloody death puts everything in perspective. What Jesus endured on the cross was required for my pride and your pride, my lust and your lust, my gossip and your gossip, etc. Considering Jesus' bloody death should fuel in our souls an utter hatred for all sin, even respectable sins.
- B. Jesus' bloody death helps us see the fierceness of the wrath of God.
1. Because we are sinners, we have a hard time rightly appreciating spiritual truths. The wrath of God is one such truth that is difficult to apprehend. We are tempted to think, "Is God's wrath really so bad? Maybe hell won't be so terrible. Maybe it won't be much worse than going to school detention."
  2. Jesus' bloody death helps us appreciate what it really means to become a recipient of the wrath of God. "If God was thus severe to his own Son, how dreadful will he be one day to

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<sup>11</sup>William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, vol. 1-2, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Gospel According to John*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953-2001), 2:427.

his enemies! Such as die in willful impenitence, must feel the same wrath as Christ did; and because they cannot bear it at once, therefore they must endure it for ever."<sup>12</sup>

3. The only right application of such terrible thoughts is to flee to Jesus as Savior immediately. He will save all those who trust in Him from the wrath we all deserve.
- C. Jesus' bloody death shows us the lengths and depths of God's mercy and grace.
1. One of our basic struggles as sinners is to believe that God truly loves us. This may sound odd, since we constantly hear "God loves you", but a disbelief in God's love is at the root of so many sins. Part of the reason Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit was because they believed the Satanic lie that God did not truly love them, that God was withholding something good from them:

Genesis 3:4 –The serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die.For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."
  2. One of the things Jesus' bloody death does is to prove to us that God truly loves us and immensely so. What greater proof of God's love could exist than allowing His own dear Son to be so slaughtered to save us:
    - a. John 3:16 – For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.
    - b. Romans 8:32 – 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?
  3. When you question or doubt God's love for you, look to the cross and remember that God accomplished this because He loves you.
- D. Jesus' bloody death shows us the strength and extent of Jesus' love for sinners.
1. We must always remember that Jesus' cross was not something the Father forced Jesus to endure against His will. Though it was a horrifying ordeal, Jesus gladly submitted to the cross "for the joy set before him" (Hebrews 12:2). And what joy motivated Jesus to endure such a terrible death? The joy of saving all those who trust in Him. Jesus had each of us individually in mind as He groaned upon the cross.
  2. The cross is how much Jesus loves you, if you are a Christian. If a firefighter ran into a burning building to rescue us, surely we would feel gratitude and appreciation for him. How much more should we love Jesus who endured such things to save us from our sins! If you do not have the love and affection for Jesus you desire, spend some serious time "surveying the wondrous cross on which the Prince of Glory died."
- E. Jesus' bloody death shows us the completeness of the salvation we have in Christ.
1. What we believe was actually accomplished at the cross will have a dramatic effect on how we relate to God, how we live our daily lives, and our joy in life. If we think that the cross is merely an example we are to emulate, we will despair over what God demands of us and view God as a "hard man" (Matthew 25:24). Likewise, if we view the cross as accomplishing only part of our salvation, we will be enslaved to anxiety, thinking that we have to labor and strive to complete Jesus' sacrifice.
  2. Jesus' bloody death fully saved those who believe. They contribute nothing but the sin that makes the cross necessary. When Jesus said, "It is finished!" (John 19:30), He really meant it. The millisecond a sinner turns from his sins and trusts in Jesus, that instant the sinner is completely and forever reconciled to God.

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<sup>12</sup> Thomas Watson, *A Body of Divinity* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1965 [originally published, 1692]), 175.

3. What this practically means is that Christians need never live as if God's love for them wavers. On our best day, and on our worst day, God loves us as if we had lived Jesus' life. While our sins as Christians do invite God's Fatherly displeasure (Hebrews 12), we are as much sons and daughters of God now as if we were in heaven already (1 John 3:1). As Christians we do not obey to make God love us; we obey because God loves us. That difference in perspective is the secret to the "joy of my salvation" (Psalm 51:12).
- F. Jesus' bloody death must be individually and personally appropriated.
1. Since Jesus is the God-man, His blood is of infinite value. Had it been the plan of God, Jesus blood could have conceivably redeemed an infinite number of universes of sinners.
  2. In the plan of God, however, Jesus' blood is only applied to those who believe on Him, to those who repent of their sins and trust in Him. All others remain under the wrath of God.
    - a. John 3:36 – 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.
    - b. Romans 5:9 - Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.
  3. All the healing power of a medicine is useless unless ingested by the sick person. Likewise, all the saving, redeeming, reconciling power of Jesus' blood is ineffectual unless applied by repentant faith.
    - a. What is repentant faith? It is humble reliance upon what Jesus has done to save me personally. I turn from whatever else I was relying upon for my standing before God – my good works, my pedigree, some other religion – and I rely only and entirely on Jesus' death in my place to make me right with God.
    - b. While not synonymous with a prayer, repentant faith is often expressed through prayer.<sup>13</sup> Here is one suggested prayer for expressing repentant faith in Jesus' death:
 

"Heavenly Father, I am really a selfish person. I have wanted my own way—not yours. I have often been jealous, proud, and rebellious. You are my Creator, but I have acted as though I was lord of all. I have not been thankful to you. I have not listened to your Word the Bible and have not loved your Son. But now I see that all my sin is against you. I now repent of this evil attitude. I turn from all my sins and trust that Jesus shed His precious blood to cleanse me from all my guilt. I now receive Him as my Savior and Lord of my life.

"I, \_\_\_\_\_, turn from my sins and take Christ as my Lord and Savior. By His help, I promise to obey Him in every part of my life."<sup>14</sup>
    - c. The nanosecond a sinner exercises such faith in Jesus, he or she is instantly saved.
- G. Jesus' bloody death helps us understand what it means to take up the cross and follow Jesus.
1. On several occasions, Jesus describes the Christian life as one of "taking up the cross" and following Him:
    - a. Matthew 16:24 - Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

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<sup>13</sup> What I mean by this sentence is that it is possible to trust Jesus savingly without praying such a prayer (e.g., the Philippian jailer), and, it is possible to pray such a prayer and not truly be expressing repentant faith (e.g., if you are insincere or thinking that the prayer is somehow magical). A prayer of faith is, however, the common way of "calling upon the name of the Lord" (Romans 10:13).

<sup>14</sup> C. John Miller, *A Faith Worth Sharing: A Lifetime of Conversations About Christ* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 1999), 148-49. This resource is an excellent encouragement to informally share your faith with those you know and love.

- b. Luke 9:23 - He said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.
- 2. Taking up the cross has been "devotionalized" by many into enduring just about anything you do not enjoy in life. "Not eating chocolate is my cross to bear." "Dealing with my mother-in-law is my cross to bear." "Having to wear my seatbelt is my cross to bear." Etc.
- 3. Jesus' first-century followers would never have understood the call to take up the cross in this way. For citizens of the Roman Empire, the cross meant one thing: *a bloody, painful, shameful death*. Thus, by calling upon His followers to take up their crosses, Jesus was calling upon people to follow Him even if it meant death by crucifixion. That is the radical nature and degree of Christian commitment. Explaining Mark 8:34 ("Take up his cross and follow me"), commentator RT France writes:

"The metaphor of taking up one's own cross is not to be domesticated into an exhortation merely to endure hardship patiently. In this context, following 8:31, it is an extension of Jesus' readiness for death to those who follow him, and the following verses will fill it out still in terms of the loss of life, not merely the acceptance of discomfort. While it may no doubt be legitimately applied to other and lesser aspects of the suffering involved in following Jesus, the primary reference in context must be to the possibility of literal death."<sup>15</sup>

**Application:**

- I. In what ways has this lesson enabled you to appreciate Jesus' death more than you did before?
- II. Do you think that Jesus' sufferings were enough to pay for all your sins? Are you willing to rely entirely on His work to pay for your sins?
- III. How does Jesus' bloody death prove that Jesus is worthy of our trust?
- IV. Is Jesus' death too gruesome to tell children about? Why or why not?
- V. If Jesus' death absorbed God's wrath completely, then will God ever turn His wrath against you as a believer? Should we interpret any of the hardships we endure as expressions of God's wrath? If not, why then does God allow suffering into our lives (cf. Romans 5:3ff., Hebrews 12:3-11; James 1:2-4)?
- VI. What point from tonight's lesson most stood out to you and why?

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<sup>15</sup>*The Gospel of Mark: New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 340. This is one of the best commentaries of any kind I have ever used on any book of the Bible.