

Jesus was determined to suffer

Hello listeners. Last week we heard that our greatest need is to have peace with God. We also heard that the gospel answers that need. Our great need for peace with God is satisfied when we trust and believe in his Son Jesus Christ. Peace comes to those who believe in Christ! If you believe in Jesus, and you trust him to forgive your sins, and you trust him to make things right between you and God, then you will have peace in your heart.

One of the most amazing things about receiving this peace, is that it is a free gift. You see, dear listeners, we cannot obtain peace with God through our own efforts. We can only receive peace with God through the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The bible says that without faith in Christ we remain dead in our sins (Eph. 2:1). And dead people are not capable of saving themselves. Imagine if you were drowning in a pit of quicksand. You would not be able to pull yourself out by your own hair. Someone else would have to reach out his hand to save you. That's also the case when we are spiritually dead. If you are spiritually dead, you cannot make yourself spiritually alive. Someone else has to do that for you. And that Someone is Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Now you might wonder: "why would God be willing to do that? Why would God be willing to send his One and Only Son down to earth to save sinners? And why would Jesus, the Son of God, willingly take on human flesh and suffer for the sake of sinners?" Why indeed?!

Well, dear listeners, the truth is that God is a God who loves to save! The God of the bible, and who created the world, is a God of love. John 3:16 states that *"God so loved the world that he gave his only Son that whoever believes in him **should NOT PERISH**, but have eternal life."* And in I John 4:9 the bible says that *"in this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him."* Elsewhere in Scripture we hear God say, *"For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies,"* declares the LORD God, *"so repent and live."*

What these words mean is that God desires to show his love to us, and he does this freely. He offers his love freely, and he offers his Son freely for us. The gifts of faith, and of forgiveness of sins, are free gifts. All we have to do is place our trust in Jesus, the Son of God.

And God had this all planned long before we were born. The bible says that, *God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us"* (Rom. 5:8). Christ died on the cross approximately 2000 years ago, long before you and I even **had a CHANCE** to repent and believe. And that means that Jesus Christ intended to die and to suffer for us long before we even had a chance to repent and believe in him. Certainly that is extraordinary love, don't you think?

In addition to this the scriptures teach that Jesus came to earth voluntarily. He was not coerced or forced to come to earth by the Father in heaven. The bible tells us in Phil. 2:6ff that Christ was willing to leave behind the glories of heaven, in order that he might become a man. He was willing to give up his special position in heaven to become a servant to sinners.

The perfect Son of God was willing to leave behind his perfect and glorious home in order to live in an imperfect and miserable world. And not only that, he was willing to suffer in this world, and to die people who are spiritually dead. He was willing to humble himself, take on human form, and suffer death on a cross. Certainly that displays his extraordinary love!

And while he was on earth Jesus Christ proved his love by showing that he was determined to carry out God's plan of salvation for sinners. In Luke 9:51 we read this extraordinary statement: "*when the days drew near for [Jesus Christ] to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.*"

Jesus set his face to go to Jerusalem. That means he resolutely set out to do so. He was determined to go to Jerusalem. After this point in his earthly ministry Jesus was completely focused on his final journey to Jerusalem. Why was he Jesus so determined to do this? He was determined to go because he wanted to accomplish his goal of dying for sinners so that he could save them from their sins!

Earlier in Luke 9 Jesus had explained this to his disciples. He told them the purpose for which had had come into the world: "*the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised*" (Luke 9:22).

That was his mission and his goal! He was determined to suffer and to die for sinners like you and I. And that is why he was determined to go to Jerusalem. He knew he would be condemned to death but yet he was determined to go.

He knew that death in Jerusalem was his earthly destiny, and so he made Jerusalem his destination. That's where he would hang on the cross as a sacrifice for the sins of people like you and I.

Therefore what Christ suffered was not some unfortunate accident, but the direct result of his determination to fulfill his divine calling as the Saviour of the world. And he did not merely go to Jerusalem to die. Luke's gospel reveals a deeper purpose and higher destiny by telling us that Jesus was to be **taken up**.

That same word is used in the book of Acts to describe Jesus' ascension into heaven. Luke tells us where Jesus was heading so that we can see the whole picture: the completeness of his saving work. Jesus was moving toward the cross, but his ultimate goal was also to move beyond the cross: his resurrection and ascension would follow.

Ultimately his goal was to go back to the Father, back to the place of glory and honour. But before he could receive that glory and ascend into heaven there was

something that Jesus had to endure. He had to humble himself unto death, even death on a cross. He had to give up his life to gain life for us.

“The days drew near...” the bible says – so there is nothing coincidental here. This is the God executing his plan of redemption. There were days planned for Christ’s birth, his years in Nazareth, his baptism at the Jordan, his 40 days of temptation in the wilderness, and his days of ministry on this earth.

In the same way there were days planned for his time in Jerusalem. And Jesus faithfully followed God’s plan of salvation: he voluntarily accepted his mission, and he voluntarily accepted the cross!! Once his gaze was fixed on that goal, he would never look back. Nothing would deter him from doing what he had been called to do, and nothing would distract him from his determination to suffer for our sins.

Dear listeners, this is a picture of our Saviour! And what is your reaction to this Saviour? That’s the important question! How are we going to react to Jesus? He says, *“if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me”* (Luke 9:23).

And before we can understand what it means to follow him we have to understand what he has done. Before we can truly follow him we must marvel at his humility, be awe-struck by his willingness, and impressed by his determination to suffer and die for us. Would you have gone to Jerusalem? Would you go there, knowing what was waiting for you? And yet **Jesus** did this with you and I in mind!

And in Jerusalem his suffering would take him through the bitter anguish of hellish agony. He was betrayed with a kiss. He was abused by soldiers. He faced false charges. He was rejected by his own people, and his disciples all left him. And in Jerusalem he was stripped naked and nailed to a cross. And he was determined to suffer all this because of his love for sinners.

So how will you respond? Will you follow him? That was also the question faced by his disciples as Jesus made his way to Jerusalem. That is the question faced by everyone who hears who Jesus is. I hope to speak to you about that next week.