

“Good Friday?”

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Good Friday

One of the children in our church recently asked me, “Why do they call it *Good Friday*?” We had been talking about how on Good Friday we remember the death of Jesus. It’s a gruesome event. Jesus had been beaten and bloodied through the night, flogged with a whip that contained sharp nails. Then nails were impaled through his hands and his feet as he was hoisted on two beams of wood. There he hung for several hours, slowly dying of asphyxiation. Crucifixion, which was commonly practiced by the Roman Empire, was one of the most brutal forms of execution. This child in our church sincerely wanted to know, “What’s so *good* about this?” It’s a fair question, one many people have asked through the centuries. I want to lay out for you, briefly, three answers to that question. Good Friday is good because of what it *accomplished*. Christ’s death brought about certain specific results that could be attained no other way. Here are three of the most significant:

First: Christ’s death on the cross results in *our sins being forgiven*. Jesus lived a perfectly sinless human life on earth. He took upon himself all of our sins. *All* of them. Every single last one. As Isaiah wrote: “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.” (Isaiah 53:6) This concept is deeply rooted in the book of Leviticus. The sixteenth chapter describes a ritual process by which the sins of the people would be taken on by a goat. The high priest would lay his hands on the goat, and confess the sins of all the people, effectively *transferring* all those sins onto the goat, and then the high priest would release the goat into the wilderness. The idea is that all the sins that the people had committed were now *gone*, completely removed from their midst. That goat became known as the “scapegoat.” Christ’s death on the cross accomplishes the very same thing: he takes upon himself all of our sins. *He* becomes the scapegoat. He becomes, as John the Baptist calls him, “the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” (John 1:29) Christ’s death results in the expiation of all of our sins. They are all wiped clean. We are forgiven, liberated, freed.

Second: Christ’s death on the cross results in *our reconciliation with God*. All those sins that we commit create a chasm between us and God. We become separated, alienated, from our loving Creator. But once our sins have been removed, our relationship with God is restored. The apostle Paul puts it like this: “while we were enemies we were *reconciled* to God through the death of his Son.” (Romans 5:10) He also says this: “in Christ God was *reconciling* the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them.” There is no longer a chasm separating us from God. We are restored to the wonderful relationship our Creator intended us to have from the very beginning. We can stand tall and strong, knowing to the very depths of our being that God loves us with an undying love. No matter what we do, as long as we come to God with genuine remorse for the things we do that aren’t worthy of God, *God will always love us*. That’s a promise that can give us peace and hope till the end of our days.

Third: Christ's death on the cross begins the process of *liberating us from the chains of death*. Without Christ, we would have no hope beyond this life. With Christ, *we know that there is life on the other side*. The only way Christ could destroy the powers of death was by overcoming death himself. So Christ had to die. He couldn't be raised from the dead unless he had truly died. And when Christ rose from the dead, Christ defeated the powers of death, forever. They are broken beyond repair. We no longer have to fear what might lie beyond the grave. Christ's death begins the process of freeing us from the power of death. Christ dies; Christ is raised; we die; we are raised. Yes, we still do have to die; we don't get to escape that, any more than Christ did, but we also *know*, know to the very core of our being, *that's not the end of the story*. There's a bright, glorious new chapter that awaits on the other side. The end of our story isn't grief and sorrow. It's *joy*. Christ's death begins the process that brings us *eternal life*.

A lot more could be said. Whole books have been written on this subject. I'm giving you just a quick summary of some of the key points. *Good Friday is good because of what Christ's death accomplishes for us*. Our sins are forgiven. We are reconciled to God. And we can live in the confidence that we will live beyond the grave. Those are all good things, *very good things indeed*.

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