

Title: **“HE SAVED OTHERS;
HIMSELF HE CANNOT SAVE.”**

Text: Mark 15:15-39

Subject: *The Death of Christ as Our Substitute*

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Tape # Z-66a

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Mark 15:15-39

Introduction:

If the Lord God wants Balaam to hear his Word, he can speak as easily through Balaam’s ass as he can through a man or an angel. And, sometimes, in his infinite sovereignty, the Lord God uses lost, unregenerate, spiritually ignorant men to proclaim gospel truth as plainly and as powerfully as any inspired prophet. Those men remain as ignorant of the gospel as ever. Yet, they become voices by which God declares his truth. **Balaam himself exemplifies that fact.** — “*The Lord put a word in Balaam’s mouth*” - (Numbers 23:5) It was Balaam, a false prophet, who said, in Numbers 23:19-24...

(Numbers 23:19-24) “God *is* not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do *it*? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? (20) Behold, I have received *commandment* to bless: and he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it. (21) He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: the LORD his God *is* with him, and the shout of a king *is* among them. (22) God brought them out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn. (23) Surely *there is* no enchantment against Jacob, neither *is there* any divination against Israel: according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought! (24) Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion: he shall not lie down until he eat *of* the prey, and drink the blood of the slain.”

Let me give you a couple of other examples of God using wicked men to proclaim the Gospel.

- Saul — It was wicked king Saul who prophesied of David’s great success as God’s king, saying...

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(1 Samuel 26:25) “Blessed *be* thou, my son David: thou shalt both do great *things*, and also shalt still prevail. So David went on his way, and Saul returned to his place.”

- Caiaphas the High Priest (John 11:47-52)

(John 11:47-52) “Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. 48 If we let him thus alone, all *men* will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation. 49 And one of them, *named* Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, 50 Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. 51 And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; 52 And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.”

- Pilate — “*Behold, your King.*” - “*Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.*”

Now, turn with me to Mark’s Gospel. In the 15th chapter, as Mark was inspired by God the Holy Spirit to record the events surrounding our Lord’s crucifixion, we see several more examples of God speaking glorious, Gospel truths by men who themselves knew nothing of the things they spoke. Repeatedly, those who mocked the Savior, with their jeers spoke plainly declaring that the man hanging on the cursed tree between two thieves was and is “**THE KING,**” and most distinctly “**THE KING OF ISRAEL.**”

- In verse 39, the centurion said, “**Truly, this man was the Son of God.**”

NOTE: The one through whom God speaks is nothing; but the message God speaks, the Gospel of Christ, is the power of God unto salvation! — **I’m a nobody, trying to tell everybody about somebody who can save anybody!**

**“HE SAVED OTHERS;
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There is another example of this in **verse 31**. Here you will find the title of my message and our subject. In the angry, blood thirsty, jeering mob, we hear the lost religious leaders of the day joining in the hellish revelry. Though they spoke with a hellish hatred for the Son of God, these chief priests and scribes spoke the plain truth of the gospel most clearly. Read the verse with me.

(Mark 15:31) “Likewise also the chief priests mocking said among themselves with the scribes, **HE SAVED OTHERS; HIMSELF HE CANNOT SAVE.**”

Proposition: Because the Lord Jesus Christ came here to save his people from their sins, because he came to save us from the wrath of God, he could not save himself from being made sin for us, he could not save himself from the wrath of God.

My friends, this is the very essence of the Gospel. See that you understand it clearly. — **THE HOLY LORD GOD COULD NOT SAVE SINNERS APART FROM THE SATISFACTION OF HIS LAW AND JUSTICE BY THE OBEDIENCE AND DEATH OF HIS OWN DEAR SON AS OUR SUBSTITUTE.**

- God did not have to save anyone.
- But having chosen to save some, he cannot save any except in a manner that honors his law and justice.
- If righteousness could come in any other way, then Christ died in vain.
- Christ did not have to come here in human flesh, as Jehovah’s righteous Servant, to save us.
- The Bond-servant, had He chosen to do so, could have gone out free at any time.
- But, if He went out free, if He saved Himself, He could not save others.
- Bless God forever, because He saved others, Himself He could and would not save! — Our Surety stood to His bond!

(Job 33:23-24) “If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to show unto man his uprightness: 24 Then he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom.”

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(Romans 3:23-26) “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; 24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: 25 Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; 26 To declare, *I say*, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”

UNFATHOMABLE AGONY

The passage before us sets before us the most wondrous, most glorious event in the history of the universe. Indeed, this is the reason why God created the world in the first place. We have before us the suffering and death of the Lord Jesus Christ as the sinners’ Substitute. Here the infinite love of God for sinners is set forth magnificently.

The sufferings described here would be astonishing, shocking to behold under any circumstances. Should we see any man endure such horror and grief, our hearts would be sick, deeply moved with compassion. But the man here suffering is the eternal Son of God! I am astounded, amazed, lost in wonder, as I read this chapter.

Standing at the foot of the cross, as I behold the Holy One nailed to the cursed tree, covered with his own blood and the spit of an enraged mob, and see him made sin for us, forsaken and cursed of God his Father, yet, realizing that this is the work of God’s own hand, I am lost in astonishment! I am filled with reverence and awe (2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 3:13).

Yonder (Amazing sight!) I see
The incarnate Son of God
Expiring on the cursed tree,
And weltering in His blood.

Behold, a purple torrent run
Down from his hands and head,
The crimson tide puts out the sun;
His groans awake the dead.

The trembling earth, the darkened sky,

**“HE SAVED OTHERS;
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Proclaim the truth aloud;
And with the amazed centurion, cry,
“This is the Son of God!”

Here is something even more astounding. All that the Lord Jesus Christ endured, when he was made sin for us, he willingly, voluntarily endured. Even when he was made sin for us, it was by his own will that it came to pass. He willingly took upon himself our sins. He willingly went to the cross. He willingly died the shameful, ignominious death of the cross. He willingly became the object of his Father’s holy wrath and indignation. The Lord Jesus Christ willingly took the cup of wrath and, with one tremendous draft of love, drank damnation dry for us. **Why?** The Book of God Reveals two distinct answers to that question.

• **Christ died for us because of His great love for us. — He loved us!**

Here is *“The love of Christ that passeth knowledge”* (Eph. 3:19). *“God commendeth his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”* (Rom. 5:8). *“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins”* (1 John 4:10). *“Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us”* (1 John 3:16).

• **And He died for us because justice had to be satisfied.**

I want us to simply observe from the passage before us the things our Lord Jesus suffered, when he was made sin for chosen sinners. I want us to follow our Redeemer, step by step, from his condemnation to his death. There is deep meaning, spiritual instruction, and great consolation in everything our Substitute endured when he suffered the wrath of God in our place.

As we dwell upon these things, let us not forget, not even for a moment, that our sins and the salvation of our souls were the cause of all his agony. It was our hell that he endured! It was our death that he died. I am talking to you, my brothers and sisters, about the blood atonement and sin offering of our own Surety!

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(2 Corinthians 5:21) “For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

(1 Peter 2:24) “Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.”

(1 Peter 3:18) “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:”

I. HERE WE SEE THE SON OF GOD DELIVERED INTO THE HANDS OF ROMAN SOLDIERS, CONDEMNED TO DEATH, TO BE CRUCIFIED AS A COMMON CRIMINAL.

(Mark 15:15) “And *so* Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged *him*, to be crucified.”

Here is that One before whom one day soon the whole world must stand in judgment. The great Judge who shall summons all men before the great white throne in the last day, is here judged of men, sentenced to death and delivered up to be executed by the hands of wicked men.

Do you ask why? It was that he might deliver us from judgment, the pit of destruction, and the sentence of eternal death in hell. The Lord Jesus was made to be sin, judged guilty, and put to death for his people, so that believing sinners might never be judged for sin, so that he might present all the hosts of God’s elect before the presence of his glory, holy, unblamable, and unprovable in his sight.

(Romans 4:8) “Blessed *is* the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.”

(Romans 8:1) “*There is* therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

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(Romans 8:33-34) “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? *It is* God that justifieth. *34* Who *is* he that condemneth? *It is* Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.”

**II. JESUS CHRIST THE RIGHTEOUS IS HERE MOCKED,
JEERED, INSULTED AND MADE A LAUGHING STOCK
BEFORE ALL THE WORLD.**

(Mark 15:16-20) “And the soldiers led him away into the hall, called Praetorium; and they call together the whole band. *17* And they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his *head*, *18* And began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews! *19* And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and bowing *their* knees worshipped him. *20* And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him.”

(Mark 15:29-32) “And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest *it* in three days, *30* Save thyself, and come down from the cross. *31* Likewise also the chief priests mocking said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; himself he cannot save. *32* Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with him reviled him.”

They clothed him with a purple cloth, put a crown of thorns on his head, and mockingly worshipped him - “*Hail! King!*” Then they beat him, spit on him, and mocked him. As they led him away to crucify him, he became the song of drunkards. Harlots and *holy* men, pimps and priests, sots and scribes joined in hellish revelry as they nailed him to the tree and watched him die. Even the two thieves who were crucified with him found relief from their torture by joining in the infamy. The Son of God was made to be utterly contemptible before men. He was made to be “*the filth of the world and the offscouring of all things.*”

Do you ask why? It was that we, who are indeed the filth of the world and offscouring of all things, that we who are in truth vile and contemptible,

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that we might have glory, and honor, and eternal life by the merit of his blood, that we might stand before God without one spot of sin or wrinkle of infirmity, in perfect holiness. He wore a crown of thorns, that we might wear a crown of glory forever. He wore the spit of man, that men might wear the kiss of God forever. He sunk in humiliation, that we might rise in triumph.

**III. THE LORD JESUS WAS STRIPPED NAKED BEFORE MEN,
EXPOSED IN OPEN SHAME TO ALL HIS ENEMIES.**

(Mark 15:24) “And when they had crucified him, they parted his garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take.”

Do you ask why? It was that we, who have no righteousness before God, might be clothed with his perfect righteousness. It was that we, who are naked and shameful, all defiled with sin, might wear the wedding garments of grace and sit side by side with the angels of God unashamed. It was that we might forever wear the white robe of righteousness, the garments of salvation, clean and white, before great white throne of our God.

**IV. THE HOLY ONE OF GOD WAS RECKONED A
TRANSGRESSOR AND A SINNER.**

(Mark 15:27-28) “And with him they crucify two thieves; the one on his right hand, and the other on his left. 28 And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors.”

He who did no sin, in whose mouth was no guile, was “*numbered with the transgressors.*”

Do you ask why? Why was he numbered with the transgressors? It was because he was made to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him (2 Cor. 5:21). The holy Lamb of God was made to be sin so that we, who are altogether unholy, might be made perfectly holy forever! He was pronounced guilty so that we might be pronounced righteous before God!

V. THE SON OF GOD WAS FORSAKEN BY HIS FATHER.

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(Mark 15:34) “And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

Try to grasp this. When our Surety, Jehovah’s righteous Servant, was at the height of his obedience, as he was performing the crowning work he was commissioned of God to do, he was abandoned, forsaken by his Father.

Do you ask why? It was because he was made to be sin; and the holy Lord God cannot look upon sin. Why was he forsaken of God? It was that we might hear the Lord God himself declare - ***“I will never leave thee nor forsake thee!”*** Christ was forsaken because he was made sin for us. We can never be forsaken because he has taken our sins away!

VI. THE LORD OF GLORY WAS CRUCIFIED UPON THE CURSED TREE.

(Mark 15:22-26) “And they bring him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull. ²³ And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but he received *it* not. ²⁴ And when they had crucified him, they parted his garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take. ²⁵ And it was the third hour, and they crucified him. ²⁶ And the superscription of his accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS.”

Death by crucifixion was reserved for only the most vile of felons. This shamefully horrid, ignominious, tortuous form of execution was designed to show the utter contemptibility of the one hanging upon the cross. The man hanging on the tree was counted accursed. The Lord Jesus died the cursed death of the cross.

Do you ask why? It was that we who were born accursed might be delivered from the curse of the law and stand forever blessed of God for Christ’s sake.

(Galatians 3:13) “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that hangeth on a tree:”

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**VII. THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, OUR SUBSTITUTE, FREELY,
VOLUNTARILY LAID DOWN HIS LIFE, HE GAVE UP THE
GHOST, FOR HIS PEOPLE.**

(Mark 15:37) “And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.”

(John 10:11) “I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.”

(John 10:15-18) “As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. *16* And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, *and* one shepherd. *17* Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. *18* No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.”

Do you ask why?

(1 John 4:9-10) “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, **that we might live through him.** *10* Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins.”

**VIII. BY HIS BLOOD ATONEMENT, BY HIS DEATH UNDER
THE CURSE OF GOD’S HOLY LAW, THE SON OF GOD
RIPPED OPEN THE VEIL IN THE TEMPLE.**

(Mark 15:38) “And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.”

When justice was satisfied, when sin was put away, when there was nothing left to separate the holy Lord God from his people, when the law of God was forever silenced, the symbol of separation was ripped apart.

Do you ask why? It was that redeemed sinners might come to God with the full assurance of faith, being accepted in the beloved.

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(Hebrews 10:12-19) “But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; *13* From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. *14* For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. *15* *Whereof* the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, *16* This *is* the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; *17* And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. *18* Now where remission of these *is, there is* no more offering for sin. *19* Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,”

Application:

1. What a deep sense we ought to have of the debt we owe to the Lord Jesus Christ.

All that we have, all that we are, all that we hope for, must be traced to the doing and dying of the Son of God for us.

- By his condemnation, we are acquitted.
- By his being made sin, we are made the righteousness of God.
- By his sufferings, we get peace.
- By his shame, we get glory.
- By his death, we have life!

Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!”

2. What assurance we ought to have of Christ’s great love for us!
3. What a reasonable thing it is for us to unceasingly present ourselves as living sacrifices unto our God! — “*Ye are not your own. For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s*” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

(Romans 12:1) “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service.”

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AMEN.