

The Bible says: **All Scripture is given by inspiration of God** (II Timothy 3:16)(圣经都是神所默示的). Every word is from God and is important. In this sermon I want to focus especially on two words in John 19:17. These two words are easily skipped over as we read Scripture but they are very important words which teach us much about the way of salvation in Christ Jesus. These two words are ‘**went out**’:

And He, bearing his cross, went out to a place called the Place of a Skull (骷髅地) .

With God’s help, let us seek a better understanding of the importance of these words so that we may come to a deeper grasp of the meaning of the crucifixion (钉十字架) of Jesus Christ, and be drawn into closer fellowship with Jesus Christ.

We want to look carefully at two things: 1) that Jesus was crucified, and 2) where He was crucified.

1) That Jesus was crucified

And He, bearing His cross, went out to the Place of the Skull...where they crucified Him. He went out to be crucified.

After Jesus was condemned by two courts – the court of the Jews (the Sanhedrin) and the court of the Gentiles 外邦人 (before Pontius Pilate) – he was handed the worst death sentence possible: *crucifixion*. According to Scripture it was very important that Jesus was put to death *by crucifixion* instead of dying some other way.

- According to Roman law, crucifixion was a death sentence given to the worst and most worthless criminals, used only for slaves, not Roman citizens. Death on a cross was a severely painful and violent death, known as a death in which the victim *died a thousand deaths*. It was completely degrading (贬低), showing that this person was the lowest of human beings.
- Yet this punishment was given to Jesus only because the *Jews* demanded it. “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” they shouted to Pilate over and over again. According to Jewish law being hung from a tree meant that that person was under God’s curse. Through Moses God had declared: **Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.** (Deuteronomy 21:23)
- Scripture teaches this
 - in Galatians 3:13 where the apostle Paul writes: **Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”).** (基督既为我们受了咒诅, 就赎出我们脱离律法的咒诅; 因为经上记着: “凡挂在木头上都是被咒诅的。”))
 - and in Philippians 2:8 where Paul writes that Jesus **became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.**
 - and in several passages in the New Testament where the word ‘tree’ is used for cross, as in I Peter 2:24: **Jesus Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree.** (See also Acts 5:30, 10:39, 13:29.) These passages use the language of Deuteronomy 21:23 (‘tree’) for the cross to remind us that Jesus’ death was no ordinary death; it was a curse. **He** was a curse!

So it was no accident or coincidence that Jesus was killed by crucifixion. On the cross, Jewish Law and Roman Law came together, declaring the truth about Jesus: He was under God’s curse. To be cursed by God means that because of your sin you are *shut out from God’s presence and handed over to complete destruction*. **He had become a cursed human being, degraded by sin and made worthless.** **I am a worm and not a man,** Jesus said in Psalm 22:6.

- Why was this the truth about Jesus? Not because He had done anything wrong to make Him worthy of this, but only because He was carrying the sins of all His people on His shoulders. He became sin for us, and that is why He had to become a curse for us.

- Sinful human beings are naturally arrogant. We are so quick to declare our greatness and worth. While it is true that man has dignity and worth because he is created in the image of God, but sin makes us all unworthy of God and life; sin makes us worthy of destruction. The cross of Jesus proves this. Jesus stepped into the sinner's unworthiness and curse of destruction.
- Every sinner who believes in Jesus may know without a doubt: Jesus became a curse *for you*, and has removed the curse *from you*! God proved this by having His Son hanged from a tree. In the cross of Jesus God declares to every sinner who believes: *You are no longer cursed but blessed!*

2) Where Jesus was crucified

However, the glory of the cross shines so much brighter when we understand where Jesus hung from a tree for sinners. **He went out to the Place of the Skull.** *Went out* means that Jesus was led outside of God's holy city to be crucified. All 4 Gospels stress this point: He went out (John, Matthew), He was led away (Matthew, Luke), led out (Mark). The point is that Jesus had to go out of the gates of the holy city of Jerusalem, and suffer and die outside God's city, away from the holy temple. **Bearing His cross, He went out.**

- The book of Hebrews explains the importance of His going outside the city to be crucified: **For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the sanctuary 圣所[holy places] by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify (使圣化) the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate.** (Hebrews 13:11-12)
- This passage refers to the Day of Atonement 赎罪日 in Israel (see Leviticus 16) – two sin offerings were presented to God take away the sins of the people, a bull and a goat. These sacrifices *went in*. They went in through 4 gates – 1) into the city, 2) then into the temple courts where they were sacrificed at the altar, and 3) then the blood of the sacrifice (祭物) went in through the curtain of the temple into the Holy Place, and 4) then it went in through the heavy curtain to the Most Holy Place where God's glory was. These sacrifices went into the city and into the temple because they were holy to God!
- But the carcasses (尸体) of the bull and the goat were unclean. They had to be taken out of the temple courts and out of the city, brought to the dump, and burned there. The people who brought them out and burned them had to wash before they could back into the city because they were defiled (被玷污) by the unclean carcasses of the animals.
 - (Later this dump was called **Gehenna** which Jesus used as a description of hell because the fires never burned out there. In an infinitely greater way, hell is a place of eternal punishment where the fire of God's white-hot anger for sin never stops burning.)

Here is the shocking thing about the sacrifice of Jesus, the worthy **Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world** (John 1:29): even though all these lambs over all these years were being brought in, in, in to the holy place of God because they were holy to the LORD, this perfectly holy sacrifice named Jesus, the Sinless Lamb of God, was not allowed to be sacrificed in the city. He was not allowed to be brought into the temple courts, and His blood could not enter the sanctuary of God. **He went out.**

- He went outside the gate to the dump where the unclean carcasses were burned! He went to the *Gehenna*, only this time it wasn't just a picture of hell-fire. It was the real hell-fire. There God turned His face away from his Son completely. There God's anger for sinners fell on His Son in full measure, so that Jesus finally cried out in deep anguish on the cross: **My God! My God! Why have You forsaken Me!**(Mark 15:34)
- Even though Jesus was the holy sacrifice worthy of the temple, because He was the sin-bearer who became sin, carrying all the terrible sins of all his people upon His own body-and-soul, He was being declared an unclean

thing, unworthy of God's city, unfit for God's temple, and unacceptable in God's presence. He had to go out of the city as an outcast (被弃绝者), defiled and unholy. That is where He had to shed His blood and die.

- This is called **the Place of the Skull** (in Hebrew **Golgotha**) most likely because it was the regular place for crucifixions, littered with the skulls and bones of common criminals who were not given burial. The garbage dump for the unclean.

This helps us understand even more clearly the meaning of the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. Jesus was removed from God's city and temple. He was cut off from fellowship (团契) with God. He was sent away from the presence of God. He did this for sinners. We are the unworthy, unclean ones, separated from God and unfit for a relationship with Him. We have no right to talk to Him and to have fellowship with Him. But when Jesus was led away and went out of Jerusalem to be crucified '**outside the camp**' where the unclean carcasses of the sacrifices were burned, He did this for sinners! He took upon Himself the rejection we deserve.

How does this benefit us?

When we believe in Jesus Christ, then all that we are by nature and all that we deserve as sinners is taken over by Jesus as His very own, and taken away from us. And because God shut the gates of His temple and city on Jesus as our *substitute*, He opens the gates to us who trust in Jesus.

- Do you know what happened the very moment Jesus died *outside* the city and temple of God? The temple curtain was torn into two *inside* the city and temple of God. God was inviting sinners into His house to live with Him through Jesus. Through Jesus the barrier that separates God and sinners is taken down and God takes us in.
- Because Jesus became an unholy thing for us and unfit for fellowship with God, through Him we become holy and worthy of fellowship with God. He went out from God, so that we can go in to God! In fact, God calls us to Himself: **Therefore, brethren, by the blood of Jesus we have boldness to enter the Holiest (Place)...let us draw near (to God) with a true heart in full assurance of faith.** (see Hebrews 10:19-22) God has opened the door for us into His presence, His heaven, His kingdom and all His blessings. All the gates to God are open through Jesus and we have full access unto Him!
- Jesus' took our place outside the city, away from God, so that we can stand in His place in God's holy presence. Jesus is the reason we are gathered here this afternoon to pray and sing and worship God in His presence. Let us go in! Let us enter His presence. Let us pray. Let us sing. Let us listen as He talks to us. Let us hold His hand to walk with Him day by day! Are you faithfully, joyfully and thankfully using your rights to have fellowship with God which Jesus bought for you by setting aside his rights to fellowship?

As those who believe in Jesus who suffered **outside the gate**, we receive a second benefit. While the Father opens the door to us, the unbelieving world shuts its door on us. Just as the world drove Jesus out of the city, so the world will also reject us. This may not seem like a benefit, but the Bible says it is!

- We have the benefit of imitating Jesus as His followers. We have the benefit of living as the holy community of Jesus separated from the world. The book of Hebrews says: because Jesus suffered outside the camp...**let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach**(shame). (Hebrews 13:13).
- Yet we know that God will always take us in, even if the world rejects us, even if our closest friends or family members reject us because of our faith in Jesus. Scripture says: **Though my father or mother reject me, yet the Lord will take me in!** (Psalm 27:10). Because of Jesus who went out, the world will reject us, but God will always take us in. The world may shut its door, but the door to God is always and forever open.