



Talk 3 - Why Did Jesus Die?

Duration 45 Minutes
HTB Transcripts

Key:

Personal Story / Testimony that Nicky Gumbel tells in the classic Alpha talk. These may be replaced with a live speaker's personal story or the speaker may tell the story about Nicky in the same way Nicky tells stories about others.

Story that Nicky tells about someone else (about a friend or a story he heard or read about).

Quotes are key to the talk to emphasise a point and to enable guests to engage and relate to a point made. There is now a way that people can seek permission to omit or replace quotes used in the original talks. A quote should be replaced with something equally effective to maintain the balance of teaching, story, and references to other information sources.

Key Quotes will need approval to change (these will be identified by a comment in the left column). Please email publications@alpha.org with your request.

Key Bible Passages are identified and you may wish to display these visually for your guests.

Red type identifies a part of the key teaching text that may be removed or altered for contextualisation.

Text left untouched is the standard key message content of the Alpha talk.

NOTE: Key elements of this script are: personal stories, humour and reference to media / popular culture to draw the guests in to engage with the talk.

Parts of the talk may need to be contextualised for other contexts or cultures but make sure you maintain the key elements of humour and personal testimony. Notice how quotes, and stories are used throughout to add emphasis to the main points of the talk (theology and testimony).

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What do the following people have in common: Madonna, Elton John, Jennifer Aniston, Naomi Campbell, the Pope and Robbie Williams? There may be a variety of answers, but one answer is they all wear a cross.

There's nothing wrong with that. Of course, many people today do wear a cross — in earrings, bracelet, lapel, even a tattoo, I guess! But the most common is you see a little gold cross, a little silver cross around someone's neck. Sometimes a wooden cross, a small one or sometimes a big wooden cross.

And there's nothing wrong with that, but has it ever struck you that in a way it's quite a surprising thing to do, because the cross was a form of execution. What would you have felt today if when you came in I greeted you wearing this — this is a very nice gallows I've had made! Or supposing I was wearing an electric chair around my neck — what would you feel?

And the cross was a form of execution which was so cruel that even the Romans eventually abolished it, in 337 AD.

So why do people wear a cross?

Well, the cross is a symbol of Christianity; **it's like the kind of logo of Christianity**. About a third of the Gospels are about the death of Jesus. Half of Mark's Gospel is about his death. Much of the rest of the New Testament is explaining why he died. The central service of the Christian church is all about the broken body, the shed blood of Jesus.

Why?

Most leaders who've influenced nations or even changed the world are remembered for the impact of their lives. Jesus, who more than any other person changed the face of world history, is remembered for his death even more than his life.

Why is there such a concentration on the death of Jesus? What's the difference between his death and the death of, say, a war hero or a martyr? Why did he die? What did it achieve? Why is it important? What does it mean? There's a little expression that appears in the New


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Testament: 'He died for our sins.' What on earth does that mean? And how can it be relevant to your life tonight, or to my life?

John, chapter 3, verse 16. This is perhaps the most famous verse in the whole Bible, and in a way it sums up the message of the whole Bible:

'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.'

In a nutshell, the answer to the question 'Why?' is, because God loves you.



Talk Point 1

THE PROBLEM

So what was the problem? Sometimes people say, 'I don't have any need of Christianity. You know, I'm really very happy. And my life's full, and I try to be nice to people. I lead a good life.'

And it's true that every human being, according to the New Testament, is created in the image of God. So there's something good, noble about every human being. Sometimes people say, 'I know this amazing person who's not a Christian.' Of course — every human being, in one sense, is amazing, because they're created in the image of God.

But there's also another side to the coin.

Certainly in my own life, I'd have to admit, there are things in my life that I do that I know are wrong; I mess up.

Would you like to turn to Romans, chapter 3, verse 23? St Paul writes this:

'... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God ...'

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Who is it, for a start? He says all have sinned.

I find it so hard to admit that I ever do anything wrong. The words 'I was wrong,' they just kind of get stuck in my throat, I find it so hard to say, 'It's my fault.'

My wife sent me a suitable birthday card one time for someone who is a little bit stubborn. It's a picture of a man with a shopping trolley full of, I don't know, groceries, and he's walking through the mountains, followed by his wife three foot behind. And what the caption says is this, 'Having insisted that this was the way back to the car, Paul is unable to admit that he is wrong.'

And I find I'm always trying to make excuses, I'm always trying to blame someone else — often my wife! And I notice when two cars collide and the drivers get out to discuss whose fault it was, the immediate reaction (I know you're not supposed to say — liability and all the rest), but still the immediate reaction is not: 'Oh, I'm so sorry, it was entirely my fault!' We come up with all kinds of excuses.

I came across some of the things that people have sent to their insurance companies, accident claim forms, trying to explain, and sometimes giving absurd reasons, why the accident happened.

— One man wrote this: 'Going home, I drove into the wrong house and collided with a tree that wasn't there.'

— Another man wrote this: 'The other car collided with mine, without giving warning of his intention.'

— Another person wrote this: 'The guy was all over the road. I had to swerve a number of times before I hit him.'

— Another wrote this: 'I'd been driving my car for 40 years, when I fell asleep at the wheel and had an accident.'

— Another wrote this: 'The pedestrian had no idea which way to go, so I ran over him.'

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— And finally this: 'I pulled away from the side of the road, glanced at my mother-in-law, and headed over the embankment.'

But, Paul says, actually all of us have done wrong, we've all sinned. What does it mean, 'sinned'? Sometimes people say, 'Well, I lead a good life.' And I suppose it depends to whom we're comparing ourselves. There are so many different standards.

I mean, it's true in every area, isn't it? It's true in sport. I told you last week I love playing **squash**, and I play it pretty regularly. And actually the number of years I've been playing, the amount I've played, I should be very good. I'm not, actually. But I would regard myself as a good social **squash**-player. That's to say, there are people a lot better than me, but there are also people who are a lot worse than me.

One time I arranged to play with a friend, and I arrived there; I was a little bit early, and this man turned up who was about fifteen years older than me, four stone heavier, and he said did I want a game? So I thought, 'Well, I've got ten minutes before my friend arrives, so yeah, fine.' So he said, like this, 'That's enough of a warm-up for me. Let's go on court.' So we went on court. I said, 'You serve' — I wanted him at least to have the opportunity to hit the ball, so I gave him the first serve.

And he did this complete fluke — it just went straight up in the air, dead in the corner. One-nil. Well, I was quite pleased he won a point, because it's a bit embarrassing if they don't get any points at all! Then he went over to the other side, another serve — straight up in the air, *boom*, dead in the corner. And then he started doing these little drop-shots, lobs. He had me tearing all over that game! I was pouring with sweat. He just stood in the middle: *lob, lob*, me tearing around. I suddenly realised why he was **four-stone heavier** — he never moved!

He was just so much better than me. He won nine-love, nine-love, nine-love. But actually he wasn't very good. If he'd played a good club player, he wouldn't get a point. And if a good club player played an international player, he wouldn't get a point. I once saw two professional top players playing **squash** in our club; they happened to be practising there. And I looked, and I looked at the game, and I thought, 'Goodness, if that's **squash**, the

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game we play definitely should not be called **squash!** Because there are so many different standards.

And the same is true, if you like, in the whole moral, spiritual world.

The vicar of this church a few years ago was a man called John Collins, who's now over eighty. John is the most lovely, charming, Godly, gracious, humble man you could ever hope to meet in your life, and also very good at explaining the Bible. And he had a way of explaining this verse. Sometimes a sort of rather arrogant young man might come to him and say, 'Look, I lead a good life, I have no need,' and John would use this illustration. He'd say, 'Look, supposing on this wall there's a scale of all the people who've ever lived. And the very worst person's at the bottom, and the very best person's at the top.' And he'd say, 'Now, who would you put at the bottom?' And they'd say Adolf Hitler or Stalin, or their boss.

And then he'd say, 'Now, who do you think is the best person who's ever lived?' And they'd say Mother Teresa, or their mother, or someone, would go up at the top.

And then John would say, 'Now, I think you'd agree that all of us are somewhere in between there and there.' He was a very humble man: he'd say, 'I'm probably somewhere down there and you're probably somewhere up there,' and the man would nod and say, 'Yes, probably the case.' And then John would say, 'Now, what do you think the standard is?' The man would say, 'Well, perhaps the ceiling is the standard.' And John would say, 'No, look at the verse:'

'... all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God ...'

The standard is not the ceiling — it's the sky. Because the glory of God was revealed in Jesus, and compared to him we all fall a long way short.

So someone might say, 'Well, if that's the case we're all in the same boat. What does it matter?' It does matter, because there are consequences. And they can be summarised under four headings.

I've made them all begin with P to make it slightly easier to remember.

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First is the pollution of sin. The pollution of the environment is now recognised to be a major problem. But Jesus said it's also possible to pollute our own lives.

Would you like to turn to Mark, chapter 7, verse 20? Jesus said this:

'What comes out of you is what makes you `unclean' — in other words, what kind of `tarnishes' us. For from within, out of your hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder'

And Jesus said, really, if we're angry with someone, that's kind of committing murder in our hearts. Adultery — he said, well, you know, adultery again is something that we can do in our hearts.

'... greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and they make you "unclean"' — they mess up our lives.

Now, as I went through that list, you may have said, 'Well, I don't do all of those things.' But if it's just one, that's enough. It's like if you make scrambled eggs and you have one bad egg and eleven good eggs, it's going to affect the whole batch.

And with the Ten Commandments it's no good saying ... It's like the law of the country: it's no good saying, if you're up for an offence, 'I haven't broken any of the other laws.' With the Ten Commandments, it's no good saying, 'Well, I keep nine of the Ten Commandments; it's just the murder one I find a little bit difficult!'

The apostle James says this: 'Whoever keeps the whole Law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.'

Second, the power of sin. **I don't know about you, but I find the bad stuff is very addictive.** It has a kind of addictive power. And Jesus says 'anyone who sins is a slave of sin' — it gets a grip on us. We all know that about certain things. I mean, we all know that if you take **heroin** over a protracted period of time you're likely to become addicted to it. But it's not just hard drugs that are addictive, Jesus says: it's possible to be addicted to a bad temper or to envy or to arrogance or pride or selfishness or lust or gossip or whatever — these things can get a

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grip of our lives.

And then, third, there's the penalty of sin. Something within our nature, I think, kind of cries out for justice. When, for example, we read in the newspapers of children being molested, abused; old people attacked brutally in their own homes, something within us says, 'That's wrong! The people who did that should be caught and brought to justice. There should be a penalty for that.'

For myself, I find that really easy to say about other people: 'Yeah, they deserve it!' I find it much harder to say it about myself. I guess I'm a hypocrite: I'm happy to judge others, but not myself.

Let me give you a trivial example. Until very recently, for many years I biked into work. And I loved biking into work, because if I came in by car it took me about 35–45 minutes. If I came in by bike I knew it only took me 15 minutes. And the reason was that on the route that I came in there was a bike lane. And basically there are two lanes: one for buses and bikes, and one for cars. And the one for cars at the time in the morning I came in was always jammed with cars — just a great big line of cars. And I loved coming in by bike, because I just sailed past all the cars. It was so satisfying!

Occasionally a car would come into the bus lane, and it was so irritating! Because you'd be biking along and you weren't expecting these cars. So I always put my bike in the middle so that they couldn't get past. And I always hoped — because I knew there were two police traps — I would always hope that these cars that came in the bus lane were caught by these, because they deserved it. They shouldn't be in the ... it's jolly frightening for cyclists if you have these cars coming. They deserve to be caught! Fine. So I liked doing that.

Sometimes it was raining, and when it rained I didn't like coming in by bike, so occasionally I came in by car. And I'd be sitting in my car in this queue, with all these wretched cyclists sailing past! And it just looked so absurd, because there are these two lanes — one with just a few cyclists in, otherwise completely empty; and then all these cars in a line! What is the point of having all these cars in one line when there's a completely empty lane there? It'd be so much quicker, certainly for me, if I could go in the bus lane. And I knew where the police

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traps were, so I would go into the bus lane. And anyway, it did say, 'Buses and Cyclists' and I am a cyclist! So it's fine for me.

St Paul writes in Romans: 'You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you're condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things.'

When we point the finger, three fingers point back at us.

Then, fourth, the partition of sin. Would you like to turn to Romans 6, verse 23? St Paul writes this:

'For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.'

'The wages of sin is death.' And by 'death' there, Paul is not just talking about physical death; he's talking about a kind of spiritual death. And that comes from a kind of cutting-off from God: if you like, the fact that there is a partition between us, and God caused by the things that we do wrong.

The prophet Isaiah says it's not that God can't hear you, he says; it's the fact that your iniquities have caused a separation between you and your God. And these things that we do wrong have the potential to cut us off from him eternally, actually.

It's like when you fall out in a human relationship and you can't look the other person in the eye. Sometimes people say, you know, 'I've tried praying, but my prayers seem to hit the ceiling. It doesn't seem like there's anyone there. There's this kind of partition.'

And all that, if you like, is the bad news. But, of course, the very word 'gospel' means good news. The message of Christianity is overwhelmingly good news. And the good news is God loves you and me. And he doesn't just leave us there; he chose to do something about it. 'God so loved the world' — that's you and me — 'that he sent his one and only Son' to do something about it.

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Talk Point 2

THE SOLUTION

It's really a complete – it's a mystery. It's so hard ... it's so amazing, so beautiful, but it's so profound. But it's basically this: that God came to this earth in the person of his Son, Jesus Christ, to die for you and for me.

Would you like to turn to 1 Peter, chapter 2, verse 24? Peter writes this:

'He himself' — that is, Jesus — 'bore our sins in his body on the tree' — in other words, on the cross — 'so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.'

This is not some innocent third party being punished instead; that would be, obviously, barbaric.

This is what John Stott calls the 'self-substitution of God'.

What does this mean?

On 31 July 1941 a prisoner escaped from Auschwitz. As a reprisal the Gestapo selected ten men arbitrarily to die in a starvation underground bunker. One of the men who was selected to die was a man called Francis Gajinisdek. And when Francis Gajinisdek was selected, he cried out: he said, 'Ah, my poor wife and my children. They'll never see me again.'

And at that moment, a Polish man — very unimpressive-looking in many ways, with round glasses in wire frames — stepped out, and he said, 'Look, I'm a Catholic priest. I don't have a wife and children.' He said, 'I want to die instead of that man.' And to everyone's amazement, his offer was accepted.

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Maximilian Kolbe was the name of the Catholic priest. He was 47 years old at the time. And he went with the others to the starvation bunker. He was a remarkable man — he got them all praying and singing hymns; it transformed the atmosphere, apparently, in that bunker. And he was the last to die, actually — he was given a lethal injection of carbolic acid on 14 August 1941.

41 years later, on 10 October 1982, Maximilian Kolbe's death was put in its proper perspective. In St Peter's Square in Rome, present in a crowd of 150,000 people — including 26 cardinals, 300 bishops and archbishops — was that man, Francis Gajinisdek. And the Pope described the death of Maximilian Kolbe in these terms. He said, 'It was a victory, like that won by our Lord, Jesus Christ.'

I was flicking through *The Independent newspaper* one time and I saw the obituary of Francis Gajinisdek. And what it said in the obituary was he spent the rest of his life going around telling people what Maximilian Kolbe had done for him, because he'd died in his place.

And in an even more amazing and wonderful way, Jesus died in our place. He endured crucifixion for us.

Cicero described crucifixion as 'the most cruel and hideous of tortures. Jesus was stripped and tied to a whipping-post, he was flogged with four or five thongs of leather interwoven with sharp, jagged bone and lead.'

Eusebius, the third-century historian, described Roman flogging in these terms: 'The sufferer's veins were laid bare, and the very muscles, sinews and bowels of the victim were opened to exposure. He was then taken to the Praetorium, where a crown of thorns was thrust on his head. He was forced to carry a heavy crossbar on his bleeding shoulders until he collapsed.'

When they reached the site of crucifixion he was again stripped naked. He was laid on the cross and six-inch nails were driven into his forearms just above the wrists. His knees were then twisted sideways so that the ankles could be nailed between the tibia and the Achilles tendon. He was lifted up on the cross, which was then dropped into a socket in

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the ground. There he was left to hang in intense heat and unbearable thirst, exposed to the ridicule of the crowd. He hung there, in unthinkable pain, for six hours while his life slowly drained away. It was the height of pain and depth of shame.'

Yet the New Testament does not concentrate on the physical agony of Jesus, or even on the emotional pain of being rejected by the world, deserted by his friends. What it concentrates on is — and this is what is unique: because other people have suffered physically — but what was unique to Jesus was the spiritual suffering, because he was cut off from his Father for us as he carried our sins.

Would you like to turn right back in the Bible to Isaiah 53, verse 6?

'We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.'

I really struggled to understand Jesus dying on the cross. I went and I heard talks about it, and I thought — 'It just doesn't make sense! Someone dying 2,000 years ago for me? I mean, that just doesn't work.' I couldn't understand it at all. **And I went to hear a talk by a man called David McInnes: he was speaking on this verse and he said this:**

"Let this hand represent you and me — your life and my life. Let this book represent the things that we do wrong, the things that cause this barrier between us and God." And he said, "Let this hand represent Jesus. Jesus never did anything wrong. He lived a sinless life. There was no barrier between him and his Father."

What the verse says is: 'All we, like sheep, have gone astray, we've turned, every one, to our own way.'

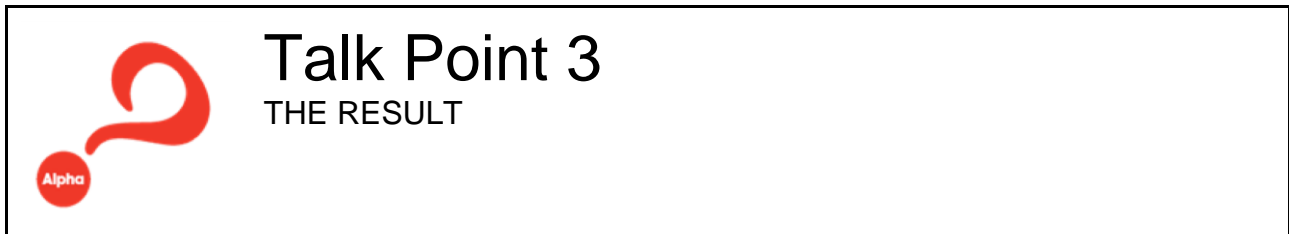
And then it says this: 'The Lord has laid on him (on Jesus, on the cross) the iniquity of us all.'

Jesus on the cross was carrying your sin and my sin. And therefore he was cut off from God, not because of what he'd done but because of what we've done. That's why he cried out: 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'

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He was cut off not for his own sin but for our sin.

Do you see where that leaves us, where it leaves you and me? Free to have a relationship with God.



So what is the result? 'God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that' — there are results!

And the cross, it's like a beautiful diamond. You know, if you have a really beautiful diamond you could look at it at different angles and you can see different colours, different lights. And you can look at the cross from so many different angles, and however many angles you look at it, you'll never fathom the full depth and beauty of it. And, as I say, it's a mystery, in a sense.

But, the New Testament tells us, there are many different angles to it. One is that it shows just how much God loves you. If you ever doubt God loves you, look at the cross. 'Greater love', Jesus said, 'has no person than this, than they lay down their life for their friends.'

It also tells us something about the nature of God. Sometimes people say ... Well, it's the biggest question probably ever asked, the biggest moral objection to the Christian faith: 'How can there be so much suffering in the world? How can God allow so much suffering?' And we don't have any simple answers. It's a very, very difficult question. But we do know this: God himself is not aloof from suffering. He has come in the person of his Son and he suffered for us, and he now suffers alongside of us.

The cross and the resurrection — because in a sense it's like one event, the cross and resurrection — also tell us that actually evil has been defeated: because Jesus rose from the dead, the cross really worked, and the powers of death and evil have been defeated.

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There are so many different aspects. But I just want to look at four images in the New Testament. What the New Testament's trying to do is to say, 'Look, have a look at this picture (or illustration), see whether this helps you!'

First, we see this: the result of the cross is, if you like, the slate has been wiped clean and we can make a new start. That's the picture from the Temple. In the Old Testament, there were very careful laws about what happened when you did something wrong. Basically, you had to go to the Temple and you got an animal and you confessed your sins over the animal. And the picture was — it was just a picture — the picture was that your sin passed from you to the animal, who was then sacrificed.

But people knew that that couldn't really work. The writer of Hebrews says: 'It's impossible for the blood of bulls or goats to take away sins; they are only a shadow.'

When John the Baptist saw Jesus, he said: 'Look — the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.' He was the one perfect sacrifice.

And St John tells us that 'the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin' — it washes away that pollution of sin in our lives, it wipes the slate clean, it enables us to make a new start.

Another result is that we can be set free from the bad stuff, the habits, the addictions. That's a picture from the marketplace. What happened in the ancient world is, just like today, people got themselves into debt. And one of the ways to get yourself out of debt was to sell yourself into slavery. So you'd go to the marketplace and you'd have a price around your neck, which were your debts and someone would buy — in order to pay off those debts — but buy you into slavery. And that was called a 'ransom price'.

A kind person might come along and offer to pay that and set you free. Jesus said: 'I've come to give my life as a ransom' — to set us free.

I heard the singer Lionel Richie being interviewed on television by Jeremy Vine, and he was saying that he came from a very poor background but he started to make money out of his singing. And one time it was his father's birthday, and he gave his father this huge present,

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and his father was really excited about it. But as he took off the wrapping paper, he found there was more wrapping paper inside. And then he took off another layer; there was more wrapping paper, and more wrapping paper. And this present just got smaller and smaller and smaller and smaller, and he could see his father's face falling.

And eventually he got to the heart of it, which was just a little tiny piece of paper. And on the piece of paper it just said this: *'All debts paid.'* And his father said, 'Well, you've paid my credit card debt?' He said, 'Yeah, I've paid off all your credit cards.' He said, 'Well, what about the car?' He said, 'Yeah, I've paid off the car.' His father said, 'Well, what about the mortgage?' He said, 'Yeah, I've paid off your mortgage.'

All debts paid — that's what Jesus did on the cross: *all debts paid*. And Jesus said: 'If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed' — 'you really will be free!'

Now, of course, certainly in my case, it's a process. Some things, I found when I came to Christ, instantly I was set free. Other things, it's taking a long time. It's a process. But Jesus sets us free.

I think of a man: Billy Nolan, who used to sit outside this church for twenty years. That's all he did all day — sit outside there drinking wine. He'd run away from the merchant navy at the age of 18; he'd been an alcoholic for 38 years.

On 13 May 1990 he looked in the mirror and he thought, 'You're not the Billy Nolan I once knew.' And, to use his own words, he asked the Lord Jesus Christ into his life. That moment he was instantly set free from alcohol addiction. He has not touched a drop of alcohol since. You can often see him in the back of church, smartly dressed, arms in the air, worshipping God. I saw him once in the car park. I said, 'Billy, you look so happy.' He said, 'I am. Life is like a maze, and at last I've found the way out, through Jesus Christ.'

Third result: we can receive total forgiveness. He goes to the Temple, he goes to the marketplace, and he goes to the law court. Paul says that through Christ's death we have been justified. 'Justified' is a legal term. If you went to court and you were acquitted, you were justified.

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I've told you I really found it difficult to understand the cross — People said, 'Jesus died for you' — 'Mmm, doesn't work.' This illustration was the one that helped me most of all. Somebody said to me:

There were two friends at school. They were great friends. They went to university together. They were great friends at university. Then they went their separate ways. One of them went on to become a lawyer and then a judge. The other one went into a life of crime. And one day the criminal appeared before his old friend the judge.

And the judge was faced with a dilemma: because he loved his friend, but he had to do justice. That, if you like, is God's dilemma: he loves us, but there has to be justice. He can't just say, just like that judge couldn't just say, 'Oh well, you're an old friend. I'll let you go.'

So, in this illustration, the judge fined him the appropriate (he'd pleaded guilty) — he fined him the appropriate penalty for the offence — let's say £20,000. And then he took off his robes, he went round the other side and he wrote out a cheque for £20,000.

He paid the penalty himself.

That is what God has done for us in Christ. Of course, **the illustration breaks down, because** God's love is far greater than just a friend, the offence is far greater than deserving just a fine, and the cost is far higher than writing a cheque — it cost Jesus his very life on the cross.

But the picture is that the penalty has been paid, and therefore it's possible for us to be completely forgiven.

And then, fourth, we can become part of God's family — that's the picture of the home. The root and result of sin is a broken relationship. It's like a parent and child who've fallen out. You know how it is when you fall out in a relationship and you kind of don't want to look at that person in the eye, because you know there's something between you; there's a barrier. And the result of the cross is the possibility of a restored relationship with God.

St Paul puts it like this in 2 Corinthians 5, verse 19. He says: 'God was in Christ, reconciling

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the world' — that's you and me — 'to himself.' This is the answer to what would otherwise be something totally barbaric. If it was that Jesus was a kind of innocent third party that God sort of punished instead of us, that would be barbaric. But what the verse says is this: 'God was in Christ.' That's why last week's talk is so important: because if Jesus is not God, it doesn't work. But 'God was in Christ.' God came himself in the person of his Son, Jesus Christ, to die for you and for me.

And therefore it's possible for us to be reconciled to God. And when we're reconciled to God — then other relationships are being restored: husbands and wives, sometimes; parents and children.

God loves us — that's the heart of the Christian message: he loves you and he loves me. And the way that Paul puts it in Galatians 2, verse 20 is this: 'The Son of God loved me and gave himself for me.' It's as personal as that. If you had been the only person in the world, Jesus would have died for you.

When I finally understood — the penny dropped: that Jesus had died for me — that was a totally life-changing moment. But I realised that a response was required. The verse says:

'God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, so that whoever believed in him should not die but have eternal life.'

To go back to the illustration of the two friends at university, one becoming a judge and one becoming a criminal — you remember in that illustration that the judge came and offered his friend a cheque: so in effect God offers you a cheque tonight. I've written out this cheque: it's on the Bank of Heaven, and it's for forgiveness, freedom, cleansing, reconciliation, eternal life. By the pound sign I've just written 'All the riches of heaven.' And it's signed 'The Lord Jesus Christ', because Jesus made it possible through what he did on the cross. It's dated today, because it's today that he makes the offer. And by the place for the name, I've left that blank, so that you can fill in your name.

And he offers you a gift. But he'll never force us. He loves us, but love never forces, love never imposes. He offers a gift. And we have a choice: we can tear up the cheque and say, 'No, thank you' or we can receive it and say, 'Thank you for dying for me.'

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I'd love us just to take a moment of quiet and possibly, if there's somebody here who would like to pray, to have the opportunity to pray. Because in a prayer we can accept this gift. And I want to make it possible. There may just be one person here who would like to accept, receive this gift tonight. And I want to pray a prayer — it's a very simple prayer — saying *Sorry, thank you, please*. And it's a way of believing, if you like, a way of accepting the gift.

Of course, there's plenty of time and it's very early in the course; there'll be lots of other opportunities, so if you're not ready, please don't feel under any pressure to do anything. **But if you would like to pray tonight, here's a prayer which you could pray in the silence of your heart. I won't embarrass you by asking you to pray out loud, but in the silence of your heart you can pray a prayer which is a way of receiving this gift. Just echo these words in your heart.**

Lord Jesus Christ, thank you for dying for me on the cross. I'm sorry for the things in my life that have been wrong. I now turn away from everything that I know is wrong. And I now receive your gift of forgiveness.

I put my trust in what you did on the cross for me. And I ask you, please, to come and fill me with your Holy Spirit, to give me the strength to lead the kind of life that deep down I'm longing to lead. Thank you, Lord Jesus. Amen.

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Talk 3 – Why Did Jesus Die?

Duration 45 Minutes
HTB Transcripts

The Alpha Transcripts are taken from The Alpha DVD 2007–2008 edition and are based on *Questions of Life* by Nicky Gumbel.

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