

# SERMON NOTES

From *In Touch With Dr. Charles Stanley*



## Jesus—Our Substitute

KEY PASSAGE: 1 Corinthians 1:18-24 | SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES: Matthew 27:22 | John 3:3, 16; 14:6  
Acts 2:21; 4:11-12 | Romans 5:8-10

### ► SUMMARY

**“Let him be crucified” (Matt. 27:22 KJV). That’s what the religious leaders of Israel demanded the Romans do with Jesus, and crucifixion was the worst kind of death imaginable.**

It was a practice that originated with barbarians centuries earlier and was handed down to the Persians, Greeks, and eventually the Romans, who refined it, causing the longest possible suffering for the victim. The reason the Jewish leaders demanded the execution of Jesus was because they wanted to get rid of Him once and for all. And that is still the wish of many people today who want nothing to do with the man called Jesus. But those of us who know and love Him want people to know that Jesus came to save sinners.

### ► SERMON POINTS

When Jesus entered the scene as an itinerate preacher proclaiming a new message, the religious leaders of the day hated Him for disrupting their religious system. They didn’t approve of His teaching and were afraid of losing control of the people. Yet the cross upon which they demanded He die became the means by which salvation was offered to all who would believe in Him.

First Corinthians 1:18, 22-24 contrasts two different perspectives of the cross—that of the saved and the unsaved. “The word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God ... For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those

who are the called, both Jews and Greeks ... Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”

**Jesus’ message was different from that of the Jewish leaders because He offered a whole new life.**

He told Nicodemus, a Pharisee and teacher in Israel, that no one can see the kingdom of God without being born again of the Spirit (John 3:3). In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus described a lifestyle pleasing to God that was different from what the Pharisees taught. It included love of enemies, the forgiveness of offenders, and trust in the heavenly Father to provide for needs.

In addition, Jesus performed amazing miracles that further upset the religious establishment. He went about healing the sick and even raised the dead. The crowds who followed Him were increasing, yet despite all the evidence of His deity, the religious leaders turned against Him and used their authority to bring about His death. They were angered by Jesus’ claim to be the eternal Son of God and the only way of salvation.

Although we may wonder how anyone could feel such animosity toward Jesus Christ, there are many people today who hate even the mention of His name because He presents a narrow way of salvation. They are willing to accept the general term *God* because every religion has a god of some kind, but Jesus’ claim to be the only way to *the* God offends them.

**What we believe about Jesus is a critical issue.**

The Bible says Jesus is the only begotten of the Father, the Son of God. His coming was predicted by Old Testament

prophets as the one who would set people free from sin and rebellion against God. Yet this belief is becoming less popular in our day because it threatens a society that desires freedom to do whatever it wants. They resent anyone, especially Christians, who tells them how to live. And the more believers obey, worship, and live for Christ, the more uncomfortable those around them become.

### Jesus' substitutionary death on the cross is at the heart of Christianity.

This was the primary reason the Son of God came to earth—to die as a substitute for us. Because He was divine and lived a perfect life, He was the only possible candidate to pay for mankind's sin. Therefore, He was born of a virgin and became human in order to die on the cross for us. God the Father placed our sins on Him, and Jesus suffered the wrath we deserved. Without His atoning death on our behalf, there would be no salvation, and we would all die in our sins and be forever under God's wrath.

### Since Jesus is the only substitute, He is the only way of salvation.

■ **Jesus affirmed this truth** when He said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me" (John 14:6). There is no other means of forgiveness and reconciliation to God except through the atoning substitutionary death of Jesus Christ on the cross. All who believe in Him as Savior and Lord, trusting in His sufficient sacrifice can be forgiven of all sin and made acceptable to God.

■ **Paul also claimed that Jesus was the only way.**

Romans 5:8-10 describes this amazing transaction: "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified [declared righteous] by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through

Him. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."

■ **Peter proclaimed Jesus as the only way.** When he was defending the gospel before the hostile Jewish leaders of the Sanhedrin, he said, "There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Although as Christians we may be accused of being narrow-minded, we must remain firm and hold to the truth of the Bible, which clearly tell us how to be saved. We can expect criticism, but we should never be ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In addition, we must be courageous in telling people about salvation through Jesus Christ. They need to know that "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16). All who trust in Christ's death as payment for their sins and surrender their lives to Him can be certain that their names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life and that heaven is their future home.

### ► RESPONSE

- Have you ever admitted your hopeless, sinful condition and trusted in Christ's substitutionary death on your behalf? If not, will you do this today?
- How do you respond when people accuse you of being narrow-minded on the issue of salvation? Is your focus more on people's negative responses or on your concern for the lost condition of that person and your responsibility to declare the truth of God?

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