



Why Did Jesus Have To Die? What Does Jesus' Death Have To Do With My Recovery?

At this time last year there was a great buzz in our society over the movie "The Passion of the Christ." Millions of people, Christian

and otherwise have seen and debated the movie from many angles. But, the bottom line of it all is, what does the suffering of Jesus have to do with us? What difference does it make to me today that Jesus died?

Most of us realize that to one degree or another we have harmed others by our actions, words, or neglect. For many of us we persisted in harmful behaviours for many months or years and only when our own pain was too great to carry any longer did we seek help and look for a new way. The death and resurrection of Jesus is a clear reminder that in whatever ways we've experienced evil done to us or done by us, Jesus stands ready to forgive, heal, and restore. By allowing sin and evil to be piled up on him, rather than left to us, Jesus made a new way for those who choose it. That's the challenge: for those who choose it.

We can continue to carry our difficulties and our sin, the pain of broken relationships and harmful experiences in our past. We can let memories trigger anger and resentment in us or simply make us sad and heavy and irritable. We can remain stuck in an endless circle of wandering as a wounded one, wondering what on earth to do. That's a choice that many make. They allow violence done to them or by them to become the focus of who they are today.

Jesus, through the cross, shows us a new option. We can bundle up our pain, our brokenness, our hatred, our self-pity, our addictive behaviours, our sadness and sorrow and we can give it away. We can put it on Jesus, where it belongs, and receive something new back from him. Jesus asks all of us today, "Do you want to get well?" "Do you want a new way of freedom and peace and love to be activated in your life today?" There's only ONE way for that to be our experience and that's through turning our pain and our shame over to Jesus for healing and forgiveness and then choosing a new way of life.

It was our weaknesses he carried; it was our sorrows that weighed him down. And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God for his own sins! But he was wounded and crushed for our sins. He was beaten that we might have peace. He was whipped, and we were healed! All of us have strayed away like sheep. We have left God's paths



to follow our own. Yet the LORD laid on him the guilt and sins of us all. (Isaiah 53)

How do we get all that stuff in our hearts and minds out of us and onto Jesus? We make a choice. We say some words to God that tell him what we've chosen - chosen to stop hurting others or carrying hurt from others; chosen to stop doing things our own way and willing to live a new way of listening, learning, and obeying whatever God says works. We give away whatever is in us that is harmful to our mind, our emotions, our bodies, and our relationships. We tell God that we, like Jesus, now wish to live in His love, follow his directions NO MATTER WHAT. We begin to make choices for new thoughts, to do things in new ways, to say "NO" when no is required and to say and do, "YES" regardless of how we feel in that moment and even though we don't now see the outcome. We simply start to act and do those things that God says works, trusting the God will make all things right in the end.

Our problem: We want to see the outcome before taking a risk on God's directions. We want to pray a prayer and have everything immediately feel and look and act better. It doesn't work that way. Jesus took all the mockery and hatred and suffering and kept trusting that God, in God's time was doing something good. God did NOT rescue Jesus from the cross. Jesus died and was buried. Jesus obeyed God's will all the way until the end. Then, and only then, was God able to demonstrate for ever and ever that the power of life, in obedient relationship with God, is stronger than the worst of evil. Jesus did come back to life, but only on the third day. That was God's plan and God's way.

We often "give up on God" too soon. The thought doesn't change immediately. A memory returns. Our circumstances don't change immediately. Something crashes or even ends that we were sure was going to be the answer for us.

Things seem lonely or even empty for a while. Jesus' way for us in those moments is, "**Who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame.**" (Hebrews 12). Jesus knew that, "**God works for good in all things for those who love him, those who are called according to His purpose.**" (Romans 8) Jesus obeyed and obeyed even through the worst of suffering. Will we trust only what we see today or will we trust the God who showed us love and a new way: Jesus on the cross, and THEN, Jesus alive from the tomb?

