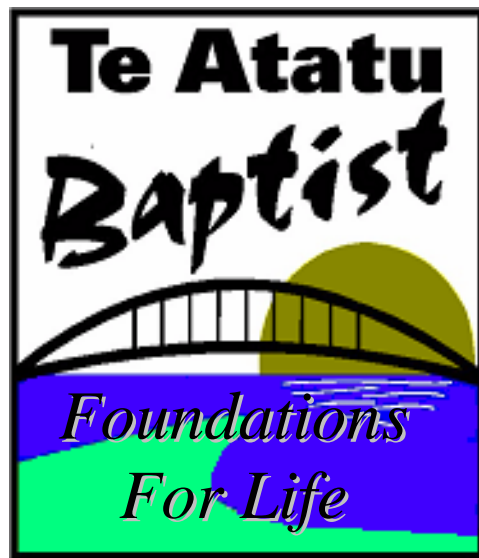


Slide # 1

# Crucified by Christians!

The deeper workings of the Cross

Part Two: *Driving the point home*



*Adapted from 'Crucified by Christians'*  
by Gene Edwards\*

\*This book should be in the hands of every believer who has known the exquisite agony that comes from being hurt by other Christians.

November 19<sup>th</sup> 2006

Roger Spackman

Te Atatu Baptist Church

Crucified by Christians! Part One.DOC

(Please make sure you read part One of this series, as it will give you a foundation upon which to build upon for this study.)

Slide # 2

# Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind!

Romans 12:2

Let's refresh ourselves about what we learnt from God's Holy Word last week.

We looked at the deeper working of the Cross in our lives – not the first step of the Cross – that is *for the forgiveness of Sins*,

...but the work of the Cross in our lives when it comes to *Sanctification* – being transformed into the image of Christ!

We looked briefly at the many Scriptures that encourage us towards self denial

- taking up our Cross daily,
- fulfilling the sufferings of Christ,
- a seed falling to the ground and dying,
- crucifying our old carnal nature,
- counting it all joy when we face trials of various kinds,

- turning our sorrow into joy, our mourning into dancing!
- We saw how Jesus learnt obedience *through the things He suffered!*

We looked into the depth of Scripture and discovered that it was God's purpose and love for Jesus, to face suffering and death – to face the Cross.

We discovered also, that it is God's will for each and everyone of us also, to face the exquisite pain of the cross and crucifixion – *what every that symbolizes for you*, in your specific situation.

We learnt how God refines our lives like a silversmith applying heat to the most tender-parts of our character, in order to burn away the dross and muck. (Malachi 3:3)

We were then able to see the beauty of our pain, as seen through the beautiful eyes of our loving heavenly Father!

How we can then echo the words of Joseph 50:20 when he said, 'What you meant for evil, God turned for good!'

When we are able to see the pain of our lives from God's perspective, we are able to view our destruction, our hurt, even the injustices done against us, as being part of God's beautiful plan to 'conform us into the image of Christ!'

You see, a crucifixion can be different things for each of us here this morning.

- Maybe it was indeed being horrifically mistreated by fellow Christians,
- Perhaps a church split or conflict,
- Maybe it was betrayal by your spouse or loved one, or even the realization that you no longer love the person you are married to!

- Perhaps your own children who have turned against you and rejected your love,
- Maybe a failed business endeavor, perhaps even bankruptcy,
  
- Have you experienced the horrible pain of losing a loved one, or of a chronic, even terminal illness in your own life,
- Miscarriage maybe, abortion, or even perhaps a mental or emotional illness.

Through all of these things, your choice, is to either become a *bitter* person, or a *better* person.

The only thing that will make the difference, is seeing these things from God's high and lofty perspective.

Identifying these things in your life as part of God's desire to crucify your old carnal nature, and bring you into resurrection victory!

It's time to let go of your pain – to let go of your anger and hurt towards those who caused your disillusionment.

It's time to embrace your crucifixion, and see it as coming from the hand of a loving God – not from the faces and voices in your mind and memory.

How you react to your crucifixion, will indeed determine your victory in life, or your defeat!

Remember this, *resurrection can only come after death.*

If you really want to experience the resurrection power of Jesus in this life time, you also must experience the exquisite pain of a crucifixion!

## Slide # 3

Luke 23:33-43

33 When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left.

34 Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." 39 One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!" 40 But the other criminal rebuked (silenced) him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? 41 We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." 42 Then he said, "Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom." 43 Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."

So - come with me now, to a high and barren hill.

See upon the brow of that hill three men.

They are all there being crucified.

There is no difference in the manner of their execution (all crucifixions are the same).

It is only their *reactions* which are different.

All three were crucified—brutally.

All three were horrifically crucified.

Each showed a different attitude toward crucifixion.

Each was different in the way he died.

Each man reacted differently to circumstances that were identical.

Each reacted differently to those who were crucifying them.

Note how much each man had to say about his crucifixion.

Two said much; one said nothing.

That fact really does tell you a great deal about each man's attitude toward the cross.

Let us draw closer and learn from each of these three men.

The first person we meet is a convicted thief.

We shall call his name Haroc.

Haroc stole for a living and, in so doing, stole one time too often.

Caught, tried, sentenced, the punishment decreed was death. Death in the extreme.

From Haroc's view, it was *not* his first time to be crucified.

From his view he had been crucified by other people throughout all his life.

The first time he was ever mistreated he reacted savagely.

He remonstrated that he had been terribly and unjustly treated.

After that day, when you met him, his main topic of conversation would be recounting how he had been mistreated by others.

At some point in his life it seemed to him that unjust crucifixion came into his life with increased frequency.

In the grip of his own attitude - Haroc became incapable of seeing anything as his own fault.

Everything negative which happened to him was both unfair and never his fault.

The first time he was caught stealing, his reaction was predictable.

He blamed others.

You might say Haroc was the author of what has become the prevailing view of most people who are crucified:

*Declare verbal war on those doing the crucifying, protest your innocence, scream the injustice, and point out the minute inconsistencies of the adversary.*

On the day Haroc was crucified he made quite a scene of it all.

As he blamed others, he made sure he took no responsibility.. .for anything.

His thoughts were focused only on the ones responsible for his plight.

Making that point his focus, Haroc missed out on healing, redemption and resurrection. (His was not a wise choice!)

Tragic, was it not, with recovery from crucifixion so near.

Healing was not only close, that healing had a name.

Healing's *name* is Jesus Christ.

While hanging there, Haroc blamed God for his crucifixion.

He also blamed men.

Haroc covered both possibilities! God and man.

You, too, were either crucified by men or by God.

These are your choices.

There are no others.

Choose to blame men and your state is hopeless.

Choose God and you have found the right person; nonetheless, if you blame Him, your state remains hopeless.

Follow either path and you join the ranks of the unhealable.

Haroc had another choice. *Not* "You, God are to blame; so are the men who have crucified me."

*But* "Lord, you did this for my good and the good of others; get on with it."

Haroc showed no redemptive attitude toward crucifixion.

Yet a redemptive attitude is the only *safe* attitude to have, when one is hanging on a cross.

Haroc had missed the true purpose of being crucified.

Odd, is it not, that if you miss the purpose of your crucifixion, you actually miss being crucified!

So it was with Haroc.

He wasted his crucifixion!

He simply received punishment for his deeds.

No man is truly crucified until he accepts that crucifixion as coming from the hand of God.

Otherwise, it amounts to no more than an ugly incident taking place between ugly people.

Listen - You are a follower of Jesus Christ, are you not?

Odd things happen to those who follow Him who is *The Crucified One*.

The very word *crucifixion* implies that you, His follower, are to receive from the hands of others that which is unfair, unjust, undeserved.

The word also implies that God is the author of that crucifixion, and hidden in its ordeal is a grand purpose that cannot be visibly seen.

Haroc missed that purpose.

There never came that pivotal moment when he yielded up to God the grizzly hour.

Consequently, Haroc's suffering was of no benefit to him or to anyone.

Haroc spewed bitterness.

He fought being crucified.

That, dear child of God, is a wasted crucifixion!

Utterly wasted!

I trust yours will not be.

Imagine for a moment what it would have been like if Haroc had been pulled down off his cross before dying.

Haroc, *saved from crucifixion*, now there is a thought indeed (and it certainly was Haroc's desire to escape the ordeal).

Is it not true that you, too, wish your crucifixion had never happened?

Did you not hope—desperately hope—you could be saved from it midway through its agonies?

So it is with all men.

After all, by its very nature, a cross *is* unbearable.

But back to the central question.

Would anything have changed in Haroc's life if he had escaped his crucifixion that day?

Would there have been gain in his heart and life?

Here is a better question yet: Does escaping a crucifixion ever change us for the better?

The answer must be... no!

What would Haroc's future have been had he slipped past death?

Imagine Haroc walking away from Golgotha!

Do you see his life change at all? No.

The next day Haroc would have been exactly the man he had previously been.

Saving him from crucifixion would not have outworked anything good in him at all!

So it is with all men.

Had you been *saved* from the crucifixion you have passed through, it would *not* have made you a better Christian!

Being saved from crucifixion at the hands of other Christians does not better any believer spiritually!

Do you wish to continue being the same person you were before you were crucified?

If so, you *miss* God's purpose.

A crucifixion, properly embraced, will ultimately make you far more than what you were.

Improperly embraced, it leaves you *less* than what you were.

It's your choice.

You will either be spiritually destroyed or you will grow in Christ beyond previous boundaries!

Your future holds only two alternatives.

You will be better off, or *worse* off. Better or bitter!

Tell me, up until now, have you gained ground or lost ground?

The answer should be so evident it requires no reflection... especially if you have gained ground, for the gain is overwhelming, and wonderful.

The other alternative?

Consider Haroc for the source of your answer.

Had Haroc been delivered from his ordeal, and had *you met him the next day, you would have found him more bitter, more victimized, more innocent* than before.

Be sure, Haroc would have gone out of his way to show you his mutilated hands.

Men come out of a crucifixion far better or far worse.

*Men meant it to me for evil.*

*God meant it to me for evil.*

OR...

*God meant it to me for good.*

The only possible way a crucifixion could affect Haroc was to change him for the worse.

Is this what you want to be like – this morning, and for the rest of your life?

Again, up until now has your crucifixion affected you for the better or worse?

Remember, a crucifixion alters your Christian life forever.

If you are not sure of your answer, it probably means you are worse off.

Why?

Because, when a crucifixion is received on its highest level, it is never seen as negative.

Contrast what happened in the life of Haroc as over against that of Jesus.

One of these two ends must be yours!

Which will it be—Haroc's crucifixion, or Jesus'?

Haroc died only a few inches from the very model *of how to be crucified*.

So do all men!

You see, Haroc could have even risen from the dead.

Where, and how did Haroc's go wrong?

He blamed.

He saw himself as a victim.

To know true crucifixion, these are two luxuries you cannot afford.

If you blame, do you know whom you are ultimately blaming?

Ultimately, you blame your Lord.

But, if you accept that gory day from Him, then glory awaits!

There is a fine line in a crucifixion: it is a line between disaster and waste, as against resurrection and glory.

*If you have been angry.*

*If you have blamed.*

*If you have seen yourself as 'the victim'.*

*If you have often recalled the events of your victimization.*

Then beware, bitterness is at the door.

Continue on this path and you lose all that God is seeking to accomplish in you.

Look up!

What happened to you was an act of sovereign mercy.

*But Jesus was God! lam at a great disadvantage!*

Yes, that is true.

But so was the *second* thief!

Let's now consider him.

We shall call his name Betard.

Retard was crucified at the same time, in the same way as Haroc.

Betard *started out* handling his crucifixion the way Haroc did.

So do most men!

On the way to being crucified, Betard had but one thought: "How can I get out of this?"

Having failed at escaping, he argued and blamed, kicked and screamed.

When the nails rammed their way through his flesh, Betard bellowed in protest.

There was no one within miles of him that didn't know Betard was being crucified.

Though caught in the act of his crime, Betard protected his innocence.

When placed in jail, he recounted his story of injustice to anyone who would listen.

His defense was logical—so much so that it was not only plausible but irresistible.

Does this sound familiar?

Betard followed a pattern similar to most believers today who are experiencing crucifixion.

(Typically, when a Christian is mistreated, he can create quite a scene. He attacks. He tells anyone willing to listen all about every detail of what was so horribly done to him.)

Betard was not handling his crucifixion very well, was he?

In fact, *not one bit better* than Haroc.

Betard began his ordeal by calling down curses on his enemies.

He cursed his companion, he railed at the watching crowds, cursed the guards.

He blamed every-one in sight.

Then he turned and ranted at God.

At least in doing that, he had found the proper person to blame!

Railing at his dying Companion he found his proper target.

A bitter old man was coming to his end, expiring in the womb of resentment.

Had Betard been taken down from his cross, would he have been a changed man?

Deliverance from a crucifixion is an escape from pain.

It is also an escape from change... *change which God desires*.

If Betard (and you) escaped crucifixion, in the long run would either of you be better off?

Consider this, if today you were to ask Betard that same question,

"Would you be better off had you escaped the cross,"

...there is no question but what Betard would tell you that escape from crucifixion would have been the worst thing that could have happened to him.

Today Betard is *glad* he was crucified.

May such a day come to you.

If you wish to receive counsel on escaping crucifixion *never ask Betard*.

He will encourage you to yield!

Betard knows the redemptive, transformational powers of shame and disgrace.

The best day that thief ever lived was the day he was heartlessly, cruelly, and publicly crucified!

The best day he *ever* lived.

Today, knowing what he knows, Betard would have embraced that cross in a manner that would establish a model for us all.

May the day come when men hear you say "Oh, for the good that came into my life as a result, I would change nothing."

I thank God that he allowed me to know such defamation."

Something monumental happened to Betard.

He changed his view of the events.

May that happen to you.

If you allow the ill treatment inflicted on you by your crucifixion to solidify into bitterness, you will be as the first thief.

But if something turns...

What happened that changed Betard?

He noticed Jesus.

He finally saw his Lord.

He watched God crucified.

He witnessed a crucifixion, and he saw a proper response to man's inhumanity to man.

The third victim, Jesus, had made peace with being crucified.

And never forget. He was being crucified by His brethren.

That sight changed the thief.

Be wise, copy him!

Consider Jesus.

As you are crucified, watch *Him* handle His crucifixion.

Your Lord has given you an example of the *high art of being crucified!*

As you consider that incredible scene, know that it is He, and He alone, who knew the cross better than all others, nonetheless chooses *who* will be crucified.

The Crucified One chooses *who* it will be that follows Him to Golgotha, there to be crucified even by brethren.

The Crucified One, having tasted the very ends of the ghastliness of the cross, hesitated not one bit - to choose you to be crucified.

If Christ had never been crucified, yet had selected you to be crucified, that would be a different matter.

But He *knew* what you would go through!

Betard noticed.

Betard beheld how God handled losing all His friends!

Betard watched Jesus' reactions toward everyone.

Betard watched God experience failure; he saw God in the act of losing everything.

That amazing sight changed Betard.

May it change you.

In that bloody moment Betard saw, and having seen, took action.

First he repented.

He took responsibility for his deeds.

None of us are wholly free of the need of doing that, especially if it is friends who set out to crucify us.

It is just not possible to be totally perfect in response to such betrayal.

Secondly, Betard *stopped* h\|s protest.

*He forever* shut his mouth.

He ended his negations, his protestations.

Betard stopped referring to being crucified.

Forever!

"Hush" was the exact word he used.

He called out to his fellow thief. "Silence!"

At that moment Betard won!

Perhaps it will be the same for you, when—concerning this matter—silence at last reigns in your inmost being.

That is the moment when *all* begins to change.

This is the point where a crucifixion begins to accomplish its purpose.

Betard won.

He won over his adversaries and his adversities.

He won over his anger.

He won over his memories!

He triumphed over crucifixion.

"Silence!" he cried. "These things are from the hand of God!"

There was the life changer.

There is nothing more wonderful than for a man to gain an instinct about how to be crucified.

"Now I see how I am supposed to walk in this hour."

Ah, *this* is a crucifixion, a real crucifixion.

A *Christian* crucifixion, designed for a Christian.

Here is where all of us learn to be Christians!

In these simple elements, presented to you by a thief, you find the proper way to hang on a cross!

The way of total healing from all the wounds and pains of the cross come pouring into your heart.

Two men show you how.

One is the God-man.

The other, a felon.

On that day of ultimate infamy, when Jesus Christ was illegally tried, unjustly sentenced, brutally murdered... many watched.

But only one... saw!

May you be the next who sees!

The enemies of Jesus watched in somber satisfaction;

His former friends watched in confusion and shame.

But of all those who watched Him, there was but one person, only one, who called Him *Lord*.

"Lord," cried the thief "Lord!"

In that moment an ignorant man saw sovereignty.

Betard was freed from all the damage of crucifixion!

He found expression of divine revelation in one word!

"Lord!"

When others are making you a villain, is it not true that everything in you wants to talk about it and, in so doing, justify yourself?

Jesus Christ did not justify; He did not defend.

He allowed the full brunt of that whole tragedy to overwhelm Him.

Christ saw *His* Lord, and the thief saw Christ!

"You are behind it all. Lord" was their common ground.

Once the thief saw he was no longer being punished, he was truly being crucified.

Actually, he was being *destroyed*.

That day, as he embraced crucifixion, the dark side of Betard's nature died.

Crucified for *his good*, and for the Lord's glory.

That gory scene on Golgotha suddenly became a very Christian event.

The cross had suddenly turned not only into redemption but also transformation!

All crucifixions are intended to turn into redemption and transformation.

Crucifixions are *not* for pain nor bitterness, they are for the highest of triumphs.

At that moment there was no thief; there were but two brothers dying together.

Betard had entered into the fellowship of the sufferings and crucifixion of his Lord.

Would you not also enter into His suffering?

Enter into His cross?

Forsake *your* crucifixion; become part of His!

May you have that privilege and joy.

Here is the joy of destruction, and of seeing destruction destroyed.

Unfairness turned to transformation.

"Crucified by men" changed into triumph by Christ.

It is in the joy of that moment, when the smoke and fire lift,  
you see Jesus!

All this, found in one contrite word, "Lord!"

Betard, in some flash of light sent to him by God, understood the true  
meaning of crucifixion.

He saw the drama going on behind the scenes, in the unseen.

Betard learned all this in the face of the *only* person who has ever  
truly been crucified.

Betard had touched resurrection.

Even ascension.

You are presently where that thief was that day.

You are in the hellish vortex of nightmarish destruction.

Your Lord has arranged *at least* two crucifixions.

The thief's... and yours!

Be as wise as that thief.

Never allow a crucifixion to be from men.

Allow it only to be from God.

*It is from you, my Lord! For my good! This thing is wholly between  
you and me. There are no others involved in this bloody hour. I do not  
like this; it is the most difficult thing ever to enter my life. But it is you.  
I now call you Lord, sovereign Lord. Others meant it to me for evil;*

*Lord, you meant it to me for good! I accept this crucifixion! From you!*

Take it at the highest.

Clasp the hand of God.

Receive this pain as glory.

Draw it into your very bosom.

Draw in the shame.

Embrace the pain.

Lift the cup high.

Lift it to heaven; lift it to Him.

Then drink the cup!

All of it.

Perhaps you, like so many others, including the thief, did not handle your crucifixion very well, not at the outset.

But it is never too late!

Today you can take that crucifixion you perhaps unjustly received... take it out of the accident of circumstance, out of the acts of men, out of the hands of Christians,

...and place it back into the hands of God.

May it become a crucifixion which came only from God.

Lord, my life ended with yours on Golgotha.  
My life began that day for the same reason.  
Nothing less could have saved me,  
nor worked so much good and so much life into  
me.

Let's pray together

