



What does the death penalty have to do with love? The crucifix was a brutal means of capital punishment in the ancient Roman empire. Death by crucifixion could take between 6 hours and 4 days resulting from excessive bleeding, dehydration or progressive suffocation. It was an extremely painful and shameful way to die, inflicted upon those considered repugnant. And yet today we hang pretty crosses from our ears and necks, tattoo them into our skin, hang them on our walls - bejeweled, ornamental, celebrated.

The cross, the shape of a gruesome death has been infused with something greater and more powerful and has captured the hope of billions over millennia.

The apostle Paul explains to Christians in ancient Colossae:

“Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ’s physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation.” Colossians 1:21-22

Though many have died by crucifixion, one person, Jesus Christ, transformed the painful, shameful cross into an act of supreme love. On the cross Jesus willingly took our punishment to bring us forgiveness and reconciliation with God.

The cross shows us our sin, our just punishment for ignoring and rebelling against God. And it shows us the depth and breadth of God’s love for his rebellious people. It is the interchange of death and life, horror and hope, guilt and forgiveness, punishment and purity. And so the brutal cruciform is also the shape of supreme love, worth remembering and celebrating.

What is your response to the gruesome gracious cross? Do you trust it as the place where God’s love has been poured out on you and your sins paid for and forgiven?

PRAYER

Dear God,
Help me comprehend and trust the paradox of the cross and what Jesus did for me when he died on it.
Amen