

He Died for Me

Have you ever wondered why God the Father allowed his Son to be so unjustly condemned and murdered by his enemies? Clearly God could have prevented the envious Jewish rulers from taking hold of him. God could have used the Roman governor Pilate, who was convinced of his innocence, to save him from the crutches of his adversaries. But he didn't.

Moreover Jesus begged his Father in unspeakable agony in Gethsemane to take away the cup, but God did not. Jesus had to drink the bitter cup to the very last drop.

Even more baffling is the fact that God did not merely 'allow' his Son to die, but the Father actually planned and willed his death, just as the prophetic scriptures foretold, 'it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief' (Is 53:10). Jesus himself confessed that he had been commanded by the Father to lay down his life (Jn 5:18).

Indeed Jesus could have easily saved himself from his murderers. They taunted him to prove himself to be the Son of God by coming down from the cross. He did not. Not because he couldn't – he could have whispered a prayer to the Father and he would have immediately dispatched an army of angels to his aid. But he remained silent. 'Like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth' (Is 53:7). He willingly offered himself to die.

He knew all along his life that the cross was his vocation. He did not come to be served but to serve, he said, and to give his life as a ransom for many. When the most prominent of his apostles, Peter, attempted to persuade him otherwise, Jesus rebuked him most severely. Christ was determined to go to Calvary.

As a child I have been taught that Christ died for our sins. I did not quite understand what that means. Somehow his death was related to my sins, but in what sense? Did I cause the death by my sins, like a murderer is guilty of shooting his victim?

No. Jesus death was no accident. It wasn't a senseless murder. Jesus' death was planned by God to achieve a noble end; Jesus died to fulfil his salvific mission.

He did not die on account of his own sins, of course, for he had none. He lived a perfect, sinless life. He had no sin of his own, yet he was not without sin on the cross. He died for the sins of others, even as the Scriptures say that God laid on him the iniquity of his people. 'He was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace' (Is 53:5).

Now I understand a little better the glorious meaning of the cross. He is not my victim; he is my saviour. He took my place. He took the death penalty which I deserved. He died that I may not be condemned to hell; he died to free me from sin; he died that I may live.

Dear friend, as you contemplate the cross, I hope and pray that you will take hold of Christ by faith, saying, He took away my sins and nailed them to the cross; I am now free, justified, forgiven. All because the Father willed that his beloved Son should die ... for me!