

What's so good about it?

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What is ... so good ... about "Good" Friday?

Jesus was betrayed by one of His own. Someone who had eaten with Him, walked with Him, talked with Him. Knew Him.

His friends abandoned Him and ran away. Peter ... to whom Jesus had handed the keys of Heaven ... denied Him ... three times!

He was beaten, flogged, spit upon, stoned, mocked and humiliated.

And even though the Roman Governor – Pilate – found Him innocent of any offense, He was sentenced to death ... for the "crime" of healing and forgiving sins!

The crowd ... who had wildly welcomed Him into Jerusalem only a few days earlier ... demanded that He not only be flogged but crucified ... a slow death by torture ... the worst death in the Roman arsenal of pain and humiliation.

Only the most hardened criminals were crucified. And He had done nothing to deserve such punishment.

Whole doctoral theses have been written on the effects of crucifixion on the human body, but here – in a nutshell – is what happened to Jesus.

Not only was he condemned to death by crucifixion, but unlike others who were tied to the cross, Jesus was nailed to it by His hands and feet.

Eight-inch nails were driven through His wrists, not into His palms as is commonly portrayed. Not only would nails through the palm just rip out, there's a tendon in the wrist that extends to the shoulder. The Roman executioners knew that when the large, square nails were being hammered through His wrists and deep into the wood, this tendon would tear and break, making Jesus have to use His back muscles to support Himself.

His feet were overlapped, one on top of the other, and then were nailed together by an even larger nail, forcing Jesus to support Himself on the single nail that impaled His feet and held Him to the cross. Jesus couldn't hold Himself up with His legs for very long because of the intense pain, so He was compelled to alternate between arching His back and pushing up on His legs.

He had to do this just to continue to breathe. He couldn't just slouch down because, if he did, he wouldn't be able to expel the air from His lungs.

Imagine the struggle, the pain, the suffering ... and the courage.

Jesus endured this awful reality for over three hours.

Can you imagine that kind of suffering?

And then, a few minutes before He died, Jesus stopped bleeding.

He simply had no more blood to lose.

The beatings ... the flogging that was so severe that it tore flesh from His body ... the crown of thorns that cut deeply into His scalp ... the stoning from the crowd ... and the huge spikes that were driven through his wrists and feet ... caused injuries that were just too severe to stop bleeding on their own.

It must have taken a heroic amount of grit and determination by Jesus just to remain conscious as He struggled to carry that heavy cross, much less throughout those three hours at the Place of the Skulls!

Then, as it was nearing sunset – and the Sabbath – the Roman soldiers began to break the legs of the prisoners to cause them to droop ... and to suffocate and die.

When they came to Jesus, however, it was obvious that he was already dead. But to make sure, one of the guards pierced Him with a lance ... a long, sharp spear.

But why did He do this and what makes it “good” ... ?

Some of you may have heard me tell the story of when I was a youngster, and a friend of mine named Max, asked me: “If you invented a time machine and could go back in time, would you rescue Jesus from the Cross?”

When I said “NO!” his eyes all but bugged out of his head.

“What?” he shouted. “You wouldn’t even try to save Jesus?”

“He saved you!!!”

Max just could not believe it!!!

But the fact is that Jesus had to endure this experience ... just so that you and I could have eternal life with Him in Heaven.

Without His sacrifice, Jesus would not have fulfilled the scriptures that foretold the coming of the messiah, the anointed one of God, the Christ.

Unless He died ... like the unblemished paschal lamb that he became ... He would not have been resurrected.

And without His resurrection, there would not have been any hope for us mere men and women ... for sinners anywhere.

But with it, we are offered the gift ... free and clear ... of eternal life.

That, brothers and sisters, is what's good about "Good Friday" ...

Horrible as it was, it was necessary ... and Jesus knew it.

He could easily have slipped away from those sent to arrest Him as He had done before at the Temple when His preaching made them angry.

And ... make no mistake ... He knew it would be horrible ...

And yet he did it.

He did it ... for you ... for me ... and for all.