

# (I Want an Answer) Why Did Jesus Die?

by Stephen Olford

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*Jesus' death is a voluntary, vicarious, verified, and victorious atonement for humanity's sin, demonstrating God's love and justice.*

**Duration:** 38:55

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 15:1

**Topics:** "Jesus Death", "Victory Over Sin"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the transformation of a girl who was living a carefree and frivolous life. He questions whether she can turn away from life and embrace death. The sermon then shifts to the death of Jesus Christ and the significance it holds. The preacher emphasizes four important truths about Jesus' death and urges the audience, especially young people, to understand its profound impact. He concludes by highlighting the victory over death that Jesus offers and encourages listeners to seek deliverance from the fear and power of death through faith in Christ.

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## Transcript

Well now tonight, my subject in the second in the series, I Want an Answer, is why did Jesus die? And in the spirit, and in the message of that great solo you have just listened to, I want to draw your attention straight away to some verses in the fifteenth of the first epistle of Paul to the Corinthians. 1 Corinthians, chapter fifteen, and we'll read those first few verses. Verses one to four.

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand. By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you, first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins, according to the scripture, and that he was buried, and he rose again the third day, according to the scripture.

I delivered unto you, first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins, according to the scripture, and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day, according to the scripture. My dear friends in Minneapolis, and those of you listening over radio tonight, I want to bring you a simple, straightforward statement concerning this tremendous truth of the cross of Christ. Why did Jesus Christ die? I want to state publicly, and positively, and simply tonight, four tremendous truths that emerge out of these verses concerning the death of Jesus.

And I do hope that men and women, and especially some young people here who've never seen any significance at all in the death of Jesus Christ, I do hope and I do pray that tonight you're going to look right into the face of the man of Calvary, and you're going to say, love so amazing, so divine, demand, yes Lord, and shall have my soul, my life, my all. So you follow me as we consider this great theme, this touchstone of the Christian doctrine, this cardinal truth of our Christian gospel, the very heart of our message. Well now, the death of the Lord Jesus Christ is the very pivotal fact of time.

Indeed, it is the converging point of two eternities. The death of the Lord Jesus Christ is eternal and universal in its significance and implication. The death of the Lord Jesus Christ is the very foundation upon which God comes out in grace in all his dealings now.

It'll be the very basis upon which he will deal in judgment in a coming day. There is no truth in the whole of the Bible which carries more importance than this central truth, that Christ died for our sins according to the scripture, that he was buried, and that the third day he rose again according to the scripture. And four salient truths emerge out of these verses to which I now want to draw your attention.

The first is this, that I want you to observe that the death of our Lord Jesus Christ was voluntary. It was a voluntary death. Christ died.

I know we can turn through the New Testament gospel and epistles as well and read such phrases as this, that Christ was slain, that he was murdered, that he was killed, that he was put to death. But when we have read all those phrases, it still remains true, very significantly true, that Christ died. His death was voluntary, first of all, as to motive.

Yes, in the very councils of eternity this death was planned. He came forth from the very farthest side from heaven in order that he might die. I can hear that word coming down through the prophetic page, Lo, I come in the volume of a book which is written of me to do thy will, O my God, thy law is within my heart.

Lo, I come to do thy will, O my God, that same will concerning which he prayed in the garden, Not my will, but thine, be done. As the Lord Jesus walked this earth and looked into the faces of his disciples, he made this tremendous statement, The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many. When he neared the end of the journey, as the shadow of the cross fell across his path, we hear the Savior say, For this cause came I unto this hour.

And he's looking right into Calvary, and he's anticipating that awful death. For this cause came I unto this hour. It was voluntary not only as to motive, it was voluntary as to method.

Again and again men tried to kill the Lord Jesus. When he opened his ministry they caught him and would have flung him over the hillside at Nazareth, but he escaped out of their hands. Subsequently they tried to lay hold of him and apprehend him that they might stone him again and again and again, but he escaped out of their hands.

And yet right throughout his ministry, and particularly from the middle of his ministry onward, he could look into the faces of his disciples and say this, The Son of Man, the Son of Man, the Son of Man shall be taken by the Gentiles and he shall be scourged, he shall be crucified, and the third day he shall rise again. He knew the very method by which he was going to glorify God in death. It was voluntary even as to method.

But what absolutely arrests me as a thinking fellow here tonight, as I consider the word of God in this amazing death, this death out of all death, this death of the Lord Jesus Christ, is just this point, that it was

voluntary even as to moment. Even as to moment. I read the gospel story and I hear, I hear the evangelist telling of this, that he bowed his head and he gave up the ghost.

He bowed his head and he dismissed his spirit. Have you ever taken trouble to examine that little word, bowed his head? That doesn't mean, my friend, that he drooped his head in helplessness. No, no, no.

No, no, no. The word means that he placed his head consciously, voluntarily, strongly, and then with a loud voice, with a loud voice, he cried, accomplished, finished, and dismissed his spirit. No one ever died before like that.

No one has ever died since like that. The same word translated, bowed his head, there, is the same word we read in the gospel stories where Jesus says, the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head. Ladies and gentlemen, I call upon you to use your intelligence and reason tonight and to follow me in this tremendous proof that this death was voluntary and the fact that it was voluntary at the motive and necessary moment lifts it right out of the realm of death, ordinary, death, extraordinary, into a place of uniqueness, infinite wonder, and redemptive significance.

The death of Jesus Christ was voluntary. Christ died. No one ever died like that before him.

No one has ever died like that since him. But let us go a little deeper and notice that this death, this wonderful death of Jesus Christ, isn't only voluntary. I notice that the death of the Lord Jesus Christ was vicarious.

Christ died for our sins. It was a representative death. It wasn't the death of a martyr merely.

It was the death of a sin bearer, a representative, a substitute who was representing before God and before the world, before principalities and powers, certain tremendous issues and factors to which I now draw your attention. Christ died for our sins. Three great, three great factors were represented there.

God, sin, man. It was vicarious. It was a representative death.

In the first place, will you notice that Christ hanging on Calvary's cross? As Calvary represented, first of all, the holiness of God. The holiness of God. When the Lord Jesus hung there, he was expressing, listen carefully, God's holy love and holy justice.

When Jesus died at Calvary's cross, in one crowning act, he met all the demands of holy love and holy justice. When Jesus died at Calvary's cross, he met all the demands, listen again, of a sin-hating God and a man-loving God. And Paul declares, Jesus Christ, whom God hath set forth to tell out to horizons to declare his righteousness, holy love, and holy justice.

O sweet and happy shelter! O refuge tried and sweet! O trusting place where heaven's love and heaven's justice meet. My friend, if you ever want to ask yourself the question, how holy is God? How holy is his love? How holy is God? How holy is his justice, my friend? You close your eyes and in spirit prepare to Calvary and look off to yon man who hangs pinned to a Roman gibbet and see there, I beg of you, God's holy love and holy justice meeting together on account of men upon this planet. But not only did Jesus represent there God's holiness, Jesus represented Calvary, listen, man's, listen, sin, man's sinfulness.

The holiness of God is represented there and the heinousness of sin, heinousness of sin, the hideousness of sin is represented there. For I read my Bible and I hear this word coming through the lips and from the

pen of Peter, who his own self dared ask sins in his body on the tree. And I want you to pause a moment reverently and tenderly and look away to Calvary just, just as I seek to lead your mind just at this moment.

If you want to see, my friend, the sins of your thought life, I want you to look away yonder to Calvary and see the trickles of blood that ooze from those thorn, listen, those thorn-pierced parts of his head that was a substitute for you because of the sinfulness of your thought life. If you want to see something of the sinfulness of your actions, will you behold those hands held to the wood by nails? Will you watch the blood spurt from the palms of his hands? You want to understand something of the sinfulness of your waywardness, will you see young substitutes held by gory spikes to the wooden cross by his feet? If you want to understand something of the depravity and desperate wickedness of your heart, will you look again and see that riven side from which flows blood and water? And will you cry from the depth of your heart, O wonder of all wonders that through his death for me, my open sins, my secret sins can all forgiven be. O make me understand it, help me to take it in, what it meant to be the Holy One, to bear away my sin.

The holiness of God was represented. The heinousness of sin was represented. But I want you to look again at Calvary, and I want you to see that it's a vicarious death because the helplessness, the utter helplessness of man is represented.

For as I look at Calvary, I hear Paul saying this, if he was crucified in weakness, he was crucified in weakness, and even though in the moment of death to show that he was in complete possession of his faculties, he cried with a strong voice, and he consciously bowed his head. Yet, sacred love compelled inability to come down from the cross, and even though they cried, if thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross, come down from the cross, he wouldn't come down from the cross, that he might demonstrate once and forever man's utter helplessness to ever save himself, that he might represent once and forever that man is cast upon the grace of God for his salvation. Man is a helpless creature, and that very helplessness was demonstrated and represented at Calvary's cross.

And so the word says, when we were yet without strength, when we were yet without strength, without the strength to lift a little finger to save ourselves or help ourselves, when we were yet without strength, Christ died for us. Guilty, vile, and helpless we, spotless Lamb of God was he. Full atonement can it be, hallelujah, what a Savior, a vicarious death, a vicarious death.

But ladies and gentlemen, come a little further and understand what this verse has to say. Not only are we here confronted with a voluntary death, not only are we confronted here with a vicarious death, but here we're confronted with a verified death, for Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures. This wasn't the untimely death of a young man, this wasn't a mistake, this was a death that was planned in the counsels of God.

Here was a death according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. Here is a death that is verified from the scriptures according to the scriptures. And those of you who know your Bibles at all, those of you who know the significance and connotation of that word scriptures, will know that that's a reference to the Old Testament scriptures divided into the law.

The father and the prophet. And I look into the law and I ask myself the question, what does the law have to say about the death of Christ? And I hear the word coming down from Leviticus, from the book of the law, without the shedding of blood there is no remission for sins. Long before Jesus died, that statement had been uttered from the law, without the shedding of blood there is no remission for sins.

My friends, I want to tell you tonight that the death of Jesus Christ to me is not just the example of good man who died. The death of the Lord Jesus Christ to me is not just the manifestation of love in order that I might be able to have a pattern to copy in terms of sacrifice. No, the death of the Lord Jesus Christ is, listen to me, is an atoning death.

It has this penal aspect about it, it has this eternal aspect about it. Calvary was something in the heart of God before it became manifest in the body of Christ hanging upon the cross. Without the shedding of blood there is no remission for sins.

But not only does the law speak about it, the sounds speak about it. And I turn to Psalm 22 and I read there that not only does the law demand the death of Christ, but the very sounds depict the death of Christ. They depict the death of Christ, listen, in every detail.

You go through that Psalm 22 and you will see that there is a picture there of pierced hands and pierced feet. Here is death by crucifixion, death by crucifixion a thousand years before it ever happened. Crucifixion was the death introduced by the Romans.

Crucifixion was known by the Jews, and yet a thousand years, a thousand years before Jesus is nailed for Roman gibbet, the very death is depicted in detail, even to the cry of dereliction which comes from His parched throat and lip as in that midnight, midday, when the world is shrouded because of that which the Son of God is enduring. We hear that cry, that cry that sends a cold shudder down my spine as I think of it. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? The law demanded it, the Psalms depicted it, the prophets declared it, declared it.

For take, take one passage only, a supreme passage notwithstanding Isaiah 53. Read that passage through on your knees, my friend, and you cannot but be confronted with Calvary. It's inescapable.

Here is God's Jehovah's servant, substitute Savior, atoning for the sin of the world. He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities.

The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with it Christ's praise, God, we are healed. The law demanded it, the Psalms depicted it, the prophets declared it. It was a verified death.

Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. But, of course, the great burden of my heart this evening and that to which I want to draw your attention in these closing moments is this, that here is a death which is not only voluntary, here is a death which is not only vicarious, here is a death which is not only verified, but here is a death which is victorious. This is not the death of a victim, this is the death of a victor.

This is not tragedy, this is triumph. Here is someone who is going into death and taking the cross and turning it into a throne. Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.

He was buried, yes, but the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures. And God's witness to the triumph of that death, God's witness to the completeness of that death, God's witness, listen, to the finality of that death, is demonstrated in the fact that He raised Him from the dead by the power of His Spirit. Christ rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.

As I think of that death as a demonstration and an embodiment of the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ, I see, I see all the manifestations of that victory in the rising Son of God from the dead. For death cannot

hold its prey, Jesus my Savior. He tore the bars away, Jesus my Lord, up from the grave.

He arose as a mighty victor o'er His foes. He arose as victor over dark domain and He lives evermore with His saints to reign. Hallelujah! Christ arose.

And by rising from the dead, I want you to see tonight just three tremendous truths. That in the first place, He conquered the power of death. He conquered the power of death.

By dying, He overcame him that had the power of death. That is the devil. That is the devil.

Had you ever thought of this, my friend, that the Lord Jesus took the very weapon of the devil out of his hand in order to deal the devil a mortal blow? Like David of old, like David of old who stepped on the neck of Goliath and took out Goliath's own sword in order to cut the head of Goliath off. So this greater David entered the fight and he plucked the weapon out of the devil's hand to deal him the mortal blow, and he overcame him that had the power of death. That is the devil.

And he conquered the devil in death. But he conquered something more in death. He not only conquered the power of death, but he conquered the very pain of death, the sting of death, which is sin.

Paul teaches us that the sting of death is sin, but the Lord Jesus Christ in death extracted that very sting and took it into Himself. He tasted death for every man. He tasted death for every man.

Mommy, mommy, mommy, said the little girl as she ran in from the garden to her mother. Awash, awash, awash. And mother, a little anxious, but nevertheless composed for the moment, drew her little girl around her, covered her under her apron, and waited a moment or two and then said, Darling, it's all right, it's all right, it's all safe now.

The wasp won't hurt you anymore. How is that? said the little girl with a curious look in her eye as she came out from under the apron. The mother pointed to her bare arm where the quivering, where the quivering sting of the wasp lay embedded in her arm.

There, darling, she said, there, darling, I've taken the sting. It's got no more sting for you. He took the sting.

He took the sting out of death. He tasted death for every man. Not only did he overcome the power of death, not only did he overcome the sting of death, he overcame the fear of death.

And I'm looking into the faces of men and women who, if they were honest with me and one honest with God, have a deep, deep fear concerning after death. For the Bible states, and never let us forget it, after death, the judgment. It is appointed unto men once to die.

But after this, the judgment. But thank God for every man who enters into the meaning, the mystery of Calvary and into the victory of the resurrection, there is not only victory over Satan, there's not only victory over sin, but there's victory over this slavish fear. For through death he overcame him that had the power of death and delivered them, who through fear of death were all their lifetimes subject to bondage.

And I'm looking into the face now of a dear man from South Wales. I'll never forget it. I'll never forget it.

A man who had gone through seas of trouble. A man who had fear of death. A man who had such fear of death that he kept awake most nights.

He couldn't even sleep. And something dreadful had happened in his home. Something tremendously dreadful.

His darling little girl, the one upon whom he had set all his affection, the very apple of his eye, had been tragically knocked down by a truck that very day and crushed to death. And I was called upon, I was called upon to conduct the funeral. I've never seen so many people around a graveside in South Wales.

He was a member of the town council. He had been a previous mayor. He was a schoolmaster.

He was known by thousands of children in South Wales. And here he is standing there at the graveside. He's standing there trembling all over.

He says, what, what awaits my little girl? There's death, and after death what? After death what? And I'll never forget taking up this very word that through death he overcame him that had the power of death that he might deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetimes subject to bondage. And as we lowered that little life down into the grave, and as that man sobbed his heart out, and as I preached from my heart to that great congregation of Welshmen who stood around the grave, suddenly it was as if the Holy Spirit broke in upon that soul, and he cried out from the depth of his soul with that great Welsh voice of his, Thank God I've been delivered from fear. I see it.

I see it. It's glory, glory, glory. It had happened.

He had seen the victory of the resurrection. Death wasn't the end. There was a hope.

There was glory. He'd be delivered from the fear of death. Ladies and gentlemen, here tonight I'm putting it to you.

Do you know victory over, listen, the power of death, the devil? Do you know victory over the sting of death, sin? Do you know victory over, listen, the panic of death, fear? You can tonight, as you come and bow at Calvary, as you look off to that man who hangs there betwixt heaven and earth, I want you to face him for a few moments as we close tonight. I want you to remember that you're being confronted with a unique death. Here is a death, first of all, which is voluntary.

Here is a death which is vicarious. It represents God's holiness. It represents ingeniousness.

It represents man's helplessness. It represents, in the deepest, most atoning way, substitutionary way, all that you ever need for your salvation. Here is a death which is verified, and here is a death, praise God, which is victorious.

But as you stand or as you kneel, as you prostrate yourself in the presence of the man of Calvary, what is your answer to him? What is your answer to him? Let me, if I can, hang two pictures before you as I close here tonight. I have reproductions in my study at home of two pictures that were hung in the British Academy in seventeen, in nineteen, seventeen, and eighteen. Two pictures by Margaret Lindsay Williams.

One of them is called, The Devil's Daughter. It's an unusual picture, and I want you just to follow me as I try to paint it to you on canvas and you watch. It's the picture of a ballet dancer.

This ballet dancer is moving away, is moving away from the sign of the cross, the cross which is being held before her eyes. That cross spells, that cross spells pardon and peace and power and salvation and life. But she's moving away from it.

She prefers her gay life. She prefers her worldliness. And instead of grasping that cross, she's holding to her bosom an awful symbol.

It's a scowl. It's a scowl. And Margaret Lindsay Williams has painted that scowl with its gaping eye sockets, with its jaws wide open.

It looks ugly. It looks ugly. And she's turning away from the cross and she's holding to her bosom this dreadful, ugly scowl.

You ask yourself the question, can a girl ever do a thing like that? Can a person ever do a thing like that? She's not a sordid, immoral, wicked girl. She's just a flippant, she's just a flippant, fascinating, attractive little butterfly dancing her way through life. And she hasn't even thought seriously about life.

Can she be turning away from life and embracing death? Can that be possible? You turn from one picture and you turn to another. And this picture is the story of the triumph. It's called the triumph.

The theme has changed. The theme has changed. Now the same girl is prostrate before one who stands almost invisible in the background.

The scowl that she held in her arms has now dropped from her arms and rolled away. Behind her are the gay symbols of her past life, the soft lights, the stage, and all that represented her past life. Instead of grasping that scowl, she's caressing the feet of the one before whom she worships.

With a deafness and skill that only belongs to an artist, Margaret Williams has painted a falling tear in this girl's eye. You're moved to sympathy. It's a piece of art.

It's a piece of wonderful painting that draws everything out of you. Why does she weep? Why does she weep? Why is she so moved? And you look carefully at that picture and you see, you see behind, behind the wonderful colorings of that paint the form of none other than Jesus Christ, the man of Calvary. Over the head of this girl is being held a crown of life by the pierced hands of the Master.

And the obvious answer is this. Love divine has conquered the sufferings of Jesus, the cross of Jesus. She's calculated.

She's conquered. She's at the feet of the Savior. And you almost hear her saying the words that have become associated with the reproductions of those two amazing pictures.

Listen to the words. Out there amongst the hills, my Savior died. Pierced by those cruel nails, was crucified.

Lord Jesus, thou hast done all this for me. Henceforward, I would live only for thee. The only answer to the Christ of the cross, to the man of Calvary, to Calvary's love.

Now, as you look off to Calvary tonight, I'm asking you, what is your answer to Jesus Christ? Will you look into his face and say, Lord Jesus, Lord Jesus, I do believe, I will believe now, that you did die for me, that at the cross you shed your blood from sin to set me free. And Lord Jesus, accepting that pardon, accepting that forgiveness that flows from Calvary, Lord Jesus, love so amazing, so divine, shall have my soul, my life, my all. Let us bow our heads in prayer.

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