

Sin and Atonement

by Art Katz

The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding God's wrath and the severity of sin, and how Jesus' death on the cross is God's provision for atonement.

Duration: 51:29

Scripture: Exodus 12:3, John 3:16, Romans 1:20, Romans 2:1

Topics: "Atonement"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of the church understanding the reality of sin, wrath, judgment, and atonement. He questions what message the church is communicating to sinners if it has lost this understanding. The speaker highlights God's provision against man's self-rationalization and self-justification, and the need for the church to be conscious of it. He emphasizes the significance of Jesus' crucifixion as a confrontation and revelation of sin, and criticizes the Jewish nation for missing its significance.

Transcript

If you read Ben Israel, it describes how a German art teacher picked me up off the side of the road, and in my time with him, he recommended that I go out of my way to see this painting. And I was transfixed. It's about eight or nine feet high.

I'd seen depictions of Jesus before, but never as shocking as this. So, this shows the grotesqueness of the cross, and when you stare at it, you're looking at a man or an animal twisted grotesquely. We don't have the full length of this.

The feet are stretched out and misshapen. The mouth is open, and it's pitiful. You see the pieces of wood metal from the flagellation actually in the skin, which is becoming already gangrenous.

It's a real sense of the horror of the death of Jesus. The other side shows the resurrection, which will hang at another time, and every place where the body is perforated, in the resurrection, beams of glory shine through. So you walk around the painting, you're confronted with the death, you walk around on the back, you see the resurrection.

It's a remarkable, as I say, holy ghost masterpiece of realism. The only thing that's in question is this little loincloth, whether indeed the victims were allowed the dignity of having their private parts covered. My

own suspicion is that they died nakedly, and that part of the suffering was the humiliation, particularly as Jews, to be exposed like that to the open gaze of anyone.

So, that's an appropriate backdrop for our considerations today, and however long the Lord will keep us on the subject of sin and atonement. So, Lord, again, we're privileged to have the leisure of such contemplation, and we invite you, my God, to instruct us. It's almost presumptuous for any man to think that he can make any presentation of the issue of sin and salvation, except you who became sin and obtained salvation, and have the wounds to prove it.

So, Lord, so much as you're incarnate in me and in us, let that mystery of incarnation find expression through this clay, this dust, in which you are again willing to be humbled and limited, contained, and give expression, my God, to these very great themes of the New Testament faith, lost even to the church, let alone to the unbelieving world. We thank you for this privileged time and invite you again to be totally Lord of it. In Jesus' name, amen.

So, I'll begin by, I'm spread out here this morning with all kinds of books and things to cite, if the Lord is pleased. So, here's an attempt by John Murray, the same author of the commentary on Romans, on a chapter in a little book entitled Justification, in which he attempts to define sin as that the essence of sin is to be against God. The person who is against God cannot be right with God, for if we are against God, then God is against us.

It could not be otherwise. God cannot be indifferent to or complacent towards that which is the contradiction of himself. His very perfection requires the recoil of righteous indignation and that is God's wrath.

How's my voice coming over? I've got my old hearing aids. I'm going to change it. I'm not happy, but can you hear okay? No problem? So, wrath is a dirty word.

It's an ugly word, wrath. It exceeds human anger and indignation. It's divine and that God is capable of it is a statement about God himself.

How can a benevolent God, who is synonymous with love, righteousness, mercy, patience, kindness, all of the attributes that we so admire and covet, also be capable of wrath? Is it unbecoming for him to have this attribute also? Or would God be God without it? And what is it that justifies that holy indignation of wrath expressed as judgment in hell eternally? What could take place in the earth and with men that is that vile, that abhorrent, that painful in God's own sight and consideration that it justifies his wrath and the penalty of his wrath? These are the great questions and it compels us to see as God sees. We ourselves would not be that offended by sin. We would not think of Zacharias.

Why does he? Because sin is against God and it's a willful against. It's not an inadvertent or accidental. It's a calculated, willful opposition to God in the form of apostasy, rebellion, iniquity, choosing those things that are contrary to him that justifies his wrath.

And there's nothing that more offends the world than to be told that. That God is angry with the sinner every day. That he who hath the son hath life and he who hath not the son hath not life and the wrath of God abides upon him.

It's as if God is saying, what my son has performed at so excruciating a cost is my great gift to mankind in their sin and to reject that is to deserve the wrath which abides upon you. The fact that you're not

conscious of it or it's not part of your subjective sense of yourself does not lessen its truth. In fact, the whole issue of sin, judgment, hell, atonement rests upon what God tells us about it and not what is revealed to us by our subjective understanding.

In fact, it throws us into an immediate tizzy, a confrontation between to what shall we defer our own natural human and rational sense of things and observation or what God says is the truth of the matter. The issue of sin and the issue of atonement is the issue of God. It's the issue of scripture.

It's the issue of the word of God. So if we don't have the word of God as a foundational criterion and we just go by our own assessments, sin is a very light thing if it constitutes anything at all. In fact, the world is remarkably devoid of sin consciousness and my Jewish people are foremost in the absence of sin consciousness.

Even though, even among the Orthodox there might be some reiteration of the use of the word in the Yom Kippur season the word sin has not penetrated the depths of real consciousness. So I'm remembering that in one of my Brooklyn jaunts I went into a local synagogue and they invited me to come back for the teaching that precedes Yom Kippur, the day of atonement, that was going to be given by a chassid, a pious man, and when he finished it was so trivial I said you make it sound like some boy scout outing. You make it sound like some petty offense.

I'm not at all impressed with your presentation that there's any need for a day of atonement because you make the issue of sin so trivial. Like for example, one of the rabbinical explanations for a terrorist attack years ago in Israel's history where they came ashore in rubber dinghies, commandeered a bus, went into a rural Israeli settlement and shot up the nursery school. There were about 20 children killed and teachers and the explanation of the rabbis, it was a judgment because the mezuzah, that little thing that is nailed on the entry in the doorway was not at its proper angle.

All of that betrays a failure to understand sin as God sees it and to depict it as men would assess it, which is always something lighter and less than God as God would have us to see it. Man will always justify himself when he is his own judge and makes his own assessment of his own condition. So what saves man from this kind of subjectivity that is flattering and will be contradicted in the day of God's wrath, that will be contradicted in the day in which they stand before the judge and suffers the penalty.

There is a day of reckoning, men will stand before the judge and who is the judge? When Paul was at Athens he said, God has appointed a day in which he will judge all men by that man whom he has raised from the dead. So when they see the judge they are going to see a man with wounds and scars. So if they got away with pretense, self-justification, how many of you know that that is a human propensity? Now we can fornicate and call it love, call it romance, call it a fleeting moment that may not come again, that God knows we deserve because we have worked so hard, because we have been snubbed, because we have been offended.

It is even a recompense for very God himself. Sinful man rationalizes justifies and dismisses the case against himself when he is his own judge. But when he stands before the judge who has a complete book upon him, not only his conduct but his secret art and there you have to face the penalty, what will be your defense then? My wife says, I have never seen you afraid.

I am so gutsy. I go where angels fear to tread. The only thing she said that I have ever seen you frightened is when the red light of a police car comes up in your rear view mirror and you are required to pull to the

side of the road.

That is the only time I have seen you afraid. What am I afraid of? That I am going to have to pay a penalty of 50, 75 bucks, is that it? No. Of course it hurts.

What I am afraid of is something instinctive about being caught in the act, being confronted with my misdeed on the spot in a way that is not to be explained away and there it is, the red light is blinking on and off and you have had it, you are guilty and you know it. That terrifies me. Not because of the financial penalty but the idea of being guilty and caught without excuse.

You could believe that we are being opposed today. I am hearing from others that they also had a 6 a.m. visitation of the kind that I described. Is that coincidence or is there a kind of a concerted attack against members of this body when the enemy knows, he is sensing what is in store for today and if he can in any way distract us or counteract against it, it would be a significant victory for darkness and a serious loss for the church.

So if the enemy can defeat us here, if he can persuade us that this is a light question, if he can keep us from the apostolic appropriation of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, he has won a victory that is incalculable for it keeps the church on the ground of triviality. Even if it maintains its vocabulary, it is without substance and without gut. It does not cut, it does not penetrate, it does not bring conviction, it does not bring repentance, it does not bring change.

It is a ceremonial thing because the church itself does not believe its own message and the evidence is that its own pastors are out there fornicating with their secretaries or the worship leader. That is how light the question of sin has become in the church itself. So I am saying however men justify themselves and get by and they will divorce or be divorced and they will marry again hoping for a more cordial arrangement and they may succeed at that and blaming the spouse that has been rejected as the cause for the failure and then go on maybe to a series of failures and go through a whole lifetime of self-justification in sin and never once acknowledge the truth of their condition, though they have left by the wayside children with that spouse, children without spouse, children with that spouse, but they will have to stand before the judge and suffer the penalty of his wrath if they have not received him who bore the wrath and has received their sin and through whom they have obtained forgiveness and the dismissal of the record against them by his blood.

When you contemplate this picture you are seeing the wrath of God visited upon the son of God. What he is suffering is that wrath. Imagine if he had not suffered it and that wrath would fall upon the guilty.

You would be wrecked, you would be devastated both for time and in eternity. So he is receiving the cumulative wrath of mankind's sin, past, present, future, in a six hour period of time. Travail of body and soul that was mercifully ended when he gave up the ghost because no man takes his life, he lays it down.

But until then, this is the picture of wrath. Now why did God not divert it away? Why does God require it? These are the great questions. Can God be God who is righteous and just and not deal with the issue of sin in this way and not demonstrate his abhorrence, horror and indignation at that which is calculated against him as God? Because if he takes it easy on the issue of sin and plays patsy and condescends and looks the other way, what would be the consequence of that for mankind in the kind of green light that will be given it for further indulgence and for the failure to apprehend God as God? What would the world be? What would mankind be if it's devoid of any consciousness of God as holy, as righteous, as just and that

anything goes and that there's no reprimand and no consequence either in this life or the life to come? What would such a world be is what in fact the world is actually becoming.

It's called Sodom and Gomorrah. There's no fear of God. Sin is not just tolerated, it is celebrated and when we'll look further into Romans chapter one and two, Paul says not only do they do these things, homosexuality and lesbianism that is in God's sight abomination because he abandons them to their own lust and to the most vile expressions of it but that their sin is condoned and applauded by others who know that the very participation in that sin obtains for the sin of death and yet the sin is applauded and condoned by those who observe it as being the final statement of the degradation of mankind that it's not only not chafed by sin or self-conscious or even embarrassed but applauds and endorses it though it knows that it's the way to death.

That's the statement of human depravity and which of you sweet characters would not be capable of it given the opportunity and condition and circumstance? So long as you think yourself inviolate your living a fool's paradise and you have a presumption about yourself and your condition that is contrary to what God's word says is the truth of it for we have all sinned in Adam and there's no man good no not one and if God were to mark iniquity who can stand? If you'll not believe that for the word of God he'll give you opportunity to experience it to your humiliation. So let me read the warning given by this writer far too frequently we fail to entertain the gravity of this fact of God's wrath hence the reality of our sin and the reality of the wrath of God upon us for our sin do not come into our reckoning. This is the reason why the grand article of justification does not ring the bells in the innermost depths of our spirit and this is the reason why the gospel of justification is to such an extent a meaningless sound in the world and in the church of the 21st century.

We are not imbued with the profound sense of the reality of God of his majesty and holiness and sin if reckoned with at all is little more than a misfortune or maladjustment agree with that? He is really nailing the church because if the church has lost this reality what then is its message? What then is its presence in the world? What is it communicating to sinners in the world if it has lost the sense of sin of wrath of judgment and of atonement? So it behooves the church to be made conscious. What is God's provision against man's subjective self-rationalization and self-justification by which sin is made trivial? What has God done to save man and that he would be without excuse before him in the day of judgment even if he has never opened the Bible? You are the church and you can't answer that question. Lord, we are in serious condition here.

What has God done that man would be without excuse in the day of judgment? Though he can say I never read the Bible, I didn't know, nobody told me. The very act of God in Christ, this mangled wreck that took place in time and history is God's statement of the severity of sin. For if it were not that real, not that significant, this would not be necessary.

The fact that God bore this is God's statement in itself of what sin is and what is required to expiate it. To avoid this picture and this crucified Christ that is pushed into the face of mankind in point of time historically and is available for anyone's consideration unless they consciously and willfully circumvent and avoid it, they are then without excuse. Just the awareness of this has got to bring a man into a consideration like wow, why was this necessary? And set in motion those considerations by which he can appropriate the benefit of that shed blood.

Jesus is a piece of stubborn divine facticity, excuse my language. God has left mankind without excuse. My Jewish kinsmen without excuse because what they have done with this is to sweep it under the carpet.

Jesus was a misfit. He was a political presumer. He jostled the Roman authorities.

He was presumptuous about his own credential. He made himself a candidate of something he need not have suffered. But we don't have to occupy ourselves with this.

It's a minor note in Jewish history. He's just a megalomaniac, a presumer who suffered the unfortunate consequence. Now let's go on.

What Jewry has lost is not only the benefit of the atonement, but the knowledge of God as God. Because in this one act we see the son bearing the wrath of the father, offering himself a sinless sacrifice by the eternal spirit. So all three aspects of the Godhead that constitutes God as God is caught up in this one historic act for which all men are accountable.

Something like this can't happen in history and be dismissed. To dismiss it is to be guilty. To dismiss it is to be sinful.

To dismiss it is an unwillingness to understand God's statement because one wants to continue in the very thing for which this act was provided. Can you understand? The issue of Jesus is confrontation. It's the revelation of sin.

No matter what man has said about himself, no matter how he justifies himself, there's this stubborn fact that has taken place in time and history which he cannot evade so that the father can rightfully ask any man, what have you done with my son? How have you understood his death? What did you think the crucifixion of Jesus was? A little mishap in history? Who cried out, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? It is finished that even a dumb centurion at the foot of the cross, a gentile dum-dum, professional murderer, witnessing this Jesus, giving up the ghost, cries out, truly this is the Son of God? A gentile can say that and the Jewish nation before whom he's made a public object of humiliation can miss it? That missing it is willful. Sin is willful contrariness of God. Against God and nowhere is it more mocked and more repunctuated than the willful dismissal of the crucified Christ.

Okay, so God's justice demanded this expiation, this sin bearing, but God's love required this statement because he knew man and he knows what is in man and he knows man's self-justifying propensity. So what is God's provision? The painful, agonizing, suffering death of his son to confront us. So for example, when Gibson's film came out and the great hullabaloo that Jews will suffer a fresh backlash of anti-Semitism, which never happened, many Christians came to the defense of the Jewish community and said, well Jesus died for all men's sin so you don't have to worry that this is going to mock you in any significant way.

It took place, yes, in your time and in your nation and your high priests and your religious leadership and scribes and Pharisees were instrumental and the crowd cried, give us Barabbas, but he died for all men's sins. Yes, that's true, but that does not absolve the Jewish community for being instrumental in that death. To get them off the hook is to rob them of the very thing by which conviction for sin can come, that Jesus made himself available as a victim at their hands because he knows the Jewish community Jewish propensity for self-justification and self-righteousness that would excuse itself so that they have reason now to be revealed in their implication.

Yes, though he died for all men's sin, that does not absolve you as being the willful instrument in that death and he made himself available for you to be your victim so that you can be convicted of your sin by your implication. The whole world lieth in the wicked one who is the father of lies and the greatest lie that he has perpetrated is about the human condition itself, that there is such a thing as a man who is good and they were not all that bad and it's not really sin, it's just adjustment or some other way of understanding or dismissing. He's a deceiver and his greatest power is to deceive us about the truth of our own condition as God sees it.

So God's answer is this statement as well as the scripture, as well as the testimony of the apostles, as well as the whole history of Israel's redemptive sacrifices by the blood of bulls and calves that was finally superseded by one sacrifice that is for all time, for all men and forever, this sacrifice. There's a whole history of the shedding of blood through a priesthood to impress upon the nation that is called to be holy what the issue of sin is that requires expiation through the shedding of blood for they're told in Leviticus without the shedding of blood there was no remission for sin. Sin does not need to be explained to them as a principle and that by which they will be persuaded that it's true because they know sin.

What man who lives with any degree of reality is not conscious of sin? What man and when he sees the blood, the continual sacrifices, the rivers of blood, the high priest once a year atoning for the nation having first atoned for himself and going into the holy of holies with a rope tied around his ankle so that if he dies within the holy place because he has missed an adequate atonement for his own sin the bells have stopped tingling at the hem of his garment and they know that the act has not been consummated. The nation is still in its sin and they drag the corpse out by the rope. They held their breath when the high priest went in once a year into the holy of holies with the blood of bulls and calves to sprinkle it on the mercy seat for the forgiveness of the nation in its unconscious sins they were steeped in those practices that prepared them for this.

That Jesus was crucified on the Passover at the very hour when the lambs were being slain having been on view for three and a half years in the same way that the first lamb in Egypt they were told to take a lamb for the house on the 10th of Nisan and slay it on the 14th. Why? To keep it four days on observation so that if there be any defect any blemish it would be forfeited it cannot be used. It had to be a perfect lamb in its maturity so that Jesus coming five thousand years later is before his nation for four years, forty years or three and a half years of his public ministry and when he is apprehended he says to these men which of you can convict me of sin? When John the Baptist sees him coming into the waters of the Jordan he says behold the lamb of God who has come to take away the sins of the world.

These things are written for your admonition about whom the ends of the age have come. We are the inheritors of Israel's history and preparation. We ought to have an appropriate comprehension of that whole biblical background of which this is the culmination but if we miss it and I want to tell you this we are missing it to the exact degree of our own sinfulness.

If you are dull now it's not because you are dull. It's not because you didn't get a full night's sleep. You are missing it in the exact proportion to your own sinfulness.

It has dulled you. You are non-compensamentous. You cannot hear.

You cannot follow. You are untouched, unimpressed, and unaffected. It is the issue of sin in your life.

It has found you out. That's why you are unresponsive. That's why you are unperceiving.

It's to the degree that there is in you sin negates the issue. We need to inquire why is it that others who were at the foot of the cross or observing did not come to the same conclusion as the Roman centurion. Truly this is the son of God because that acknowledgment was salvation.

What about the Jews that were there? Instead of saying that they said if you be the son of God come down and we will believe you. They mocked and taunted watching the writhing painful victim on the cross. They saw the same thing as the centurion but they spoke in a totally other way observing the same phenomenon and the answer is their sin forbade it.

Their sin of pride, their arrogance, their contempt, their disdain blocks out God's message but something in that centurion, God bless him, was free enough to get what God was saying and cry out in a way contrary to the Jews who should have been the first to see and the first to recognize seeing that they were groomed and trained out of a whole history of sin and sacrifice and expiation by blood. That the centurion when he saw that Jesus had given up the ghost he cried out truly this is the son of God. Something happened when he watched how Jesus departed this life that was different from all the other previous victims whose death he had observed as a professional executioner.

There was something in this death and suffering uniquely different from all of the others who had writhed on the cross, who spat out their curses, who defamed those who were abusing them. This one is forgiving his executions for their sin, lay not their sin to their charge. He's acting with a certain composure, even a calm and a magnanimity and a grace and his legs don't have to be broken.

The other two had to have their legs broken to shorten their agonizing death span because the cross is a form of suffocation. Because of the unusual posture your chest fills up with blood or fluid. That's why the water came out when he was speared and in order to avoid suffocation they stretch their feet but when they break the legs they can't stretch they suffocate they die.

Jesus died in fact when Pontius Pilate was told that Jesus was dead he was surprised. How could he be dead so early? Because man did not take his life he gave it up. He cried with a loud voice unto my father unto you do I commit my spirit and that was it.

And the centurion is seeing this, this is different from all previous deaths. There's something exhibited here of the majesty of the victim not just because of his suffering but through his suffering that all the more illustrates that he is the king of a kingdom and that's probably a glimpse of what the criminals saw. So all of this needs to be factored in.

See there's something in the suffering Christ that reveals the ultimate truth and condition of men and what they say in those final moments and how they view is the ultimate statement of the truth of themselves as they're confronted with this truth. And my frustration is why aren't we as students being confronted? What is keeping us from the recognition? Would we be any more moved if we saw the live thing? See what I mean? Is there a statement of us that is impeding the breakthrough in consciousness that God is wanting? Because this should be an everlasting testimony. It's a statement once and for all in time and history can't be repeated.

But the magnitude of that statement should resonate throughout all time and all places. It's a once and for all given of God and that somehow it's not registered on the church and I'm wanting to know why? What's wanting? Is it some apostolic commentary? Because evidently the criminal who was saved and this day will be with me in paradise did not hear it. The centurion did not hear it.

Something was available right there and then with the suffering Christ that made it or broke it for the one or for the other that should be equally as valid and available for us. That we have a certain concept of our own self-righteousness that in, what's the word, not nullifies, it's inures us, that's the word, I-N-U-R-E, inures us from the reality that just as it served to inure the Jewish critics, it inures us even as Christians to the degree that we share with them some degree of a self-righteousness which is sin. While the centurion was devoid of just that thing and saw what he needed for his salvation.

So what if, I made the blunt statement before, if you're not touched, if you're indifferent, it's not a statement that you're dull this morning or you're lacking sleep, it's a statement that sin itself is clouding your ability to perceive the enormity of what this represents and sin in the form of self-righteousness probably is the point at issue that we need to recognize. Don't forget to factor in not only the grief of the son, the agony of his own suffering physically and morally, the absence of the father, but the grief as we mentioned the other day of the father himself. The father is suffering with the son in this painful death.

Maybe it's all the more excruciating for the father because he's hearing the cry of the son, why have you forsaken me? And it tears his heart out because the father's deepest impulse is to relieve the son of such an excruciating suffering but he cannot. He has to turn a deaf ear to the cry of his own son about abandonment and that, what is that for a God who is holy? What is that for a father who is righteous and moral, who is the epitome of what is moral to be unable to relieve his son from the excruciating death for which he's crying out, why do you abandon me? So that the father is suffering in a unique agony of his own kind that has to be coupled with the suffering of the son to get a sense of what God in the Godhead has paid for the atonement for sin which raises the question how hideous is sin that it required that magnitude of suffering both from the father and the son and why is it that we can be indifferent and just note it as a kind of a fact of the faith and a doctrine to which we're obliged to subscribe but have no pang, no inward registration of the enormity of this and are left devoid and untouched as Christians. I think we need to go back to the garden.

We need to examine the first classic prototype of sin that we all share in the calculated rebellion and defiance against God who had made of them but one request of any tree in the garden you may eat except this one tree and they violated that simple requirement as an obstinate willful act as if though God had said that we are at liberty to disregard that because in the eating of that fruit we ourselves will be made wise and as God and he probably sought to discourage our eating because he didn't want to share his deity with us in his jealousy to keep it to himself so we bought the snake's lie, the serpent's lie. I mean we have to devote an entire session just to examining the anatomy of sin in its very first expression because the first is always the classic statement and we don't have to go far to go from there to Cain and Abel where the Lord warns Cain that sin is crouching at the door and he does not heed that warning and kills his brother out of envy because the brother's sacrifice was consumed by fire accepted by God while his was neglected and then when God says and where is your brother? How should I know? Am I my brother's keeper? As if God did not see that murder in a word as if God is not God as if he can be ignored with impunity is the statement of human arrogance, conceit, self-will, rebellion, complete indifference against God mocking him about being God who can see and judge even though he has warned and to be indifferent to that warning and having performed the murder to make oneself as if how should I know and when God makes him a fugitive he says this punishment is too much for me. It wasn't too much for him to kill his brother but to suffer a mild consequence it's too much for me.

Self-pity, self-righteousness, self, self, self and we have inherited that Adamic cane taint and it's a moot question whether unless we have really appropriated this to what degree does it yet remain to blunt even

our consideration that God is wanting to press upon our consciousness even now. To what degree are we superseding God? Are we making our own independent judgments? Yes God has said but I don't know. It's how you look at it.

I'm not impressed. I'm the arbiter. I'm the one who's really assessing.

Yes though God has said but I don't really believe in my inward heart that that is necessarily so. We're still performing an elevation over God as his creation over the creator which is why God abandons men to their lust. That it works itself out in the most abominable forms.

Maybe one of the vilest forms of that is turning the truth into a lie by making the truth a truism. We have sanctified the truth. It's kosher.

It's an article of faith. It's a doctrine to which we subscribe but it's not alive in our spirit, our consciousness or our concern but we will mouth it as a platitude. When you turn truth into truism you have turned the truth into a lie and you've hindered the truth by subscribing to that and commending it to others as something light.

So we want to keep from the blood and from the cross so we'll have a fig leaf that has the form of the truth but not its essence or its power and what is so sinful is we inwardly know that and continue in it and subscribe to it and are participant in it as the church in disseminating it for the problem that it has become so that the sin of men is not only his unrighteousness but also his righteousness and in fact his righteousness is yet a more deadly form than his sin of unrighteousness which is much more visible and discernible but the sin of our righteousness is what keeps us from the realization, the appropriation of this so great provision. Is there in me a post-Christian self-righteousness that is yet operative, more tenacious, deep, pervasive and continuing than ever I imagined and is my dullness today toward this subject the very evidence of its existence that I have never imagined because I thought I was a proper Christian? Why then was your self-righteousness not dealt with in your conversion? How deep was your conversion? How much was it a disgust with your natural man and a willingness to forsake all unto death and a coming to the cross? How much was your baptism a burial of that natural man because you know that there was no good that could come from him and that you believe there would be a resurrection to notice of life or how much was it just a religious requirement to which you submitted but you never went into it as a death nor a burial and therefore your self-righteousness remains, therefore you are obdurate, therefore you are insensitive and even offended if a suggestion is made that what blocks your comprehension and your aliveness to this issue is your yet prevailing sin and the sin is the sin of self-righteousness. It could not be true of me because you will be the last one to know it because you are full of self-justification and self-celebration.

You can't see it until this reveals it. It's being revealed this morning. You ask the Lord is there a deep tenacious self-righteousness yet alive in me that has not been submitted to the cross that inures me to the reality? If so I repent of it, I forsake it and I bring it into death and it's a death that will be total or we're still playing a game with the cross and just verbalizing something without its actualization and therefore we'll be hindering the righteousness of God by hindering his righteousness by our unrighteousness and making it pabulum rather than a message for a dying world.

Got the idea? Well all the while we're students seeking to grow in the knowledge of the Lord. So long as there's a place of admiration and even hope to serve God by the natural man and to be spiritual by the natural man we're not bringing anything to death. We're just bringing verbal categories into the water and

we come up the same as we went down.

It was not a going down into the Jordan of death because we still want to retain the original life and see it improved and even employed in the service of God. Until you despair and agree with God that in man there's no good thing at all. Why call us only good? There's no man good but God.

Until you believe that your baptism is a fake. So Lord we don't want to go any further. We don't want to be guilty of hindering the righteousness of God by holding it in unrighteousness as a platitude and so we're asking Lord your deepest dealing with us today or else we have come to a loggerhead where we're backed up and it would be pointless to go on.

We would just add confusion and embarrassment rather than understanding. Lord help us at this juncture we pray. You brought us to this impasse and we ask for the mercy that will bring us through it in truth in Jesus name.

Amen.

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