

# Crucifixion of Jesus - Part 1

by Art Katz

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*The sermon explores the significance of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and its importance in understanding the gospel and the nature of God.*

**Duration:** 53:19

**Scripture:** Habakkuk 2:4, Matthew 6:33, Romans 1:1-4, Romans 1:16-17

**Topics:** "Jesus Christ"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the importance of the Gospel in revealing the righteousness of God. The Gospel is described as the story of God sending His Son to die for the atonement of sin. The preacher also reflects on his own struggles with sleep deprivation and the challenges of preparing for the class. He mentions Martin Luther's controversial book, 'The Lies of the Jews,' and how it fueled anti-Semitic sentiments. The sermon concludes with a reference to the book of Romans, specifically chapter one, which emphasizes the role of Jesus Christ as the Son of God.

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## Transcript

So Lord, again, increase our discernment, open our understanding, enter us into the divine perspective, for we confess that we don't know as we ought to know. It is knowing and knowing, so we're asking, my God, for that knowledge into our deeps that affects and colors our whole soul, and the way in which we perceive everything and anything has got to be affected by this single greatest episode in the history of man, the crucifixion of your son, and the gospel, my God, of which it is its heart. So, again, be our teacher, Lord, you who bore the pains of it, and communicate to us, my God, what only you can in your own way.

We thank you again for the privilege, in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, you see the battery of books and things that I have here, dip in as the Lord guides.

I was impressed with this book by a British theologian, a lady, because she opens up with the question of the absurdity of the gospel, that God himself would suffer crucifixion, sending his son to suffer the most barbaric form of punishment which men could devise. So we need to understand that, because in the very beginning of the book of Romans, Paul says, I'm not ashamed of the gospel, implying that there could be grounds for being ashamed of it, or being embarrassed with what that message itself is. Because, especially to the generation then, who had opportunity to observe crucifixion, if not of Jesus, of any number of victims that were proliferated the highways, both in Rome and in any of their provinces, the unique Roman form of death for criminals and for slaves in rebellion.

Otherwise, capital punishment was beheading, more appropriate to the dignity of the criminal. But for the worst cases, crucifixion, and the death could linger on for three or four or more days. So you watch these people writhing in their remarkable agony, and only Satan could have conceived of so ingenious a method for bringing death to man.

So where does Paul talk about, in Philippians, that Jesus emptied himself and took upon himself the form of a man, even a slave, son of David, of Israel, and suffered death, even the death of the cross. The word even is even that death, that ultimately humiliating and excruciating death is what this son suffered, and that that's at the heart of the gospel. So we need to be sufficiently staggered, or our proclamation of the gospel will suffer loss.

We've got to be reminded of how foolish and offensive a message it is from the very first, and because that brings home the whole question of why would God allow it? Why did his son have to suffer it? What was the enormity called sin that was so vile that no form of expiation would satisfy the divine justice of God than this cruel form of death for his son? You got the idea? It's like asking a Jew about the Nazi Holocaust. What could we have done? For what could we have been guilty that could in any way justify such a judgment upon us that took six million of our lives, obliterated European Jewry, and counted in its victims a million and a half children and infants? What could we have done? What could we have been so guilty as to justify such an act, such a crucifixion of the nation Israel? So the same question could be raised for the crucifixion of Jesus. What was the enormity of the sin for which only his death in such a form could suffice? And if we don't ask that question and come to some sense of it, we do not know sin as we ought.

And if we do not know sin, we do not know righteousness. And if we do not know sin nor righteousness, we do not know God. Everything collapses at the very beginning, and we're condemned to some kind of shallow formula about are you saved, brother, from which we ourselves have not been saved sufficiently until we see the magnitude of what it is which God is saving us.

The wrath of God. So let me read a little bit of her description of this Roman form of execution as a good point of beginning, and while I'm reading you can look at this Holy Ghost masterpiece, I don't know of another painting like it, that depicts so realistically the suffering. Where you see pieces of wood, splinter, glass, whatever it was that was on the end of that cat and nintails, talk about cruelty.

Just to be flogged with this instrument, which was the preparation for the cross of all of its victims, and then have to carry the cross on the back that had been laid bare to the bone by that flagellation is already excruciating. We can almost say that the death of the cross was itself a relief from the pain that they were bearing from that very first. So you see it in this painting, things sticking out of the flesh, and the tincture, this depiction is not like the original, no reprint is, but in the original the skin almost has the color of a gangrenous hue.

The body is already decomposing, death has set in, and you look at the face, it's not like the pictures you see of Jesus on a cross looking like a ballet dancer. It's a man with his head down on his chest, and his mouth is parted, and his lips are white, and he's a suffering victim. And to add to that the verbal abuse, the taunts and mocks of his own people.

If anything would drive someone to a fury, it's to be falsely accused and provoked while you're suffering for the very benefit of those who are accusing you. Come down from the cross and we will believe you. They mocked him.

If you be the son of God, it's almost like Satan's taunt of Jesus after his baptism in the Jordan. If you be the son of God, come down. Of course he couldn't come down, not physically, but to come down would have been to nullify the whole purpose for being nailed.

So I'm not rehearsing this because I have a maudlin propensity for torture and love to dwell on the gory details, but we need to be exercised a little bit. We need to be jabbed in our deeps lest we trivialize this as in fact Catholicism has, and sentimentalize it, which is just as effective as negating its importance as the actual disregard that the Jewish community holds this crucifixion. It is disregarded as non-event, having no special significance.

It's just the unhappy end of a presumer suffering some kind of megalomania about himself as Messiah, who ran afoul of the authorities and suffered this consequence. Missing the whole remarkable intent of God to be revealed through this suffering. Because Paul says that this is the revelation of the righteousness of God.

How is that the statement of God's righteousness? If you don't know that, have not asked that question, have not probed it, then how shall you know righteousness at all? And how shall you know God as righteous? Unless the cross, the heart of the gospel, is the most profound revelation of the righteousness of God. Otherwise we just have to take it by faith that it says so. Here we see the righteousness, if we rightly interpret this suffering.

And she says, our problem is simply that we're too used to the Christian story. It's difficult for us to grasp the absurdity, indeed the sheer madness, of the gospel about a crucified Savior, which was proclaimed by the first Christians in a world where the cross was the most barbaric form of punishment which men could devise. So the first proclamation of the gospel is to those who know the form and have seen it, and are being told that this one whom they're celebrating is the very Son of God who has suffered this kind of death.

It's as if God has gone out of his way to find the most offensive foundation for faith and salvation that he could conceive. That no man could ever be saved by any extension of himself or by any operation of his own intelligence, because this beggars all rationality. This is totally off the wall.

And the only way to understand it and to receive it is by the gift of grace, of faith, from faith to faith, or you cannot. And in the wonderful book by another German theologian, Jürgen Moltmann, called *The Crucified God*, what a title. When I saw that book sticking out of that German bookcase all those years ago while this pastor's wife was sewing my torn pants, I'm sitting in my underwear hitting his study and looking at the bookcase, which I'll always do when I come to your house also, because you tell a person by their bookcase what the absence of the same.

And as I'm gazing over his bookcase, when my eye came on that title, *The Crucified God*, like somebody threw a switch, electric went through me, and I made a resolve in that moment, I am not leaving this house without that book. I don't care whose body I have to step over, I am not leaving without that book, and I didn't leave without that book. And subsequently I sent him another copy.

That book is such a statement, *The Crucified God*, that God would submit to this. And he quotes in the beginning, he said, true faith begins where the atheist thinks it should end. Because the atheist, if he has any consideration for God, will always conceive of some lofty imagining appropriate to the dignity of what deity should be.

But this has no dignity. This is infamous, this is contrary to anything that you think that God should experience himself, let alone allow his son to experience. So faith begins where the atheist thinks it should end.

It's got to be faith. It can't be rational agreement by any kind of logic. It's staggering.

But it's God's wisdom. The cross is God's wisdom. And we need to understand why, if we are to communicate it to others and receive deeply its significance ourselves.

She says, we may well share this reluctance to dwell on its horrors, but if we are to understand the significance of the gospel as it was proclaimed in the first century, it's essential that we grasp just what crucifixion entailed. And she goes on to explain, it was reserved for slaves, traitors, and was the most degrading form of death. The victim died a lingering and horribly painful death.

One could therefore inflict the maximum pain on one's enemies or on the criminals being punished. And partly was due to the fact that nailing a man up naked, whether dead or alive, was the greatest possible indignity to which one could subject him. This thing with the loincloth is an artistic device.

It's not a piece of historically accurate data. But Gothic artists, Renaissance artists have all followed the same tradition of always giving Jesus a loincloth. But what she's saying is that not only was the suffering physical, it was also moral.

That the victim who has his hands pinned, can't cover himself, is exposed to the gaze and view of anyone totally naked. For an Orthodox Jew, that would be humiliation of the ultimate kind. And so was it for Jesus also.

Why did he have to die that way? So that you 2,000 years later would not hide and cover yourself. That you would be as willing in some measure to be publicly exposed in your nakedness. Because if you will not, you'll not receive the benefit of God's grace and redemptive working that waits upon the acknowledgement of the truth of your condition.

But if you cover it and conceal it because of your pride that doesn't want to be exposed, you forfeit the benefit of God who wants to meet you in the truth of your condition, nakedly. Maybe we can define church as the willingness and the ability of God's people to be exposed and open and naked, not only before God, but even before each other. Because we know that we're not going to be the victim of those who will meanly use those opportunities to gossip or to take cheap pleasure or delight in our nakedness.

We can trust one another in covenant relationship, going back to last night, to be open, naked, and revealed so that we might receive prayer, correction, and all of the sanctifying redemptive work available only in an environment of that kind. Where do you find a church like that? When even the pastors themselves will not come out. They just come out to do their thing as the man of faith and power, and then when their thing is over, they go back again into hiding.

And who's more in need of redemption in truth than these ministers who are chronically lacking in relational ability and don't want to be seen in the truth of their condition? Got that? So part of our responsibility is to create an environment conducive to the sanctifying work of God that only takes place on the ground of truth. I can't help talk about nakedness without thinking about Noah and his drunken condition, and the great episode in Genesis 9 where Ham, who saw him exposed, and there's even a hint that he did more than see him exposed, but took advantage of his nakedness, whatever that means. And

some writers even suggest some sneaky kind of sexual thing of a perverse kind, by which Ham advantaged himself on a defenseless naked father now drunk, and then went out to tell his brothers.

But how did he tell them? Hey, you don't want to know? Because there's something in a young son that likes to be exalted at the cost of an older father. Have you ever noticed that? But Sham, when he heard it, would not be seduced into joining that kind of disrespect, but walked backward with a cloak in order to cover his father's nakedness, and to keep his own eyes from in any way beholding it. And is therefore eternally blessed that Noah says, blessed be the God of Sham.

Because Sham could not have done this of his own initiative. It's not a normal human response. The normal human response is to relish a father who's naked and take advantage of it and say, well he's had his time, now I'm taking over.

He has shown his disqualification, it's time for me now to rise and to graduate. But Sham did not succumb to that temptation, but covered his father and would not look upon his nakedness. So what does that mean for us? On one side of my mouth I'm saying the church ought to be a place where we can afford to be open, transparent, and real.

And on the next side of my mouth I'm saying we ought to cover one another. You know, that's a paradox. But in the paradoxes is the glory of the faith.

Just to get at the heart of this, crucifixion combined the death penalty with excruciating torture and with total humiliation. That needs to be factored in. Not only the physical suffering, the moral suffering of total humiliation of the nakedness of an orthodox Jew who is also very God before the gaze of his people and contempt because he's dying as a criminal between criminals nakedly.

And that one form of execution reserved for the vilest of the vile. Got that idea? He doesn't die with dignity. He dies not only in excruciating torture, but in remarkable humiliation, total humiliation, and that the flogging that preceded his death sapped the victim's strength and shortened the time of torture, which could sometimes last for days.

That's why in the end they often broke the legs of the victims so they could stop, they would stop stretching themselves and then they would asphyxiate as the body fluids drowned them. Crucifixion was thus an utterly gruesome business, a cruel and sadistic form of execution. It is hardly surprising that the Jewish historian Josephus described it as the most wretched of deaths.

In the Roman Empire it was used primarily to punish slaves. The threat was used to keep slaves subservient. No wonder then that Paul recognized that his proclamation of Christ on the cross was sheer folly.

And why does he begin in Rome, in the letter to Rome, which by the way is not only Paul's most extensive and systematic statement, but his most eloquent. The language of the book of Romans is superb and presumes a pretty sophisticated audience. You just read the very introduction, which we'll do shortly, Paul's salutation at the beginning, evidently indicates that the readers are at a level of erudition and sophistication probably more than any other of the churches of the ancient world.

And to this church he writes this book, the most systematic survey of his apostolic understanding of the faith. And at the very beginning, he says, I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ. To people who, in Rome, the capital of the great empire, would likely then be ashamed.

So the apostle has to disarm any disposition they would have to be embarrassed at their own message by saying that as the chief of apostles, I'm not ashamed. Why? Because this horrible thing is also the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes. And if you knew the magnitude of sin in which every human soul abides and the wrath of God that rests upon every human soul in sin, the wages of which is death and eternal separation from God and an anguish of soul eternally that cannot be described, then whatever the subject matter, I'm not ashamed of it because I understand that for which it saves us.

You got the idea? If you don't understand the magnitude of sin and the wrath of God upon sin, who's angry with the sinner every day, then you will be ashamed. You will be offended. You've got to see the suffering in the context of what it has come to expiate.

And that's what we have not seen. And that's why we're reviewing this because the whole thrust of this school from its beginning was back to foundations, not just principles of faith, but the foundation of foundations, the crucified Christ, the issue of sin, judgment, atonement, without which you can't even begin to talk about sanctification or church over the last days, any of those things until you've come to grips with the foundation of foundations, which has this at its beginning in the wisdom of God. But the horror of it needs to strike also.

So Paul recognized that the proclamation was folly. The idea of a dying God was not without precedent in the ancient world, but a gospel about a crucified Lord was something quite different. The cross was a symbol of weakness, of total impotence.

The dying Jesus was taunted because he could not save himself and neither so it seemed could his God. The cross signified total humiliation and degradation. So this is the scandal of the message of the cross.

And Jesus says to his followers, take up the cross and follow me. The scandal of the cross was thus not simply that Jesus had been put to death as a criminal, but that the particular death he had suffered was the most barbaric that could be devised. Moreover, this barbaric death had involved the display of his naked body in public, the final utter degradation.

Christian artists, not unnaturally, have shrunk from this aspect of Christ's suffering and have no inhibition in portraying the blood caused by the crown of thorns and the spear thrust, but they have shrunk from portraying the nakedness of Christ and the modest loincloth which they add to the body conceals the shame that was an integral part of crucifixion. So of what shall we be too proud if God himself suffered this? And did he not suffer it to meet the issue of our pride, that we would not have a ground to stand on by which we keep ourselves from public exposure and the kinds of things that would be humiliation for us? If he will suffer that humiliation, to what degree then we who follow him should also be willing? Got the idea? And the church is phony baloney. It's an institution.

It's a play thing to the degree that we will not follow him in that humiliation and keep ourselves guarded from every angle to protect ourselves from any loss of our own dignity. Here we have to sweat blood and wring ourselves out to persuade believers to pray when God has touched something of conviction and they sit like lumps in their seats and will not open their mouths, will not break, will not pray. Their dignity will not allow it.

And they're making already a private arrangement with God. I'll see you about this later and we'll talk about it in the privacy of my bedroom. And there I will confess what you're wanting me now to confess publicly.

And that private confession, which I will do at my leisure and invoke you at my will for my convenience is one to which you will give yourself. How disrespectful to God and how much does it depreciate God as God that we can make a private transaction appropriate to our dignity and will not humble ourselves and cry out and pray in the moment in which he's present and asks for our response. Got the idea? We're proud and unwilling and therefore the church suffers and is unreal and unable to communicate to a dying world those redemptive things that would have been known to us and communicated by us had we opened ourselves up, opened ourselves to the work of God in the kind of thing that threatens our dignity.

We're unwilling to be humbled. Got the idea? I couldn't see that. There must be a reason why every single morning I'm up around four.

Lord, couldn't you make it six? I would still have plenty of time for devotional seeking and preparation and then come to the class. Why in this season, especially when a man needs his rest, am I most deprived so that by the time the class starts at 10, I'm then really beginning to feel the effect of the loss of sleep and lay out all these books not knowing how to begin but to begin in total weakness not knowing, which is a humiliation. Why? Because how dare we broach this subject except in the same character and spirit in which the subject itself takes place.

This is minor. This is nothing to be a little hungover for want of rest but is not an accident. Got the idea, you guys? And I believe that the truest and deepest last days ministries must come out of that impotence and out of that weakness and not out of some flamboyant, heady ability of our own which contradicts the very spirit and the ethos of the faith as it was given at the first by a suffering and humiliated Savior.

This is full of implications for us now and especially in the last days. But are you willing to be humiliated? What happens if you fog up and you can't think of the next sentence and how to proceed and your long painful silences and all of that stuff? Well, that's a minor note next to what he suffered. So his suffering has that implication and when he says, if any man would follow me, take up his cross, that's what he's talking about.

But we are a cross-neglecting and a cross-rejecting church and it shows pitifully. The church has got to come to the Jew in the character and spirit of its own Messiah. But how has the church come in the rare instances in which it has come, if it has come at all? Superior.

If you see Gothic churches in Europe, the portal of those cathedrals show a fallen Jerusalem with a blindfold on and a broken scepter and humbled, humiliated and the other side is the victorious triumphant church. Triumphalism has been the note of the church historically toward the Jew. You really miss it, but now we take over.

So we're not coming at all in the spirit of their own God. And little wonder that they have rejected what little message we've had to offer. There have been forced debates throughout the Middle Ages where leading rabbis were required to debate erudite priests over the issue of Messianic scripture and Jews were required to attend.

And if they fell asleep, they were wrapped on their heads. There were people who walked around with sticks. If a Jew faint sleep or fell asleep, they wrapped them because they wanted to educate these Jews about the truth.

What made Luther anti-Semitic? The failure of Jews to see in the process of Reformation their Messianic faith. He could understand that they could reject Catholicism, but they should reject Reformation Protestantism, which for the Jew was no more impressive than Catholicism. And he was so angered by that failure and then his debate with rabbis and the way in which they misconstrued the Messianic prophecies and would not see the evident truth of them that he lashed out with his book called *The Lies of the Jews*, which served four centuries later to equip the Nazi movement to do what Luther commended.

Burn their synagogues, destroy their Talmud, rob, break, loot, destroy, expel, because he saw them as a threat to the Reformation itself. So we have not come to them as we ought. But how do we come to them as we ought? How do we come in to this reality, this mode, this ethos, E-T-H-O-S? Because is there anything more offensive than false humility? Better that we would not make an attempt at it, than we should play at it and miss it, as you must unless your humility is authentic.

How do you obtain that? In the school of humiliation, in the church, in life, in the working of God, in being found out, in the issues of your own life and family that you do not hide and conceal and depict yourself as the man of faith and power, but the flesh and blood as of all of God's saints. So one thing about humility, it cannot be affected. You cannot put it on.

You can only have it in the same, in the measure of your union with the God who himself is humble by nature, because you have joined him in the fellowship of his sufferings and in his humiliation. You're the continuation, so to speak, of what he began in his own suffering and death. This natural man does not want to give up the ghost and doesn't want to suffer a crucifixion, death, and burial.

He doesn't mind getting baptized so long as it's only getting wet, but he has no intention of remaining buried. He wants to continue and assert himself in the natural life, which now will improve by virtue of being a Christian rather than be extinguished. If you're earnest in your walk, you don't have to look far for the cross.

It will be there. You don't have to ask, what does it mean? You'll know it. If you're earnest in your walk.

If you're not experiencing a suffering because of your identification with Christ, if you're not brought into places of confrontation and dealing, you're shrinking from the cross. You have seen to the protection of your own life in which the issues are avoided. But if you're earnest, necessarily you will and must come to the cross as experience.

You don't have to look far to find it. You know, just as the sacrament of the Lord's table has suffered great loss, the sacrament of baptism has equally suffered loss. And where is the apostolic exposition of the meaning of water baptism? In the book of Romans itself.

The sixth chapter, as Paul goes on, and I don't know that we're going to go through every chapter and come to that, but just now to say that there's a way that God has provided that we might be joined with him in his crucifixion, death and burial, that we might be joined with him also unto a resurrection to newness of life. God has provided a sacrament, a means, a mode by which we can obtain the benefit of his death because we're not to be impaled afresh ourselves. There's one death.

It's the great epical, E-P-O-C-H-A-L, event in all history, the crucifixion of God himself. But we can enter into that reality, receive the death of it by the means of baptism. So there's something available to us.

God's not asking us to impale ourselves, but he is giving us invitation to identify and join him in his very death. But if we negate that and make that baptism only a religious requirement for getting wet, then we're as much alive after we come out of the water as before we went in. So when I have occasion, especially to baptize younger people, I mock and taunt them and tell them that they're too young to die.

Why are you doing this? You're foolish. You have a whole life ahead of you. You've not even yet begun to live it, to test your talents and your abilities and find your way and fortune.

Why are you wanting to bring now that life into death? And if they can pass through the test of my mocking and taunting and still require it, then when I put them in the water, I put them into death and burial and keep them down. When they come up, they will come up by faith unto the news of life and resurrection. That's why we see so little resurrection reality, because we've seen so little death reality.

And as John mentioned, it's a daily reenactment. There's a daily dying and a daily rising if we're walking in earnestness with the Lord. So none of that would have any meaning if this had no meaning.

It only has meaning to the degree that it meant for him a death of his natural man, of which he was the epitome of all that could be hoped for in humanity. He was very man and very God. He was a superb piece of humanity.

What a pity that he had to die. He could have gone on. People were ready to make him king then, but he wouldn't receive it.

He knew he had to pass through death. He's the resurrection and the life. If they mourned and wept outside of the tomb of Lazarus because he was too young to die, what would they think of the death of Jesus at only the age of 33? Why do I regret the passing of Spurgeon at the age of 57? Or Oswald Chambers at the age of 38? Or for that matter, George Gershwin? Or any of my culture heroes whom I would have loved to have had a longer life.

Why does God take them early? I remember praying for a woman in England. She said, I've had a headache, God, for over 30 years. Please pray for me.

I said, what happened 30 years ago? My father died. I said, oh yeah? And she said, I have never forgiven God that he took him prematurely. Who are we to say what is premature from our earthly vantage point when God is the giver and taker of life? I said, you need to ask God's forgiveness for your arrogant attitude toward him that you have not forgiven him as if he requires your forgiveness for something he in his own sovereignty and wisdom required.

She never thought that. No one had ever told her like that. She's been prayed for a thousand times and she still retained her headache.

She prayed asking God for forgiveness for her proud assumption that God could be wrong because she wanted her father so much to live a longer life. He was evidently a dear man. And when she prayed that, I prayed for her, boom, that headache lifted as if it had never existed and she'll not experience it again.

So what am I saying by all that? The sovereignty of God, the issues of death, and our own willingness to submit to it. So you take inventory. What has your water baptism meant for you? What did you intend that it should mean? And what evidence have you seen consistently of the newness of life and to which you should have been brought by going down into death? And it was not your hang-ups.

I never tire of telling people a baptism is not to crucify your hang-ups. It's to crucify your virtues. It's not to crucify you at your worst aspect, but your best, because even your best is not best enough, not good enough.

It's still man, it's still human, all too human. It's still shot through with sin and ego, vanity and pride. It can never serve God in a priestly way.

There'll always be a self-serving aspect, so long as that root remains, to which only one axe can be laid that can kill it. It's this cross. And evidently we've not understood that, and therefore we've not received its benefit.

Pity. The issue really begins in the garden, where Jesus sweated clots of blood. I'm very fond of saying, and I've said already in these days, the first blood was extruded before it was extricated.

But it was the same blood shed later by the infliction of men. But its first shedding was extruded by the agony of Jesus in the garden, wrestling out the commitment to the Father unto death. So what began in the garden in the fall of Adam is rectified by the second Adam, in faithful obedience to the Father, in suffering for the first Adam and all the sons of Adam, that we might have a newness of life in him.

But it required that agonizing review of what this cross would mean, and the voluntary willingness to go upon it. Because he said, don't you know that I could have called for legions of soldiers? I didn't have to suffer this. But my kingdom is not of this world.

Okay. So let's go into the book of Romans now. We're not doing a detailed study.

I'm not even able to lead in it. But at your own leisure, we're not going to begin with chapter one, the salutation, Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures, the gospel concerning his son, which was descended from David according to the flesh, and declared to be the son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness, by resurrection from the dead, even Jesus Christ, our Lord. What a mouthful.

What an opening statement. I wonder if it stupefied the Gentile readers to receive an epistle like that with such a salutation and a greeting. If that's the way he began, what can be expected as he goes on in the depth and magnitude of his thought? But this greeting alone deserves exacting examination, even to the acknowledgement of itself as a slave, for the purpose of being set apart for the gospel of God.

So this great apostle saw the issue of the gospel as the principal reason for his being, and that he would be the apostle to the Gentiles to communicate this message, and that it had to do with his son who was descended from David. You would think that Paul would have been more politic than that and avoid anything in reference to what is Jewish in writing to a Gentile church in Rome, who are already smarting from the contempt of the synagogue for themselves as Gentile believers who profess to claim to have received Israel's Messiah. The details are enormous.

If you're to appreciate this epistle, that the church was already in tension and conflict with Jews who still retained their synagogue Judaism and treated the church with contempt and disdain as a bunch of Gentile dum-dums who didn't understand Hebrew and misconstrued the scriptures and read it to their advantage to celebrate a criminal and make him the Messiah and even God. Can you understand that? So already they're smarting, because Jews are to be found in the capital of the greatest empire, because their

commerce, business, trade, culture is the kind of thing in which we Jews flourish. So when he says at the very beginning that this son of God is also the son of David, he's like opening a sore wound and allowing even a wave of resentment to come from his readers.

But that doesn't even stop him in the same chapter a few verses later to say that this gospel is not in the power of God unto salvation, but it's to the Jew first and also to the Greek. So here we have a beautiful picture of what an apostle is, who does not withhold the whole counsel of God even though it will not fall well on the ears of his auditors. He's not politic, he's not playing the game, he's putting out the truth.

They need to hear these things, because as we'll go on into Romans especially 9 through 11, Paul really lays it on the line and says, except that they receive mercy through your mercy, they will perish. But if God did not hesitate to break them off from their tree that you might be grafted in, is he not able to graft them in again? And if you do not hold fast in faith, he'll break you off. So Paul is already from the very first chapter establishing themes that the Roman church, which is to say the church in the world to this very day, needs profoundly to consider, but you need to appreciate what it means to be apostolic.

It's not to withhold the truth because it may occasion misunderstanding or resentment. It's not to skirt around it and wait for a more opportune moment. Right from the beginning, Paul begins to lay it out.

This son of God is also the son of David in the flesh. He's Jewish. You need to be reminded because even today there are Christians for whom that has never struck home.

They can't conceive that Jesus was a Jew and of necessity had to be to live under the law, fulfill the requirements of the law, to be a covenant faithful son and fulfill its requirements even in his death. So this is the obligation of the apostle to set forth this remarkable statement and doctrine of a gospel concerning his son who is descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection of the dead, Jesus Christ. So you dwell on that, but we want to go directly to 16 and 17 that sets the whole theme of the book of Romans about the gospel as the power of God unto salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek, for in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith or by faith to faith as it is written, the one who is righteous will live by faith.

What do you make of that? It raises the question that we need to consider and have been considering in the first week of the school. How is the righteousness of God revealed? By faith in the gospel for in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith. Anybody have a glimmer? If the righteousness of God is not revealed through the gospel, how then will it be revealed? And how is the gospel the most acute and profound statement of that righteousness? The gospel is the story and the account of the sending of God's son to die and that through his death and the shedding of blood in that death, an efficacy is released for the atonement of sin.

An atonement is obtained, an atonement with God because his ear is not heavy that it cannot hear nor his arm weak that it cannot save, but your sins have separated you from God. The gospel is God's provision to end that separation and effect a reconciliation of lost mankind with God through the expiation or the shedding of blood performed by his son as perfect man and God because no lesser sacrifice would have sufficed for which all previous sacrifice was an anticipation but could not be the once and for all sacrifice performed by very God himself that the God of righteousness who is rightly angry at sin because he's holy himself had to pay the price necessary that justice required to expiate it or else he would not have been a righteous God. You know how Jews talk today? We don't need blood.

We ask God forgiveness, we get it. You ask and you get. This blood business is unnecessary out of the construction of their own minds presuming upon God that merely to ask for forgiveness is to obtain it without anything needful to expiate it.

They can say that because they have no real consciousness of the exceeding sinfulness of sin that requires more than little glib God forgive me and then you go on with your business. Sin is of such a thing and that's why we're going into this. We need to understand sin.

Why is God angry with the sinner every day? Why is the wrath of God justified? Why is the righteous God offended? What is sin? That this was required to expiate it and not just forgive me and then go on. Got the idea? We have no message for the Jew until we ourselves have understood and received that seeing the magnitude of our own sin. Maybe that's why David had to commit both adultery and murder.

That if the sweet singer of Israel and the king of Israel, the author of Psalms could fall into so hideous a condition, which of us is except and not capable of that very conduct. Why are not our sins like his ever before us? Do we have to commit it to prove that we share the same nature with David? That if a David could fall, we also not only can but have? This is what is in my craw. This is the thing that's in a man that needs to be worked out and expressed and understood and received.

Or else how shall we praise God? What kind of worship are we capable if we have not deeply received this benevolence? If we're only shallowly saved, we'll only shallowly praise, we'll only shallowly worship. And that in fact is the truth of our present condition. And we'll only shallowly witness it's righteous of God to give himself for the sins of the world because no other provision would have been sufficient.

That's righteous of God to do. And how was it done? Through suffering, through sacrifice. That's righteous.

So we're wanting a definition of righteousness. Any aspect of holding this to the light reveals it. Jesus revealed righteousness in the bearing of the cross voluntarily.

That's the righteousness of God. Or else we're stuck with abstract definitions that do not suffice. This is the depiction of righteousness.

This saves us from abstract mental contemplations. This is righteousness. What was done on that cross is righteousness.

It's the righteousness of God that will not let sin pass without an appropriate recompense. Or else how would he be righteous if he looks the other way? As if sin is not a factor and he can take it or leave it and humors you and so that you can go on in it again if you choose. He's got to express his righteous indignation at what sin is because sin, as we will read in the last analysis, is a direct affront to God, is a willful conduct on the part of man against God in attitude and in conduct.

It's full of disrespect and contempt. God says thou shalt not and nevertheless we do. How can God ignore that and still retain his own godliness and be an object for the worship and the consideration of mankind to save it from itself?

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/art-katz/crucifixion-of-jesus-part-1/>

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