

(Missions Conference Shoals) - Part 2

by Paul Washer

Paul Washer's sermon highlights the seriousness of sin, the necessity of understanding God's holiness, and the transformative power of grace in salvation.

Duration: 1:14:55

Scripture: Proverbs 17:15, Isaiah 6:3, Matthew 6:33, John 3:16, Romans 3:23-25

Topics: "Justice Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the movie 'The Passion' and his response to it. He expresses his fear of watching the film due to the emotional impact it may have on him. The preacher also criticizes Southern Baptist preachers who he believes will misuse the film. He emphasizes the importance of understanding the true depth of Christ's suffering and the significance of sin in the eyes of God. The sermon highlights the power and obedience of creation to God's commands, contrasting it with the fallen state of humanity.

Transcript

And preach Christ as he ought to be preached. And though I heard no word, I knew. Son, even then you will not preach Christ as he ought to be preached.

All the choruses of glory, all the choruses and corrals of heaven strain with every fiber of their spirits will be to lift a word that might be worthy about the Christ. And after all is sung and after all is cried out, they bow their heads knowing they have not even begun to climb the foothills of the Himalayas, of the glories of Christ. Oh, that your heart would be warmed, that your heart would be warmed.

In Romans chapter 3, verse 23, for all have sinned. That does not shock us today. It does not terrify us.

It does not scare us or frighten us. And it should, it should, it should. One man fell, one man sinned, our father Adam.

And one sin was enough to crash an entire universe into condemnation, was enough to set this entire world almost into a whirling spiritual and moral chaos, physical chaos. One sin, one tiny sin is so grievous against a holy and loving and gracious and compassionate God that it takes down a universe with it. And then there we are.

We stand and we multiply sin upon sin upon sin upon sin. We are a people of unclean lips and we dwell among a people of unclean lips. We have no idea the gravity of sin.

If you're older here, you might have caught yourself saying, well, let me put it this way. I'm not wanting to attack young people tonight, but let me just give you an example to show how dull we can become to sin. We can come to be with regard to sin.

The things that are worn by your culture, the things that are worn at the beach by your culture, that even you as Christians wear. If that had been worn by a person even 60 or 70 years ago in public, they would have either been thrown in prison or placed in an insane asylum. And yet we do it today with no shame whatsoever.

Just in a matter of 60 years, look how dull we have become to what is wrong. How can we as a people understand the gravity of sin? When we swim in it, we drink it down as though it were water. Everywhere you look, it is used, it is promoted.

And so when the Bible says for all have sinned, we see nothing frightening about it. And yet we do not know that, that creatures far more splendid than us angelic beings with one revolt in heaven, with one turning away from God in heaven, they were cast out and an eternity of destruction awaits them without one hope of salvation. It is as though God standing on the day of creation, He speaks to stars that can swallow up 6,000 of our suns and He says, you stand in this place and you move in this way until I give you another word.

And then He speaks to planets and He tells them, put yourself in such and such orbits and stay there until I command another thing. And they all obey Him. And then He says to the mountains, be lifted up and He tells valleys, be cast down.

And they march to every word with perfect obedience. He pours the rain out on the ground and the ground obeys by turning to mud. He brings the sun out from behind the clouds and the ground dries in obedience to the Lord.

He tells monsters of the deep, the ways that they should move, the waters that they should stay in. He tells the deep itself, you will come here and you will go no further. And they all obey Him.

And then He looks at you and says, come and you go, no, we have no idea the gravity of sin because we have no idea of the greatness of God. I think sometimes I agree with a psychiatrist, Jung, who said, hurry is not of the devil, hurry is the devil. Now, I believe in a personal devil, but the point I'm trying to make is that one of the works of the devil is to keep the people of our culture so entertained with frivolous, trifling things that they know not who God truly is.

And then there are puppeteers who do not know God themselves. And so allow the people to participate in trifles while they march their way into hell. But oh, my dear friend, if only I could pull back the curtain, if only I had hours with you tonight to take you through every step of Scripture and show you what God sees when He sees sin and to show you the passionate, yea, even violent, furious hatred of God that comes against sin.

It is so hard to preach on sin unless you have spent several, several weeks preaching on the attributes of God, unless you have preached on the law. Someone asked a preacher one time, he said, why don't you preach on hell? I never hear you preach on hell. And he said, well, it's pretty much useless to preach on

hell.

Everybody believes in hell. The problem is no one believes they're going there. So I preach on the law.

Oh, my dear friend, young people, the vileness and the wretchedness of sin. So many people today are appalled when I speak of hell. And yet if they truly understood the glory, the beauty and the kindness and the love of God, and they truly understood their own vileness, they would quickly understand that hell is a just place for the ungodly.

Do you realize, my dear friend, that there is enough in you apart from Christ that if it were not for the restraining grace of God, you would make Hitler look like a choir boy? Why? For all have sinned. What a terrifying statement. It leaves us dead.

It leaves us corralled. It leaves us on the ground without any hope whatsoever. For all have sinned.

Now, when you're catechizing your children or reading through the Westminster, you come to understand that sin is lack of conformity to the law of God. And when we say that, that's an impersonal thing, and it doesn't sound too bad. Sin is breaking a rule.

It is not conforming to law. And that's not such a terrible thing at first until you understand that the law to which you are not conforming is God's law. And that to break God's law is to dishonor deity, to lift your clenched fist in the face of God and proclaim to Him that you will not have Him to be God over you.

And if you could, you would storm through the gates of the throne room of God. You would tackle God and slaughter Him. That's what it means when the Bible says, for all have sinned.

And that's why any type of good work we think we could lift up to God in order to make ourselves right with Him is absolutely, well, not only preposterous, it's blasphemous. He says, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Now what does this mean in the context of Romans, the first three chapters? I think it first of all would mean this.

We did not esteem God to have any worth whatsoever. Although they knew God, they did not honor Him as God. And come to the point where even fighting against Him, He's not even worth enough to fight against.

Just simply ignore Him. You say, well, those are pretty hard words. No, they're pretty true words.

There is not a man, woman, or child in this building tonight, including this preacher, who has esteemed God as He ought to be esteemed. Who has shown gratitude to God as He ought to see from His creature. I mean, you are able to turn almost anything, an inanimate object, a car, a house, into an idol and lift it up above God.

Give it more worth than God. You're able to take clothing and give it more worth than God. You're able to take your own reputation, your own time, everything, and make it of greater worth than God.

You do it every day. Here we were created for Him. We were created by Him, but we were created for Him, for Him, for Him.

We receive breath. Every breath we receive comes from the Almighty, and it is given to man only to return it to Him in praise. Every beat of our heart is given by the sovereign decree of God so that our hearts might

beat for Him.

But as I was praying in the pastor's office, Lord, this heart of mine, so prone to wander, so prone to leave the God I love, when we look at the human race, the only thing I can say, if I were to pick out one word, it would be ingratitude. That everything you are, every good and perfect gift you've received, everything of pleasure, everything of joy, everything that's ever been of any good whatsoever in your life has come from Him. Now, people always talk, theologians, talk about the problem of evil.

If you're biblical, there is no problem. The problem of evil, why do bad things happen to good people? That is not the question at all. That is not the question.

Why do bad things happen to good people? The problem, the philosophical problem within the context of Scripture is why is there anything good on this fallen world? God should have left us nothing of joy, nothing of beauty, nothing of peace, nothing of life. The question is, how can He still be so gracious to a people that hates Him? And all men are born haters of God until they are regenerated by the power of God, fallen short of the glory of God. And where has that left us? Where has that left us? A hollow husk of a people.

One thing that I try to get across and that I want to get across so much to my sons is that sons, you were made for Him. And as Augustine said, your heart will be restless. Your heart will have no peace, yea, until you find Him.

Isn't it amazing, let me speak to the Christians for a moment that are here, isn't it amazing that we are the wealthiest, most protected Christians in the history of Christianity, with more at our disposal than all the other Christians put together down through the history of the church. And yet if you go into a Christian bookstore, most of them, you will find out that more than half of the volumes are dedicated to fixing how empty we are. Now isn't that a marvel? And why is it that we are so empty? For the same reason that Jesus never was.

He said, I have food to eat that you know not of, and that food is to do the will of my Father who sent me. There is a real sense in which God has placed eternity in your heart. There is a real sense in which your heart, there is this infinite hole in your heart.

And if you know anything about mathematics, you cannot fill, or philosophy, you cannot fill infinite space with finite matter. This world, as great as it is, all its wealth, all its beauty, all its fame, all its fortune, take the whole thing, rob every other human being on the face of the earth and take all of that and put it in your heart and your heart will still be empty. And that is why so many people are so miserable today.

And that is why so many people are like the walking dead. They breathe, they think, they speak about things that they do not possess. The difference between a secular philosopher and a theologian is this.

The secular philosopher will constantly speak about beauty and truth and life and peace and purpose and meaning. But for him, it is nothing more than the writing of poetry. It is nothing more than a dream.

He does not have it, nor can he find it for anyone else. The theologian says, yes, all these things exist, but they exist in the Godhead. They exist in deity.

They exist in God the Almighty, Creator of the heavens and the earth. For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Now this presents a most tremendous problem.

A most tremendous problem. And I want to speak for just a moment. We're all aware of the movie, *The Passion*, that has come out.

I have no qualms whatsoever with the film. Many preachers and things have written me, asking me my opinion, what should they do and all sorts of things. And most of them, I've responded this way.

I don't have a problem with Mel Gibson, nor do I have a problem with his film. But I do have a problem with the Southern Baptist preachers who are going to use that thing in all the wrong ways. You see, you take a look at that film, which I yet have seen.

I'm afraid to see it. I'm just afraid. I don't know if I can bear it.

But when you see the physical sufferings of Christ, what is not communicated by the preacher in the modern day pulpit, is that is a small reflection of the greater pain that the Christ suffered. We are going to see tonight that it wasn't whips and thorns and crosses that were the true pain of the cross. And we're also going to see that it wasn't those things alone that save us.

But we're going to see something much greater, much more horrifying, behind what can be seen with the eye. It says, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Now, this presents a tremendous problem, and I'm going to read a text to you.

He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous, both of them alike are an abomination to the Lord. Now, I'm going to shorten this. He who justifies the wicked is an abomination to the Lord.

That's Proverbs 17, 15, one of the most important verses in the Bible, because it explains just about the full context of everything that's going on in the Bible. He who justifies the wicked is an abomination, a hateful thing, a loathsome thing, in the sight of God. And that there, my friend, is the greatest problem in the entire Bible.

When we go back to Romans 3, verse 24, after hearing in verse 23 that all men are wicked, and wicked indeed, we come to verse 24, and it says, being justified, an action done to the wicked by God. God justifies the wicked. And yet we read in the book of Proverbs, we read in Scripture, and Scripture cannot be broken.

What do we read? It is an abomination to the Lord to justify the wicked. And yet now in Romans we hear that God is justifying the wicked. What do we do with this passage? This is what the entire Bible is speaking about.

This is what the Gospel of Jesus Christ is all about. If God is just, He cannot pardon the wicked. And we are wicked.

Therefore, we are without hope. See, in a land that knows nothing of law, or the philosophy of law, or justice, or righteousness, a corrupt people, children of evil deeds, that's what we are. Ignorant of greater, weightier matters, that's who we are.

We cannot understand Scripture as it should be understood. That if God is the just judge of all the earth, and if God must do right, and He must be consistent with His character, that's what it means to do right, then God cannot forgive the wicked, but must measure out to them the judgment that is due them. And the question of the entire Bible is, how can God be just and at the same time justify wicked men? If you look in

verse 26, you have that.

So that He would be just and the justifier of the wicked. Now, let's look at this passage, being justified. Everything, my dear friend, I want to come down there and I just want to shake you.

Every, if you study contemporary or comparative religious studies, if you do comparative religious studies, the different religions in the world, you'll find out that there are really only two. You'll find two truths actually. First of all, you'll find out that every real religion is setting out to answer one question.

How can a man be right before God? That right there ought to be proof to an anthropologist or sociologist that there's something to the Bible if everyone on the face of the earth believes that they are wrong with God. And the question of all these religions out in the world is, how can I be made right or declared right with God? How can it happen? And that's what justified means. Speaking about Christians, He says that they are justified.

That means that the Christian who believes in Jesus Christ is declared to be right with God. That God forensically or legally declares that believer to be right with Him. To be right.

Not wrong. Not sinful. Not out of balance.

Not out of turn. Not in rebellion. But right.

And again, I present the problem to you. We're not right. So how can a just God declare us to be right? Hold on to that question.

And He says, being justified as a gift. Now I said you can say two things about comparative religions. First of all, that they're all seeking to know how to be right with God.

But then you can say another thing. When you study religions all around the world, you'll come to the conclusion that there are really only two religions. There are really only two religions.

Christianity, a religion of grace. True Christianity, a religion of grace. And all the other religions have one thing in common.

They all seek to be made right with God through their own virtue, their own merit, their own works. All of them. Without exception.

Take them all, put them all together. You will find this to be true. All the religions outside of genuine biblical historical Christianity believe that they can somehow make themselves right with God by their own virtue and their own merits.

Which shows you, first of all, that their greatest sin is idolatry. Because they're calling something God that is not God, because if they knew the true God, they would know His holiness and understand their sinfulness and realize that they could never gain a right standing with God through their own works. But He says being justified, being declared right with God, reconciled to God, at peace with God.

How? As a gift. By His grace. As a gift.

As a gift. This is the same word that is found. This is very important.

Listen to me. Sometimes when I preach, someone will get up and sing a song that's the eternal question, I can't understand why God would love me. And when they sing that song, I'm like in the back going, Oh, pick me, I'll tell you why.

If you're always wondering why God would love you, what is it that God sees in you that causes Him to love you? Let me answer that question for you. Absolutely nothing. Absolutely nothing.

As a matter of fact, everything that God sees in you, apart from His grace and the work of Jesus Christ, would only bring judgment and wrath against you. You see, when the Bible says for all have sinned, it doesn't mean that prior to coming to Christ, you were a pretty good person who made some mistakes or every once in a while sinned or sinned every once in a while. That's not what it means.

It means that prior to coming to Jesus Christ, the only thing you ever did with every breath was sin against God. And he goes on and he says, justified as a gift. Now, there is a passage that Jesus quotes in the book of Psalms.

It says, the Gospel is quoted, and they hated Him without a cause. Scripture is fulfilled, they hated Me without a cause. Now let me ask you a question, Christian.

Does anyone, I mean, could anyone stand up and say they have a right reason for hating Jesus? You could search the world over and over and over again, and you will never find a person who even has one reason for hating Jesus. And that's the same word that's used here by the Apostle Paul. Justified without cause.

He declared you right, and you gave Him no reason whatsoever to do it. But he not only says that, he says, justified as a gift by His grace. Now Paul has said something and iterated.

He's become redundant, it seems. It's as though Paul is saying, you have been declared right with God as a gift, as a gift. If we read in the book of Galatians, and throughout the book of Romans, we understand the book of Ephesians, he's always saying the same thing.

He's always hammering the same truth home to the people. Your salvation is a gift by grace. It's a gift by grace.

It's a gift by grace. Now why does he have to do that? Because men hate grace. You say, what? I've never heard of such a thing.

Grace is unmerited favor. Grace is when God is kind to you even when there's no reason for it. Grace is when God treats you with favor when you've done just the opposite and deserve wrath.

Why would anyone hate that? Why would anyone hate unmerited favor? Because it is unmerited. And if it is unmerited, it means that in order to receive it, you have to acknowledge what Romans 3.23 is saying. You have to acknowledge in order to come to Christ, you have to acknowledge that there is absolutely nothing in you that could motivate a holy God to be favorable to you.

And that if you are declared right with Him, you are only declared right with Him because of a working and a thing coming out of Him that has nothing to do with you. Men do not want to humble themselves. If I were a preacher of works, I could have a church of 30 million people.

If I were a preacher of religion, I could have a church as large as any church in the world. If I was a preacher of works, because men love to hear that they're good enough to get to heaven. Men love to say that they have done something in order to merit God's favor.

And then they don't stop there. I mean, you give a sinful man an inch, he'll take a mile to the point where finally, he has placed his throne over God and God has become his debtor. That's why men hate grace.

That's why men hate the song, Nothing in my hands I bring, Simply to the cross I cling. Well, surely there's some worth in me, isn't there? No! And that's what men hate. He says, being justified as a gift by His grace, how can He do this? How can God declare the wicked to be right when they are not right? God uses two words.

One of them is almost unspeakable. It's not theatrics when I tell you that I'm almost afraid to say this word. Redemption.

We are a people who play marbles with the diamonds of God. We throw out words. We speak them.

We yell them. We scream them. We sing them.

And oftentimes, we know not what we do. I know that this is not exactly a wonderful display of God's attributes. I'm going to say something a bit human.

In a human way about God, which doesn't really apply directly, but as an illustration, what do you think would go through the mind of God when He hears the word redemption? A word that we read quickly. A word that we just sing out thoughtlessly. And yet, what would go through the mind of God when He hears such a word? Would it be His only begotten Son crucified over a garbage dump outside of Jerusalem for the sake of a bunch of people who can't even begin to understand the cost? How is it that we are declared right with God? What? Because blood was spilt.

The blood of God's only begotten Son. What a gift this Father has given unto us. I remember after my first boy was born, whenever I thought and taught and studied on the cross of Jesus Christ, my attention was always given to the Son, to the Son, to the Son.

And the sufferings of the Son. I never thought much about the heart of the Father until I had a son. I would die a thousand deaths for my boys.

I would do everything in my power to defend them from harm. I would rather be tortured with torture unspeakable than to see harm befall them. And as I was driving down the road in my old truck, I began to think.

The Father and what He gave. If I, being evil, and that's what Jesus said, can love my boys with such a passion, what is the love of the Father toward His only begotten Son? And yet to give Him up to be crucified over a garbage dump, for His blood to be spilt, so that wicked men who hate God might be reconciled to Him. Redemption, a price that is paid to bring deliverance to a slave, to bring deliverance to captives.

And that is what God has done. The word redemption. One of the things that seem to haunt me is this.

I have been bought with a price. Not with gold or silver or trinkets from temples, but I have been bought with the precious blood of the Lamb of God. I am now not my own.

I am a prisoner of love. Now we go farther, and He speaks about this redemption. And He says in verse 25, speaking about His Son, whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation.

Whom God displayed publicly. God, as Martin Lloyd-Jones says, placarded Him, ordained that He die in a most public display for a purpose. And what was that purpose? That purpose was to reveal the true character and nature of God and to vindicate that character.

To demonstrate once and for all who God truly is. You see, you need to understand something. When you talk about Christ dying for men, you can say a hearty amen, but understand that first of all, Christ died for God and for God's glory and for God's revelation and for God's vindication.

And you need to understand something. Everything God has ever done, He has done it for His Son. And everything the Son has ever done, He has done it for His Father.

We are beneficiaries, but we are not the center of the universe whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation. A sacrifice that does what? A sacrifice that takes sin away. That removes guilt once and for all.

But more than that, a liberal will tell you that. Not only just taking guilt away, but satisfying justice and appeasing the fierce, holy, violent wrath of Almighty God. That's what a propitiation is.

Now, let's get back to the great divine dilemma, as we could say, that we saw in the book of Proverbs 17, verse 15. To justify the wicked is an abomination. So how can God justify the wicked without being an abomination? The only one way, there is only one way, through this propitiation, this sacrifice of God's Son.

In ancient Castellano, in Spanish, in La Reina Valera, which is an old translation that we often use in South America, it's used in Spain. When the publican or the tax gatherer is praying in the temple, he cries out, *Se propicio a mi*. *Se*, which means *be*.

Propicio, propitiation. *Propicio a mi*. *Be propicio*, to me.

The word means literally this, *be merciful to me*. Now you say, well, that's a wonderful thing, and God is a quite merciful God. No, there is a terrible theological and philosophical problem here.

Let me explain it to you with a vulgar illustration. Let's go back to Valladolid in the 16th century, Valladolid, España. And the punishment for a slave at that time, for stealing from his master, would be death.

Instant death, no appeal, death. So the master comes home one day and he finds the slave stealing. He grabs him by the back of the neck and is dragging him to the gallows because the law declares that the slave must die.

That's the law. And the slave, knowing he's going to the gallows, falls down on his knees and cries out, *Se propicio a mi amo*. *Be merciful to me, master*.

You say, well, now it is up to the master to decide whether to be merciful or not. No, there is something much deeper here that we don't understand and we need to understand. The law demands that he dies.

When the slave asks for mercy, he's asking the master not to obey the law. He's asking the master to look away from the law and ignore righteousness and justice. Let me give you another illustration.

Let's say that you go home tonight and your entire family has been slaughtered on the floor. And you see the man who's done this with the blood on his hands running through the back door. And you go through the front door and you come around the house and you knock him to the ground and you take him to the police and the police take him to the judge and the judge looks down at him and says, I'm a loving judge.

I forgive you. The first word that's going to come out of your mouth, the very first words will be, I demand justice. This is not fair.

You are going to write congressmen and senators. You are going to write the newspaper. You're going to call up the radio and television stations.

You're going to do all in your power. You're going to cry out that there is a judge on the bench who is far more wicked than the criminals he allows to go free. A judge must do right.

He must do justice. We demand such things from our own judges. How much more the judge of all the earth must he do right? You see, God is holy and God is just.

He cannot be inconsistent within himself. He cannot turn away from his own justice and just forgive the wicked. I hear preachers sometimes saying, God could have been just with us, but instead of being just, He was loving.

They're saying that God was unjust. That He was wicked. That He became an abomination in the name of love.

No, my dear friend. And then there are others who say that God must conform to the law. God must carry out the law as though there's a law higher than God.

No, that's not true either. God cannot forgive the wicked just like that. Not because there's some law over Him that's higher, but because the law flows out of His very nature.

God cannot be inconsistent in His own being. He cannot say, I'll be loving today and not just, or I'll be just today and not loving. God must be both just and loving.

And He is in our salvation. For He sent His only begotten Son to die in our place and pay the price and become the just and the justifier of those who have faith in Him. Now there's something you need to understand about this Son.

First of all, He is a man. God became a man. Wonder of wonder that Mary should give birth to the One who created her.

Wonder of wonder that manna should take on human form. Wonder of wonders that the God of glory should become a man. And why does He need to become a man? It is man who has sinned.

It is man who must die. The blood of bulls and goats will not take away sin. And so if we are to be saved, a man must die in our place.

But that man must also be God. And why is that? There are several reasons. First of all, salvation is of the Lord.

The Jehovah Witnesses, they do not understand what they're doing when they say that Jesus Christ is not God in the flesh. Here's what they are saying. That God created or made a creature, albeit very special.

They say Jesus is nothing more than a created being, a creature. So God makes a creature, sends that creature down to win for us salvation. That creature becomes our Savior.

And salvation is no longer of the Lord. God will have none of it. All the work of salvation on behalf of man is a work of God.

And God became man to do that work. He was God. Some other reasons possibly we could think about.

Who but God could withstand the wrath of God? Have you ever thought about that? Before His anger, before His wrath, the mountains melt. But only God could go to a tree and withstand His very wrath against our sin and our crimes. Another thing that's very interesting to think about.

In order for us to be saved, someone has to lay down their life. But here's something I want you to think about. And then college students always ask me this.

They say, well, how can one man dying on a cross for a short period of time, suffering the wrath of God, pay for a multitude of men and save them from an eternity in hell? I love that question. The answer is this. Because that one man dying on that cross is worth more than everyone else put together.

He is worth more than planets and stars and angels and people and crickets and clowns and dust and dirt and mountains and seas and the monsters of the deep. All that ever has been, all that ever will be, every created thing flowing from the fingers of God, put it all together on the scale and put the Christ on the other side and He outweighs them all in value. He outweighs them all.

Now, we need to speak about one thing. Now, and it is this. I was in a seminary in northern, it was in Eastern Europe, last year.

A Germanic type of seminary. All the volumes were in German. I was kind of looking around.

I was teaching there and I had a break and I was looking around to find something I could read. And there was a book on the cross of Christ. Now, if you have read as many books as I have, you kind of learn to open the thing up, go through it really fast and you can find really quick what the book is all about.

You just have to know where to look. This is what that book said. God looked down at the sufferings of His Son on that cross that were being inflicted upon Him by the hands of men.

And He counted that suffering as payment for our sin. That's heresy. That, my friend, is heresy in the greatest degree.

Or you'll hear preachers that will say, the Father looked down from heaven and He saw the suffering of His Son at the hands of men and it was so vile and so horrid that the Father, out of love, turned away from His Son and could not bear to see His suffering. That is heresy, my friend, to the greatest degree. My dear friend, if you are saved here tonight, you are not saved because the Romans and Jews rejected Jesus.

You are not saved because they beat Him with a cat of nine tails. You are not saved because they nailed Him to a rugged cross. You are not saved because of what men did to Jesus.

If you are saved, you are saved because when He was on that cross, He bore your sin and the Father in heaven crushed Him under the weight of His own wrath. That is the thing that saves us. That is what saves us.

Just look for a moment at the cross. Christ on the tree. He cries out, My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Now notice, His theological, philosophical problem is not My God, My God, why have the Romans nailed Me to this tree? Or why have the Jews turned their back on Me? That wasn't His problem.

He knew why men had done that. Men hate God. And men hate God because their deeds are evil.

But Christ looks up and cries out, My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? You say, well, what does that mean? Just listen and I'll tell you. When Jesus was quoting that text, when He said that, He was quoting from the book of Psalms. And I believe also that when He quoted those words, that the Pharisees who knew the Psalms, that a terror came over them because He was quoting the words of the suffering servant of Yahweh.

Listen, you'll find meaning in Jesus' words from the book of Psalms. It starts out, My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Far from My deliverance are the words of My groaning. Now, first note, both in the Greek text, in the New Testament, here in the Hebrew, in the Old Testament, the word is forsaken.

Jesus Christ is looking up into Heaven and saying that His Father has forsaken Him. That His Father has abandoned Him. It is not just something romantic in which the Father looks down at His Son and cannot bear to see the suffering and He turns away because He loves Him.

No, the Bible says, Jesus Himself declares that the Father, when Christ was on the cross, forsook Him. And He says, My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Far from My deliverance are the words of My groaning. O My God, I cry by day, but You do not answer, and by night, but I have no rest.

That's His complaint. And then He gives an argument. He says this, In You our fathers trusted.

They trusted and You delivered them. To You they cried out and were delivered. In You they trusted and were not disappointed.

His argument is this, There has never been a time in the history of the covenant people Israel that a righteous man cried out to You and You did not answer. But I, Your Christ, Your Messiah, Your Son, I bleed on this tree and I cry out to You and You have turned Your face away from Me. Why? Why? And then He answers His own question.

Verse 3, He says, Yet you are holy. And in verse 6, But I am a worm. Christ had become the serpent in the wilderness, the bearer of the iniquities of God's people.

All the guilt of our filth, all the guilt of our crimes, all the guilt so horrid and wretched and loathsome before a holy God was placed upon the Christ, the Holy One of God, the Trihagion, the Holy, Holy, Holy. There He is on a tree. He had always known the Father's pleasure and the Father had always known His love, but now He is on a tree and He has become the horrid thing.

He has become accursed. Hear the Scriptures when it says this, Cursed is every man who does not abide by all the things written in the book of the Law so as to perform them. That's you.

But you don't understand what it means to be cursed. Do you know what it means to be cursed before a holy God? It means that you are so wretched, so filthy, so disgusting, so loathsome before the holy God and the holy inhabitants of heaven that the last thing you will hear when you take your first step into hell is all of creation standing to its feet and applauding God because He has rid the earth of you. And yet the Christ, the precious, holy Son of God who knew no sin but became sin for us, He took all our guilt upon Himself and the Father turned away.

And all those little tracks of ours when we talk about man is sinful and God is holy and there is a great chasm between the two, we have no idea what we're saying. It's not just some little painting in a track, my dear friend. A chasm so wide it cannot be crossed.

And the Christ bore our guilt and the Father turned away. You and I, even after walking with the Lord 20, 30, 40 years, we've known His presence and His power in our life. The most horrid thing that could ever happen to a man of God is for him to wake up and not sense the presence of Christ.

That is the most frightful thing. I have heard from my mentors, I have heard men much older than me warn me and warn me and warn me and warn me. Son, the one thing you must fear, you know the presence and the power of God on your life.

Dread the day that you'll wake up and it not be there because you will die. You will crumble into the dust. And I being evil and you being evil would sense such disparity, losing the presence of God, enough to drive a man insane.

What would I feel like right now if last night I had committed adultery? What would I feel like right now if I had committed some heinous crime unknown to all of you last night, unknown to my wife? Literally, I would have blown my brains out with a gun. It would have been all over for me. Life, everything, gone.

And I being a wicked man can sense the shame of such guilt. Now imagine the Christ on that tree. Holy, holy, holy, undefiled, pure.

And yet in one moment all the guilt of God's people is heaped upon Him. And instead of the sweet communion He had known before eternity, His fellowship is broken with His Father and He is left to die alone. Estranged of God and estranged of the people of God.

He is like the scapegoat in the Old Testament. There were two of them, you know. It was as though the sins of God's people were imputed upon them and one goat was sent out into the wilderness and the other one was killed.

And the one was killed because the wages of sin is death. And the other one carried the guilt of God's people out into the wilderness to wander and stumble and die. Forsaken of God and forsaken of man.

Yea, the writer of Hebrews says that He suffered outside the gates of the city. And not only that, I know I'm going long, but this is an important thing. I would question your salvation to want to leave at a point like this.

And then you go to the garden and you find another telling tale about the cross. Here we have Christ the man weeping in a garden in anguish so deep that it brings forth blood. A terror upon Him like no man has ever known.

And He cries out, And these silly little boy preachers who sit there and go, What was the cup? The cup was the cross. Jesus did not want to go to the cross. The nails, the whips.

Is our Christ and our Savior less than His disciples? Can it be that so many disciples, some say over 50 million in the last 2,000 years, have gone to crosses, have been set aflame, and they did so willingly, even singing hymns? Boldly and without fear, they played the man. In the name of Christ, they died horrible deaths. And they did so with joy.

Are you going to tell me that their leader, their captain, their Savior cannot face the same trial except with great fear and trembling and anguish? My dear friend, it was not a cross that so terrified the Christ and brought Him to anguish. It was not puny little nails. It was not the whip of a man.

It was not the weight of a beam. What did He dread? Something no man could bear. That He would go to that cross and carry on His back our filth.

Filth that sometimes we drink down like water. Filth that we sometimes want to bathe in. And yet so wretched and horrid to the Christ.

Why did He not want to go there? Why did He cry for that cup to pass? Because He knew that bearing the guilt of His people, He would be forsaken of His Father. He would be forsaken of His Father. And then finally, why? Why? I want you to listen.

For thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, He says to me, Take this cup of the wine of wrath from My hand and cause all the nations to whom I send you to drink it. They will drink and stagger and go mad. What was in the cup? I was teaching at a classical Renaissance school in St. Louis a while back.

And I asked that question. A little eight-year-old girl stood up and she said, Sir, the wrath of God was in the cup. And I said, Hear out of the mouth of babes a child who knows more than many theologians, that all the holy hatred of God against our vile evil would come pouring down on the head of the Christ and crush Him.

All the judgment of God that you should drink down, that I should drink down, it was poured upon the head of the Christ. I was on an airplane two weeks ago and a young man asked me, we were talking back and forth, a very secular young man, and he said, Well, then who did kill? Was it the Jews? Who killed Jesus? And I said, God killed Jesus. He said, I've never heard such a thing.

I said, Most church men haven't either. Have you never read in Isaiah 53, And it pleased the Lord to crush Him. It pleased the Lord to crush Him.

You say, and you say rightly, that the love of God cannot be described. Oh, it goes beyond measure in intensity, in purity. It goes beyond measure.

Who can describe the love of God? Well, say the same for His wrath. And all the wrath of God, the fury, the anger, the hatred of God against evil came crashing down on the head of His own Son. Someone, in order for God to justify the wicked, someone had to die in the law place of the wicked condemned.

Someone had to take their guilt upon Himself in that someone had to be God in the flesh. And He took that guilt upon Himself. And then the estrangement that you and I should experience in hell throughout all eternity, the Christ had to suffer.

And then all the fierce and furious wrath of a holy God against the wickedness of His people had to come crushing down on His head. And He died. And our text says, What does this do? It does this.

This was to demonstrate His righteousness, God's righteousness. It was to prove that God really is righteous. Well, why would God need to do that? Why would God need to give such an example that He's truly righteous? And here's the reason.

Because in the forbearance of God, He passed over sins previously committed. What does that mean? If God is just, Adam should have died immediately. If God is just, He should have flooded the earth and flooded Noah with it.

If God is just, He should have never made a friendship with Abraham. If God is just, He should never call David His son. Because all of them deserve condemnation.

How is it that God could forgive them and forbear their sin? How is it that God could save Abraham, save Noah, save David, and all the Old Testament saints? And how is it that God can save you and declare you to be right with Him only because 2,000 years ago the Lamb of God shed His blood for them all? Shed His blood for them all? Do you want to know, saint, how much you've been forgiven? Look at the cross of Christ. You want to know, sinner, how much God hates sin? When His own Son bore sin, God crushed Him. God crushed Him.

What do you think He'll do to you? I'll finish by saying that when Christ died, He vindicated God. He proved once and for all that God is just and sin must be dealt with to come into His presence. And when God resurrected His Son, He vindicated Him.

We're going to close by just... and I thank you for your patience. We're going to close just... There's a psalm that the patriarchs of the first five centuries used quite frequently to describe something of the resurrection and the ascension of Christ. It's always been dear to me.

The psalm starts out by saying, Who may ascend to the hill of the Lord and who may stand in His holy place? And the answer is this, He who has clean hands and a pure heart, does anyone here qualify? No. Who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood and is not sworn deceitfully, is there anyone here who qualifies? No. Who can ascend? Of all the men on the earth, can one of them, the best of them, ascend up to heaven and stand in our place as our mediator? Is there one among us that can be the captain of our host? Is there one among us who can lead us into glory? Is there one among us who qualifies? That was Job's question.

Oh, that there was a daisman, that there was a mediator, that there was someone who could lay His hand upon us both. Christ, the man, risen from the dead. And He ascends up into glory.

And He comes to the gates of heaven, the doors of the abode of God. And He says this, Lift up your heads, O gates, and be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Can you imagine the response on the inside of those doors? Who is this that cries out to these doors? No one has ever spoken this way to these doors before.

What man on earth would dare lay His hand to the latch? Who thinks they have the right? And they say, Who is this King of glory? And the answer comes back from the mouth of the Christ. It is I, the Lord, strong and mighty. It is the Lord, mighty in battle.

Lift up your heads, O gates, and lift them up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. And those doors, for the first time, those doors that shut me out, those doors that shut you out, those doors that cry out to you mockingly saying, You shall not pass. You shall not enter here.

Those doors are open wide, and there stands the Christ in all His glory. Oh, what I would have given to be an angel on that day. You see, they're not like us.

They were made, when they opened their eyes, they looked into His face. And there He stands. The Lord of glory has returned.

Can you imagine Him walking up to the throne of God and sitting down? His Father looking over and saying, Son, it is finished. Father, it is finished. Indeed, the price has been paid.

Oh, take the royal diadem and crown Him with many crowns, the Lamb upon the throne. This is your Lord, Israel. This is your glory, church.

This is your hope, that man who stands there, not a man, but the man, God's man, in God's presence for us. And He has called upon us to repent, and not to treat repentance as something you did to initiate your Christian life. He calls upon us to repent and to continue repenting, to continue acknowledging our need, to continue, and to continue, and to continue, and to continue clinging to Him.

Clinging to Him. And dear saints, not just clinging to Him, but coming to know Him. I have set it upon myself to know the Christ and His cross.

I know very little about the Second Coming, eschatology, and all sorts of things such as that. I don't have time. We are to grow to know Him and know Him.

Why? So that we might be like Him. And so that we might cling to Him and rejoice in Him, and worship Him, and worship Him, and worship Him. The more you know of Christ, the more you must love Him.

The more you must love Him. If you're here tonight and you consider yourself to be an upright and good man, then there's nothing here for you tonight. This is no place for you.

There is a place for you. And it was created for the devil and his angels. But if you're sitting here tonight and you have seen the vileness of your heart, and you are crying out, you are wondering, is there any hope for a sinner like me? This is your place.

Christ died in your place, sir, ma'am, boy, girl. Christ died in your place. It is finished.

He has paid the price. Come. You say, what must I do to be saved? Throw yourself down upon the Christ.

Repent of trusting in your own goodness. Repent of trusting in your works and everything else, and trust in Christ, and Christ alone, and you shall be saved. And if you're a church member here, a saved one, that is, how can you not love Him? They will mourn for Him as one who mourns for an only Son.

Everyone says, Brother Paul, go see the Passion. I suppose I will when I get enough courage. But would you think it strange if I did not want to see the death of my own son? Would you think it strange if I told you I was afraid to go watch a video of the death of my brother? Then I must be strong and I must pray much before I go see such a thing that even attempts to portray the death of my Lord.

How will I be able to hold up? How can I hold up when I read His Word and I understand everything He's done for this blind, wretched beggar that I am? Dust that breathes holy breath. Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing my great Redeemer's praise. Pastor.

Many preachers and things have written me asking me my opinion, what should they do and all sorts of things. And most of them, I've responded this way. I don't have a problem with Mel Gibson, nor do I have a problem with his film.

But I do have a problem with the Southern Baptist preachers who are going to use that thing in all the wrong ways. You see, you take a look at that film which I yet have seen. I'm afraid to see it.

I'm just afraid. I don't know if I can bear it. But when you see the physical sufferings of Christ, what is not communicated by the preacher in the modern day pulpit is that is a small reflection of the greater pain that the Christ suffered.

We are going to see tonight that it wasn't whips and thorns and crosses that were the true pain of the cross. And we're also going to see that it wasn't those things alone that saved us. But we're going to see something much greater, much more horrifying behind what can be seen with the eye.

It says, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Now this presents a tremendous problem. I'm going to read a text to you.

He who justifies the wicked.

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