

Jesus Looking at His Own Cross

A Walk with Paul

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Romans 3:21-24

Ephesians 1:7

1 Cor. 6:20; 1 Cor. 5:7,8a; 1 Cor. 15:54-57

Jesus looking at his own cross: A journey to Jerusalem and Calvary. Each week I will take this topic from a different author's perspective. Today, we will be **taking a walk with Paul**.

When we say Paul, we mean his letters. Paul wrote his letters after 50 AD. His audience was Jews who were converted to Christianity and Gentiles who were brought up in Greek and Roman cultures.

Here are five metaphors relating to the cross and resurrection that Paul presents:

1st Metaphor: The Judge in the Law Court (Romans 3:21-25)

Paul says:

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law. (ESV)

Paul is a Jew and he knows what the **righteousness of God** in the **Torah (Pentateuch)** means. When he speaks of law, he is talking about the first five books of OT. There are laws, but more than that. Torah is a narrative book where the author is telling the audience stories how God is saving his people. God chooses Abraham, then his descendants go to Egypt; then God rescues his people from there; He walks with them in desert all the way to the Promised Land. **It is the story of how God acted in history to save His people. The righteousness of God means God acts to save. (To have right relationship with him and each other)**

Now Paul describes that the **cross and resurrection** manifested God's righteousness in a unique way. God brought salvation to humanity. Then Paul uses the metaphor of **Judge**.

Imagine, **God is the Judge**, and He is judging the prisoner, the sinner like you and me. He gets up from his chair, takes off his robe, and puts on the prisoner's robe.

He leaves his place and walks around the table and comes next to the prisoner looking up to the place he was sitting before. Then he says, “Your Honor, I will die in the place of this prisoner.”

“In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself.” (2 Cor. 5:19).

God is just and righteous. But God loves us, and because of His mercy and grace: God is our justifier. He makes justification possible through the cross and the resurrection.

2nd Metaphor: The Prisoner of War (Ephesians 1:7)

“In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses (sins), according to the riches of his grace.”

The Greek word for **redemption is *apolutrosis***; the word has four parts:

-Apo: from

-Lu: to set free

-Tro: by agency of someone

-Sis: an action (*Added to verb stems to form abstract nouns or nouns of action, result or process*)

“Set free from something by agency of someone through some action.”

Someone (Christ) is going to free us from something (sin) through some action (the cross and resurrection).

Paul wrote his letter in Greek. His words are chosen from the Greek culture of the day. During a war sometimes a general was captured by the enemy. The negotiators quickly started to work on releasing this general from prison. These negotiations included giving up some territory, money, or an exchange of prisoners. At the end when **the general was released**, this process was called ***apolutrosis***; he was redeemed, freed after long negotiations.

This is a great picture for us to think about: God made His “negotiations” by coming to this earth, becoming like us and going to the cross so that we are redeemed from sin and death.

How can I pay back to God? I cannot. None of us can pay back. The price is too high. That is why God, “the judge”, came down from his throne and became like us (incarnation) so that he will have the gift of salvation.

In Him we have REDEMPTION.

3rd Metaphor: Setting the Slave Free (1 Cor. 6:20)

for you were bought with a price. So glorify (honor) God in your body.

This time the metaphor is from **slavery**. There were 60 million slaves in the Roman Empire in those days. Slaves had an opportunity to be freed. Sometimes they were paid for extra work. They had to save money, penny by penny. There were no banks those days; therefore they took the money to the priest in the temple. The idea was that they would collect money with the priest of a certain god in the temple. One day when the sum of money was enough the slave could be bought back from his master and become the slave of that god. On that day, the slave would receive a letter from the priest that he was owned by the god and he could live as a free man in society. That slave would leave the temple free but filled with adoration and special love towards that god who became his “savior”. Paul uses the same imagery. Christians are bought at a price. The price of being free from sin cannot be paid by our pennies, or efforts; it was paid by our Lord Jesus Christ.

The verse ends saying: **therefore glorify, honor God in your lives.**

The question that we can ask, **do we glorify God in our lives?**

Why do I work? Why do I earn money? Why did I get married? Why did I have kids?

Does every aspect of our lives glorify God?

4th Metaphor: The Passover Lamb (1 Cor. 5:7,8a)

“Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Therefore let us keep the Festival....”

Get rid of the old yeast, so that you may be a new unleavened batch—as you really are. (NIV)

The metaphor here is the Passover Lamb and also the unleavened bread. The Israelites understood very well what that meant. They were saved by God who ordered them to sacrifice a lamb and put a sign over the doors with the blood of the lamb.

Jesus became the final and perfect Passover Sacrifice. He is the perfect Lamb of God for bringing rescue salvation to all of us. “The whole Christian life, from this point of view, becomes one long Passover-celebration! Every breath a Christian takes is a silent Passover –hymn of gratitude to the God who has acted to save the world through Jesus, the true Passover Lamb. Every action a Christian performs is part of the endless ceremonial of Passover-celebration.”¹

They also made unleavened bread (they did not have time to prepare a bread with yeast.) Yeast can ferment the entire bread and make it leavened.²

Jesus used the image of yeast for positive illustration; but here it has totally opposite image:

In the context of Corinthian church, some are Jews and some are gentiles. “Paul borrows an illustration from the kitchen to show the dangers in their attitude. It requires only a very small amount of yeast to leaven quite a large lump of dough (cf. Matt. 13:33; Gal. 5:9). By keeping the offender within the fold they were retaining the bad influence, and it would inevitably spread.”³ Paul says, get rid of old yeast from among you.

The Corinthians are *a new batch without yeast*, they really are. But really to be that new batch they must *get rid of the old yeast*, and Paul’s verb (*ekkathairō*) means ‘clean out’.⁴

Sin is dirty and defiling, and like yeast, it will work until it permeates the whole. The only remedy is to clean out the evil entirely. So Paul speaks of *a new batch without yeast*. **The Christian church is not just the old society patched up. It is radically new (2 Cor. 5:17).**⁵ When we have Christ the Savior, we have a new bread, new wine, a new life, a new transformed life where sin is defeated.

“Get rid of the old yeast, so that you may be a new unleavened batch—as you really are, For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.” Jesus is the final sacrifice. Jesus is the final Passover Lamb of God. The “yeast,” evil, or sin are defeated. Let us not go back to the old life, to the old yeast.

Is it reality in your life? Has Christ the Lamb of God brought salvation to your old life?

What kind of “yeast” needs to be taken care of that is corrupting the entire body? Jesus asked us to deal with it. He can help us through the presence of the Holy Spirit.

5th Metaphor: Battlefield (1 Cor 15:54-57)

When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:

“Death is swallowed up in victory.”

⁵⁵ “O death, where is your victory?

O death, where is your sting?”

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (ESV)

Christ died and rose from the dead. He won over death. It is the death of death. Sin is defeated as well because the wages of sin is death. Both are defeated. The battle is won by Christ.

The perishable bodies will be changed with a new imperishable format. Why? How? Because of what Jesus Christ did on the cross and on Sunday when he rose from the dead.

How precious is this metaphor. How can I do any funerals without these verses? What hope can I give to my perish without the assurance of what Christ did for us?

Death and sin are defeated. The battle of Evil and Good.

All these metaphors are written by Paul so we can identify with the images. I have taken these ideas from my teacher Dr. Ken Bailey. He always finished his lessons asking us what all this information meant to us personally.

Lamb Of God (Twila Paris)

Your only Son no sin to hide
But You have sent Him from Your side
To walk upon this guilty sod
And to become the Lamb of God

Your gift of love they crucified
They laughed and scorned Him as He died
The humble King they named a fraud
And sacrificed the Lamb of God

Chorus:

Oh Lamb of God sweet Lamb of God
I love the holy Lamb of God
Oh wash me in His precious blood
My Jesus Christ the Lamb of God

I was so lost I should have died
But You have brought me to Your side
To be led by Your staff and rod
And to be called a lamb of God

Please give a chance to God to free you this morning.

Amen

1 N.T. Wright Paul for Everyone (1C Corinthians)p 60

2 Jesus used the metaphor yeast as positive thing describing the kingdom of God. The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds[b] of flour until it worked all through the dough. (Matt 13:33 NIV) not in this context.

3 Tyndale Commentary

4 ibid

5 ibid