

The Cross-Centered Life Q&a 4

by Paul Washer

The sermon emphasizes the importance of preaching about sin and the need to understand our own depravity in order to appreciate the beauty of God's grace and the gift of salvation through faith in Christ.

Duration: 1:12:27

Scripture: Psalm 7:11-12, Matthew 6:33, Romans 3:22-25

Topics: "Cross of Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of preaching about sin and convicting people of their guilt. He uses the analogy of a judge setting a criminal free out of love and compassion, which would be met with opposition and condemnation. The preacher highlights the incredible love and compassion of God, who sent His Son to die for our sins. He shares a personal story of a young man whose life was transformed by his encounter with Christ, leading him to boldly share the gospel. The sermon concludes by emphasizing the need for preaching the true gospel, rather than reducing it to a mere formula or self-help message.

Transcript

Again, it's a tremendous privilege for me to be here with you, and I praise God, it seems that each time, in each time of worship, there seems to be a greater manifestation of God's freedom, and that's a delight for me. You know, preaching is extremely important, but preaching is not an end in itself, it's a means to a greater end, which is the worship of God. And you will do well to learn to worship Him properly, and to give yourself to a life of worship, not simply corporate, but individual and personal and hidden worship.

What a man is in public is determined by what a man is in the hidden places, in his secret time with God. Let's go to the book of Romans again. We're going to continue on with our passage in Romans chapter 3. In verse 23, we read, For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Now, I want to make one more statement about this that is very, very important. We do not have a systematic theology in the New Testament. It's not written in the form of a systematic theology.

But the closest thing we have to a systematic theology would be the book of Romans. Paul has a great desire to go on to Spain to preach the gospel, and he's sending this letter forth for the edification of the church in Rome, but also that they might know his teaching. Now, here's something that I want you to recognize.

Paul is explaining what he believes about the gospel. It's his theology in the book of Romans. Isn't it amazing to you that he spends the first three chapters almost entirely dedicated to man's sin? Now, there are 16 chapters.

He spends the first three doing what? Using his intellect, using his knowledge of the scripture, and of course, led, guided by the Holy Spirit, he is trying to convince all men of their guilt. We do a great disservice when we try to put sin and preaching about sin in some hidden place. We do a great disservice to the world when we refuse to tell them about their sin, when we refuse to labor and labor using the scriptures to convince them of their sin.

You see, the purpose of the law is not that by living the law someone might be saved, but the purpose of the law is this, to show men they cannot live rightly before God and they need a Savior. And the purpose of gospel preaching with regard to sin is this, is to build a cage around you, to cut off every human hope you might have so that you'll turn to Christ and Christ alone. Do you know there are actually some evangelical churches today where the preachers actually boast that they do not talk much about sin? Do you know I can tell you with the authority of scripture that the Holy Spirit is not working through their ministries? Because one of the primary ministries of the Holy Spirit is to convict the world of sin.

And if you have a preacher or you have a church that does not want to talk about that at all, they can be assured that the Holy Spirit is not among them. It's not working. You see, my purpose here in speaking much about sin is the twin purpose of Paul.

I desire to cut off from you every hope you might have in your own virtue, your own merit, that you might run to Christ. And I can tell you this about yourself. The unconverted man is of such a nature that he will try every avenue of salvation rather than come to Christ.

And therefore, it is important for the preacher to anticipate his wanderings, to anticipate his rebellion and try to cut him off before he even starts to run. And I want to tell you here, your case is a difficult one. You cannot save yourself.

No man can save you. No deed can save you. The piety of your parents cannot save you.

There is only one who can save you. And that is Jesus Christ the righteous. The one who laid down his life and took it up again.

He alone has the power to say. Now, yesterday we discussed how wretched that man truly is. And even though we may have painted a dark picture, I can assure you that no preacher has the ability to paint a dark enough picture.

Again, I want to iterate that the reason for doing that is we cannot understand the love of God and we cannot understand the glory and the beauty of the gospel unless we understand how wicked man truly is. It would have been an amazing thing if Christ had died for worthy creatures. It would have been astounding that he would have given his life for good men.

But Paul the Apostle makes it clear that he gave his life for wretches. And that's what makes his love so spectacular. I don't know if there's anyone here that has studied astronomy, but let me ask you a question.

Where did all the stars go today? I mean, did some just giant cosmic creature come by and sweep them all into a bucket and take them to the other side of the world? Where did all the stars go? They're still there.

Then why can't we see them? Because of all the light of the sun. Now, so right now as I look and I see up in the sky, I can see no beauty.

No beauty of the stars. It's gone from me. It's impossible to capture.

I look all over and I see no beauty. But when the pitch black night comes, the darkness of the night comes, then those stars shine forth with the most excellent beauty. The grace of God is most manifest, appearing in the backdrop, appearing with a backdrop of man's depravity.

The darker we paint man, the more beautiful the stars of God's grace appears. That is why when someone is soundly converted, when they're truly converted, and when they are growing in Christ, if a preacher gets up and teaches on the radical depravity of man, they don't get mad. They rejoice.

And they don't rejoice because of what they were. They do not rejoice that men are depraved. No, they rejoice because they see Christ in a clearer fashion.

And they're willing to say this, paint me as dark as you can, preacher, if Christ be greater glorified. See that? Religious people don't talk that way. They say, how dare you? Now, man is radically depraved.

We have shown that over and over. Now let's get to verse 23. Speaking about those who have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, speaking about Christians, he says in verse 24, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

Now, these sinners, these people who have fallen short, are now justified. What does it mean to be justified? Well, does it mean that the moment that we believe God, that He somehow does some miracle in our life and turns us into perfectly righteous creatures who never sin again? No. Because Christians still sin.

Does it mean that He infuses us with some power and because of that power in us, we're now able to live in a way that totally pleases Him all the time and we earn for ourselves salvation? Justification is a legal or forensic term. It's a legal term. The moment a man believes God, God legally declares him to be right with him.

God legally, from His throne, looks down upon the man who believes Him and legally declares that man to be right. Yes. And here's the important part.

Not only does He legally declare him to be right with God, but He treats him as someone who is right with God. And don't forget that word. That's the one word I want you to remember.

When someone believes God, not only does God legally declare them to be right with Him, but He treats them as right with Him. Now, it says here that being justified as a gift by His grace. This is almost redundant.

It's almost like He's saying being justified, it's a gift, it's a gift, it's a gift, it's a gift, it's a gift. It's a gift. Again, Paul, when he begins to talk about grace and he begins to talk about faith, not only here in Romans, but in Ephesians and Galatians, he almost just seems to be constantly repeating himself to drive home the point.

He even seems to be breaking rules of proper writing. He's just redundant, redundant. Not of works.

It's a gift. Not of works. It's a gift.

Not of works. It's a gift. And that's what you must see.

But you can't see that until we have cut off every hope that you might have in your own virtue and merit. A man is declared right with God as a gift. Now, it says here in verse 24, being justified as a gift.

The Greek word here is very important. It's used in another place and it kind of gives us an idea of what God's talking about. In the book of John, it says that they hated Jesus.

Now listen very carefully. They hated Jesus without a cause. That phrase without a cause is translated from the same word we have here.

Now, here's what I want you to see. Did anyone have a cause or reason to hate Jesus? Did Jesus ever do anything? Did He ever sin against anyone so that they might hate Him? Absolutely not. Jesus never gave anyone a cause to hate Him.

Well, that's exactly what this text is saying. That God justified us even though we did not give Him a cause to do so. In fact, God does not declare a man right because of that man.

He declares a man right in spite of that man. In our sin, the only thing we could ever cause a good and holy God to do is to condemn us. The only thing we could ever cause or motivate a holy God to do is to condemn us.

One time years ago, I was in a church and God seemed to move and I was praying in front of the church and some people came down and this young man came down and knelt right beside me. And even though I wasn't wanting to eavesdrop, his prayer was rather prominent. And this is what he said with adamancy, I mean, with strain, with force.

He said, God, I just want you to give me what I deserve. I usually do not interrupt people when they're praying. But I stopped my praying and I turned and I grabbed him by the shoulder and I spun him around.

And I took my finger and I put it in his face and I said, young man, never, never, never ask God to give you what you deserve. Because you deserve the lowest part of hell. You want God to reward you for your virtue? You want God to reward you for your merits? If God were to allow you to cull every deed that you thought was inappropriate from your life and He allowed you to go to every virtuous man on the planet and gather all their good deeds and heap them upon yourself and then present yourself before Him to be judged based on the virtue and the merit that you carry on your shoulders, He would condemn you to the lowest place in hell.

Salvation is not God giving you what you deserve. Salvation is God having pity. And that's why proud men hate Christianity.

They'd rather go to hell than have pity, than receive pity. Now, there's something very important here that I want to point out. If I'm ever teaching in a Bible college or a seminary, and that's probably not going to happen, I'm just not smart enough.

But if I were ever teaching, and I was ever teaching a study of comparative religions, trust me, you will want to take my class. Because it actually will be a very easy class. Why? Because there are only two kinds of religions.

I don't care how you put it, how you look at it, there are two kinds of religions in the world. There are religions of works. And there is a religion of grace.

They can all be divided in that way. Let me give you an example. Let's say that here we have a Jewish man, we have a Muslim man, and we have a true Christian, a real Christian.

I have to say it that way. So the reporter goes to the Jewish man and he says, Sir, if you died right now, where would you go? And the Jewish man says, I would go to paradise. Well, why? Well, I love the law of God.

I have kept the way of the righteous. I am a good man. And the reporter goes, oh, okay.

Then he goes to the Muslim man. And he says, Sir, if you died right now, where would you go? I would go to paradise. Why? I have studied the Koran all my life.

I have made all the pilgrimages. I have made all the daily prayers. I have given alms.

I am a good man. I am a righteous man. He goes to the Christian, the real Christian.

And he says, Sir, if you died right now, where would you go? And the Christian says, Sir, I would go to heaven. Well, why? And the Christian begins, In sin did my mother conceive me and bring me forth. And like all the wicked, I went astray from the womb.

And I have broken every law of my God. The reporter can't take anymore. And he stops him in mid-sentence and he says, Hold it.

Hold it. I mean, these other men, I understand. They have a hope for heaven because they believe themselves to be righteous and good.

They've earned it. They've done the right thing. God owes them heaven.

They have completed every task they should. They are righteous in their own persons and their own deeds. But you, Sir, I do not understand.

You're telling me you're going to heaven and yet in the same breath you're telling me you deserve nothing of heaven. How are you going to heaven? And the Christian looks up with the most beautiful smile on his face and he says, Sir, I go to glory on the virtue and the merit of another Jesus Christ my Lord. That is the difference between all religions.

Right there. That's it. You see, all we have is Jesus.

That's it. It's not knowledge. Even the greatest Christian scholar knows nothing.

It's not personal piety of a man who's walked with God for many years. All his good works are like filthy rags. Young man, one time after I got through preaching, he came to me and he says, You're right, Brother Paul.

Jesus is all we need. I said, Young man, Jesus is all we have. Apart from Jesus, you have no part with God.

You see, in every other religion, there are principles that you follow. In Christianity, there is a person that you follow. In every other religion, you do something to earn your salvation.

In Christianity, Christ has done it all. Christ has done it all. It's just Jesus.

Jesus. Jesus. Jesus.

Everything is Jesus. The foundation is Jesus. The starting point is Jesus.

The ending point is Jesus. The middle ground is Jesus. Everything is Jesus.

Nothing else, nothing else, nothing else, nothing else is Jesus. Being justified as a gift by His grace, by His unmerited favor. Not only is this the message that saves us, this is also the message that propels us to true piety.

The Gospel is the mystery of godliness. It is this knowledge of the grace and love of God that propels us to want to be more for Christ. When you preach on grace that salvation is free, the accusation immediately comes up, well, if it's free, then people will believe and live like devils.

They most certainly will not. The more the true Christian learns about grace, the more he desires to be everything for Christ, the more the carnal, wicked church member hears about grace, the more he says, let sin abound. And the difference is one is truly converted and the other is not.

One has been regenerated by the Holy Spirit and the other has made a decision, and that decision has been affirmed by a well-meaning but ignorant minister of the Gospel. Let's go on. Being justified as a gift by his grace through the redemption.

Young men, women, I forget what Puritan it was, but he said there are some words that should be lightly spoken, some words that after, that when we speak them, there should be a trembling of the lip and that afterwards, when the word comes forth from our mouth, there should be a moment of silence and thought. I believe redemption is one of those words, redemption. It means to gain the liberty of a prisoner or a captive or slave by the payment of a price, a payment of a price.

What price was paid? The precious blood of God's own Son. Not with silver or gold, not even with all the coffers of heaven being emptied. The precious blood of Christ.

Having children has helped me so much in my theology. It is frightening how much a parent can love a child. It is frightening.

It can even, we must be careful, it can turn into idolatry. I mean, even after all these years, to wake up in the middle of the night and creep in to your children's bedroom just to watch them sleeping. And I think, if I, being evil, could love my children in this fashion, be willing to die a thousand deaths, consider my own self accursed that they might be saved.

If I, being evil, can do that, how much more did God love His Son? I love my children and I am not perfect. I love my children and they are not perfect. But God loves His Son and He is perfect.

And He loved a perfect Son who never gave Him cause to do anything but love. And He gave this Son. After my son Ian was born, I was driving down the road in my old truck.

And I just burst into tears. Because all my life when I thought of the cross, I thought of how much Christ suffered. Then I thought for a moment, if I had to give my son unto death, how much I, how much I would be wearied with pain.

You see, this is what moves us to desire to be saved. Alright, I know now what I am. I have an idea what He is.

I have an idea of how much He loves His Son. I have an idea of how much He should hate me. And He gave that Son to die for me.

When you look at it that way, you almost want to say with Peter, depart from me Lord, I am a wicked man. Do not do this thing. Do not give your Son for something like me that crawled out of a hole and should crawl back into one.

Yet you made Him a worm and a serpent and a scapegoat to buy filth. And can it be that I should gain an interest in my Savior's blood? And it not only draws us to Christ, but it leads us to want to give our lives to Him. You see, I am not an I-daughter and a T-crosser.

I am kind of like a bull in a china shop. I do not like religion at all. It is too confining.

I like to scream at the top of my voice. I like to run through fields. I like to dance wildly when no one can see me.

After all, I am Baptist, sort of. I even like to fight. I am wild inside and I want to run wild.

But there is a thing that drives that wildness in certain directions. It is not religion. It is not wanting to be clean or pretty or moral or have straight hair.

It is this thing that God, God, God, God sent His Son to die for me. I remember, I know a young man. I used to be a young man.

I know him well. He was sort of a big guy on campus. One day he met Christ.

And as Christ has the ability to do, Christ ruined his life. He believed in Christ. And he went from being a big man on campus to standing out in the middle of the campus handing out tracts.

One day some of his friends came to him and they took him aside and they said, What are you doing? People think you are out of your mind. And the young man replied, What can I do? What can I do? He died for me. Don't you understand? He died for me.

He died. I'm going to hell. I'm a wretch.

The kingdom of the Lord died for me. What do I do? I must live for Him. He died.

The Christian lives between two days. The day that Christ hung before all men. And the day that all men will fall before Christ.

Always think of those two days. Don't think of this present day. Don't determine how you will act based upon this day and this circumstance.

Look at the fact that He shed His blood for you. Look at the fact that all men will stand before Him on that glorious day. Live in light of that.

Keep your eyes focused like a laser on that. He shed His blood for us. He paid the price.

Now here's the question. To whom did He pay the price? Throughout church history there have been some very extravagant and heretical ideas. One of the most common was, well, since we had sinned we had come into bondage under Satan and therefore Christ paid Satan.

He sacrificed Himself and He paid the redemptive price so Satan would set us free. That's still alive today. It's not true.

Who did Christ pay? He paid God. Let me put it this way. Someone came to me and said, God saved me.

I said, wonderful. From what did He save you? And they said, well, He saved me from sin. I said, sin wasn't coming after you.

Well, He saved me from hell. Hell is an impersonal place. From what did God save you? He said, well, I don't know.

I said, God saved you from God. It was God coming after you. You had made yourself.

You declared war on God. And guess what? God declared war on you. You declared yourself to be an enemy of God.

And God declared Himself to be your enemy. And He was coming after you in His righteousness and His holiness. And in order for His wrath to be turned back against you, a payment had to be made.

So herein we see both the wrath and the love of God. In His wrath, He declared you worthy of eternal condemnation and was coming for you. In His love, He gave a sacrifice of His Son that paid the price that satisfied His justice and appeased His wrath.

Now, I want us to go on. The redemption which is in Christ Jesus. We've already touched on this.

In Christ, there is salvation. Outside of Him, there is nothing. Nothing.

You are either in Christ or you are in Adam. In Adam, you are condemned. In Adam, you must die.

In Christ, you are justified. In Christ, you have life. You were born in Adam.

You must be born again in Christ. You are in Adam from the beginning without any effort one way or the other on your part. But to be in Christ, you must repent and believe.

Now, which is in Christ Jesus, verse 25, whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness because in the forbearance of God, He passed over the sins previously committed. For the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Some theologians, many theologians, have said this is the most important text in the entire Bible. It's the most important text in the entire Bible. Well, that's a pretty big statement, but if it's to be made, it should be made about this text.

Spurgeon, Martyn Lloyd-Jones, others called it the Acropolis of the Christian faith, the fortified city, the high city of the Christian kingdom. How often is this text preached? Very rarely. How many believers, who are even genuine believers, if I walked up to them and said, explain to me propitiation.

What is the problem with God being just and the justifier of His people? They wouldn't even have a clue. So we're going to take this apart. Let's begin.

Verse 25, whom God displayed publicly. Now, although we are only supposing, we could suppose that God could have done away with sin in a house, in a covered place, in a hidden place, in the wilderness of Judea. But look what we have.

God displayed His Son publicly. Martyn Lloyd-Jones used to use the word that is more common in England, that God placarded His Son. One thing that Missouri is a beautiful place, if you could only see it, but you can't see it because of all the placards, all the billboards along the highway.

Those are placards. Those are signs. They are public displays.

And so when God wanted to put away sin through the death of His Son, He publicly displayed Him at the very center of the religious universe, outside the city of Jerusalem, hanging on a tree for all to see. Why is that? Why did He do that? He says this was to demonstrate, in verse 25, His righteousness, God's righteousness. God publicly sacrificed His Son in order to demonstrate or reveal something to the world about Himself.

And what is it that He sought to reveal? That He's righteous. That He is righteous. That He is righteous.

Well now, why does He have to do that? I mean, why? I mean, isn't it clear that He's righteous? Why would anybody think God isn't righteous? He tells us, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed. Now, we're going to go back and before we answer this question, we're going to look at some things that you must understand. Here is your greatest problem.

Are you ready? Your greatest problem, most terrifying problem, most devastating and dangerous problem is this. Are you ready? It's absolutely terrifying. But here it is.

God is good. You say, what's so terrifying about that? You're not good. So the question is, what does a good God do with you? You have broken every law that He has ever given.

You have made yourself a wretch. Not only in the sight of God, but in the sight of every holy creature in heaven. All of heaven itself has marshaled itself against you and is begging God to do away with you.

As a matter of fact, heaven sees you as so evil 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. You see, criminals and organized crime murder people, kill people, do all kinds of horrid things. They are not afraid of a bad judge.

A bad judge is just like them. They can deal with him. What they're terrified of is a good judge.

Why is it then when a moral man seeks to run for office in this country, it's as though you poured gasoline on the wicked. They go wild with hatred. God is good.

You and I are not. What should a good God do with people like us? Now, I want us to look at a couple of texts that are very, very important. Have you ever heard the statement, God hates the sinner and loves the sinner? Or loves the sinner and hates the sinner? Have you ever heard that? There's only one problem with it.

It's not true. It's not true. There isn't truth in it, but it is extremely misleading and it is used by men who do not understand theology to their own destruction.

Have you ever heard a sermon on God's hatred for men? You say, brother Paul, I've never even heard of such a thing. This is crazy. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.

Yes, yes, that's true. Go to Psalms 5. Is all the Bible inspired? Is it all infallible? Within John 3.16, is it inspired and infallible? Yes. Look at Psalms 5.5. The boastful shall not stand before your eyes.

You hate all who do iniquity. Does it say He hates iniquity? No. It says He hates those who do it.

In the NIV it says, you hate all those who do wrong. You say, but brother Paul, John 3.16 is in the Bible. Yes, it is, but so is Psalms 5.5. And you can't choose one and not the other.

And as a matter of fact, you can't understand John 3.16 unless you understand Psalms 5.5. As a matter of fact, if you don't understand Psalms 5.5, the hatred of God towards the wicked, you cannot understand how spectacular John 3.16 is. The Bible clearly teaches that God hates the wicked. Now what does this mean? Someone told me one time, very angry they said, God can't hate because God is love.

I said, no ma'am. God is love, therefore He must hate. Let me ask you a question.

Do you love Jewish people? If you love Jewish people, can you be neutral about the Holocaust? If you love Jewish people, you will hate the Holocaust. Do you love children? I do. Wish I had a hundred of them.

Do you love children? Then you must hate abortion. You must hate it. Do you love African Americans? You must hate slavery, racism and prejudice.

You must hate it. As an abomination. Does God love righteousness? Yes.

He must hate evil. And not only hate it, come against it with a full arsenal. Prior to Christ, do you and I qualify as evil? Most certainly.

You say, but Brother Paul, I don't understand. If God hates the wicked, how does God love the wicked? The only thing I can say towards that is He does do both. But let me put it this way.

The nature of God's love is such that He is able to even love the objects of His hatred and to work on their behalf for their salvation. Imagine this. In God's righteousness, His hatred and anger is built up against you, ready to cast you down for all the evil you have done to Him, His creation and your fellow man.

It is burning like everlasting burnings, the prophet said, against you. But the love and mercy of God holds back His wrath. And with the other hand of love and mercy, He calls for the sinner to come.

He is holding back His wrath. He is holding back His hatred. He is holding back His anger with His love, His compassion and His mercy and with His other hand, He is extending it to a people all day long saying, come, come, be saved, be reconciled, do not perish.

I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked. It is my disposition that men be saved. Come, come, come.

But one day, the hand of mercy will be withdrawn. And at that moment, the fierce hatred of God toward everything that is evil will come crushing down upon the head of the evil, upon the sinner's head with everlasting burnings. Let's go to another text.

Psalms chapter 7. I'm going to give you one of the most spectacular passages on the love of God that you will ever read. Chapter 7, verse 11. God is a righteous judge and a God who has indignation every day.

If a man does not repent, he will sharpen his sword. He has bent his bow and made it ready. He has also prepared for himself deadly weapons.

He makes his arrows fiery shafts. You say, Brother Paul, how can that be one of the greatest passages on the love of God? Because you cannot understand the love of God unless you accept this passage as true. You cannot marvel in the love of God until you understand from what the love of God has saved you.

Listen to what it says. God is a righteous judge. He's not just a righteous God.

He is a judge. That means He's not only righteous, not only does He desire righteousness, but He will judge the world in righteousness. Perfect righteousness.

That's something you need to know about hell. Often people have a wrong view of hell. Most people's view of the Ten Commandments is based on Cecil B. DeMille's movie.

Most people's idea of hell is based upon some sort of Dante's Inferno. That it's this perverted sort of place where demons are gleefully torturing people in all horrid and twisted ways. What I want you to see about hell is this.

Hell is absolute perfect justice. In hell, God does not rip anyone off. In hell, He does not give anyone too little or too much.

Hell is where God pays you exactly what your deeds deserve. Now see, we can't understand that. Why? Because we do not understand how horrid sin is.

Now imagine this. Adam and Eve committed one sin and the entire universe was cast down into chaos. Your sins outnumber the hairs on your head.

The greatest supercomputer could not figure the number. And in hell, you will be paid perfect, pristine, holy, fair justice for everything you've ever done. He is a righteous judge.

It goes on. And a God who has indignation every day. If I had a dime for every time I heard an evangelist get before a crowd and say, the first thing I want you to know is that God is not an angry God.

That evangelist lied. God is an angry God. The Bible says He is angry every day.

Now you say, well, why is that? Well, first of all, it doesn't matter why is that. It's what the Bible says. Again, I can speak to you for weeks on the love of God and if I had time, I would do it.

But if I am to be a faithful minister and a faithful steward of the Gospel, I cannot shun these other doctrines that are just as biblical being the hatred and the anger of God. You say, what do you mean God is angry every day? What kind of twisted personality is that? Well, let me ask you a question. Have you ever read

in the newspaper and you hear about a little boy or a little girl that's been kidnapped and they find them ten years later? Maybe they've been enslaved in a man's basement for ten years, tortured and abused.

And you read that. What's your response? Do you go, well, you know, everybody has their own way of looking at life and, you know, if it feels good, do it. Is that your response? If it is, then you're just as wicked as the man who tortured that little child.

No, what happens when you read something like that? Honestly, what happens? Do you not burn with anger? Do you not even feel nauseous like you're going to vomit? So you reserve the right to have righteous indignation when you see something terribly wicked done to a person. And you refuse to give that right to God whose emotions, if we can say such a thing, are perfect, whose expressions are expressions of perfect righteousness. Now, I want you to think about something.

God is omniscient. Every day He sees every perverted, heinous, twisted act of violence and murder, the abuse of the innocent, blaspheming against His name. The wicked, as it says in Scripture, howl at Him.

He is not apathetic. He loves with all His might. He hates with all His might.

And one day, His mercy will be retracted. The grace that allows the wicked to continue on, giving them space and more space to repent. But instead of repenting, they are storing up wrath for themselves.

The Bible tells us in Romans 2. Every day you go without Christ. The only thing saving you from the anger and hatred of God against your evil is God Himself. God Himself.

And here's what you need to understand. Evangelists will sometimes say, instead of being, you know, just with you, God has been loving with you. Does anyone here study logic? There's a tremendous problem in that statement.

Because if instead of being just with me, God has been loving, then the conclusion is, God's love that He shows toward me is unjust. You see, God cannot be loving at the expense of His justice. It's like if you take into your home and love dearly a man that you know every day is abusing children.

You are loving at the expense of justice. God does not love at the expense of justice. God must satisfy His justice.

Now, gosh, I wish I had more time for this, but let's look at it this way. Have any of you read The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe? Some of you. How many of you have seen the movie? Okay.

Well, in the movie, it was a good movie and I really enjoyed it. But Edmund has been recaptured. Remember? They sent the warriors into, the Narnians into the camp of the witch and they took Edmund back.

Edmund, who had betrayed them all. They took him back and brought him back to Aslan's camp. And everyone thought, wonderful, it's done.

But then the witch shows up. She says, you can't do that. I own him.

By right of law, I own him and you just can't take him back. A price must be paid. And so Aslan and Peter are standing up on a hill and Aslan is explaining this to Peter.

And basically what he says is this, Peter, we just can't take him back. A price has to be paid. And Peter basically kind of says, but you're Aslan, you're the king.

You can do whatever you want. And Aslan says something like this, Peter, there is a magic or a principle or a rule over me that even I cannot break. I cannot go against this thing of justice.

It must be satisfied. That is wrong. That's not what happened at the cross.

It's not that here is God and there is some principle of justice over Him that He Himself cannot violate. That's not what happened there. It's not this rule of justice over God that He cannot violate.

No. It is God's own justice that He cannot violate. God is just.

It's not some principle hanging over His head that He has to submit to. He submits to nothing. God is God.

He is perfect in all His ways. He is consistent in all His attributes. He cannot love you at the expense of His justice.

His justice must be satisfied if you have offended it. It must be paid. The crime must be punished.

Do you see that? Now, let's look at one last thing. I'm going to show you the greatest problem in the entire Bible. This is what the whole Bible is about.

This is what the Gospel is about. And what's amazing is some of you have never heard this. And most people in the evangelical community have never even thought of it.

I mean, it's never even been told to them. And yet it is the very core of the Gospel. It is the foundation of the Gospel.

It's what the Gospel is all about. The Bible is all about. It's about what redemptive history is all about.

It's what everything is all about. Go to Proverbs 17, 15. Here the problem is illustrated.

Now look what it says. He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous, both of them alike are an abomination to the Lord. Now, an abomination in the Bible is the worst thing you can be.

It is the most loathsome, disgusting thing that you can be before God. Now you say, Brother Paul, what's the problem? Look at what it says. He who justifies the wicked is an abomination before God.

You say, well, what's the problem? What we studied in Romans 3. What did we study in Romans 3? For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. We are wicked. Romans 3, 24.

But we were justified by God as a gift. You see, over here in Proverbs it's saying anyone who justifies the wicked is a loathsome, disgusting abomination before God. And then we go to Romans and Romans says God justified the wicked.

See the problem? So the greatest problem in all of Scripture is this. If God is just, He cannot forgive you. The great question in all the Bible is this.

If God is just, how can He justify the wicked and still be just? And that is where we come to the word propitiation. It is a sacrifice that is given that is strong enough and worth enough to pay the penalty and to

satisfy God's justice. And in satisfying His justice, appease His wrath and make it possible for a just God to forgive the wicked and still be just.

Let me demonstrate the problem in another way. Let's say that you go home and you find your entire family slaughtered on the floor. And you see the murderer strangling the life out of your youngest sibling.

And you run across the room and you grab him and you throw him to the ground and you tie him up and you call the police. And the police take him to prison. Three months later, he's brought before the judge for his trial.

Everyone in the town is there. And the judge is there on the bench. He's looking down at the criminal and this is what the judge says.

He says, I'm a very loving and compassionate judge. Therefore, I set you free. What is going to be your response? Are you going to say, oh, how wonderful.

No. You're going to write the Congress. You're going to visit the state representatives.

You're going to go out on the newspaper and the editorials. You're going to write and you're going to be against that judge and you're going to say there is a judge on the bench that is far more wicked than the criminals. He sets free.

The judge himself ought to be condemned. Well, how can God look at a wicked people and be loving and compassionate and slow to anger and cover all their trespasses? How can He do that and still be righteous? There's only one way. All the crimes of the guilty were heaped upon the head of His Son and His Son was made sin in our place.

And then the Father treated Him as the guilty person and He took Him and crushed Him under the full force of His wrath. And when He said it is finished, means I have paid it all. And now God can be just and the justifier of wicked men.

Now, go back to Romans 3 quickly. We're going to look at the cross again tomorrow, but I've got to finish this one part. Please bear with me.

Go back to Romans 3. Look what it says. In verse 25, whom God displayed, speaking of Christ publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith, this was to demonstrate His righteousness. Why does God have to show everybody He's righteous? Because in the forbearance of God, He passed over the sins previously committed for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time.

What does that mean? Now, I'm going to be kind of dramatic here. This is just something to illustrate. But let's look at it this way.

We know far less about Satan and the fall of Satan than we claim to know. We know far less. It is a very, very mysterious thing.

We know there is a personal devil. We know that he is called Satan exactly. We know he had to be created by God.

And we know that he fell. But all that other stuff, it's very hard to discern. But we know this, that when those non-elect angels and Satan himself, when they fell, there was perfect justice.

And here's something I want you to think about, young people. Think about this very, very deeply. The angels who are far superior than you fell.

And God did not send them a Savior. He did not have to send you one. So, imagine Satan falls and perfect justice is granted him.

No mercy. Perfect justice. And then God comes and He creates a man and calls him Adam.

Not long after, Adam and his wife Eve commit the same sin as Satan. They rebel against God. And there is mercy.

Mercy. Not only is there mercy, there's the first promise of the Gospel in Genesis 3.15. That someone born of woman would come, crush the serpent's head, and restore man. Imagine the railings of the accuser.

God, where's Your justice? The justice that fell upon me, He deserves to die and die now. There should be no promise of hope. Oh, and Noah? Noah? Sure, you crushed the entire world under the judgment of water.

You flooded the earth and wiped it clean. But you left Noah. And others like him.

Noah should have died. Oh, and Abraham? Abraham's your friend? Abraham's your friend? He didn't believe you. He doubted.

And he lied. And he put his wife in jeopardy. Oh, and David? Your son? A man after your own? He's a murderer.

His pride led to the death of thousands. How can you save Noah? How can you give promise to Adam? How can you call Abraham your friend? How can you call David a son? And if he'd had the chance? And how can you call the likes of these your people? Two thousand years ago, God answered him. Satan, come forth.

Do you want to know how I can give a promise of hope to sinful Adam? Do you want to know how I can save Noah from the flood? But only him and his family? Do you want to know how I can call Abraham my friend? Do you want to know how I can call David my son? Do you want to know how I can call these people my people? Look at the cross! Because there my son died for them all! And once and for all, God has proved that although He covers the sins of His people and takes them away as far as the east is from the west, it is because His Son paid for them all. And He is now both just and the justifier of the wicked. You see, my dear young men and women, people aren't maybe as hardened or they're not as invincible to the gospel as we think they are.

The problem is, very few people are preaching the gospel. This glorious message has been turned into five things God wants you to know with a sinner's prayer at the end. That is not the gospel.

This is the gospel. The power tomorrow, we're going to talk more about the cross. We're going to go farther into the cross and the resurrection.

But let me say something before we finish. Do you know that oftentimes when a governor or a president is going out of office, he's allowed to pardon a criminal. Do you know that most of those criminals, after they're pardoned and set free, they never have peace? Never.

Some of them even commit suicide. Do you know why? Because they've been set free. But their crimes are still outstanding.

Nobody paid for them. You see, what you've got to understand is the reason why your conscience can be clean and you can be at peace, it's not just that you were pardoned. It's not that you're pardoned, but there's still a warrant out there or there's still, you know, a book, a payment waiting to be made.

No. Your conscience is clean and you're free because you were pardoned because the crime was really paid for. There's nothing outstanding.

It's over. It's all gone. And that, my friend, is an amazing truth.

Let's pray. Father, I pray. Father, I pray that you would use this message that Christ might be formed in the hearts of the hearers.

In Jesus' name, amen.

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