

# The Greatest Text in the Bible

by Paul Washer

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*Paul Washer emphasizes the importance of understanding God's love and grace while recognizing the sinfulness of sin and the call to conform to Christ's image.*

**Duration:** 1:18:53

**Scripture:** Romans 3:26-27, Galatians 3:10, Galatians 3:13, Ephesians 1:1-2, Ephesians 2:12, Ephesians 3:19

**Topics:** "Eternal Life", "Intimacy With God"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the choices we make in life and compares the idea of being confronted by a huge, intimidating man versus a small Martian. The speaker emphasizes that when faced with these choices, we should choose the man because it represents the infinite glories of God. The sermon then shifts to the topic of eternity and the speaker encourages Christians to start pursuing the glories of God now rather than waiting for eternity. The speaker concludes by highlighting the importance of having a deep and intimate relationship with Jesus Christ, which will lead to true happiness, contentment, and a sense of being loved.

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## Transcript

It's a great, great honor and privilege for me to be speaking here today. It's just a great privilege. I'm overwhelmed at the goodness of God that he would allow me the opportunity to be here in this place and hear the gospel, speak of the gospel of Jesus Christ in fellowship with believers.

I count it such a tremendous, tremendous privilege. And don't be discouraged. Don't ever be discouraged.

There's just no reason to ever be discouraged. I believe it was Conrad Murrell who once said, some of the greatest sermons that have ever been preached have been preached to six people. Some of the greatest manifestations of God has occurred among just a handful of believers.

We are not like the world and we shouldn't use the world's wisdom. We should use God's wisdom. And don't be discouraged.

I look back at so many years of ministry and sometimes I just have to almost laugh. The times of, well, I worked in a street ministry for a long time in the inner city of Fort Worth and then in Peru, working with street children and starting churches and just so many, many battles. I look back on it now.

It seemed like every day my heart was tossed like a man on a ship on a violent sea. There'd be days when I would feel like I would get up to preach and everyone who had promised, fulfilled their promise, the church, our little church would be filled and people seemed to be excited about worship, attentive to the sermon. And then I just feel so good.

And then the next week get up and a third of the people had come back and they seemed to be dead in their spirits and it seemed like no one was regenerated. And the only thing that held me up, I think, was the pulpit. Folks, if it was easy, everybody would be doing it.

This is not about how useful we can become or how successful our ministries appear to be. It is about being conformed to the image of Christ. Absolutely everything in our lives is directed towards our conformity.

You have to understand, and I wish there are many men who ought to hear what I'm about to say, God is not served by human hands as though He needed something from us. He's granted us the privilege to participate in a great work that He is doing. But the great goal of God is not to make us successful servants.

The great goal of God is to make us conform to the image of Jesus Christ. I have walked with men of mega churches and the such and literally if I went into their office and began to talk about how to make a church grow, they would fix their eyes upon me as though they were straining to learn something new they hadn't learned in all those conferences they go to. But if I opened my Bible to the book of Colossians and began to speak about the glories of Christ, they're looking over my shoulder and out the door as though they were waiting for something more important to happen.

Oh, my friends, we shouldn't get caught up in all these things. We should get caught up in what God is doing in our lives at this moment. Sometimes I go to places and preach, and I don't know why, but preach to a large number of people.

I am not any more loved of God when I'm standing before five thousand people than when I started in Peru and preached to three. It is not a declaration that I'm any more conformed to the image of Christ now than I was then. It's really true when the Bible says that the greatest goal of God in our lives is to conform us to the image of His Son.

That's really true. It's also really true that if you're the maturest believer among us who has walked with God for 60 years, or you're a brand new believer who has walked with God for three minutes, you need to realize God does not love the one any more than the other. That the love of God is perfect and complete.

Perfect and complete because of the finished work of Jesus Christ. One of the greatest moments in my life was when I realized I did not have to move a quarter of an inch to the left or the right to be loved of God. That I did not have to be successful in the world's eyes, nor powerful, nor eloquent, nor intelligent, nor any other thing.

That I simply was loved of God. I'm going to say one more thing, and don't worry, this is not the sermon. This is just an added little piece that I felt that I needed to say.

A while back, about eight months ago, I had a seminary student write me an email. And I know this young man. He's far ahead of where I was at his age.

And he wrote me and he said, I am so unholy. I am so unrighteous. I am so ignorant of the things of God.

I feel so ashamed. And since I have the gift of encouragement, I wrote him back and I said simply this. Young man, you are much more unholy and much more ignorant than you now know.

Signed, Paul. Well, he called me up on the phone. He said, thank you.

I think he said, what were you trying to say? I said I wanted to say something to shock you into a new truth that I hope you grasp. Not a new truth as far as Scripture goes, but as far as you go. I said, when you get up in the morning and you have your quiet time, just perfect, and you hear angels singing and everything else.

And then you go out and and you kiss your wife and make her feel like she's the princess of princesses. And then you go off to to study at the seminary. And on your way, you see a man with a flat tire.

And even though it means you're going to miss an examination, you stop and you witness to him. And he is gloriously saved. He and all his household.

And then you go take the exam and it's a makeup exam six times harder. But God sends an angel down to lead you through the exam and you get a hundred. And and you're just walking around blessing your enemies and you spend the rest of the day.

You're so filled with the power of God that you don't eat. And I mean, just go to bed. And your last waking thought is how good God is.

I said, are you very happy? He said, yes, I would be happy. Would you be content? He said, yes. I said, would you feel love? He said, yes.

I said, OK, let's say you get up in the morning and you don't have your quiet time. And you jump out of bed and your wife throws a Twinkie in your hand and you run out the door asking her why she doesn't cook more and get up earlier. And you go and you see a guy with a flat tire and you run him down because you're on your way to your exam.

You take the exam and you don't do well and you spend the rest of your day grumbling. How would you feel? He said, horrible. I said, you're an idolater.

And he said, what? I said, your greatest problem is idolatry. He said, what do you mean? I said, young man, I have studied your life and you are probably much more spiritual and much more holy than I am. But I'm happier than you are.

I said, your joy and everything about you, your comfort, your joy, your peace comes from your performance and what you can do for God. I said, my comfort, my joy, my peace comes from what God has done for me in the finished work of Christ. God will not allow your source to be anything but him and grace.

Now, there is a sense in which we're not walking with God as believers. God's going to convict us of our sin. There is a sense in which we should be sorrowful over our lack of obedience.

But at the same time, we need to realize something. Do you know what God does for the most part in the life of believers after they're saved? He doesn't work life in them so much as he works death in them. After

a small period of what some people call a honeymoon period or this God protecting you with grace, he begins to draw back a little so that you will begin to see that you can do nothing and that absolutely everything depends on him.

That's why a lot of young ministers will go out and preach. Now, if they're God's man, they will usually meet with years and years of failure. Now, there are exceptions.

There are exceptions like Charles Spurgeon and others. But for the most of us, God allows us to be confronted with so much failure in our prayer life. Failure in our ability to read the word and understand it.

Failure in our preaching. Failure everywhere. So that in the end, we reach a point where, oh God, who do I have in heaven but you? Who do I have on earth but you? And then it becomes a work of God in our own mind, in our own heart.

And that's what I want you to see. I want you to draw your joy, not from your performance, but Christ's finished work. I want you to draw everything from that one thing and that one person.

And then your joy, your comfort, your peace will be as solid as a rock that does not change. But as long as all your joy, your comfort and everything else comes from your performance, you will spend the rest of your life like this. I had a guy tell me one time, he came in and he said, you know, you can do this and this and the ministry would expand and you could think about TV and you could think about all these things and it would be so great.

And after he got done, I said, but if I did all that, where would I find time to go fishing? And he looked at me and he said, I know how he was thinking. It was like you're the most unspiritual man I've ever heard. And I looked at him and I said, sir, I've been there.

I've spent a great part of my Christian life working myself to death. So that somehow God would think I was special. I said, I don't need this ministry or that ministry or the things that you're talking about.

I know that I am deeply and eternally and perfectly loved. Now, if God wants me to go do something, I'll go do something because he loves me so much. But I don't need, I don't need to be big.

I don't need to be smart. I don't need to be eloquent. I don't need a tremendous ministry and I don't need to be well known.

God loves me. And that is enough. I want you to know if you're a believer here today, God loves you.

The Charismatics and Pentecostals, some of them very, very dear friends of mine. They've always told me the greatest act of faith is to raise the dead. Boy, if you can raise the dead, you have got faith.

And I always tell them, that's nothing for a Baptist. They said, well, what's the greatest act of faith? I said, for me to look in the mirror of God's Word and see all my faults, all my sin, all my shortcomings, and to believe that God loves me exactly as He says He does. He truly does.

You are beloved if you are in Christ. You are accepted if you are in Christ. You always walk with a safety net underneath.

That's a beautiful thing. Legalists don't like that very much, but to someone like me, that's a beautiful thing. To someone who has never been able to cross all the T's and dot all the I's, like other people, it's a

wonderful message.

It's a wonderful message. Now, let's open up our Bibles to Romans 3, verse 23. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, 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. Where then is boasting, it is excluded.

By what kind of law of works? No, but by a law of faith. Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones says, and I think it originated with him, I've heard a lot of other people say it, but I think it was he that first said it. This is the Acropolis of the Christian faith, the Citadel, possibly the greatest passage in all the Bible.

This is possibly what I have just read, the most important passage in the entire Bible. Have you read it? Do you understand it? Have you poured over it? Because here we find the greatest and greatest of truths. So many people read this passage and the only thing they remember is Romans 3.23. And yet, this passage, in my opinion at least, is the most important of all of them in the Bible.

And in order to understand the cross of Jesus Christ, we must understand this passage. Now we start by saying, for all have sinned. As I said last night, it is very, very difficult to bring forth the meaning of this text in our modern day world.

Why? We use sin to sell truck tires. We drink down sin as though it were water. We're like fish who swim in a culture of sin.

Fish never recognize they're wet. Talk to a fish, ask them if they've ever thought about being wet. They really don't think about it because they're surrounded in it all the time.

We cannot understand the depth of the wickedness and the sinfulness of sin. Let me give you just a small example. It might not mean quite much to those who are here, but in most churches, when I say this, people are a bit shocked.

What the average so-called church member wears to the beach today. I'm not particularly fond of going to the beach or anything like that. I'm not saying go to the beach, but I'm just making a statement.

What the average church person wears to the beach today and considers it to be OK. Sixty years ago, if someone had gone out in public, the unbelieving secular authorities would have either thrown that person in jail or put them in an insane asylum. That is true.

That's not an exaggeration. If what people wear, even people who claim to know Christ, if what they wear today in good conscience would have been worn 60 years ago, lost people would have had them committed to an insane asylum. Now, why am I saying that? For just this purpose.

Do you see? You can't recognize how far we have fallen. When you just look around yourself and compare yourself to those around you, you can't see how far our culture has fallen. This is all we've ever known.

Now, if in 60 years the world has become that numb to sin and immorality, how much in 6,000 years have we fallen? You see, and when you think, oh, it's just a little sin, you can't realize that it was just such a sin

that threw the entire universe into chaos. There are two things I know I will never be able to do. One harder than the other, but two things I know I will never be able to do.

Number one, I will never be able to preach Christ as He ought to be preached. And number two, I will never be able to explain the sinfulness of sin for two reasons. I myself cannot understand how wicked sin is before the throne of God.

And the people who hear me cannot understand. There is one way in which the burden of preaching never leaves. And there is one way in which preaching is a very, very, very depressing thing for the preacher, because he knows every time he steps down from the pulpit, he has failed.

He's talking about themes too great for himself to even understand, much less his hearers. But if we go through Scripture, we quickly discover how much God hates sin. It says, for all have sinned, every one of us.

And if we understood that, we would fall right now out of our chairs and try to dig a hole through this asphalt and hide ourselves, not simply from the wrath of God, but hide ourselves from the shame of it. The shame of it. Don't you realize that we live in a culture today that is not embarrassed over anything? That does not blush.

It does not blush. But all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God today in our human centered, man centered ideas and preaching. Most take this to mean, well, God created us for this marvelous, glorious purpose.

And all have fallen short of this glorious, glorious purpose. I don't think that's what this passage means. At least, that's not its main meaning.

I think what he's saying goes back to chapter one, where it says, although they knew God, they did not honor him as God. You see, you need to understand something. One of the reasons why people are so miserable is that they were made for God.

And one of the reasons why even true believers sometimes fall into misery is because they begin to live for themselves and do not realize they were made for God. Every fiber of my being, every beat of my heart, every thought of my mind is for God. And to the degree that it is for God, I will have joy.

You were made for him. To breathe, you were given breath only to return it to him and pray. Your heart beats only for him and you will only, only, only, as Augustine said, find peace and contentment and life in giving yourself to him.

I love to make things. I make furniture. I love to make bows, bows and arrows that you shoot and hunt with and do target with.

I love that kind of thing. And I could bring one of my bows here today and it would be a fine thing to use to shoot an arrow, but you can't play a song on it. To the same degree, I can't take the guitar that was here last night and put an arrow in it, pull back and draw and expect to hit a target.

Guitars are made for one thing. Bows are made for another. And they only find true purpose when they're used for the thing they were made for.

In the same degree, you were not made for chasing this world. You were not made for looking like this world. You were not made for loving this world.

You were made for God and you will be restless until you find yourself found by him. Let me give you another example. Christians in America and in Western Europe today, real Christians.

We are the wealthiest, most protected group of Christians on the face of the earth and in the history of Christianity. And yet you go into all these Christian bookstores and you find out that half the books are written about how miserable we are. Our emotional needs, our financial needs, our spiritual needs.

We are the wealthiest, most protected group of Christians in the history of Christianity and yet we seem to be the most needy and most miserable. And why is that? I will tell you. We are miserable and needy for the same reason that Jesus Christ was never those things.

He was persecuted. He was poor. He was many things, but he said, I have food to eat that you know not of.

He was always full for the same reason that we are always empty. He was full because he had food to eat that we know not of and that was doing the will of the Father. We are empty because for the most part we are about doing our own will instead of the will of the Father.

If I ever see a person who claims to know Christ and there is evidence in their life that they have truly been converted and yet they're walking around telling me they're empty, I just go and tell them, you are empty because you are not about doing the will of the Father. And then they'll say to me, but you don't understand the trials in my life. I said, in the midst of the trials, do the will of the Father and you'll be full.

Trials are not designed to make us self-centered and turn in to ourselves to try to fix our own need. There's no excuse. I have known saints.

A dear friend of mine who died of cancer and while she is dying of cancer in that hospital room, 15 people professed faith in Christ. Why? While she was suffering her body terribly with cancer, she was doing the will of the Father and she was full of joy in spite of her trials. All have sinned, yes, my dear friend.

They have broken God's law. But I want to tell you something. The greatest crime is not in simply breaking a law.

The greatest crime is not giving yourself wholeheartedly to God. Now, let me talk to you for just a moment about holiness because I believe people are quite confused on this. Today in America we have confused the term holy and righteous.

Both those terms. We've confused them. If you ask somebody, what does it mean to be holy? They will say basically, usually sinlessness, obedience, and all those things.

Well, that is part of holiness. But let me tell you something. That is not the full meaning of holiness.

Righteousness refers to conformity to the law of God, to living rightly. Holiness includes that a bit, but means something more. The word in its basic root means to cut, which means to cut and to separate.

Now, when the Bible says that God is holy, it does not simply mean that he's sinless. It does not simply mean that he has no shadow or turning in him. It means much more.

It means that he is cut, that he is separated, that he is unique, that there is only one God. There is no one else like him. He is unique.

Let me ask you a question. What is closer to God? An archangel in heaven? Or bacteria floating around in your toilet? Which one is more like God? Neither one is like God. You see, that's your problem.

That archangel is no more like God than a piece of bacteria because God is not like us, just bigger. He's totally different than creation. He is the only one unique.

The only one different. I'm not demeaning the character of God and saying he's something like bacteria. What I'm saying is he is so great, he is so distinct, that that archangel whose glory would destroy the world is still nothing like God.

He's completely separate, completely unique. That is why when God dealt with Moses and Moses said, Who do I say you are? He said, I am what I am. I am who I am.

What does that mean? If a Martian came down today and I'm walking out in a cornfield in the nighttime and a Martian from outer space came down and said, Who are you? I could say, well, I am like him. I could point outside of myself to so many people and say, I am like him. I am like her.

If you want to know who I am, just look around. There's a whole bunch of examples of me. Moses said, God, who are you? He could not point outside of himself and give Moses an example.

He said, I am who I am. I am what I am. Never pointing out of himself, outside of himself to give an example until 2,000 years ago when someone said, God, who are you? And he pointed down to his son and said, I am like him.

Now, I know I'm probably running rabbits here, but that's just fine. I love to hunt. Let me just tell you another thing about holiness.

When you talk about holiness and fear, so many people say, what does it mean to fear the Lord? One of the biggest reasons behind fearing the Lord is his uniqueness. Let me give you an example. It's four o'clock in the morning and I'm crossing a glen.

I'm crossing a meadow to hunt. Okay? Now, I've got two choices. As I'm crossing that meadow, I can choose to be confronted by a man who is seven feet tall, weighs 300 pounds, has muscles coming out of his ears, and wants to beat me up.

That's one choice. The other choice is I can be confronted with a Martian. Now, I don't know if you know anything about Martians, but they're only about this tall.

Their arms are really, really skinny. They don't have any muscles at all. They've got really big feet, long fingers, and great big eyes.

Now, when you think about it like that, I would look at him and say, I could whoop 40 of these guys. I could kick them, punch them, everything. But if I have to make a choice between, in that four o'clock in the morning, walking across a field and meeting this huge monster of a man who wants to beat me up, or this little Martian, I'm choosing the man.

Now, why? It's kind of a vulgar illustration. Funny illustration, but it proves its point. I would be much more afraid of this little Martian than I would this man, regardless of how big and how mean he is.

Why? This man is like me. I know this man. I know he's a man.

His characteristics. I know what he's going to probably try to do. I know what he's going to be able to do.

I'm going to be able to think about what I should do. Because this guy is like me, at least to some degree. This thing I know nothing about.

It's not like me. It is other. And that is why many theologians will talk about the otherness of God along with His holiness.

He is nothing like anything or anyone. That is why it is so foolish. When you sin against Him, you know not what you do because you don't know who He is.

All you know is this. You take all the strength of all the created beings in Heaven, Hell, and Earth, combine them together, and they are nothing compared to God. You take all the greatness and glory of every created being and thing, the power of the seas, the power of the great rivers, the power of volcanoes, and everything else, and you combine them together, they are nothing.

If we were to go to the sun and heat up the tip of a needle that we sew with, if you were to stick the needle into the sun and bring it back to Earth with just the tip heated, it would destroy everything in a thousand mile radius. The tip of that needle. That is nothing.

Christ would take the needle and go... And so when we talk about that we are to live unto the glory of God, what a crime it is when we sin against Him. What a crime it is when something stupid, and I use that word on purpose, it can be used, some little stupid, trite little thing that means nothing takes the place of the living God in our hearts. What a travesty.

What a vulgar travesty. I was hunting one day and I was hiding. I had bought a bow in England actually, big longbow like Robin Hood, and I had brought it back to the States, and I was hiding in these bushes waiting for a deer to come by, and I was admiring the beauty of the thing.

On the tips of it it had horn from buffalo and all these sorts of things, and it had ivory where the arrow would pass. A beautiful bow. And all of a sudden it dawned on me.

This piece of wood. I was contemplating and meditating on this thing over the God of glory. What idolaters we are.

What a shame. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Now it says here, being justified.

So many people today do not understand justification, and some reformed theologians are now turning on what we know to be the biblical evangelical definition of justification back to a more Catholic idea. It's unbelievable. Justification, what does it mean? That every true believer in Jesus Christ is justified.

What does that mean? Does that mean that every true believer is righteous? That they in themselves are righteous? No, that's not what it means. Because every true believer still sins. God has not made you righteous.

Because if you were righteous, you would not sin. God has rather legally declared you to be righteous. God looks down upon the man who repents of his sins and throws himself upon Christ, believing in Christ and Christ's finished work on his behalf, and God declares him legally to be right before Him.

Now that's an amazing, amazing statement. Legally in the courts of God I have been declared to be right. I'm right with God.

I'm accepted before the throne of God because of Jesus Christ and His work on my behalf. It's also the term forensic is used. Forensic or legal righteousness.

God looks at the sinner who has trusted in Christ and declares him to be right. Now, that's very important as we go on. It says here, being justified as a gift by His grace.

Being justified as a gift. Every religion deals with one thing, and that should be a proof of the universal sinfulness of men. Every religion deals with this one question.

How can a man be right with God? You go to Judaism, the question is, how can you be right with God? Even in the Muslim faith, how can you be right with God? There's always in the heart of all men this idea that something is terribly wrong with me. Even in pagan Druid religion, every kind of religion you can imagine, there was this question of, how can we be right with God? Well, you ask a Muslim, Sir, are you right with God? He'll say, yes. I'm going to paradise when I die.

Why? Well, I've read the Koran. I've obeyed the Koran. I have given alms.

I've made the pilgrimages. I make the prayers. I'm right with God.

You talk to an Orthodox Jew. Sir, if you died, where would you go? To the way of the righteous. Why? Because I read the law.

I love the law of God. I try to obey the law of God. I'm a righteous man, and I walk in the way of the righteous.

You come to the Christian, the true Christian. You say, Sir, if you died right now, where would you go? He would say, heaven, with great joy. When you ask him why, with great humility, he probably will bow his head and say something like this, I was born in sin, and in sin did my mother bring me forth.

I have broken every law that God has ever made, and I am worthy of all death. And immediately you stop him and go, Sir, I don't understand. I understand the answers of the other men.

They say they're going to heaven because they proclaim that they deserve it. You, Sir, tell me that you're going to heaven, and yet you declare that you deserve just the opposite. How can that be? And the Christian looks up with a smile and says, because I'm going to heaven, not on my own virtue or my own merit, but upon the virtue and the merit of another Jesus Christ my Lord.

That's the difference. And that's why the Christian is the only person that can actually say that they're right with God and going to heaven and not be proud. Because they're going to heaven and they're right with God based upon the finished work of another Jesus Christ the Lord.

Now, he says here, justified. Very, very important. He says justified as a gift by His grace.

This is actually an iteration. It's saying the same thing. It's redundant.

It's almost as though Paul is saying that we are made right with God as a gift, as a gift. And why does he keep having to say this in the book of Galatians over and over and over again that salvation is by grace, that it is a gift? Why does he say that? Because men hate grace. You would think just the opposite, wouldn't you? You'd think that if you walked up to a man and said salvation is completely free, not based on your merit at all, but the virtue and merit of Jesus Christ, you'd think that a sinful man would rejoice.

No! He hates it. Why? Because he has to humble himself and recognize his need. He has to recognize and declare publicly he is not God.

But he needs a God who can save him. And men would rather go to hell being their own God than escape hell by bowing the knee. Now, it's very important here when he says that it is a gift.

We look at it again. He says being justified as a gift by His grace. This word translated as a gift is the same word that we find in the New Testament when it says about Jesus, they hated Him without a cause.

Now, let me ask you a question. Did anyone ever have a cause to hate Jesus? People always answer, no, of course not. You could study His entire life and you would never find a cause to hate Him.

Well, the same degree. He saved you without cause. You could search throughout all eternity to try to find one good reason why God should save you and you'll not find one.

He justified you without a cause. He justified you not because of you, but in spite of you. He justified you because He is love and because He is doing a work of salvation in the world.

Now, He says, being justified as a gift by His grace through what? Redemption. This is not theatrical. I'm not doing this for some preaching reason.

I'm saying this to you because I believe it. There are some words in the Bible that we ought to almost be afraid to speak. There are some words in the Bible that are so glorious, so full of worth that maybe after we say them, we should pause a moment and think about what we have said.

One time, I forget which museum it was. It was over in Europe. I think it was actually in London and they had a piano there from a very, very, very famous composer of ancient times.

There was a man standing there, a guard right by the piano, and it was roped off. A teenage girl walked up there who was just starting to take piano lessons, and she said, Sir, could I play a song on that piano? And the old man looked at her and said, Okay. She crossed over the rope, she sat down, and she played out a simple song on the piano.

Finished, jumped back over the rope, looked at the guard and said, I guess there are a lot of great composers who've asked to do that, who've done that. And he said, No. As a matter of fact, last week, the greatest composer alive today, we asked him if he would like to play on this piano.

And he simply bowed his head and said, I'm not worthy, and walked away. I believe it was Vance Havner who said that Christians are prone to be like those who will play marbles with the diamonds of God. I hear people, TV evangelists, screaming out these words.

And it just makes me nauseous inside. There are some things that are holy. There are some things that are special.

There are some things that you only touch after much prayer. Redemption. It's one of those words.

Now, I want to speak humanly for a moment. We're going to ascribe things to God. It's just an illustration.

I want to speak humanly for a moment about God. I'm going to say things as though God were human and He's not, but to illustrate. What do you think would run through the mind of the Father every time He hears the word? Redemption.

Every time one of us just kind of blurts out the word or says it without thinking or without meaning, His Son, crushed under the wrath of God, nailed to a tree over a garbage dump outside of Jerusalem for the sins of people who don't even understand the meaning of the term. I'm talking about the Son. I'm not talking about somebody else.

I'm talking about Jesus. I'm talking about Him. You don't say things about Him that way.

You don't let His name roll off your lips that way. You don't talk about Him like that. Angels are afraid to speak His name.

Not because He's a cruel tyrant, but because He is of more worth than all put together. He's different from everybody else. Talk about men.

Yea, be stupid and talk about angels in a way that's trite, even though it's not recommended. But when you come to Him, at least when you come to Him, guard your tongue. Bow your head.

You are before the One that is holy. You are before the One, and there is no one like Him. You can't name His name and then go live like some of you live.

This is not about getting into heaven. This is not about keeping all the rules that your Christian peer group has laid down, and if you don't follow them, you won't look as holy as everybody else. This is not about religion.

This is about why do you not sin? Why do you turn away from the world? This is about Him. It's because He's worth too much. It's because He's too precious.

This is about Him. I know some of the people that are so holy and so righteous. They do everything right.

I mean, they do it all right. And they've got a manual that if you don't follow them exactly like they are, you're just not in their club. But why they do it, I don't understand.

Because they don't talk much about Jesus. They talk about their principles. They talk about the way they do things.

They talk about all their stuff. But where's Jesus? And I'll warn you, you dress right, fine. You're homeschooled.

Wonderful. I'm going to do the same thing. Great.

You're homeschooled. It's not a brownie point with God. Let me share that with you.

You've got everything right. You know how to do this and do that. You look like a Puritan, talk like one, everything else.

Fine. Where's Jesus? Oh, everybody walks like a duck in a row. Wonderful.

Glory to God. Where's Jesus? All that stuff is good, but I want to tell you something. In and of itself, it's dumb.

Apart from Jesus Christ and just loving Him for the grace He's given you. I was a drunk. I was saved out of my own vomit.

I know what I am. And never going to pretend to be anything else. Most of me is just weak and chaotic.

But I know in whom I have believed, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption. I have been purchased with a price. I have been bought a slave, a vile criminal.

It would be different if I was some victim in chains who did not deserve to die and Christ came and saved me. It would be a glorious thing. Or if I was a little lost sheep seeking the shepherd, it would still be a wonderful thing that He saved me.

But I was a vile, wretched, God-hating criminal. And He bought me with not gold and silver, with His own blood. I was bought with a price.

I still, I love Him. But, I mean, I still sometimes just feel like a pagan who's been saved. But I know who has bought me redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

I love the introduction. I don't know what you'd call it. The first several verses of the book of Ephesians.

Paul just gets beside himself. If ever Paul came close to becoming a mad prophet, it was in the book of Ephesians because he just begins to talk in just the biggest run-on sentence in the entire Bible. And what does he say everywhere? In Christ.

In Christ. In Christ. In Christ.

In Christ. I heard a young man pray one time. And he stood up before the prayer time and he said, he said, folks, all we need is Jesus.

And I said, young man, all you have is Jesus. Outside of Him, there is nothing. You would have no part with God except for Christ.

No part with God except for Christ. It's Christ. You know, it is so easy when I talk to people here that have come in off the streets and talked to them about their soul.

It's so easy to talk to them about sin, about so many things. They'll nod their head. But it seems like there's just a fog over them when you're trying to explain to them only Jesus, only Jesus, because they always come back with yes, but.

No, it really is only Jesus. Everything else is sinking sand. It's dung.

It's rubbish. It's torn up cloth full of filth. Do you want to know? Just a glimpse of what it is.

Walk over in that crack house right now and go into the filthiest part of those rooms. Get down there and lie in that filth. That's what everything is.

That's what you are apart from Jesus Christ. He goes on and he says, whom God displayed publicly. Now, when God could have done away with sin in a closet, do you realize that? There was a purpose for that cross and it was revelation.

That cross reveals to us things about God that we could never know apart from that cross. God displayed him publicly. Yes, he was crucified by the hands of wicked men, but it was God's doing.

God had a purpose in Christ dying in shame in public. We're going to see what that is. Whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation.

I was preaching up in Detroit and Vernon Higham was there. Wonderful preacher. And he came up to me and I was preaching on propitiation and he came up to me weeping.

And he said, young man, I have fought for 30 years to get that word back in our book. They traded other words and put other words in its place, but that one word I have fought all my life to get it back in the book. That word propitiation.

And I knew what he was trying to tell me. He was saying, young man, you did a good job, but not even you yet understand the full meaning of that word and the importance of that word. Young man, if you ever lose that word, you have lost it all.

What does it mean? I want you to think about something. Possibly you've thought about it much. Possibly you've never thought about it.

I want you to think about something. Now, I know it's hot, but I mean, there are many unbelievers today sitting there for four hours just waiting to get into a football game. It's not that hot.

Now, I want you to listen. I want you to listen. I want you to listen, possibly like you've never listened before.

I'm going to show you something. When we first started our sermon, what did I talk about? What is to justify? It is to legally declare the sinner to be right. You are a sinner and God declares you legally to be right.

And we worship God for that. We praise God for that. We rejoice that although we are sinners, God, the judge, has legally declared us to be right.

Now, I want you to listen to something. Just listen. Proverbs 17, 15 says, now just listen, He who justifies the wicked is an abomination to the Lord.

Now think. Think. What have we been bragging about? God justified the wicked.

What do we sing about? Not God justified the wicked, but what does the Bible say? Anyone who justifies the wicked is an abomination. The greatest question in all of Christianity, the entire Bible, is written about this one theme. If God is just, He cannot forgive you.

He cannot. What do you think about the judges that we have in America, in South America, in Mexico? What are we always saying, especially in Peru where I live? The judges are corrupt. Why do we say the judges are corrupt? Because they let the wicked go.

Especially if they have money. They let the wicked go. They turn their face away from the wicked and let the wicked go.

What would you think about a judge? Let's say that there was a man who killed your entire family. You caught him, took him to the police. The police took him to the judge, and the judge looked down on this man that assassinated your entire family and said this, I'm a loving judge.

I forgive you. You're free to go. What would you think? You would say the judge was the most vile man on the face of the earth.

You'd be calling the newspaper. You'd be calling television. You'd be doing everything in your power to get this man kicked off the bench because you're saying he is a corrupt, wicked judge.

And why is he corrupt? Because he doesn't do right. The nature of being a judge and justice demands that he measure out to the criminal exactly what the criminal deserves. If he is just and he is a judge, that is what he must do.

The Bible says that God is the just judge of all the earth, and yet we are bragging about the fact that He declared us to be righteous when we are not. And the question really comes down to this. The whole Bible is about this one question.

How can God be just and at the same time justify the wicked? How can God be holy and forgive the wicked that should be condemned? That's the greatest problem in the entire Bible. That's what the entire Bible is about. If God is just, He must condemn you.

Because anyone who justifies or forgives the wicked is an abomination. How can God be just and still pardon the wicked? That's where the word propitiation comes in. God became a man.

God, the God-Man, walked on this earth, born of woman, born under the law, obeyed absolutely everything of the law. He was the Son. He was the only true servant of Jehovah who heard this testimony about Himself.

This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. He fulfilled absolutely every requirement of the law. He was the one perfect servant of Yahweh.

And then, He goes to the cross. And on that cross, He carried the sins of God's people. The sin, the guilt of God's people.

And then all the judgment, all the holy, righteous wrath of God that should fall upon you, upon the heads of God's people, fell upon the Christ. And Christ interposed. Christ stood in our law place, our law room.

Christ took our place and all the judgment of Almighty God, a righteous God, fell upon Him. And when He died, He paid the price. He bought us.

He did what? By His death. First of all, He satisfied all the demands of the law. The law demands that you be punished for every crime you have ever committed and that is death.

When He died on that tree, He satisfied the demands of the law. Now, let me say something here that's very important because I don't want you to get confused. Many times people speak of Christ satisfying the demands of the law as though there were these laws over God that God had to satisfy in order to forgive.

That is not what it means at all. And I've heard people preach it that way. At least it sounded that way.

No, these laws are a revelation, are a reflection of the very character and nature of God. God's just law had to be satisfied because they're His laws and they flow forth from His just character. God cannot be inconsistent within Himself.

His justice must be satisfied. And when Christ died on that tree, the law was satisfied. God's justice was satisfied.

But not only that, wrath was appeased. Sometimes people will come to me and I'll say, hey, what's going on? And they'll say, God saved me. I say, from what? They say, well, I never thought about that.

Well, He saved you. From what did He save you? Well, He saved me from hell. No, not really.

Well, He saved me from sin. Nope. Well then, from whom did God save me? God saved you from God.

It was God who was arrayed in the armor and weaponry of a soldier coming after you. In His holiness and His justice, God coming after you to do vengeance against you, to cause you to pay for all that you have done against Him. And He is able to return His sword to the sheep now because Christ has died.

Christ saved you from the wrath of Almighty God. Hell is just a revelation of that. I always tell people this.

God saved you from Himself. God saved you for Himself. And God saved you by Himself.

Now, I never hardly preach in a place unless I mention the following thing, and that is Galatians 3.10 and Galatians 3.13. I just want you to think about this. What does it say? It says, Cursed is every man who does not abide by all the things written in the book of the law to perform them. Cursed is every man.

That means every one of us prior to our conversion is under a curse. That means everyone here who is not truly converted is under a curse. Now you say, well, what does that mean? When you think of curse, you think of some little old lady from southern Europe who is going to put a hex or an evil eye on you.

That's not what it means. I have gone through the Bible for a long time trying to find the definition of a curse that would rightly bring forth the terror of the name. And I haven't found one.

But let me just give you this. To be under a curse means that in your sin, you are so desperately wicked and vile and grotesque before not only a holy God, but the holy inhabitants of heaven, that the last thing you will hear when you take your first step into hell is all of creation standing to its feet and applauding God because He has rid the earth of you. I heard an evangelist say that God will dry every tear from our eye in heaven because we will be weeping over those that we love that go on into hell.

That is a fabrication if ever I heard one. You know what? I love my children. And just up here with the brothers, I was praying for their salvation.

But if both my boys go to hell on judgment day, you will see their father stand up, raise his hand, and say, has not the God of all the earth done rightly? And I will even go so far to say that I believe that the people

who march off into hell, part of that recognizing that Jesus is Lord will be also recognizing to all of creation that the judgments heaped upon them are true and faithful. Some think, oh, I'm going to go to hell and my parents will be sad throughout all of eternity because I'm in hell and I'm not with them. No, that's not true.

Because I want to tell you something. I love my boys, but if you want to get into really, really deep theology, I'm a child of God. And what I am loving about my boys is the love God's put in my heart towards them and also whatever common grace is upon them is the very thing I'm loving.

What I'm actually loving in my boys is what God is doing in my heart and doing in theirs. But one day, when the wicked stand before God and all grace, all restraint is pulled back from them, they will be the most grotesque monsters you have ever seen. And not even a parent will be able to direct love towards them.

Oh, don't kid yourself. This is a terrifying thing. Now, it says that we were under a curse.

And that's what it means. But then it goes on to say, Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law. How? Does anyone know? Can anyone tell me? How did He do it? By becoming a what? Becoming a curse.

Propitiation. But it says in Galatians 3.13, He redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us. Now you understand what He meant possibly when He said, my God, my God, why have You forsaken Me? I was over in Europe two years ago preaching up in northern Romania, I think it was.

Beautiful place. Snow on the ground. It was sort of a German Mennonite type seminary.

And I was teaching there. And I went into their library, and all the volumes are in German, and I'm looking around trying to find something I can read. And there's a book there on the cross of Christ.

And so I pull the book off the shelf, and if you've read enough books, you can kindly get to the point where I know where I can go to find out what this guy really means. And I'm going through there, and this is what was written in that book. God the Father looked down from heaven and saw the afflictions heaped upon His Son by the hands of men, and He counted that as payment for our sin.

You know, the problem is I preach in most churches, I'll tell them that, and everyone's going, what's wrong with that? It's a lie! We're not saved because of what the Romans and Jews did to Jesus. We're not even saved because they simply nailed Him to a cross. We are saved because on the cross He bore our sin, and God the Father crushed His only begotten Son under His just, righteous judgment.

For never forget, it was Abraham that was bringing the knife down to the heart of his own son. It was God who crushed His Son. And it pleased the Lord to crush Him.

When I used to travel in the jungle and through the war, bombs, raiders, terrorists, you could die any minute. We'd smuggle ourselves into the jungle right in the back of grain trucks. Twenty-four hours under a black tarp in a grain truck, about to die at night, slip over the side.

Many times my wife with me. When I knew I was going into a place where there were a lot of military, I would not allow my wife to go because we were more afraid of the military than we were robbers and thieves and everything else. Because if they grabbed me off of a bus and drugged me off of a bus and put me up against a wall and started screaming at me and yelling at me and everything else, or just pushed me around, big deal.

I've been pushed around before. But as a man, you would know if one soldier extended his hand and touched your wife, you'd probably lose your life defending her. And then when my boys came along, helpless little monsters that they are.

I can't imagine. I mean, the way you want to protect them. I mean, I love my wife and I love my children more than I love myself.

I think it's just natural. I think it's something that you do. I would die a thousand deaths to save them from one.

Look at the Father. You say there's nothing like a mother's love? That's demonic and earthly. That's a lie.

A mother's love doesn't even begin to compare. There's nothing like God's love. Oh yes, for us.

No, there's nothing like God's love for His only begotten Son. Everything God's ever done, He's done for Him. And God crushes His only begotten Son.

What is that song? How deep the Father's love for us. How vast beyond all measure that He would give His only Son to make a wretch His treasure. Young people, you're never going to find a love like that anywhere but in Him.

So we bring this to a close. I'm sorry. It says, there's so much more to be said, but in the love of Christ, I'll let you go.

It says in verse 27, where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law of works? My dear friend, let me tell you something. If you're a true Christian, you have a glimpse of what God has done for you in Christ.

If anyone ever comes up to you and even suggests that your salvation has something to do with you, it will make you nauseous in your stomach. It says, where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law of works? No, but by a law of faith.

For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law. Now look in 26 just really quickly. He says, so that he would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

You see, what did I say at the very beginning? The great problem is this. How can God be just and at the same time justify the wicked? He can do so in Christ. Usually when I'm in a university or something speaking to a secular crowd and I mention this, usually someone will pop up and sometimes I have to thank the devil for sending that person.

Some smart aleck will always pop up and say, yeah, I've got a problem with this thing about Jesus. I say, what is it? How can one man, suffering for a few hours on a cross, save a multitude of men from an eternity in hell? It's not balanced. I say, oh, I'm so glad you asked that question because the answer I'm going to give you is my most favorite answer.

Well, what is it? That one man could suffer for a few short hours on that tree and save a multitude of people from an eternity in hell because that one man was worth more than all of them put together. That's how. When they talk about the infinite worth, theologians are the perfection of Christ's sacrifice.

You'll always hear them talking about Christ's sacrifice being perfect. It doesn't just mean that it's perfectly righteous or perfectly holy. They're also meaning it is of infinite worth.

This is not just some man dying there. This is the Son of God. And His worth goes far above all other things.

All other things. All other things. Now, I have to tell you, I'm disappointed.

Not disappointed in anything that I'm looking at. I'm disappointed for the same reason I'm always disappointed. Queen Yeshiva said the half has not been told.

If she could say that about Solomon, what must I say? An infinite amount of things have not been told. One time, in a moment of passion, and if you ever said something and God stops you in just a second and lets you know, that's just emotion. I was thinking, and I said out loud, oh, the one thing I'm going to ask of God when I step over into glory is just once let me stand up and preach Jesus Christ as He ought to be preached, because I've never preached Him as He ought to be preached.

And right then, I didn't hear a voice, but I knew exactly, God, Son, even then, in all Your glory, You will not preach Jesus as He ought to be preached. As a matter of fact, do you want to know what heaven's all about and what it's like? I'll tell you. I'll tell you what heaven is about.

I'll tell you everything it's about right now in just a few short sentences. What will you be doing in heaven? You'll be doing in heaven exactly what you started on the day of your conversion is what you'll be doing in heaven. Now, what do I mean? You remember in John 17.3, what's eternal life? Just longevity? Swinging on gates of pearl and walking down streets of gold? No.

You may know Him. This is what you'll be doing. Let's say that eternity has days and nights.

Okay? It doesn't, but let's just use that for an illustration. Before your conversion, you were just walking along blind to the glories of Christ. Anything you saw of Jesus Christ, you hated because He's holy and you were wicked.

But on the day of your conversion, God regenerated your heart, gave you a heart, and you saw Jesus. And it enraptured your heart and led you to worship. And that's what I've been doing and hopefully you've been doing if you're a Christian for the last how many years you've been a Christian.

As I walk along this Christian path, it's just more and more glimpses of the glory of Jesus Christ which more and more enraptures my heart and leads me to worship Him. What will heaven be? The same thing, except greater. Someone asked me, when I get to heaven, will I know everything? I said, you'll know a lot, but you won't know everything.

You see, here's the thing. You're always going to be a finite creature, but you're always going to be chasing after an infinite God of infinite glory. And you know why heaven's not going to get boring? You get streets of gold, gates of pearl, swing on them 15 days, that'll be enough.

The reason heaven is not going to be boring is because in the morning, you're going to wake up and when you first walk over into heaven, you are going to see a vision of Jesus Christ that you have never seen before. It is going to lead you to such ecstasy that if your heart was not strengthened, it would kill you, and you're going to fall on your face and worship Him. And then you're going to go to bed.

Remember, I'm making that part up. And then you're going to get up the next morning and you're going to get a new and a greater revelation of Jesus Christ that is so great, it's going to make the one you saw yesterday seem quite small. It is going to enrapture your heart to such a degree you would have to be strengthened or it would kill you, and you're going to spend all day worshiping in such ecstasy it cannot be described.

Then you go to bed. Then you wake up the next morning and another, and you are going to spend the rest of your life chasing down the glories, the infinite glories of God. And that's why eternity's got to last a long time.

But here's my admonition to you, Christian. Why start then? I've had some wonderful experiences in my life. Wonderful experiences.

Things that would just get your adrenaline flowing, your emotions running. I have seen beauty. I have seen things.

But I want to tell you something. Better is one day in His courts than thousands elsewhere. If you have ever come into the presence of God, if you have ever come tasted of the Lord, you would have to acknowledge that all the other experiences you have had, all of them combined, cannot even come close to that one glimpse of Christ on this side.

Follow hard after Him. Follow hard after Him. Some of you young people, God may be working in your life, maybe you are thinking about the ministry.

Don't worry about the ministry. I stopped having a ministry a long time ago. I don't want to have a ministry.

I want to have a life. And I want ministry to flow out of that. Don't make it your goal to be useful to God.

Make it your goal to chase hard after Christ.

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