

# The High Cost of a Free Gift

The sacrifice of Christ did not begin on the cross, or in the garden, or in the manger. It began in heaven when He laid aside His glory and consented to come to earth. He left the abode of God for the abode of man and exchanged exaltation for humiliation, magnitude for servitude, a radiant crown for a rugged cross, and a hallowed throne for a hollowed tomb. And it was all for us! As Paul wrote, “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9).



Aaron Erhardt Village church of Christ

The culmination of that sacrifice was, of course, the cross. Jesus suffered the most brutal and torturous form of execution in the Roman Empire. It was so severe, in fact, that Roman citizens were exempt from it. Only the most degraded offenders, like insurrectionists and slaves, were crucified. The victim usually lingered for hours before finally succumbing to asphyxia, dehydration, or heart failure.

Our English word “excruciating” literally means “out of crucifying,” and that is probably the best way to describe how Jesus died. It was excruciating! In fact, here is an excerpt from the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* about crucifixion: “The suffering of death by crucifixion was intense, esp. in hot climates. Severe local inflammation, coupled with an insignificant bleeding of the jagged wounds, produced traumatic fever, which was aggravated by the exposure to the heat of the sun, the strained position of the body and insufferable thirst. The wounds swelled about the rough nails and the torn and lacerated tendons and nerves caused excruciating agony. The arteries of the head and stomach were surcharged with blood and a terrific throbbing headache ensued. The mind was confused and filled with anxiety and dread foreboding. The victim of crucifixion literally died a thousand deaths. Tetanus not rarely supervened and the rigors of the attending convulsions would tear at the wounds and add to the burden of pain, till at last the bodily forces were exhausted and the victim sank into unconsciousness and death” (Vol. 2, p. 761). The high cost of a free gift!