

Peachtree Baptist Church - Part 6

by Paul Washer

The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding the radical depravity of man and the need to preach on sin in order to magnify the grace of God.

Duration: 1:29:52

Topics: "Christ Exalted", "Personal Salvation"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of painting a clear picture of Christ and His glory in preaching. He argues that young preachers should not shy away from preaching a condemning message, as it is necessary to bring people to a place of recognizing their need for a Savior. The preacher highlights the biblical truth that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, and that only through acknowledging our sinfulness can we truly seek God. He also emphasizes that being a Christian is not just about external symbols like streets of gold or gates of pearl, but about knowing and experiencing a personal relationship with God.

Transcript

And I want us to go to the book of Romans chapter 3. It was a message that I sought to preach last night, and yet I felt that the Lord led us in another direction. Romans chapter 3, verse 23. For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood. To declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are passed through the forbearance of God. To declare, I say at this time, His righteousness that He might be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.

Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay. But by the law of faith.

Let's pray. Father, Father, I know that there is no strength in me. I know there is no strength in me.

I know there is no wisdom in me. I'm needy, Lord. I'm needy.

Lord, for the sake of the great love that You have for Your Son, for the sake of Your people, help us. Lord, that it would be good to You and pleasing to You to help us. That it would be pleasing to You to send revival, to grant repentance, to grant faith.

I have, Lord, for our eyes that we can see, and in seeing with the new heart that You've given us, that we would be broken and restored, Lord. And I pray, dear Lord, that this church would get some benefit from this evening that would last throughout eternity. But I pray most of all that Jesus Christ be preached rightly.

Lord, that in some way by the power of Your Holy Spirit that these old rags would be lifted up to speak a good word about Your Son. Lord, I know You hear me. I trust in You.

Let Christ be my boast. In Jesus' name. Amen.

There are, as I have said and I say quite frequently, preaching is a rather pathetic thing. It is a failure. As you walk up to a pulpit, you know you are bound to fail.

How can a man speak forth the things of God in a way that they ought to be spoken of? I can remember one time being so distraught before preaching on the gospel of Jesus Christ and crying out to God, Oh, I long for that day when I'll stand before You pure, sanctified, completely holy, glorified. And oh God, that at that moment You would grant me just once to preach Christ as He ought to be preached. An impression upon my heart was a rebuke.

Even then, You shall not preach my Son as He ought to be preached. You will never know Him well enough. Your tongue will never be so refined that the only one who can give true praise and true glory and speak rightly about the Son is the Father, the Holy Spirit, and the Son Himself.

We will spend all of eternity tracking down the glories of God in the face of Christ. Ever pressing in, we are told that the violent shall take the kingdom by force. I would submit to you that that violence will continue on.

It will be a joyful violence, but a violent passion throughout all of eternity. And when we have finished ten thousand eternities, you will still be panting and still not even begun at the foothills of the glory of God. That's why eternal life begins with knowing Him.

Because eternal life is all about knowing Him. It's not about streets of gold. It's not about gates of pearl.

It's not even about escaping hell. It's about Him. And then a preacher comes to the pulpit, like I believe it was G. Campbell Morgan used to say, like a lamb led to the slaughter and a sheep before shears.

What can a man say about these things? For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. You do not understand that text. I know it was probably the first you memorized after John 3.16 as a little child, but I can assure you, you do not understand even at this present moment what this means.

And neither do I. Because if you did, the moment you heard it, you would fall down on your face and rend your garments and bury yourself in the dust. The Puritan speaker would often say this. It is not against a small governor or a meager prince of a small province against whom you have sinned, but you have sinned against the Lord of glory, the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

But how can you take that seriously? You drink down iniquity like it was water. When you are of unclean lips and you dwell among a people of unclean lips, how can you understand the vileness of sin? For all have sinned. I guess the best attitude of trying to even describe the grotesque nature of that would be that in your disobedience you have declared war on God and you have proclaimed that the only thing you desire is to rush into His throne room, knock Him from the throne and slaughter Him.

And then walk out of the throne room without one ounce of remorse in your fallen heart. Sin is a sinful thing. It is a horrifying thing.

The Puritan is called sin insanity because it is. It is like cutting the branch out from under you that you are resting upon. It is like pulling the life support system, the plug from the wall in order to kill yourself.

It is absolute insanity and it is vile. And not only vile before God, but vile before all of God's creatures that obey Him. I use this illustration often.

It would be this. Imagine death and on throughout the days. He commands everything and everything obeys Him.

He looks at stars that can swallow up thousands of the star we call the sun. He looks at them and He commands them. He says, you put yourself in these places in space and you stay there until I give you another command.

And they all bow and say, yes, sir. Thy will be done. He tells planets to put themselves in tracks and trace around in orbits.

And they all bow and say, thy will be done. He tells mountains to be lifted up. He tells valleys to be cast down.

And they say, thy will be done, master. He looks at the sea and He says, you come to this point and you come no further. And the sea obeys.

And then He looks at you and says, come. And you go, no! The wretchedness of our sin. How can we see it? We ought to pray that God would give us eyes to see.

So that we would hate sin as God hates sin. All have sinned. All have broken His laws.

All have failed to conform to the righteous standard that God has set before us in His Word and placed within us in our heart. You. You.

You. You. If I had time to point my finger at everyone to come down from this pulpit and point you right between the eyes and cry out, you have sinned.

And your sin is so vile that if you reject Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, 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's rid the earth of you. That's how vile your sin is. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Modern day interpretation of that passage is that God has a marvelous plan for your life and you've fallen short of it. The context tells us something quite different. Although they knew God, they did not.

We are so humanistic in every way we look at Scripture today. What does it mean that we've come short or fallen short of the glory of God? It means that God made you for him, for his glory, for his good pleasure. And against that purpose, you have rebelled.

And it is for that reason that you are broken and tired and hungry and dirty, even among those of the household of faith. Isn't it amazing? We are the most secure, the most prosperous Christians in the history of Christianity. And yet you go into these so-called Christian bookstores and more than half the books are

written about how empty we are.

And why are we empty? For the same reason he never was. He had food to eat that we know not of. His food was to do the will of his father because he came to glorify his father.

And Christians by and large in America today live for self. Everything is for self. My God, even salvation is for self.

Oh, let's take it back farther. God is for self, for man. But Scripture says another thing.

He is not. The reason why we are so empty is that we live for self. Instead of laying down our lives and realizing we were made for one purpose.

To serve him, to worship him, to adore him. You are given breath in order to return it in praise. Because your heart beats for one purpose.

For the glory of God. And until you align yourself with a very divine purpose for which you were made. You will be restless and your life will be useless and stupid.

It's like trying to shoot arrows out of a guitar. Or trying to play music with an archery bow. One has one purpose, the other has another purpose.

You were made for a purpose and it is not for you. It is not to have your best life now. It was for him.

By him. For him. You were made.

You were made. This is the great problem, isn't it? Humanism. We come back to it again, don't we? Everything for us.

A great preacher once said this. He said, the liberal, the liberal, through his humanism. The liberal doesn't know anything about whether or not there's a heaven or not.

So his basic core of his religion is this. Make man as happy as he can be now. And fundamentalists have done exactly the same thing.

They've just moved the time. Make man as happy as he can be. Why should men get saved? I said it earlier in my preaching and I'll say it again and it is this.

My dear friend, you should repent of your sins even if God sends you to hell. Because He is worthy. You should believe in Jesus Christ whether He saves you or not because He is worthy.

You should spend all of your life in prayer and worship and service to God. Whether He saves you or not because He is worthy. But no, the preachers today tell you to do it for you.

Do it for you. No, you do it for Him. You do it for Him.

For His glory. For His glory. Now he says, After setting before us, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

Now, before I go on, let me say something about preaching for those of you young preachers here. We are told today that we should not preach a condemning message. Well, if you believe that, in order to

believe that, you must deny the first three chapters of the book of Romans.

Because Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, but using every power of intellect and thought that the man has, he does nothing for three chapters but seek to do one thing, condemn the entire world. To shut up every man's mouth and lay them in the dirt. To cut off every, every possible humanistic hope.

Because only in that manner, only in that manner, will men seek God. Only in that manner. I want to tell you that by not preaching on sin, we have done a great injustice to the gospel and to God and unto humanity.

Let me give you an example. I always use this example. Just listen.

The sound of keys doesn't make you happy. Why? Because you're not locked away in a dungeon. If you were locked away in a dungeon, the sound of keys would spark a hope in you that would possibly burst into joy.

But since you do not know because you have not been told how vile and how close to death and condemnation and hell you actually are, you take no joy in the gospel. You'd rather look at a clock and hope that its arms move quickly rather than listen to the very words of salvation. Oh, my dear friend, if only, if only, if only, only, only, we would seek our lives, young preachers, to learn to paint a picture of Christ.

Of His glory. Of His perfect death. Of His powerful resurrection.

Of His majestic reigning in heaven. And also paint the pitch black picture of sin. That men might see the difference between the two.

Be drawn to Christ. For all have sinned. Paul says this as a conclusion to a great argument.

Of saying there's none righteous, no not one. There's none that doeth good. All our works of righteousness, all our good works are nothing more than filthy rags.

That every imagination of a man's heart is evil. I said that once preaching and a reporter came up to me afterwards and he was so furious with me. He says, that is wrong, that is wrong, that is wrong, your interpretation of that text.

Because it was a Christian university. He said, that's wrong. I said, young man, I did not interpret the text.

I read it. You interpreted it. And correctly, I might add.

He said, but it's not true. We're not that evil. I said, young man, if I could take your heart out right now and put every thought you've ever had.

From the first moments of infancy to even right now. Take every thought you've ever had. Put it on a film strip and show that film in this coliseum here this evening.

You would run off this university campus and you would never show your face here again. Because you have thought things so vile, so perverted. You cannot share them even with your closest friend.

Because even against your closest friend, you have thought wicked things. What could he do? The same thing you must do if you're honest. Bow your head in shame and cry out for a savior.

It's true. It's true. For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

Now, speaking about the Christian in verse 24. Now, again, when I say Christian, I have to be very, very careful. In a country that at least probably 70% of it believes itself to be Christian.

When I would submit to you that among Baptists, I would be joyful to know that even 15% of us were actually converted. And why is that? Let me say this, because it's my last night. I'll say it over and over and over again.

We have reduced the gospel down to a few evangelical hoops that if someone jumps through, we declare them to be born again. It comes from stupid preaching. Unbiblical preaching.

Terrible preaching. Again, ask someone if they're a sinner. If they say yes, go to the next question.

Do you want to go to heaven? If they say yes, ask them if they want to repeat a prayer. Superstition, every bit of it. Worthless jargon.

Talk of fools. Does not matter if a man recognizes he is a sinner. The question is, has God done such a work in his heart that he now hates the sin he once loved? Does not matter if a man wants to go to heaven, because everyone wants to go to heaven.

The question is now, does he now desire the God that he has spurned and hated? And it is not a question of whether he wants to receive Jesus into his heart. It is a question of whether he desires to repent of his sins, believe the gospel, and follow Jesus Christ. And the evidence of all profession is a lifestyle of sanctification authored by God Himself.

Which will produce practical evidence that can be seen by even the smallest of spirituality. It can be seen, the difference in one's lifestyle is the seal of God upon the assurance of salvation that we claim to possess. Now, but speaking about the true Christian, he says, being justified.

Being justified. Now, I've heard preachers say, being justified means just as if I'd never sinned. No, that's not what it means at all.

Being justified. Some people and some sovereign grace people now are going back to this and it's a Catholic heresy. That justified means that God, when He saves a person, when that person believes in Him, that God makes them righteous so that they can live a righteous life.

That's not what that means. When God justifies a man, He does not make that man righteous. Because if that man were truly made righteous, he would never sin again.

To be justified does not mean that God makes the believer righteous. It is a forensic or legal term and it means this. The moment someone truly believes unto salvation, God declares them to be legally right before Him.

He looks down and says, this person is right. Now, I want to go on to say something that is very, very important. I always tell people, you are saved not only because Jesus Christ died for you, you are saved because Jesus Christ lived for you.

People say, oh yes, I know the resurrection is important. Well, yes, the resurrection is very important, but that's not what I'm talking about. What I'm talking about is this.

To be saved, you must be more than pardoned from your sins. To go to heaven, you must be absolutely righteous. It's not just that you don't have any negative.

It is that you have the very righteousness of God if you plan on standing in His presence. And who may ascend that holy hill? He who has clean hands and a pure heart. Someone who is righteous and none of us qualify.

But Jesus Christ, the Son of God, stepped out of heaven, took on the robe of humanity, and walked on this earth as a man and He lived a perfect life. And the moment someone believes in Jesus Christ, they are not only pardoned of their transgressions by virtue of the cross, but that life that Christ lived perfectly before the Father is granted unto them. We have one here who is greater than Joseph.

Joseph had a coat of many colors that he would not share with his brethren. But Jesus Christ, a coat of righteousness, and He clothed every one of His brothers in that coat. A greater than Joseph, a greater than Joseph.

Justified, declared legally right with God. Now, let's go on. Being justified freely by His grace.

Now, this is, by all means, redundant. Freely? By His grace? I mean, why didn't Paul just say freely? Why does he emphasize grace so much? Why does he repeat himself, it seems? I'll tell you why. Because men hate grace.

What? Men hate a free gift? Yes. And why would any man hate a free gift? Because it requires him to humble himself and say, I cannot, I am not. Man would rather go to hell with his chest out than to heaven on his knees.

But it's amazing, this word here, where it says being justified freely. You know, it says in Scripture that they hated Christ without a cause. They hated Christ without a cause.

Did Jesus Christ ever give anyone a cause to hate Him? No. That's the same word that's used here. God justified you freely means that God justified you, declared you legally right with Him, but He found absolutely no reason in you to do it.

He justified you without you giving Him any cause to do it. As a matter of fact, the only thing you ever gave Him was a cause to do just the opposite, condemn you in hell throughout all eternity. That's the cause you gave God.

But God declared you right with Him through no cause of your own, but because of grace. And it says, whom being justified freely by His grace. By His grace.

Why is it so necessary to preach on the radical depravity of man? How else can grace be grace? Grace cannot be known in a perfect world. Grace cannot be known. Unmerited favor cannot be known where everyone merits the favor.

Oh, my dear friends, you cannot magnify the grace of God and magnify humanity at the same time. It is absolutely impossible. Because then it turns the grace of God into nothing more than a trite cliché.

Men happy about themselves and pleased with God. No, men who loathe themselves and look only unto the grace of God. Now, being justified freely by His grace through something.

Through the redemption. What a word. There's a lot of music I can't stand.

There's a lot of songs I can't stand. And not just contemporary ones, southern gospel ones and many such things as that. Screaming and hollering out words without even the smallest understanding of what they mean.

There are certain words in Scripture that almost ought to be spoken with a whisper. This is one of them. Redemption.

Liberation. Liberation from imprisonment. From slavery.

By the paying of a price. I think if there's anything that overwhelms me, it is this. And again, ask the liberal denominations that's done it.

Take away the blood. And you've lost all devotion. You've lost all piety.

You've lost all salvation. That we were redeemed. But not with the stupid coins of our heathen fathers.

Not with silly religious ritual. We were redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. And His blood was precious blood.

Redeemed. Redeemed how I love to proclaim it. Redeemed.

One of the bones that I have to pick with contemporary preaching is that it seems salvation is no longer enough to move men to piety. They have to be promised a good life. They have to be promised health.

They have to be promised wealth. They have to be promised that their desires are all going to be met. Since when is salvation from hell not enough to make us happy? If He were to crush me and roll me up in a ball and throw me into a distant land.

If there was nothing left but a finger to lift to heaven in praise, then a finger should I lift to heaven in praise. If everything is taken away. Why? I have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.

What more shall I ask from Him? I knew one preacher, he says, Come to Christ. God offers you two things. Eternal life and death on a cross.

Come to Jesus. Come to Jesus. Leonard Ravenhill used to joke, Room at the cross? Room at the cross for you? There's no room at the cross for you.

There's room on the cross for you. You have been redeemed. What more? If tomorrow my tongue is cut out.

If my legs are broken. If all the ministry I've ever done in these last twenty some years, it appears that it's nothing more than dust and fodder and it will all be burned. I still have infinite cause to worship Him.

I've been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. He goes on and he says, Through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. In Christ Jesus.

Apart from Christ Jesus, God has no part with thee. Some young man one time came to me after I preached and he said, Brother Paul, you're right. Jesus is all we need.

And I said, young man, Jesus is all we have. Apart from Him, there's nothing. There's nothing.

There's nothing but Adam. There's nothing but condemnation. There's nothing but death.

There's nothing but transgression. It's why Paul literally goes wild in chapter one of the book of Ephesians. The longest run-on sentence in the entire Bible.

And what is it all about? In Christ. In Christ. In Him.

In Christ. In Christ. Everything God has to do with you is in Christ.

If not, then the only thing God has to do with you is wrath. Only in Christ. He is that rock of ages cleft for me.

He is that city of refuge to where you must run to be saved. He is that strong tower and the righteous run in and are safe. That is Jesus.

It is only Him. Only Him. Only Him.

You see, there's something you need to understand. The Christian, the true Christian, is the only religious man who can claim heaven and not be boasting. You speak with the Orthodox Jew and ask him if he's going to go to heaven.

Say, yes. You ask him why. You say, well, I love the law of God.

I walk in the way of the righteous. I am a righteous man. Okay? Make sense? You ask a Muslim.

If you die, where are you going? He'll say to paradise. Why? I love the Koran. I have made the pilgrimages.

I've been obedient to the praying. I've given alms to the poor. I am a righteous man.

Then the reporter comes to the true Christian and says, sir, how is it with you? If you died right now, where would you go? And the Christian says, heaven. The reporter asks, well, why? And the Christian says, in sin I was conceived and in sin I was born. I have broken every law of my God.

I deserve the fullness of His wrath and righteous indignation against all that is wicked. And the reporter stops the Christian and says, Christian, I don't understand you. Now, the other two men I understand.

They're going to heaven because they're righteous men who have done righteous things. You tell me with joy on your face that you're going to heaven, but how is it so when you deserve just the opposite? And the Christian cries out, I'm going to heaven upon the virtue and the merit of another, my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Upon Him.

He's our boast. He's our boast. He is our boast.

And apart from Him, every help is dung, dust and excrement. It will fail you in the day of trouble. Only Christ is that strong tower.

Only Christ is that rock of ages. Only in Him is salvation found. Now, we go on.

Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation. Whom God hath set forth. I heard a very popular preacher on the radio say a while back, this was several years ago, but I have no indication to believe that he's changed.

He said, I mean, this is a fundamental preacher on the radio, and he said, if those Jews 2,000 years ago would have taken Jesus in and crowned Him as the Messiah, we would all now be walking around in the millennium. My dear friend, if Jesus Christ had not gone to that cross, there would be no hope whatsoever. It was not something that God left up to men to decide.

But it was foreordained by God before the foundation of the world. Someone asked me one time, and I'm pushing the envelope on this. Someone asked me one time, well, the cross was necessary because of the fall.

I said, no, the fall was necessary so that there could be a cross. Don't ever think that the cross is plan B. That Adam fell and God had a backup plan. My dear friend, without the cross of Jesus Christ, you would never know God as you can know Him now.

The cross was necessary not only that a people might know God in a way they never could without it, but all of creation, angels and all might know Him. Because apart from this cross, no one would know Him as He is known now. That is why angels long to look in these things.

Without a fall, just listen for a moment, without a fall, how are you going to demonstrate mercy in a perfect world? How are you going to show grace in a perfect world? Although the fall was squarely the fault of man, it was squarely within the ordained counsels of God that He might get glory for Himself. And it is a mystery so deep that we should be very afraid to enter in. But at the same time, be careful that you do not make the cross into some necessary plan B because it was not.

Now, we go on. Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation. Now the word set forth, Martin Lloyd-Jones here likes to use the word placard, which makes a lot more sense in the United Kingdom than here.

A placard is a billboard. Or to placard something, to use as a verb. That God placard Him.

God displayed His Son publicly. And there was a purpose in it. Do you realize God could have put away sin in a hidden place, in a cave? But for some reason, in the major religious city of the entire universe, His Son is publicly made a spectacle and crucified.

And there's a reason in it because salvation and the work of the cross is not primarily for you. It's primarily for God. And you're going to see that.

Now, let's go on. Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation. About two years ago, I was preaching up in Detroit.

And when I got to the church, they told me, well, you'll be the second speaker. And I said, well, who's speaking right now? And they said, well, go in and see. And I went in there and there was O'Vernon Higham preaching.

The man who preached Martyn Lloyd-Jones' funeral. And I got up and my topic was propitiation. And after I got through preaching, I was kind of intimidated.

I mean, sitting there preaching in front of this man. He'd walked with God for so many years. And to preach on what Martyn Lloyd-Jones called the Acropolis of the Christian Faith, that this is the most important passage in the entire Bible.

So I'm preaching on propitiation. And when I came down, that old man, he walked up to me with his Bible open like this. And just tears running down his face.

And he said, we got the Word back in the book. And I said, what do you mean? He said, there's a turning of the tide in England among the young preachers and others. They've left off all these foolish liberal ideas and many of them are coming back to the fact that Christ died as the propitiation.

My friend, this is possibly the most important word in the entire Bible. Do you understand it? Probably, no, not probably. It is.

It's the meaning. It's the explanation of everything that is written in this holy book. The word propitiation.

Now, he says, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are passed through the forbearance of God. Now, what does that mean? It means something absolutely amazing. That Christ was crucified publicly and that the primary purpose was not the justification of men, but the justification of God.

I said, what do you mean? Well, that word justification, when applied to God, the word could be used, the vindication of God. Now, what is that? It means this. I don't want to get ahead of myself.

Let's back up a little and look at propitiation. Then we'll deal with that question. Propitiation.

In ancient Castellano, in Latin, we have this word propitio. In Spanish, propicio. And it's used quite frequently through the ancient La Reina Valera and the other old, old translations of Scripture in the Spanish language.

Propicio. You'll hear it used something like this. Amo, sed propicio a mi.

Master, be propitious to me. Which means, Master, be merciful to me. The word basically means mercy.

Now, what is a propitiation? A sacrifice that enables, makes it possible for a just God to show mercy to the wicked. Now, I want to show you something that's very, very important. I want you to go to the book of Proverbs.

Chapter 17, verse 15. Here we're going to see the greatest problem in the entire Bible set forth for us. The reason for everything you find in the Old Testament, the reason for the sacrificial system, the reason for absolutely everything you see is found here in Proverbs 17, 15.

Now listen, He that justifieth the wicked and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the Lord. Now, let's use the first part connected to the second part. He that justifieth the wicked is an abomination to the Lord.

Now, just listen to what I'm saying. Now listen, this is important. You understand this? You'll come closer to understanding the cross.

He that justifieth the wicked is an abomination to God. Now, do you see the problem? The problem is this. Romans chapter 3 that we've been studying.

We talked about the wickedness of man and then we say that God justified the wicked. Scripture cannot be broken. There is no contradiction.

It says the one who justifies the wicked is an abomination before God and yet in Romans 3 it says God justified the wicked. And that's why God must be vindicated through the cross of Jesus Christ. And it comes down to this.

The greatest problem in all the Bible and everything in the Bible centers around this one thing. If God is just, He cannot forgive you. If you went home to your house tonight and find that someone slaughtered your entire family and you see the murderer standing over your smallest child, their lifeless body in his hands, he drops the child on the ground, he runs out the door, you run out the door, you knock him to the ground, you take him to the police.

The police take him to the judge and the judge looks at him and says, I'm a loving judge. I forgive you. Go home.

What's going to happen? The first thing out of your mouth is going to be, I demand justice. You're going to call the newspapers, write the congressmen. You're going to say that there's a judge on the bench in this county that is more wicked than the criminals he sets free.

Do you see? Now, shall not the judge of all the earth do right? If God is a just God and you are wicked, then God can not forgive you. And that is the greatest problem in the Bible and Paul sets it forth in Romans chapter 3 saying, how can God be just and the justifier of the ungodly, the unrighteous? That is the greatest problem in the Bible. Let me give you another illustration.

Let's say we're in Spain 500 years ago. Valladolid, Hispania. Nope.

16th century. And I'm a slave. And the law is this.

If a slave is caught stealing, he dies at the gallows. If a slave is caught stealing, he dies at the gallows. So I'm a slave and I'm in there and I'm stealing from my master.

And my master comes in and he catches me red-handed. He grabs me around the collar and he's dragging me to the gallows where I'm going to swing by the neck. But as he's dragging me, I throw myself down on the ground and I cry out, Amo, sed propicio a mi.

Master, be merciful to me. Now, since our society, our culture knows nothing of justice, I'll have to explain this. Do you see what's really going on? Most people say, Well, he's asking for mercy.

Now, the master just has to decide. Is he going to be merciful or not? No, that's not what's going on here. I have just broken the law.

The law demands all of society that I die. What I'm asking the master to do is break the law. I'm saying, Do not do what the law demands.

Turn your back on righteousness and let me go. Are you beginning to see the problem? If God is the just judge of all the earth, He cannot forgive you because you have broken every one of His laws. Now, in the

counsel of God, and no one enters in there.

In the counsel of God, it is right that someone come and that justice, God's justice, be satisfied by the death of one in the place of a multitude. That the only way a just and holy God can forgive the wicked is if someone comes and places themselves, as John Gill used to say, in the law place of the wicked and die under their condemnation. Now, who qualifies for such a task? Well, first of all, this person who dies must be man.

It is man who has sinned. It is man who must die. The blood of bulls and goats will not do.

A man must die. Never forget this, Baptists. A lot of our theology is reactionary.

We react against cults and false teaching, but sometimes it does not pull us to center. It takes us to the other extreme. We are so much about defending the deity of Jesus Christ that oftentimes we forget His humanity.

He was the man. There is one God and one mediator between God and man. The man.

Jesus. He was man. He was God.

He was man. He wasn't a demigod. He wasn't something in between the two.

He was really, barely man. He was really, barely God. But He was man.

And He walked on this earth as a man. But He walked on this earth, as I said, a man who always looked up to the Father and heard, Well done. This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.

Now, is it enough that He be a man? No. He must be God. Why is that? Well, first of all, let's look at a few things.

Salvation is of the Lord. Salvation is of the Lord. And the work of salvation God does not share with a man or an angel.

That is why the doctrine of the Jehovah Witnesses is such an abomination because according to them, God is not our Savior. But God created an innocent creature and then sent that creature down to take care of the problem. My dear friends, it had to be God who went to that tree.

It had to be. Because salvation alone is found in Him. It is He who raises His right arm and swears by His own name that He will do the work.

No one accompanied Him. No one is able. As in the same way in the book of Revelation, no one was found who could open the book.

No one was found who could go to that tree. There's an old song that says, you know, if no one had been willing. Willingness is not the issue.

It wouldn't matter if every angel in heaven had been willing. None of them would have qualified. Because our salvation is not found in an angel.

It's not found in a fine man of good form. Our salvation is found in God. Another thing that we have to realize is this.

Who but God could withstand the wrath of God? Because it was on that tree that the wrath of Almighty God fell. The very wrath that makes mountains melt and seas curl up and go dry. That wrath was to fall on the victim who would die that day.

And who but God could withstand that wrath and rise again? Another thing that we need to ask ourselves. The one who died had to lay down a life. Now, let me ask you a question.

Who possesses such a life so as to lay it down? I was teaching the children today the difference between something derived and something inherent. An angel, is his life inherent or is it derived? It's derived. It comes from someone else.

It's not his. It's borrowed. All life comes from whom? It comes from God.

It's like I see you without a car, so I give you the car that my other brother has loaned me. I've done nothing. Jesus said, I have authority to lay down my life and I have authority to take it up again.

It was true life that was laid down that day. Not a borrowed thing, but a thing possessed and a thing let go of. Another thing.

So, one time, this was a few years ago at a university, and I'm preaching on Christ dying for a multitude of men. And some smart aleck university student kind of stood up and he said, I got a problem with all that. I got something you can't answer.

And I said, well, possibly I can't answer it, but it won't change the truth of the gospel. What's your question, young man? He said, how can one man suffer a few short hours on a tree and save a multitude of men from an eternity in hell? And I said, young man, I'm so glad you asked that question. Do you want the answer? He said, yes.

I said, that one man could suffer a few short hours and save a multitude of men from an eternity in hell because that one man was worth more than all of them put together. When theologians talk about the perfect sacrifice of Christ, often you are lulled into believing they're only talking about the sinlessness of Christ. That He was morally perfect.

No, they're talking about the value of the cross. Remember the other day I said if I could write on something for a PhD, it would be on the beauty of God. If not that, the precious value of the one on the tree.

The value of the one who died on the tree. He bore our sin. He bore our sin.

What does that mean? Calvin wouldn't even get near it. He just threw up his hands and threw his pen down and said, I give up. That the triad, the thrice holy one, would become sin.

I don't know. I don't know. But I want you to think about something for a moment.

There is a subjective relational sense to what's going on here to understand the value of His death. Let's take the finest, most precious, most protected, most naive, most childlike woman among us. So tender as Scripture said she would not put her heel on the ground.

The finest, most upstanding cultured woman in this church. Let me just use her as an illustration. Tonight in Atlanta, countless prostitutes will be arrested.

It will be a scandal out in the streets. Pictures will be taken. The women will laugh.

They've done this a million times. They're not ashamed of it. They might even come out in the newspaper.

They're not ashamed. They'll be right back out on the street in a few days. Now, let's say that one of you fine ladies just happened to be walking on that sidewalk when the arrest is made and you're captured and drug in with them.

Don't you know that that arrest will have an entirely different meaning for you? It will break you into a million pieces. It will bring shame that will endure throughout your lifetime. You won't even know what to do.

You'll be so beside yourself. When everyone else is laughing and tackling and telling jokes, you will literally be digging through the cement to bury yourself in shame. When we think about Jesus Christ burying our sin, we know not of what we speak.

Would it be a horrifying thing for you to bear the sins of all the world with your renewed heart, your regenerated heart, now a Christian? Would it be a terrifying thing? Oh, it would be a terrifying thing, but you are still cultured in sin. You know it. But for the Holy One to take all that sin upon Himself meant a punishment much deeper than anything you could ever know or endure.

Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all the things written in the book of the law so as to perform them, to do them. What does it mean? Prior to being converted, prior to having your heart regenerated, prior to coming to know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you're under a curse is what it means. And what does it mean to be under a curse? I gave you a little bit of taste of what it means earlier in the sermon.

That in your sin and your rejection of God and your rebellion against His commands, you have become so vile, disgusting, and loathsome not only before a holy God, but before a holy heaven that the last thing you will hear when you take your first step into hell is all of creation rejoicing and singing because God has rid the earth of you. Should go on in the same chapter of Galatians 3. Get down to verse 13. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law.

How? He became a curse. The serpent lifted up in the wilderness. The one upon whom God cannot look.

Now, I want to talk about the cross for a moment. I almost cannot go to churches that preach on the cross, especially during what's called Easter. I simply can't endure it because the cross has been turned into a romantic syrup.

And men do not even understand from where cometh the pain of the tree. Men tell me they're going to preach on the cross. When the movie *The Passion* came out, I kept getting all these emails from different brothers all over the country saying, you know, they're in trouble with the movie *The Passion*.

I have trouble with the movie too. I didn't go see it. But they were all writing, all these preachers writing me, Southern Baptist preachers, all kinds of preachers writing me about how terrible *The Passion* was.

And I wrote them back. I don't have near as much trouble with Mel Gibson and his passion as I do your preaching because we're to know better. You hear preaching on the cross today.

And I do not want to take away from the physical sufferings of Christ. I do not want to take away from the blood shed. I do not want to take away from the crown on His head and the spear in His side and the nails in His hands.

I do not want to take away from that. But for a moment, we have to stand back and look at something. When Christ is preached on that tree by the great multitude of Baptist preachers, they don't even understand what they're saying because they will spend an entire hour even with the words of a medical examiner going through everything Jesus Christ suffered at the hands of the Jews and the Romans.

And my friends, if you are saved here tonight, you are not saved because of what the Jews and the Romans did to Jesus. You're saved because when He was on that tree, He bore our sin and God the Father crushed Him under the full force of His wrath. I was over in Eastern Europe and I was teaching a conference among pastors and it was a German brethren seminary and I went in there and everything, of course, in German.

I was looking for a book I could read and finally I found this one book, *The Cross of Christ*. And I pulled it off. And if you've read enough books, you get to the point where you can kind of just go, okay, I'm going to thumb through this really quick and find the major point and see what this man believes.

Well, I found it after about two or three minutes. This is what he said. God the Father looked down from heaven and saw the suffering that was inflicted upon Jesus by the hands of Romans and Jews and He considered that as payment for our sin.

I want to submit to you that if I went to most seminaries and said that and in most churches and preached that, everyone would applaud. And I hear all these preachers that they'll look and they'll go, and the Father turned away from the sun on the tree because He couldn't bear to look at His suffering. That's not what it says.

He says, *Ila ila lama sabachthani* My God, My God, why have You forsaken? Why have You abandoned Me? Why had He abandoned Him? Because He took upon Himself sin, that's why, and the guilt of it. And our God is too holy to look upon such things. If you go to Psalms 22, just quickly, I'll read.

Just listen. Psalms 22 begins with, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? Why art Thou so far from helping Me? And from the words of My roaring. That's His complaint.

Verse 2, O my God, I cry in the daytime, but Thou hearest not, and in the night season, and am not silent. His complaint continues. And then He gives an argument against this complaint.

He says, in verse 4, Our fathers trusted in Thee, they trusted, and Thou didst deliver them. They cried unto Thee, and were delivered. They trusted in Thee, and were not confounded.

O my God, there's never been a time in the history of Your covenant people, Israel, that a righteous man has cried out to You, and You have forsaken him. But I, Your only Son, the Messiah, I hang on this tree, and wicked men surround Me. My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? And then He answers His own question in verse 3, But Thou art holy.

And in verse 6, But I am a worm and no man. On that cross He bore the sins of His people. And became a reproach.

The serpent lifted up in the wilderness. The scapegoat, the elders of Israel would come out and lay their hands upon the head of that goat, symbolically transferring their sin to the goat, and that the goat would be led outside the gates of the city, left to wander in the wilderness, forsaken of God, forsaken of God's people. To die.

So Christ suffered outside the gates of the city. And now, we get to this other point, the fierce point of the Gospel. And it is this.

When you get to the garden and Christ cries out three times, Let this cup pass from Me. I have heard preachers of all manner say that He was afraid of the devil. I've heard preachers say, No, He was afraid of the Romans.

No, He was afraid of the spears. He was afraid of this. He knew that the cross was going to be so terrible and on and on.

No! Just look up the word cup in the Old Testament. Get you an exhaustive concordance. Let me sum up all the prophets for you in a makeshift.

I'll gather them all together and summarize them with this. Because of the wickedness and the sin and the rebellion of the nations, I will hand them the cup of My wrath and I will force them to drink it and they will drink it and they will stagger and they will die. My dear friend, I want you to think about this.

Here is Jesus Christ in such anguish, cowering in a garden and He is literally bleeding through His skin. He has such anguish. Now, hold that picture.

Now, later on, just a few decades later and on up to England, to all the different times, even the early Americas, all throughout the world, even today. What? We see Christians, disciples of Jesus Christ, they're going to the cross singing. They're going to be burned at the stake and they walk out there as happy as larks, counting it a privilege.

Origen's mother had to hide his clothes because she knew when the Romans came into town that day he would run out in the street and start preaching just so he could be martyred. So here we've got all these Christians. Do you realize that today 1,000 Christians will die as martyrs? Do you realize that? 1,000 a day now are dying as martyrs.

And they go to the cross. They go to the firing squad. They go to the noose.

They go to prison counting it a privilege and worshiping God and full of courage and full of joy because of the grace of God. And here's the Captain of our salvation hiding. Oh, my dear friend, no.

It was not a cross. It was not a spear. It was not a crown of thorns.

And it was not nails that caused our Savior, the mighty Captain of our salvation, to be there in a garden crying out with great drops of blood. It was this. The three times Holy One would go to a tree and bear the filth of His people.

And then the One who was always in the bosom of the Father had always looked up and heard, This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. He would be abandoned by His own God and crushed under the full force of God's holy hatred against our sin. It is that thing that is the true pain of the cross.

Abraham is standing there on that mount with a knife, probably the circumcision knife. What do I know? A knife of flint. He's got his hand on the brow of his dearly beloved, only begotten son, Isaac.

He takes the knife and rears it back and comes down to slaughter his own son and his hand is stayed. And you think the story ends there. His hand is stayed and then God the Father takes the knife, puts His hand on the brow of His only begotten son, Jesus Christ, and thrusts the knife straight into his heart.

His son was slaughtered by His own hand on your behalf to call forth a people. That's the cross. That's the cross.

Justice had to be satisfied. It had to be satisfied. Now, let me say something.

In Reformed teaching, although they do not say this, they do not commit this heresy, sometimes the way they say things makes us misunderstand certain things and we need to clear them up. When I say that the law of God or the justice of God must be satisfied before God can forgive, I am not saying that there is some great law higher than God that God must submit to before He can save. The law of God is nothing but an expression of God's character.

God's justice, His just character had to be satisfied. Have you ever heard these preachers say, God could have been just with you, but instead of being just, He was loving? Do you realize what they're saying? God's love is unjust. God is wicked.

No, my friend. God satisfied His justice through the death of His only begotten Son. He died.

He died. He died. I don't boast about the fact that I don't understand anything about the book of Revelation, but I don't.

And I've been preaching for 23 years and haven't really started a study on it. I decided about 12 years ago that I would seek to know something about the cross where my Lord died. 12 years, 1200 pages of notes.

I don't understand nothing. I don't understand anything. All hail the power of Jesus' name.

Oh, Jesus. Oh, Jesus. I worship You, Lord.

I worship You. Oh, God, I worship You. All hail the power of Jesus' name.

Let angels prostrate fall. Bring forth the royal diadem and crown Him Lord of all. God, this is between You and me.

Oh, that I might know Him. That I might know Him. That I might preach His cross.

I'm so sad that I can't preach Jesus like He ought to be preached. My words are so dumb and they're so vile and they mean nothing. Oh, God, I worship You.

Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing my great Redeemer's praise. The glory of my God and King. Oh, God.

Lord, I just want to stop for a minute. Lord, I just want to stop. Oh, Lord.

Thank You so much. And I'm so sorry I don't see more. I'm so sorry I don't understand.

I'm so sorry that my heart is so dull. Lord, that the cross might become real to me. Oh, God.

Oh, God. I worship You, Lord. I praise Thee.

Oh, God. Oh, God. Thank You.

Now, I want us to look because I want to teach this. It says that verse 25, whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are passed through the forbearance of God. To declare, I say at this time, His righteousness that He might be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.

Sometimes when I speak at a university, people are always appalled when I speak about hell, when I speak about the damnation of men. They're appalled. They're angry.

They say they can't understand that I have to go into some diatribe or explanation to explain what I mean, to justify my words. How could it be that God would send men to hell? Do you know that it's exactly the opposite problem in heaven? If God were to have sent every man on the face of the earth to hell, He would not have to have given one explanation to anyone. Everyone in heaven, every angel would have stood and said the God of all the earth has done right.

God only has to explain Himself, not when He condemns, but when He forgives. Because how can a just God forgive such wicked people? And imagine, imagine the accusations of the slanderer. Just imagine.

The devil, we don't know much about his fall. We really don't. But he did fall.

We do know that. He took some with him, it seems. But he fell.

And what happened when he fell? Perfect justice. No explanation. Perfect justice.

Everyone was content. He sinned against God. He was condemned.

All of creation stands up and says, hallelujah, no problem. And notice this. When the angels fell, God did not send them a Savior.

What makes you think He had to send you one? Tozer said that if all the men on the face of the earth were blind, it would not diminish the glory of the sun and the moon and the stars. If every man were cast into hell and heaven were void of all men, it would not diminish the glory nor the happiness of God. But they fell.

And the only thing that is seen is justice. Perfect justice. No need of explanation.

But then Adam falls. There's where the explanation must begin. What is this? He'll send forth one born of woman.

He'll send forth one that will crush the serpent's head. What is this? Can you imagine the railings of Satan? Oh God, what has happened here? When I fell, there was all this about justice. Where's your justice? Has the God of all the earth decided to turn a page on who He is? I mean, look at this Adam.

He fell. He's not dead. And what is this promise of salvation? You can't save him.

Oh, Abraham. Noah. Noah.

Right. You saved him from the flood. But he should have died with the rest of them.

Oh, and Abraham, your friend. He lied. He did not believe you.

He even put his wife in jeopardy. Israel, your people. Your beloved.

Bunch of idol worshippers and you didn't kill them. Oh, and David. Man after your own heart.

He's an adulterer and a murderer. Not to mention all the rules you gave with regard to a king. He broke.

Where's your justice? And heaven is silent. No answer is given. 2,000 years ago, Satan lifts up his voice and says, how can you forgive? And God points down to that tree.

I can forgive them because my Son died for them all. Behold the vindication of God. When Jesus Christ died on that tree, He vindicated the character of God.

That God is both just and the justifier of the one who believes. That He satisfied justice and made a way for pardoning in Christ. He died.

And with His death, He vindicated God. And when God resurrected Christ from the dead, He vindicated Him. Declared to be the Son of God publicly.

He was always the Son of God. He was not made the Son of God by the resurrection. But He was publicly declared by the Father to be the Son of God when He rose again from the dead.

Raised because His death brought justification. It brought it. He died.

He paid. He was raised as proof that the people of God are free. Are free.

Now, He rose again from the dead. He walked on the earth. He ascended up into heaven.

This is an amazing thing that He would ascend so. I want you to think about this. I know this is more teaching tonight than anything, but just if you can grab a hold of this.

You know you hear people say about Jesus, the man upstairs. That is a vile remark. It is a vile remark.

But there is a real sense that Jesus is the man in heaven for us. He is the answer to Job's cry. Oh, that there was someone, a mediator, an umpire, someone who could stand between us both and lay one hand on God and lay one hand on us and bring the two together.

In order for someone to lay one hand on man, he must be man. In order for someone to lay one hand on God, he must be God. And Jesus Christ was the God-man.

Spurgeon said this, a ladder that does not reach to the top is not any good, and a ladder that does not reach to the bottom is not any good. Christ is able, being God, to reach to the top and being man to reach to the bottom. But here is the thing, the most amazing thing, and it is this.

He ascends up into heaven. But if you take note, no one has ever entered through those doors. No man has entered in through those gates.

Can you imagine? There stands the Christ at the gates of heaven. And He cries out. There is a psalm that was used throughout by the patriarchs and everything.

It is an amazing thing, and it says this, Christ's, according to the patriarchs of the first five centuries, they said that Christ came to the doors of glory. And He cried out from Psalms 24, Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. And the answer back from inside, there was silence, and then a rabble, and then a rumble of voices saying, angels and the like saying, Who would dare cry out to this door? What man on earth would dare lay his hand to the latch of this gate? This gate opens for no man.

Who is this King of glory? And Christ answers back and says, The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates, even lift them up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. And for the first time in all of history that is history, those gates flung open wide, and there stood Jesus the man for us.

And all the angels that cannot be counted fall upon their face and worship the Lamb. And the Lamb approaches the throne of God where a man cannot stand, where seraphs must cover their faces and cover their feet. And He sits down at the right hand of majesty on high.

Could it have been something like this? The Father looking to the Son and saying, It is finished. And the Son saying, Father, it is finished. Indeed, I've bought them all.

I've bought them all. In this same Jesus who was crucified is coming again. He has been given a name that is above every name.

He is King of kings and Lord of lords. And He will come and all the nations will stand before Him and all the books of all the deeds ever done by men will be opened up and all men that have not availed themselves of the blood of the Lamb will be judged out of the things written in those books and everyone who is judged shall be condemned. But one by one, the tiniest, most pitiful saints will come before Him and Christ will point His finger towards them and say, This one, this one was born in Zion.

This one is mine. This one is mine. And the most amazing thing, Saint, is though you have never seen Him, I assure you that when you look up for the first time into His face, you will see a familiar face.

And I can assure you this, Saint, that although there is a judgment for the saints of God, it is probably the most difficult thing in all Scripture to understand because I also want to assure you of this, Saint. Many of you have very little joy because you constantly walk under condemnation. Many of you who are truly bought by the blood of the Lamb have little joy because you are sure that because of your frequent failures that the first thing you'll see is a scowl and a frown from the face of one disappointed in thee.

That is a lie straight out of the pit of hell. He did not redeem you with His blood so that the first glance you ever catch of Him would be a frightful frown. He's reserved that for those who hate Him.

I do not know how you will be judged, but I know it will be in love. I have sometimes wondered if it would be something like this. You appear before Him, and there's so much love coming out of Him.

There's so much holiness. Everything you've ever done is brought to mind, and it crumbles you into a million pieces, but at the same time, you know that He knows, and you know that He loves you more than life itself, and He's made it go away forever. And for you smaller saints, you're not Charles Spurgeon.

You're not missionaries. You're not great evangelists. You're just little lambs that have never done anything to get in the record books.

And you have bought into the lie that somehow God has an inner circle, that He has these men. All your life you've been left out, haven't you? All your life! You've never been the big shot. You've never been in the inner circle.

You've never been the chosen one. And so according to most preachers, you're going to get to heaven in the same pecking order. It's going to remain throughout all eternity.

Oh, you're getting in, but you won't sit with Whitfield and Spurgeon. Oh, you're getting in, but you will not be a favorite son. That's demonic.

Because Jesus said the first will be last and the last will be first, and by saying the first will be last and the last will be first, He's saying there is no first or last. It's a rabbinic circle. You're there because of Him, and you're a child, and pecking orders no longer exist.

Because everyone who's there is there just because of Jesus. And nothing else matters. You're finally free from all this demonic chaos that steals your joy.

Folks, I don't have to move a quarter of an inch to the left or a quarter of an inch to the right to be more loved of God. He cannot love me more. He will not love me less.

If I walk out of this pulpit and it's the last time I preach and I become an abject failure, lose all my courage, boldness, faith, and everything else, and I'm just a tiny man who with all the courage he can muster can only bear to sit in the back seat of a few, He will not, it will not, diminish His love for me. The one thing I know is that God's love is not like ours. I am so happy.

When I learned this, and young preacher, if I could give you a gift, it would be this. I am so happy when I learned this truth. I became so happy.

It doesn't matter. Nothing matters except He shed His own blood for my soul. You, many of you, I know you.

You think you're going there and you think you're not going to be loved as much as the ones who really did it right. That's not true. You're going there in full regalia.

You're going there dressed out with the best of them in a robe of righteousness won by your elder brother. To hell with all this silly stuff. I hear preachers preach in order to manipulate and motivate people.

You're just loved. You finally came through a door where you're just loved. And that's all.

And that's wonderful. That is so wonderful if you can just grasp what I'm saying. And it's all because of the Lamb.

The Lamb. Thank you. It's been a privilege.

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