

The Cross of Christ - Part 1

by Paul Washer

The cross of Christ is the central theme of the Bible and the source of all knowledge of God, providing the solution to the problem of God's justice and mercy.

Duration: 58:59

Scripture: Exodus 33:5, Exodus 34:5, Exodus 34:11, 2 Corinthians 5:21

Topics: "Cross of Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the motivation found in the cross of Jesus Christ. He explains that this motivation is not based on guilt or slavery, but on the knowledge of what God has done for sinners through his son. The preacher also challenges the common belief that man is the problem, using the example of witnessing to prostitutes to illustrate that man is not always at fault. He then highlights the self-revelation of God in Exodus, describing God as compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, abounding in loving kindness and truth, and forgiving of iniquity. The preacher concludes by urging the audience to take the message of Romans 3 seriously and to consider the text's interpretation seriously.

Transcript

So far this morning, two passages have been read from the Old Testament, one from the book of Psalms, the other from the book of Isaiah, on the cross of Christ. We have also sung some beautiful, beautiful works written in honor of the cross of Christ. But I want to submit to you that one of the reasons, if not the primary reasons for the weakness, the error of the modern evangelical church is because it does not understand the cross.

And so often we have taken the gospel of Jesus Christ, reduced it down to a five-minute conversation, and then supposedly go on to more profound things regarding Christianity. But what I'm going to do this week, and next week, and the next week, by the grace of God, is to talk about the cross. Now, if you've ever heard me preach any more than once or twice, you've heard me preach many of the same things.

It's not because I do not study all of the Scriptures or do not desire to know the full counsel of God. It's just that there is one thing that burns on my heart above everything else. I would feel safe in saying that I could spend ten hours a day of my entire life doing nothing but studying the cross of Jesus Christ.

And it is in that cross that I find everything, everything, everything with regard to the knowledge of God, the attributes of God manifested in such a way as in no other place. In that cross I find my motivation, what

causes me to get up in the morning or work late into the night. It is not guilt.

It is not slavery, but imprisonment from the knowledge of one thing, even though it is a brief knowledge. That is what God has done for this sinner in the person of his son. I suppose that if a man had to be a slave to something, this immense love would be our highest choice.

I'm going to begin talking about the gospel not with man, where most people usually begin. Because although we say man is the problem, there is a sense in which man is not the problem. Who man is, is not the problem.

The greatest problem is who God is. And that's where we must start. I want you to go just for a moment to the book of Exodus.

Now, many times you've probably heard us speak about the inerrancy of Scripture, the absolute trustworthiness of Scripture. That is something that you must hold on to to be a biblical Christian. But what I want you to understand is that that is not enough.

You must believe in the sufficiency of Scripture. That not only is it inerrant, it is sufficient for everything. And not only is it sufficient, but there is there is a degree into which you must interpret the Scriptures severely.

Now, what do I mean by that? I'm trying to communicate the idea is that you must believe what it says. You must take it for what it is actually saying. And then you must think about that and ponder it and ask, how does this truth actually relate to everything else in the Scriptures and in reality itself? It's as though I could tell you the building is burning and you could say, oh, yes, the building is burning.

I say, no, you're not understanding me. How do I know you're not understanding me? You're not moving. You're not trembling.

That's what I mean when interpret what I'm saying, interpret the Bible with a type of severity, actually think about what it's saying. One of the things that you will see, because we do not put much emphasis today on the attributes of God, is that people will pick portions of Scripture and make that their reality. God is love.

God is merciful. God has a plan and neglect all the weightier matters that must be understood in order to understand those individual things in their context. So I want us to look and begin to form a biblical reality of God and of our situation, circumstance before it.

Exodus 34, verse five, here we have what is known as a self-revelation of God. God comes down at the request of Moses. God comes down and reveals himself.

In another word, God speaks about himself. You can see the importance of this, can't you? How it differs from every other way of presenting the knowledge of God. I mean, if you were to ask someone about me, it would be one thing.

But if you were to ask me about me and I answered your questions, that would be another thing. So here we have the self-revelation of God says the Lord descended in the cloud and stood there with him as he called upon the name of the Lord. Then the Lord passed by in front of him and proclaimed the Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in loving kindness and truth, who keeps loving kindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin.

Yet he will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations. OK, do you see the problem? This is where I want to apply this idea of interpreting the Bible severely or actually listening and thinking about what it's saying here before us this morning. We have the greatest problem in all of Scripture.

Most people will read this and delight in the different things they hear about God, but not look at it holistically and realize there is a tremendous contradiction here. There's a tremendous problem, and I'm going to point that problem out to you, and when I do, you're going to come to a greater understanding of the gospel. First of all, God explains himself in verse six, the Lord, the Lord God, speaking of his sovereignty, compassionate and gracious.

We revel in the fact that God is compassionate and gracious. We have hope only because God is compassionate and gracious and slow to anger. That he would endure thousands of years before the redeeming work of Christ, that he would put up with men and that even after we are converted, we marvel in the fact that God is slow to anger.

And abounding in loving kindness and truth. We wouldn't want a God who would be any other way as a matter of fact, a thinking man would be terrified if God were any other way. There would be no hope for broken and sinful mankind.

Just recently, a few days ago or yesterday, I suppose a prominent football player killed someone and then turned the gun on himself. And today they're going to play a football game, I believe his football team, and they're going to have a moment, a minute of silence for domestic violence. And that's appropriate.

But I think it ought to be taken deeper. We ought to have a moment of silence for the universal sinfulness of man. That causes these things, it's sin.

And if God were not compassionate, if he were not slow to anger, we would have no place to go. And so we marvel in this. And he goes on, verse seven, who keeps loving kindness for thousands, he's a covenant keeping God, he never breaks his word, he is faithful in everything he is and everything he declares himself to be in every promise that he makes, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin.

When you see something like this in the Hebrew Bible, or you see something similar repeated in the New Testament, for example, you should love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. He's not dividing up necessarily different kinds of sins here, just like Jesus, when he says you're to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. He's not necessarily dividing up the human psyche into different categories.

What he is saying is, in the case of Jesus, you should love the Lord your God with all your being, with every fiber of your being, with the full fabric of who you are. And here he's saying simply this, God forgives all kinds and types of sin. This is a wonderful, again, a wonderful piece of news for you and for me.

He doesn't just forgive certain kinds of sin, but he forgives every kind of sin. So there's hope, but now we go on. Who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin? Yes, he will by no means leave the guilty unpunished.

Well, I've isolated it for you. Have you now found the contradiction? He forgives all kinds of sin, but he will not leave the guilty unpunished. This is one of the great problems with evangelism today.

Is this second part, this problem, this contradiction is not explained. You see, in one place he is saying he forgives all kinds of sin, but there will be no guilty person who commits sin, who will not be punished. Now, because we are not our culture and our society, we're not necessarily a thinking people and we have been taught in our high schools and universities that words only mean what you think they mean and not necessarily the intention of the author.

Because of that, we can read through this and just be aglow or a teacher can teach this and say, this is wonderful, not recognizing that there is the greatest of contradiction here. How can God forgive all kinds and types of sin? And yet not one sinner will go without being fully punished. How can that happen? How can it happen? Let's go on.

Let's go for a moment to Psalms. Thirty two verse one. Which is later quoted by Paul in Romans four verses seven and eight.

But let's look at it with David here in Psalms thirty two. How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven? Whose sin is covered? How blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity and in whose spirit there is no deceit? Now we read through this and we marvel in the grace of God. But I want you just to look at what it's saying.

Listen to the words, meditate, ponder how blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven. That doesn't seem too awful contradictory, but let's go on. Whose sin is covered.

So blessed is the man whose sins have been forgiven by God and then blessed is the man whose sins God has covered up. I want you to think about that. What do we call an official of any type or kind, ruler, judge, anyone with authority who covers up sin? What do we call them? We call them corrupt, vile.

We blame all the maladies of society on them because of their lack of justice. A text like this to a thinking man makes him proclaim, shall not the judge of all the earth do right? What do you mean God like covers up sin? He hides it? How can he do that and still be righteous? Now, let's go on for a moment to the book of Proverbs. A text I use frequently, and it's mainly an illustration or an example, but Proverbs 17:15.

As Christians, we marvel in the fact that God justifies wicked men. I'm standing here today with the hope that God has justified this wicked man. As a matter of fact, the book of Romans chapter four tells me that one of the results of the resurrection is that I can now know God justifies wicked men.

He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous, both of them alike are an abomination to the Lord. He who justifies the wicked is an abomination to the Lord. And yet we have just sung songs and sing songs quite frequently about how the Lord justifies wicked people.

And yet here, anyone who justifies the wicked is condemned as an abomination before God Almighty. This is the basis and the foundation of the gospel. This is the reason for the gospel.

This is why, you know, when our pastors begin to speak about the importance of the knowledge of God and go beyond our pastors, when Jeremiah says that rich men shouldn't boast in wealth, and wise men even in wisdom, and strong men in strength, but the ones who boast should boast in this, that they know God. You see, when you have a Christianity void of the knowledge of God, you will never see even the foundation or reason for the gospel, except that man's a sinner. You see, the great reason for the gospel, God is righteous.

Now, one thing about God's attributes that you must understand is this. When we say that God is perfect, we're not just meaning that in a moral context, that He's a perfect God without sin, even though He is perfect and without sin. When we talk about His perfection, sometimes it's best to talk about it in plural, His perfections, meaning that all the attributes of God exist in absolute and perfect harmony.

He does not exercise one to the loss of another. He does not make void one attribute by exercising another. He does not put aside His justice in order to show you love.

If He did so, He would no longer be perfect. He would no longer be consistent. There would be no harmony within God.

God must be just. Do you realize He does not have to exercise mercy? That's His prerogative, but He must be just. We have today in evangelicalism a gospel without a just God and therefore a gospel that cannot be understood, cannot be lived out, most importantly, cannot be appreciated.

Now, let's go over for a moment to the book of Romans, and I want to show you how Paul deals with this problem. We're just going to stop here for a moment. In Romans 3, 23, of course, he says, all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

And then in 24, he comes back and he explains that these people who have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God have been justified. The wicked have been justified. This immediately brings a problem.

This immediately brings a problem. How can this be? How can God be just and justify wicked people? Now we go on. Verse 25, speaking of Jesus Christ, whom God displayed publicly.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones put it this way, whom God placarded. It's probably a term more familiar to those in England, but the idea is the placard. If you were to drive south and go to Gatlinburg, Tennessee, you would immediately notice one thing, all the billboards everywhere.

You can't see the forest. You can't see the mountains for all the billboards. They're placarded in front of us there.

You cannot avoid them. You see them. Now, he says that God displayed our placarded Christ publicly.

Now, why did he do this? And I want you to think about this. In the very center of the religious universe, the son of God was crucified and he wasn't put away in the secret of a room or a closet. He was publicly crucified at the crossroads of the religious universe, the religious center of the universe.

Now, why is that? Because he was displayed publicly as a propitiation. Now, that is, of course, a sacrifice that satisfies the demands of God's justice and therefore having justice satisfied, appeases God's wrath, extinguishes it. So Christ is displayed publicly as this sacrifice that satisfies all the demands of God's justice against the sinner.

And in satisfying, appeases God's wrath against the sinner. Now, why? Verse 25, this was to demonstrate. Why did he publicly do this? It was to demonstrate his righteousness, to demonstrate God's righteousness.

Now, we need to ask ourselves a question. Why does God have to demonstrate or prove that he is righteous? That's the sad thing. He doesn't have to do that anymore to most people in our culture because we do not read and think enough to even see a problem.

But there has been a problem throughout all of human history. And Paul is going to go on and explain that to us. This was to demonstrate his righteousness, to prove that God is righteous.

Why does God need to do that? Because in the forbearance of God, he passed over the sins previously committed. What does that mean? It means this. Adam should have died right there on the spot, without a promise, without a proto evangelicum, without a first promise of the gospel that someone would come born of woman and crush the head of the serpent.

He should have died right there on the spot. When God put away the entire world except one family, Noah and his own, there's a problem there. A big problem.

Not that God put away the entire world. The problem is he did not put away Noah. Noah should have died.

Abraham should not have been a friend of God. He was a sinner and at times a doubter and at times wayward. Put his own wife in jeopardy.

God tolerated Israel's idolatry over and over and over and even more. God allowed the pagan nations outside of Israel that scattered throughout the entire world to live. And not only did he allow them to live, he sent them rains.

You see, if you look out here and you're a thinking person, you look out this window, you automatically see a theological, philosophical problem. There should not be anything green or flowering. There should not be clean water.

There should not be blue skies. There should be nothing of blessing or beauty. Children should not be born with joy.

Two young people should not be married with celebration. There should be nothing but wrath on this planet. That is what justice demands.

It should be something like Beckett's waiting for Godot. There should just be nothing here. Nothing but sorrow and gray and death and wrath.

And the fact that there's not means God's got some explaining to do. See, that's the amazing thing. When something supposedly goes wrong in the world today, like a hurricane or something happens, we automatically call God to task.

That was wrong. That's not the problem. The problem is when it doesn't happen.

The problem is when it doesn't happen. The question is not why do bad things happen to good people? It's why does anything good ever happen at all? Because God is just. He's just.

And that justice must have its full hand. And the great question is this, how does justice coincide and coexist with mercy when you have a people as we are? Now, see, there's another problem, isn't it? Especially for many of you youngsters, you've been raised in evangelical churches where people really aren't that bad. And we've somehow been able to take it so that if someone does commit some sort of unusual crime or unusual sin, we can blame it on society without realizing that's a logical fallacy of circular reasoning, because society is created by the individual.

By man. The problem is man. That Hitler is not an anomaly.

He is what every one of us is capable of being apart from the restraining grace of God. And so here we have this thing, Paul is setting forth this argument. Now, I want to say that if you do not agree with what I'm saying here, then I challenge you, take Romans three seriously and come back with another interpretation next week.

Because you won't be able to do that if you take the text seriously. What you'll have to do is what is often done, skim over the text entirely and only touch on the parts that most favors man. But if you take Paul seriously, you're realizing here he's portraying one of the greatest logical arguments, one of the greatest arguments in all of Scripture, and he is solving finally the greatest question that has existed throughout the ages.

How can God be just and then bring this type of people into fellowship with him? How can you do that without denying his justice? And he says simply this for the demonstration, I say, verse 26, of his righteousness at the present time so that he would be just in the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. So let's set up something of a drama here at this moment. Let's say that Satan is standing before the throne of God and doing what he does and that is accusing.

And God shows mercy to our fallen parents, Adam and Eve. And Satan cries out, For those of you who think that man is better than he is, I challenge you to answer this question. Do you realize that Satan and the angels were far superior, of far more worth, beauty, glory, everything than us? And yet when they fell, God sent them no promise of salvation.

God did not have to send us one. Be very, very careful. He did not have to send us one.

So Satan accuses God, shall not the judge of all the earth do right? Adam must die. Oh, Noah, Noah, you see, even after you saved him in a drunken stupor, he ruins his family and brings a curse upon the full lot of them. Oh, and Abraham, your friend, he lied and put his wife in jeopardy.

He should die. Oh, David, David, a man after your own heart. What has happened to your justice, God? How can you call David a son? How can you bring him into fellowship with you? And Israel, Israel, that apostate nation that's done nothing but build idols.

It's outdone even the pagan nations in its own sin. How can you call them your people? Two thousand years ago, God answered that question. You want to know how I can give a promise to Adam? You want to know how I can save Noah? You want to know how I can call Abraham my friend? You want to know how I can call David my son? Then go now to Jerusalem.

Look on that tree where my son is dying for the full lot of them. You see, he loved Abraham based upon what Christ was going to do. He forgave David, just David falling from that throne and saying, you're right, I'm responsible for the death of Uriah.

Just him saying that is not enough to purge him of his sin. The law says he should have died. God did not kill him.

How can God do that? Pass over sins in his forbearance? Because Christ was going to the tree before the foundation of the world. That's how. He is not some upstart Christ.

This idea of crucifixion and cross is not just some new thing appearing on the scene when plan B fails or plan A fails, go to another plan. No, from the very foundation of the world, Christ and his cross, the tree

center in all of divine history. And yet for the evangelical church in America today, Christianity 101, now that we've got through simple stuff, let's go on.

No, my friend, no. It's reason why in order to keep the church somewhat appearing to be alive, we must invent one circus and when the glory of that circus is gone, create another circus, much larger and larger, new music, new things, all sorts of stuff. Why? Because the foundation is not there.

The thing that brings true fire, true spiritual strength, true endurance, it is the cross of Christ and this glorious thing that God has done in his son. You go down through history, you show me the men and women that have been used of God and I'll show you they have one common scarlet thread among them, the cross and the revelation of God and Jesus Christ was primary for them. They would have considered everything else as little.

Little. You come to me with the book of Revelation and I honor that book as holy scripture and would desire to know what it says. But the most glorious things of the book of Revelation is not what's going to happen in some later date.

It is what appears in that book about Jesus Christ. And about his cross and about his glory, talk to me about creation and the way the universe was formed and the power and majesty of God displayed therein, and I will worship with you. But it is a small thing compared to the cross of Jesus Christ.

Talk to me about all the wonderful blessings that I can have in the Savior. And although I cherish each and every one of them compared to the cross, I count them as nothing. I would rather hear a conference on all the glories of God revealed in the person of Christ on the cross of Calvary than a thousand sermons about how I could get my best life now.

Tell me about Jesus. Tell me about Christ over and over again. You say the same message over and over.

My dear friend, you know not what you say. You could spend a thousand eternities examining the glories of God in the person and work of Jesus Christ. And at the end of all those eternities, you will not have reached the foothills of Everest.

The cross, the cross. Let's go on. Second Corinthians is where we will start our sermon and be part of our introduction.

Chapter five, verse 21, he made him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf so that we might become the righteousness of God in him. He, God the Father, made him, that is the Son, who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf. There's enough here to propel a human heart for thousands of years of piety.

There's enough here to drive you to serve Christ all the days of your life just in these simple words. What more do you need? I see so many people in this nation running to and fro, looking for a word from God. When they're not hearing, they're not hearing.

God made him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf. God made him who knew no sin. He knew no sin.

If you were to ask me, Brother Paul, in the life of Christ, in the ministry of Christ, what do you consider the most spectacular thing that was accomplished by the person of Jesus of Nazareth? Was it the resurrections from the dead? The calling forth of Lazarus and others? Was it the casting out of demons?

The calming of the seas? What was it? Ah, here it is. He knew no sin. He was born without the taint of sin.

He was born without the corrupt, vile, radically depraved nature that was mine and yours and every other man since Adam. He was born without sin and he committed no sin. Not only did he not commit sin, he knew no sin.

He didn't experience sin in the sense of willing participation, in the sense of grabbing a hold of it and it grabbing a hold of him. All the things that you and I understand very, very well. He knew no sin.

And that's amazing. He kept the law perfectly. No, no, no, no.

You're not. You're not grabbing this. Yes, he kept the law perfectly, but it goes so much farther than that, so much deeper, so much greater.

Let me give you an example. A man asked me one time, what is the greatest sin you can commit? Well, I'd never thought about that before, because in a sense, they're all great sins. Adam and Eve ate a fruit.

The entire universe was condemned. So how can you say that one sin is greater than the other? But as I was thinking about it, kind of with a twinkle in my eye, I said, well, I suppose the greatest sin would be breaking the greatest commandment to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. I suppose that not doing that would be the greatest sin.

Think about this. There has never been one moment. There has never been one fraction of a moment in your life that you have loved God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength.

There has never been one millisecond in your life that you have loved God as God ought to be loved. I want you to think about that. That's why when a legalist will boast in his legalism or a man believes that he's justified by works, that ought to be enough right there to shoot him down for eternity.

There has. Imagine. Think about this.

There has never been one moment in your life that what you did, you did fully and completely for the glory of God. Not one time and not just not one time, not one millisecond in that event. Never.

And yet. Jesus of Nazareth, there was not one moment in his life that he did not love God as God ought to be loved. There was never one moment in his life that he did not love the Lord his God with all his heart, soul, mind and strength.

Think about that. What you and I, the combined humanity in all of us, we cannot do. For even a millisecond, he did his entire life with absolute perfect continuity.

That's enough for me to think high thoughts about him. And let me give you an example. You know that, for example, in Hebrews chapter four, verse 15, we're told that he was tempted like us in every way and yet without sin.

Right. But there again, don't just say, OK, I read that. I understand it now.

Let's go on. No, you're not getting this because you would just be marveling about it. Look at this.

It doesn't mean that in the way I've been tempted, he's been tempted and he didn't fall. It means much more than that, and I'm going to show you, I'm going to give you an illustration from from weightlifting. OK,

now, here I am, an old man with very weak legs.

You put an Olympic bar on my back and then over here you have a power lifter who just won the national championship and you put an Olympic bar on his back. The bars weigh 45 pounds. Now you take two Olympic plates and you put it on my rack.

OK, 45 pounds each. So we got about 135 pounds. All right.

I'm standing there. I'm OK. I'm old, but I can still stand.

You put those on him. He's still standing. You get two more plates and boost it up to 225 and you put it on me.

And as long as I don't have to go down, I can still hold it. You put it on him. No problem.

He's with me. You come back and you put on two more plates. Now you've got 315.

I'm standing because I don't have to bend my knees. But if my knees bend just a little bit, I'm going down. I'm starting to really hurt in my back and I'm sweating.

You put those plates on him. He has 315. He's standing there.

You go on now to 405. You put those plates on each side. I'm trembling.

I lean a little over and I crash. You put 405 on him. He's still standing there.

You put two more plates on him. He's just standing there. You put two more plates on him.

He's still standing there. You put two more plates on him. He's still there.

You put the whole world on him and he's not Not trembling or sweating. That's what it means when Christ was tempted in everything that you were tempted. But take that exponentially and make it larger.

And He's still standing. This is a broad-shouldered Christ. Deep-chested and strong.

Without sin. Always doing the will of His Father perfectly and completely. The wise man can't point to one thing in his own life.

He can't point to one thing in human history that would say that that was done perfectly unto God. I'll sometimes hear a young man read a biography about a George Mueller or Hudson Taylor or Charles Spurgeon and say all sorts of things about the man. I hear scholars do the same thing.

Say all sorts of things about the man that I know. It's not true. But, Spurgeon was a man.

He sinned. Mueller was a man. He doubted.

Hudson Taylor was a man. He feared. Christ stands alone.

Our only brother. Our elder brother. The only one to look to.

We heard a sermon from Anthony about in the year the king Uzziah died, I saw so the Lord high and lifted up and His train filled the temple and above Him stood the seraph and each one having six wings with two

they covered their face with two they covered their feet with two they did fly and one cried unto the other. This majestic scene. In the year the king Uzziah died, Uzziah was one of the best kings in Israel.

Yet, he died a leper. Because of his sin. You need more than a king Uzziah.

Samson, this mighty man who goes to the gates of the city, rips them up from their roots, carries them on his back up a mountain and casts them down in destruction. He fell in sin under the weight of a woman's words. But Christ grabs the gates of hell, throws them on His back, carries them up a mountain, and throws them down and remains impeccable.

Impeccable. Without sin. You see, renewing your mind in the Word of God will bring you to the point that you live in a state of marvel.

Who is this? Like in the Song of Solomon. Who is this One coming across this field? Banner's unfurled. What a God! What a Christ! What a Savior! And that is the only thing that will protect you from all the mesmerizing that goes on in the world.

It is more of Christ. Not making the church more like the world in order to compete with the world, but giving you Christ so that the world is forgotten. That is, if you're converted.

If your heart is truly changed. Because if Christ does not marvel you, if Christ does not mesmerize you, if Christ is just a number, maybe even number one among other numbers, then you ought to fear. You ought to fear.

He knew no sin. And yet, it says that He who knew no sin, God made Him to be sin on our behalf. Now, you've read that.

You've told other people that. Now, here's the question. What does it mean? Why? Do you know some of the greatest commentary writers in history have said, I'm just not going to go there.

I don't want to touch this. It's too... I don't know what it is. Because we don't want to say too little and not go far enough.

We don't want to say too much and blaspheme. What does this mean? Christ born impeccable without sin. The spotless Lamb of God.

And yet here we find out that God made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf. What is this? You see, if you just read it and you don't think, or you don't compare it, or you don't actually hear the words... You know, I'm reminded of a great illustration of this is C.S. Lewis' Voyage of the Dawn Treader, in which they come into this cloud of blackness and they meet a man that is insane with fear swimming in the water. As the boat makes its way into this dark, pitch black cloud, they hear the voice of a man.

They shine a lantern upon him. He's pale with fear. He's just full of terror.

He's violent. He's so afraid. And he says, flee, flee, flee, turn the boat, turn the boat.

And they're all brave soldiers. They're all brave sailors. And like, we turn from nothing.

Why should we run? Why should we fear? He said, this is a place where all your dreams come true. And they're like, even more so, why should we turn? And he basically said, you fools, hear my words. This is a

place where all your dreams come true.

And the men become as terrorized as the man in the water. They quickly haul him out and look for a way of escape. Though they'd run from no other thing, they looked for a way of escape.

Now, what's the point? The point is this. They weren't hearing what he was saying. And so they didn't see, this is severe.

This is amazing. This must be dealt with. What can it mean? It's the noble task of kings to look at these things and search them out.

We're more than animals driven by instinct. This is our calling to ask, what does this mean? He was made sin. How did God make him sin? Hear the word.

Hear it. He goes on and he says, he made him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf. What does this mean? Does it mean that somehow on that tree, Christ became polluted? Did somehow His nature devolve into a sinful thing? Did He become vile Himself? Polluted, dark, full of spots? What happened? What does it mean? The second half of the verse tells us what it means.

It says, He made him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. Ah, there's the clue. The moment the sinner believes in Christ, does he become a perfectly righteous being? Now listen to my language.

Absolutely not. Even though you have believed in Christ and you have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit, you are not a perfectly righteous being because you still sin. Then what does it mean? The word justified means that the moment the sinner believes in Jesus truly, God forensically or legally declares that person to be righteous, to be right with Him.

You see what I'm saying? Do you see the difference? The moment you believe in Jesus, you do not become a perfect righteous being who never sins again. The moment you believe in Jesus, God legally or forensically declares you to be right with Him. It is a legal position before the throne of God.

Now most of you know that. But now here's a word I want to throw in that is commonly not thrown in and should be thrown in every time this is preached. What is it? The moment a person believes in Jesus, God legally from His throne declares that person to be right with Him and treats that person as right with Him.

Now how does He do that? Of course, we're going to get to that later, but it's based upon the work of Christ. But what I want you to see is that when a man is justified, it means God legally declares this sinner who will continue to sin, He declares him legally right with God and then treats him as someone legally right with God. You see, saints, you need to understand this.

It's not that God... How can I put this? If there was one tiny sin upon which your relationship with God depended, it would be over. You see, so many Christians will believe in God under justification, but they'll spend a great part of their lives still thinking that somehow their favor in standing with God is based upon their performance. And that's not true.

And I can tell you why. Because if that was the case, your performance would have to be absolutely perfect. Because one sin is enough not only to throw you into chaos, but the entire universe into hell.

And so the moment you believe you are legally declared by God to be right with Him and He treats you as right with Him. Now let's go back to Christ. On the cross, our sins were imputed, put upon Jesus.

He was legally, from the throne of God, legally declared guilty. And God treated Him as guilty. Do you see that? Do you see this? That's what it means.

God treated Him as guilty. That's why we can say this. Do you want to know how much God hates sin? Do you want to know how much God hates your sin? When the Son of God bore your sin upon the tree, God killed Him.

God crushed Him. You think God doesn't hate sin? I don't have to preach about hell to show you that God hates sin. I just have to preach about the cross.

You want to know how much He hates sin? When His Son bore sin, God crushed Him. Do you see that? He hates sin. And that's why the believer is realizing, if I had one speck, one drop of the mighty ocean of sin that I've committed, if I had one drop splash upon me, it would condemn my soul to hell.

And the only reason I have a right relationship with God, and the only reason why He treats me as His Son is because Christ bore it all. Once and for all. Past, present, future, sin, all of it.

Gone when He died on that tree. Now, we're going to close here. I haven't really even got... This is kind of the introduction.

We'll take it up next week. But there's one thing that I do want to say. Simply, though it was imputed guilt, though it was imputed guilt, that means our sin was imputed to Him.

It was real guilt. He really suffered the bearing of guilt before a holy God. You see, you and I have so much trouble with this.

That's why in modern day, contemporary evangelical preaching, whenever they talk about the cross, what do they primarily talk about? Crown of thorns, whips, nails. Why? Because our culture does not see sin as that big a deal. If someone said the pain of the cross is that Christ bore our sin, we're thinking, no, it's got to be crowns of thorns.

It's got to be nails. It's got to be all of this. No.

You see, I want you to imagine for a moment some of you young ladies, try to put this in perspective. Let's say that you've just been raised and cared for by your father. Your foot has never touched the earth.

You've been watched over. Your heart has been kept pure. You have no idea of all the evil that's out there in the world.

But one day you decide you're going to go out and witness to a group of prostitutes. And as you're sitting there witnessing to them, the police come by and gather all of you up and throw you in with them. Well, those prostitutes, they've done this a million times.

They're sitting in the back of the patrol car or whatever it is. They're laughing, telling jokes. You know, maybe, I don't know, get to the precinct office and they're there calling their lawyers.

They're sitting there in the pen that they're waiting and they're laughing and painting their nails or whatever. That's no big deal for them. This is custom.

Do this every day. You're sitting there over in a corner and you can't even breathe. Now that is a pathetic illustration, but I don't know what to do here.

How can you use illustrations to describe what Christ suffered? You see, He knew no sin. You and I drink down iniquity like it was water. How can we know what it was like for someone who knew no sin to bear our sin on that tree? You see.

Now, what I've said thus far warms your heart. And if what I say next week warms your heart, you go, wow, I love this. I love Him.

I want you to know that there are a great many so-called evangelicals today in America who actually hate the things I have just told you. And they would not preach it in their churches. Or they consider it a small thing.

Let's go on to more important things. I want you to see that although when it began the term evangelical was an appropriate term, it is still a beautiful term. The only problem is it is now a meaningless term.

You can be called evangelical and yet believe in almost anything. What we want to be not out on our own, but within the Scriptures. And not only making the boastful claim of being in the Scriptures alone, because that can demonstrate great pride, but being in the Scriptures and aligned with Christian history.

The old paths. The men and women who walked them. The first century church.

The reformers. Puritans, Baptists, early Presbyterians, men who knew God. Wesley who would have delighted in this today.

No, we don't want to say we know the Bible. Everyone else is wrong. We know how wrong we can be.

And that is why we not only want to study the Scripture, but compare our interpretation to the men and women of God down through history and ask ourselves, are we with that great line of people who loved God, who loved Christ, who needed nothing in a church, but the Word of God and prayer and worship. No entertainment. Christ is our desire.

Christ is our desire. Christ. Hopefully next week we'll be able to get beyond our introduction into the actual cross event.

I was hoping to do the cross today and then do regeneration next week and then to go on to how do you know if you're a Christian. But it looks like we're going to stay here for a while. If you're here today, if you're here today and you don't know Christ, oh, come on now.

Your heart. Do you want Christ? And do you lament when you don't want Him as you should? Do you know Christ? Not did you pray a prayer. Not did you ask Jesus to come into your heart.

Have you repented of your sins and have you believed the Gospel? And the evidence of that is that you are still repenting today, still believing today and growing not only under His teaching, but under His blessing and not only under teaching and blessing, but you are growing under discipline. You belong to Him now. And He jealously, lovingly watches over your heart.

Do you know Him? If you do not know Him, then please, come talk to me. Come talk to one of the elders or one of the ministers or one of the deacons here. About any man in our church can lead you to the Scriptures to show you what it means to be converted.

Do not leave here today not being converted, not knowing Christ. Realize that the religious just lukewarmness of our culture and the amount of worldliness that has entered in. What is it that draws you to church? Or is it friends and fellowship? Moral activities? A soothed conscience? What is it? Let it be Christ.

Let it be Christ. Let's pray.

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