

## Introduction

Jesus had been arrested by the Jewish authorities, sentenced to death by Pontius Pilate, and had been physically crucified by the Roman soldiers. The Gospels provide many details about Jesus' crucifixion and give us an understanding of why Jesus willingly died on the cross. He died so that He could pay the penalty that our sins deserve.

Apostle John gives three short verses that provide a personal insight into Jesus' love. Jesus was in the middle of His crucifixion suffering when He gave The Toughest Message.

### 1. The AGONY (John 19:25)

*"Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene."* (John 19:25 NIV).

The opening phrase underlines that this courageous group of women were standing *"Near the cross of Jesus"*. Jesus is at the centre of what is happening. Just by being there, the women must have been a great encouragement to Jesus. But there was nothing they could do to minimise the pain and anguish that He experienced.

Jesus' crucifixion is so familiar that it is easy to overlook the brutal reality of what Jesus endured. We forget the agony that Jesus went through in the final hours leading up to being crucified, plus the six hours that Jesus hung on the cross and died in our place for our sins.

#### a) Agony in Prayer.

The night before Jesus' crucifixion, Jesus prepared for His greatest human trial.

*"While Jesus was here on earth, he offered prayers and pleadings, with a loud cry and tears, to the one who could rescue him from death. And God heard his prayers because of his deep reverence for God."* (Hebrews 5:7 NLT).

Jesus wasn't simply praying. He was crying out. Yet, after three hours of sweating blood in prayer, Jesus declared, *"Father, ... I want your will to be done, not mine."* (Luke 22:42b NLT).

#### b) Agony in Trial.

After the soldiers arrested Jesus in the Garden, He calmly went with them in the darkness to Jerusalem. Over the following few hours, Jesus endured six trials: three were religious, and three were public courts. All six trials were illegal. Even worse, during those hearings, Jesus was repeatedly mocked, slapped, and punched. Jesus could have called down a mighty army of angels from Heaven and stopped everything. Instead, He took every slap and false accusation. Jesus willingly did what was necessary for our sins to be forgiven.

#### c) Agony in Torture.

After Pontius Pilate had handed Jesus over to be crucified, the sustained physical brutality began. The Roman soldiers were experts at torture and death, and they did their worst. The floggings were called "the half death" because half of the men who received this torture died from it. Jesus was beaten until he was physically unrecognisable. Yet, through it all, Jesus remained silent.

#### d) Agony in Crucifixion.

After the torture, Jesus was taken to Golgotha, a hill just outside of Jerusalem. The soldiers stripped Jesus of all His clothes and stretched Him out on a rough and jagged cross. They grabbed his hands and feet and, using a metal spike, they nailed Jesus to the cross. The soldiers then lifted the cross upright and dropped it into a previously dug hole. This was when the slow suffering started. Jesus hung there for all the world to see –

gasping for breath, shamed, naked, bleeding, and dying. He hung on the cross before the very people that He had come to save.

e) Agony in Abandonment.

After hanging on the cross for 6 hours, Jesus cried out, “*“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”*” (Mark 15:34b ESV). This was the moment of Jesus’ ultimate agony, as God the Father turned His back on His only Son. It was the moment when God’s anger for all of the sin of humanity was poured out on Jesus.

When Jesus died on the cross, the sin of humanity had been paid in full through His blood. Jesus is “*The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!*” (John 1:29b NLT).

*“But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honour because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.”* (Hebrews 2:9 NIV).

Jesus took our sins in His own body. He died so that we might live.

## 2. The AUTHORITY (John 19:26)

*“When Jesus saw his mother standing there beside the disciple he loved, he said to her, “Dear woman, here is your son.”*” (John 19:26 NLT).

Despite the excruciating pain that Jesus endured on the cross, Jesus spoke 7 last sayings:

a) Jesus spoke Forgiveness.

*“Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they don’t know what they are doing.”*” (Luke 23:34a NLT). Jesus forgave everyone involved in His death.

b) Jesus spoke Salvation.

To the thief who asked Jesus to remember him, Jesus said, “*“I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise.”*” (Luke 23:43 NLT). Salvation was assured.

c) Jesus spoke Relationship.

See below.

d) Jesus spoke Abandonment.

As His death approached, Jesus cried out, “*“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”*” (Matthew 27:46b ESV). Jesus experienced an agonising separation from His Heavenly Father. He did this because of His love for us.

e) Jesus spoke Distress.

Jesus said, “*“I thirst.”*” (John 19:28b ESV). Jesus was given a drink of sour wine to show that He was fulfilling Old Testament prophecies.

f) Jesus spoke Triumph.

Jesus declared, “*“It is finished.”*” (John 19:30a NIV). These 3 words changed human history. The penalty for sin has been paid in full. Jesus has defeated sin and death – once and for all.

g) Jesus spoke Reunion.

Jesus said, “*“Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.”*” (Luke 23:46 NIV). As He approached death and His onward journey through to resurrection, Jesus declared His complete trust and His wholehearted love in His Heavenly Father.

When Jesus spoke Relationship [see (c) above] (John 19:26), we see a dying son; a puzzled disciple; and a mother whose heart must have been at breaking point. With great physical effort Jesus said to her, “*“Dear woman, here is your son.”*” In His dying moments, Jesus was concerned for the future well-being of His earthly family.

Jesus said, “*Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them.*” (Matthew 5:17 ESV).

The Law of Moses said, “*Honour your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.*” (Exodus 20:12 ESV).

Jesus was honouring His mother, Mary, by providing for her after His death.

But in addition to providing food and shelter for His mother, Jesus showed His divine authority over all things. When Jesus declared, “*It is finished*”, He announced to world that He is the only Way, the only Truth, and the only source of eternal life. This Way, Truth, and Life is freely given to those who trust in Jesus.

Mary and John believed in Jesus. In the shadow of the cross, through the blood of Jesus, a new person, a new home, a new community came to life. This is the same for us today. Jesus died so that we might live.

### 3. The **ACTIVITY** (John 19:27)

*“And he said to this disciple, ‘Here is your mother.’ And from then on this disciple took her into his home.”* (John 19:27 NLT).

The phrase translated “*from then on*” literally means ‘from that hour’, i.e. immediately. Jesus asked John to do something, and his response was to instantly respond in loving obedience.

As Christians, we are called to follow Jesus in loving obedience. Our love for Jesus is shown in our lives through the way that we obey what Jesus wants us to do. We obey Jesus as an outward expression of our internal love for Him. Love and obedience go together.

Because of what Jesus has done for us on the cross, our love for Jesus and our obedience to do what He says cannot be separated.

*“God the Father knew you and chose you long ago, and his Spirit has made you holy. As a result, you have obeyed him ...”* (1 Peter 1:2a NLT).

John obeyed Jesus without getting into a discussion or a debate. His silence and prompt actions speaks volumes.

In response to what God has done for us through the Holy Spirit, as Christians, we are called and expected to respond in loving obedience. Are we following John’s example and responding to Jesus in loving obedience?

## CONCLUSION

Spiritually speaking, everyone is in one of two families.

We are either in the family of “[I’m Going to Do what I want to Do](#)”, or we are in the family of “[I’m Going to Do what God wants to Do](#)”. Contrary to what people may say, there are only two options. Deep down, each of us knows which family we belong to.

When we are born, by default, each of us belongs to the “[I’m Going to Do what I want to Do](#)” family. (Parents with a toddler will confirm that we have an inbuilt desire have our own way.)

Unfortunately, anyone who is part of the “[I’m Going to Do what I want to Do](#)” family, does not have a long-term future. When this life is done, the eternal future of this family is death.

But there is good news. A new birth certificate is available. This new birth certificate guarantees eternal life, and it ensures an immediate transfer from the “[I’m Going to Do what I want to Do](#)” family, to the “[I’m Going to Do what God wants to Do](#)” family.

The bad news is that this new birth certificate has a price. It is such a high price, that no-one can afford it. It is an impossible price; but not because it is money. The price requires a perfect behaviour, a perfect attitude, and perfect thoughts – at all times.

But there is good news! The price of this new birth certificate has been paid – in full. Jesus, God's own Son, has bought a new birth certificate for each one of us and He has them ready. Jesus is offering us this new birth certificate as a gift. All we do is accept this gift from Jesus.

Which family are we going to choose?

Do we stay in the, “[I'm Going to Do what I want to Do](#)” family, which has no long-term future? Or are we going to accept Jesus' gift of a new birth certificate and be part of His everlasting “[I'm Going to Do what God wants to Do](#)” family?

At Calvary,

- Jesus endured the **Agony** of the cross because He loves us and chose to pay the penalty for us.
- Jesus displayed His **Authority** because He wants us to be part of His family.
- Jesus calls us to **Activity** because He wants a relationship with each one of us.

This is The Toughest Message – and the most important Message for each one of us today.

How will you respond?

**AMEN**