

What the Heavy Nails in Jesus' Cross Teach Us About the Father's Heart

Have you ever wondered what on earth could be as tough as nails, especially iron nails? For iron to melt, the temperature has to be at or above 2,750 degrees Fahrenheit. Around 87 A.D. the Roman fort in Perthshire (Inchtuthil) was abandoned and approximately 875,000 Roman nails (7 tons) were left behind. In 1961, these nails were discovered and were still intact. They were forged so well that even though they were rusty, bent and unusable—they were all still there. Iron proves to be extremely strong! It is unyielding and never forgiving.

In Roman times, nails were often made from iron. The specific nails used in crucifixions had an additional ridge on the side that would allow the nail to clamp down on muscle, tendons and bone to help assure that once a body was placed on the poles (cross) it would stay up there and not fall off. The additional ridge on the nail enabled the soldiers to help remove the nails to get the bodies down for burial.

The common Roman crucifixion would involve four nails. Two iron nails, roughly five inches long, would go into each wrist between the two wrist bones. And then two longer nails, 7 inches to 9 inches, would go through the person's heels and ankle bones. Commonly, one foot would be placed over the other foot, and the nails would be driven through the top portion of the foot near the ankle; two nails would go through both feet. This type of death was so painful that this is where we came up with the English word "excruciating," which described the Roman crucifixion process. Crucifixion was one of the worst ways to die, reserved for the worst types of people.

Crucifixions Were Deliberately Drawn out – A Statement Being Made by the Roman Government

The Romans didn't have due process of law or delayed punishment like we do in The United States. If someone gets the death penalty in America, there will be all kinds of delays by the time the death penalty is activated and the process of how that person is killed will be scrutinized by major political and special interest groups today. Now the comfort and privacy of the person going to die in the chamber will be respected and kept to a minimal out of respect for the one dying. Not so with the Romans. Roman punishments were public, long and drawn-out, and deliberately humiliating and excruciating. It was the Romans way of saying to everyone, "We are in power here. We are in control. Do what we say or you will get the same treatment."

Romans were good at putting fear into the hearts of the people by torturing people before putting them to death. Typically, criminals and treasonous people were made into a public spectacle for all to see. Those crucified were often runaway slaves/criminals or thieves, or treasonous. But of the two main crimes (runaways or treason), the punishment for treason or "being an enemy to Rome," was the absolute worst form of punishment that one could go through. They would torture and kill a thief, but they would *slowly* and brutally humiliate (above and beyond) torture and then kill a treasonous person by crucifixion. Keep in mind, the Romans didn't invent the crucifixion; the Romans perfected it. They created a way to maximize the pain, torture and prolonged suffering; it was intentional. Starting with the person's trial all the way through the end, the one being crucified would endure the most mental and physical torture beyond imagination. The beatings would weaken the body to an all-time low. In Jesus' case, the beating alone went way too far.

"Just as many were astonished at you, his visage was so marred, more than any man, and his form more than the sons of

men" (Isa. 52:14).

Then there was the seemingly endless road to the cross, being nailed to rough planks on raw flesh and being hung up in such a way that the criminal was completely defenseless. The scavenging birds would pick up the scent of blood, and they would fly above and descend to pick and feast on the head, arms and shoulders while roaming wild dogs and other animals would lick and nibble at the feet and legs. And it doesn't stop there; don't forget about the heat, sun, bugs and then the dread of the long evening and nightfall. The crucifixion could be a few hours or even as long as a few days before death would come. Remember that if the Romans crucified someone, they would also claim the body as their property, and (of course) they would want to keep the body up there as long as possible. This was all part of their master plan, a horrific fear tactic to keep Roman leaders in control. In some circumstances, the person on the cross would reach near-death levels rather quickly and the body would be claimed by a family member. In this case, the soldiers would pierce the side of the body and/or break their legs in order to have the body down by sundown.

What Exactly Is Stronger Than the Nails?

It's obvious; nobody would want to go through something like this, ever. But then Jesus endured the cross, knowing it would be one of the most prolonged tortures ever in Roman crucifixion history. He went through it without turning back. So why did He do it? Why on earth would Jesus willingly go through such a horrific experience?

I guess another question is this: What is stronger than the iron nails that held Him to the cross? The answer: Christ's love He had for you that day on the cross. Had a nail popped loose, an angel came anyway or a rebel group of followers came to "rescue" Him, He would have given all His strength and power to remain on that cross until it was finished.

“‘It is finished!’ And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit” (John 19:30).

Jesus’s love for you is unwavering, unyielding and undying. Jesus gave His life and went through such an unthinkable death because He was thinking about you.

“For Christ also has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but made alive by the Spirit” (1 Pet. 3:18).

It was His love for you that kept Him up there that day; it is His love for you that keeps His thoughts toward you today. Jesus’ love for you is stronger than the nails could hold.

“Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, yes, who is risen, who is also at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us” (Rom. 8:34). {eoa}

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