

DEVOTIONAL AID FOR 10 AUGUST 2020 – 16 AUGUST 2020



**UPPER
HUNTER**
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Dear church family,

It would be strange if we kept on talking about someone's death in our social or family gatherings. It would be even seen morbid and unhealthy if we insisted on keep talking about somebody's death. Even at someone's funerals, we usually talk more about the dead person's life than his/her death. And yet, Christianity centres on the death of Christ. Whenever we meet together for worship, we're meant to remember Christ's death. Yes, His resurrection must not be forgotten, but you see, there's no resurrection without death first. So we remember and talk about Christ's death when we celebrate the Lord's Supper. And we talk about Christ's death when we tell the gospel. And when we're tempted with sin, we turn our minds to Christ's death on the cross. Why?

One could answer by saying it's the way the Gospels in the bible presents Jesus to us, as we can see in the table below.¹

Gospels	Total number of chapters	Number of chapters dedicated to Christ's final suffering week, ie. the Passion Week
Matthew	28	9 (32%)
Mark	16	6 (38%)
Luke	24	6 (25%)
John	21	9 (43%)
TOTAL	89	30 (34%)

Kevin DeYoung puts it vividly: "If we figure Jesus was thirty-three years old when He died, He lived around 1,700 weeks. And His four biographers spend a third of their time on only one of those weeks. Have you ever read a three-hundred page biography where one hundred pages dealt with the subject's death?"²

Yet, this is not a morbid obsession of the Gospel writers, nor is it ours when we focus on Christ's death in our worship and proclamation of Him, because in His death, He bore our guilt and set us free from the righteous anger of God against us. We are right to think of Christ's sin-bearing death for us as often as we can. We must never forget or omit His death in our worship and proclamation of Christ.

Yours in Christ,

Timothy Lee

<https://www.upperhunterpc.com>

¹ This table is adapted from Kevin DeYoung's statistics in *The Good News We Almost Forgot* (p81), although it is easy enough for anyone to verify it by reading the Gospels for oneself.

² Kevin DeYoung, *The Good News We Almost Forgot*, p81.

THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM³

Lord's Day 15

Q37) What do you understand by the word “suffered”?

A) That during his whole life on earth, but especially at the end, Christ sustained in body and soul the wrath of God against the sin of the whole human race. This he did in order that, by his suffering as the only atoning sacrifice, he might deliver us, body and soul, from eternal condemnation, and gain for us God's grace, righteousness, and eternal life.

Q38) Why did he suffer “under Pontius Pilate” as judge?

A) So that he, though innocent, might be condemned by an earthly judge, and so free us from the severe judgment of God that was to fall on us.

Q39) Is it significant that he was “crucified” instead of dying some other way?

A) Yes. This death convinces me that he shouldered the curse which lay on me, since death by crucifixion was cursed by God.

JOHN 3:16

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

This might be a familiar verse to you. It is to me. And there is the danger: Familiarity breeds contempt. We are familiar with this verse, so we assume we know everything about it, we no longer ponder on it, we miss important truths of it, and we discard it. Perhaps you haven't discarded it. Perhaps you actually treasure this verse. I hope you do. It's the gospel in a nutshell: God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, so people can be saved. But one of the precious truths in this short verse people tend to miss (and I did too for many years) is the “negative” elements of the truth. I intentionally phrased it in the previous sentence, did you notice it? What's often left out is that everyone is on their way to perish by default. Everyone shall perish because of their sins. But, God loved the world and gave His only Son, so anyone who believes in Him shall not be on that default pathway of perishing, but instead have eternal life. But how can it be? What took place that I shall no longer perish only if I believe? What took place is that Christ “perished” for us. He bore our sins and guilt instead of us. He suffered in our place, so we may be forgiven and have eternal life. Praise God for sending His Son for us! Praise God for loving us so greatly!

GALATIANS 3:10–13

Gal 3:10 For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.” 11 Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for “The righteous shall live by faith.” 12 But the law is not of faith, rather “The one who does them shall live by them.” 13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”.

The fact that Christ died hanging on a tree is important, as the Heidelberg Catechism Question and Answer 39 tells us. Christ did not die by beheading, not by poison, not by terminal illness, and not of an old age. He was hung on a tree. And the bible shows us the importance of that fact. Christ was not simply a tragic victim. God was actively cursing Him because Christ was bearing our sins as our substitute. This means we who believe in Christ no longer need to fear God's curse upon us. God's curse (condemnation) upon our sins was poured out on Christ so we may be saved. Because Christ suffered God's anger for us, we can expect God's smile upon us. Christ was crucified. For us and for our salvation. Let us then be thankful and be confident of God's love for us, and live faithfully for His glory alone.

³ The text of the Catechism is usually from <https://threeforms.org/heidelberg-catechism/>, but time to time, for the sake of clarity, I have also adopted the translation used in *The Good News We Almost Forgot* by Kevin DeYoung.