

(True Disciple Conference) the Greatest Words in All of Scripture

by Paul Washer

The sermon emphasizes the universality of sin, the depth of sin, and the consequences of sin, and highlights the problem of God's justice and the solution through redemption through Christ Jesus.

Duration: 1:40:48

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Romans 3:23, Romans 3:25, Ephesians 2:8, Philippians 1:6

Topics: "Salvation"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by describing a horrifying scenario where a person's family is violently slaughtered. He then compares this to the justice system, where the murderer is brought before a loving judge who inexplicably sets him free. The speaker uses this analogy to emphasize the true meaning of the cross and the sacrifice of Jesus. He goes on to explain the brutal physical suffering that Jesus endured, highlighting the significance of his death for the forgiveness of sins. The speaker also challenges the idea of treating Jesus' death lightly and calls for a deeper understanding and appreciation of the magnitude of his sacrifice.

Transcript

Let's open up our Bibles to Romans chapter 3. Romans chapter 3, verse 23. Before we read our text, let's go to the Lord in prayer. Father, I pray that in this night You would get glory for Yourself, get great glory for Your Son.

Pray that the Holy Spirit might fill ever-increasing measure. That You would revive us in Christ, about Christ. That as it is in heaven, so it would be on earth.

Everything in Him, about Him, for Him. Lord, in our weakness, in our smallness, so finite and incapable, O God, O God, Lord bring revival. Please, in Jesus' name, Amen.

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. For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law. We have before us this evening what many scholars and preachers throughout the ages of the church have said to be the Acropolis of the Christian faith, the fortified city of Christianity, the great shining star in Scripture.

I have heard some very godly men say that if they had to lose the entire Bible and could pick only one passage, this is the passage they would hold. Because in this passage is found the very salvation of man. There are words here that are possibly the greatest words in all of Scripture.

And we cannot understand the gospel of Jesus Christ apart from understanding some of these words, some of these things that are said in this small text. And if you do not understand the glory of God in the gospel, how then will you live? How will you live? So many today, we call them gospel hardened. They're not gospel hardened.

They are gospel ignorant. So many today that are truly born again, who are looking for motivation and reason and zeal and a source of Christian life, and they do not understand that it is found only in the truths of the gospel. And yet they think they know the gospel.

But the gospel in America today has been reduced down to, as I have said many times, four spiritual laws and five things God wants you to know. The gospel is treated as a small truth. Christianity 101, something that you learn in five minutes and afterwards you pray a prayer and then you go on to the greater stuff.

But there is nothing greater than the gospel of Jesus Christ and as it is laid out in this glorious text. And so we're going to take this text line by line and seek to discover by the grace of God some of what's buried here. First of all, he says, for all have sinned.

Isn't it quite amazing? Doesn't this show the lack of discernment on our part and the dullness of our own hearts? Those of you who are born again, those of us who are born again, upon hearing all have sinned, we ought to be falling out of our chairs at this very moment, worshiping God and giving thanks to God that He has saved us from such a terrible thing. And those of you who are not born again, who treat the gospel as something common, or maybe have gathered unto yourself a sort of gospel that doesn't change life, you ought to fall on your face in fear knowing that if God doesn't move on your behalf, you will stand before Him in your sin and that is a most terrible estate. All have sinned.

Why don't we tremble? Why don't we know how terrible this is? We don't know how much we've sinned in the same way a fish doesn't know how wet it is. We were born in sin. We were conceived in sin.

We were born in a fallen world of sin. The only thing we've ever known is sin. Our society, as Scripture says, drinks down iniquity like it was water.

We also live in a land that is rampant of the ignorance of God. They have no knowledge of God. We don't know who God is.

We treat Him as though He were some sort of Santa Claus or a buffoon of a grandfather. And we do not understand that He is the Lord of lords and King of kings. Do you know that hell is of infinite duration? The

primary reason is because every sin you commit is committed against an infinitely worthy and good God.

Sin is sin today. Listen to the way we speak about sin. We talk about sin against man.

We talk about sin even against nature and animals and trees. But no one realizes that all sin is ultimately sin against God. David sinned against his people.

David committed adultery with a woman. David murdered a man, but in the end he said this, Against thee and thee alone have I sinned. Why is sin so terrible? Because it's committed against God.

Why don't we tremble? Because we don't know what that means. And why don't we know what that means? Because we do not know who God is. Such a glorious and blessed being.

Imagine this for a moment. God stands there on the day of creation. And He tells planets to put themselves in certain orbits in space.

And they all bow down and say amen and obey Him. He tells stars to find their place in the sky and to follow His decree to the letter. And they all bow down and obey Him.

He tells mountains to be lifted up and valleys to be cast down. And they bow down in worship. He tells the brave sea, you will come to this point and you will come no further.

And the sea adores. And God tells you to come and you go no. How wicked is our sin.

And if it were only an act it would be terrible enough. But sin goes much deeper in the heart of a man. A man does not simply commit sin.

A man is born in sin. Vile and corrupt from the beginning. Let's just go for just a moment.

Go over to Genesis just quickly with me. Chapter 6, verse 5. Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth. And that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

Only evil continually. I simply read this text one time preaching at a university. And a young reporter came up to me and he said, I don't agree with your interpretation.

And I said, young man, I didn't interpret the text, I read it. And he said, well, I don't agree. And I said, young man, let me tell you something.

If I could pull out your heart right now. If I could take every thought you have ever had. From your first waking moment until this very hour.

If I could take every thought you've ever had. Not just your deeds, but your thoughts. Only your thoughts.

And I could put them on a video. And I could show that video here in this auditorium tonight. You would run off of this campus and you would never show your face here again.

Because you have thought things so wicked and so perverted. You cannot even share them with your closest friend. As a matter of fact, if your closest friend knew.

Some of the thoughts you've had against him. He would no longer be your friend. And young man, I do not know that because I'm a prophet.

I know that because it's what the Scriptures say. And I know that like you, I too am a man. I can say the same thing about every one of you here tonight.

You would spend every ounce of energy to hide from everyone in this room. What has gone through your mind just in the last hour. Don't tell me Scripture is not right when it talks about all men having sinned.

Because all men are sinners. Go to Genesis 8 for a moment. Verse 21.

And the Lord smelled the soothing aroma. And the Lord said to himself, I will never again curse the ground on account of man. For the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth.

This can mean evil from childhood. Evil from a babe. Let me share with you something that a correction officer said a long time ago.

He said this. Discover that human nature is such. That imagine for a moment an 18 month old baby.

That you're holding in your arms. And that 18 month old baby sees that shiny watch on your wrist. And he grabs for your watch.

And you pull his hand away and say no. He begins to cry and move about in your arms. He reaches for the watch again.

You grab his hand and say no. He begins to scream and cry. He reaches for the watch again.

You say no. He begins to frail his arms even in the direction of your face. I submit to you.

That if that 18 month old baby had the strength of an 18 year old man. He would slaughter you there where you stand father. Rip the watch off your arm and walk across your bloody body.

Out the door without feeling an ounce of remorse. You see here's something you need to understand. Hitler was not an anomaly.

Hitler was not a phenomenon. Hitler was what everyone in this room has the potential of being. And not only that.

You need to understand. Even in all the wickedness of Hitler. Hitler was still restrained by the common grace of God.

And you need to know this. That if it were not for the common grace of God. Restraining you in your unconverted state.

You would make Hitler look like a choir boy. What we do not understand is what Scripture teaches about men. Men are evil.

You say well I don't agree. That's because you've grabbed enough of Christianity to stand. But you don't believe the Bible.

The Scripture's testimony against you. And all men. Is that we are born with evil.

And we are evil. Do you have to teach a child to lie? Do you have to teach a child to be self centered? Do you have to teach a child to be selfish? Do you have to teach a child to be brutal to other children? They

learn that on their own. Set them free.

Discipline them not. And see what you have in ten years. A monster.

Why? Because what Scripture says is true. And you hold your ears and you say. I don't want to hear it.

I don't want to hear it. In the same way that a person dying of cancer is in denial. And says to the doctor.

I don't want to hear it. I don't want to hear it. But by cupping the hands over your ears.

You close yourself off from any remedy. The first thing you must embrace is this. All men are born in sin.

And given over to sin. And all men are born hating God. You say.

Well I never hated God. Yes you do. If you did not.

If you did not. And in your unconverted state. Hate God.

Then the Bible is not true. Because the Bible calls all men haters of God. And enemies of God.

You say. But I loved God ever since I was little. No you loved an image of God.

That you created with your own mind. And you loved what you made. But if someone would have come to you.

And pointed out the God of Scripture. You would have said. I could never love a God like that.

So many times I'll go to people. And they say. Well I've loved God all my life.

And I say. Can I sit down with you for a half an hour. And just explain from Scripture.

Some of the historical Christian beliefs about God. And after a half an hour. A good church man will say.

That's not my God. And I have to say. Of course it's not.

But it is the God of Scripture. It is the God of Scripture. Let's take another look.

Let's go on over to Isaiah. Isaiah 64. Verse 6. For all of us have become like one who is unclean.

And all our righteous deeds are like filthy garments. And all of us wither like a leaf. And our iniquities like the wind take us away.

I helped build a church years ago in San Pablo. Near the Colombian border on the Amazon. And it was a colony of lepers.

Have you ever seen a leper? Have you ever smelt a leper? If I brought a leper of the worst sort. There's about three different kinds of leprosy. If I brought a leper of the worst sort.

You'd smell him before he got out of the parking lot into this building. If he walked in here. He would be a mass of rotting flesh.

Body fluid. Pus and blood. When he said all of us are like one who is unclean.

This is possible to reference here. And let's say that all you fine people say. Well we must do something about this.

So you go to Kansas City. To the most exclusive shop. And you buy the finest silk you can find.

And you take that silk. And you bring it back. And you wrap that man head to toe in that fine white silk.

And you say. Bravo look what we've done. We've saved the day.

We've made him presentable. But that silk only lies on that flesh for a few seconds. And the corruption of that man's body begins to bleed through that fine silk.

And that silk becomes as corrupt as the man himself. That is why all our good works are like filthy rags before God. Because we ourselves prior to conversion.

Have a heart of stone. A God hating heart. A heart of evil.

Born in sin. Given towards sin. That is the testimony of Scripture.

Some of you. In your 60's, 70's. You heard preaching like this all the time when you were children.

But now it seems the new generations to follow cannot bear with truth. They would rather be deceived and think well of themselves. But a man who will not accept his illness cannot be healed.

A man who does not have all his hopes crushed. With regard to his own self-righteousness. Merit and worth cannot turn to Christ.

We must realize that we are destitute. And there is only one Savior. And His name is Jesus.

We go on back to Romans chapter 3. Verse 10 it says, There is none righteous, not even one. The word righteous in some degree means straight. It is talking about a standard.

To be righteous you must be perfectly conformed to a certain standard. If you are not conformed to that straight standard. You are twisted.

You are crooked. Another word perverted. The standard is God's nature and God's law.

And the Bible says no one has conformed himself to the standard of God's holy nature. The standard of God's holy law. All of us have become twisted and dislocated.

It says also there is none who understands. There is none who seeks for God. If you have ever truly sought for God.

It is only because God has sought you first. It says all have turned aside together. They have become useless.

There is no one who does good, not even one. How many people, even those who set themselves inside the sphere of Christianity. Will tell you they are going to heaven because they are not that bad.

They are going to heaven because they are good. But what is the testimony of Scripture? There is none good. No, not one.

None. None. All have sinned.

You say brother Paul I haven't sinned much. How much do you have to sin? Adam and Eve sinned only one time. And the entire universe was cast into moral chaos and judgment.

You have sinned more times than you can count on a calculator. If Adam and Eve and even creation could not escape the condemnation of one sin. How will you escape? The condemnation of all the sins that are heaped upon your head.

You say but I am pretty good as far as humans go. But you will not be judged by human standard. You will be judged by God.

A righteous and holy God. And He has seen your heart. So many people will say don't judge me.

You don't know what is in my heart. How foolish a statement. Because they would be ashamed if I knew what was in their heart.

Why would they ever want to use their own heart as evidence that they really are good? Because they hide their heart from everyone. You don't know me really. Okay then let me see you in secret.

No I would never let you see that. Just the thoughts of our own mind accuses us. All have sinned.

And come short of the glory of God. So common today to take this verse and just almost seem to make it humanistic. What does it mean to fall short of the glory of God? Well God had a marvelous plan for all of us.

And He had so much invested in seeing us being filled with glory. But although He had this great plan none of us have reached it. I don't think that is the primary meaning of the text.

When we have fallen short of the glory of God. But I think that phrase should be interpreted in the context of Romans chapter 1. Where it says although they knew God they did not glorify Him as God nor give thanks. You were created.

Well let's think for a moment. By whom? By God. And not only were you created by God.

All your faculties, your very existence is sustained by Him. You owe every breath and every beat of your heart to God. And the breath is given only to return in worship and the heart beats only to serve Him.

And yet look at the testimony against us. Our minds and our lives are filled up with searching for our purpose. Searching for our dreams, our goals, our will, what we want.

Even those who claim some form of piety. Would have to say that in their daily lives they are practical atheists. God is far from their thoughts.

When they're at business, when they're in the factory, when they're in the field, when they're working at home. Is God the center of their thoughts? And all their thinking and all their doing, are they doing it for the glory of God? You say to me, but brother Paul no one is that way. That's absolutely my point.

All have sinned. All have fallen short of the glory of God. Why are men so hollow and so miserable and so without purpose? Isn't it amazing? Christians in America are the most wealthy, most protected Christians that have ever existed in history.

And yet you go into all those so-called Christian bookstores of yours. And 85% of the books are written about how empty we are. Do you want to know why we're empty? First of all, because the great majority of those calling themselves Christians are not converted.

But secondly, even those who are Christians are empty for the very reason Jesus never was. He said, I have food to eat that you know not of. My food is to do the will of my Father.

Our food is to gain ground on this planet. Success, comfort, fame, leisure, youth, beauty. Us, us, us, us.

And the more we get of us, the more empty we are. Because we were made for something else. Better said, we were made for someone else.

But we have become twisted and dislocated. Not only have we sinned. Not only are we separated from a holy and a righteous God.

But our whole purpose has been wrenched from us. For all have sinned. Fallen short of the glory of God.

But now here comes the problem. It is the greatest blessing you could ever hear. It is the greatest problem you could ever hear.

And what is it? God is just. You say, well that's good, I want a just God. I wouldn't want an all-powerful being who is evil.

I want a just God. That's good news, brother Paul. No, it's not.

Because you're not just. You see, here's the problem. He is a just God.

And a just God, the judge of all the earth, will do right. And in doing right, his response to you is rather dreadful. Now I know that you've heard these evangelists over and over on television.

How many times do I hear evangelists get up in the pulpit and say, now the first thing I want all you good people to know is that God, unlike those Puritan preachers of yesterday, God is not an angry God. How many times have you heard that? God is not an angry God. Okay? Let's just see.

Go with me to Psalms chapter 7, verse 11. God is a righteous judge and a God who has indignation every day. In some of your translations, a God who is angry every day.

You see, God doesn't need a PR man to make him politically correct so that people will like him. The Bible says God is an angry God, and you ought to fall down on your knees and praise that he is. Not only is he an angry God, he is a God who hates.

Not only is he an angry God, he is a God who hates. And you say, yes, Brother Paul, you're exactly right. God hates the sin and loves the sinner.

Well, that looks good on the back of a Christian t-shirt, but that's not biblical. The Bible does not say that God hates the sin and loves the sinner. The Bible says God hates the sinner.

Look in Psalms 5. Just look there for a moment. Psalms 5, verse 5. The boastful shall not stand before your eyes. You hate all who do iniquity.

In another translation, you hate all who do wrong. Now, does it say here that God hates the sin or that God hates the sinner? You say, Brother Paul, but what about John 3.16? It's in the book. God so loved the world.

Yes, it's in the book, but so is Psalms 5. But God is merciful and a loving God. What about that? Yes, that's true and we're going to talk about it, but you can't understand it until you understand the full counsel of God. God is love, but this loving God hates.

God is merciful, but He is angry. You see, you just can't take one side of the coin. Not just one part of the story.

And that's the problem today. As I said this morning, I one time preached one whole sermon one night on the holiness of God. And after the sermon, three men walked up to me and said, Brother Paul, we got a real problem with you because you preached an entire sermon on the holiness of God and not once did you mention the love of God.

And I said, well, gentlemen, last night I preached on the love of God and not once did I mention the holiness of God and not one of you had a problem with that. Do you see? Dear people, we're always getting a one-sided story. But doesn't the Scriptures tell us that we need the full counsel of God? I'm going to talk about the love of God tonight in a way possibly you've never known it.

But in order for you to appreciate the love of God, you've got to understand something. His love is exalted in the same way the stars are exalted by a pitch black sky. Let me ask you a question.

Where did the stars go this afternoon? Did someone put them all in a basket and carry them away? How come when you looked up you didn't see them? Because there was so much light. You could not marvel at their beauty. You could not even see them because there was so much light.

In the same way, you cannot see the stars of God's grace and His love with so much light. When preachers tell you that men are so good, the only way to truly appreciate the love of God and the grace of God is to see the pitch dark blackness of man. And when you see the pitch dark blackness of your own heart and then you realize that God moved in love for you, it causes you to fall down on your knees with the greatest esteem and worship God.

I have a point to all this madness. I've got to dig a hole and bury you deep. I've got to show you how dark your night and hopeless your situation so that when I begin to talk about Jesus, you're filled with admiration.

Sometimes I'll pick up a thing of keys and I'll jingle them before the congregation and I'll say, does the sound of these keys bring you any joy? Everyone goes, no. Of course not, because you're not locked away in a dungeon. If you were locked away in a dungeon, the sound of keys would bring you great joy.

Your heart would leap with hope. Preachers don't preach about sin. And they're just about as moral as a doctor who will not tell his patient he's dying.

I want to abase man totally. I want man to see what he is so that when we talk about God's love in sending His own Son, men cry out, amazing grace, how sweet the sound. Several years ago when I was in Peru, someone sent me a tape, Amazing Grace.

I was so happy, I loved that song. And I put it in my little cassette player there and it went around for the first verse. I grabbed it out of the cassette player and threw it right in the trash can.

Do you want to know why? Because it said this, amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a man like me. You know, I think it says sinner like me. And before that it says wretch like me and worm like me.

Behold, every generation, man just seems to be getting better. Men don't need saviors, wretches do. And when you take away the darkness of man, you take away the glory of the Gospel.

Have you ever wondered why some men who are drug addicts and women who were prostitutes and murderers and all so on and so forth, when they're converted, they seem to be filled with such a special zeal for God. It's because they didn't come from a country club. They didn't come from some religious denomination or religious life where everyone pretends to be moral, upstanding and deserving of God's love.

They came out of the sewer and when they heard about the love of God, their hearts exploded. Now let's talk about God's response. God is angry.

And you say, I don't like that. You should. I pick up a newspaper and I'm sitting beside you.

I pick up a newspaper. I look at it and I go with a kind of a smile, a twinkle in my eye, Hey, did you read this? A pedophile molested six boys. Hey, get a kick out of this.

What would you say about me? He'd say, you're sick. What's wrong with you? You should read that and be so angry. Oh, I should.

But God has no right to be angry. Every day He sees the wickedness of this world. Every day He sees the filth and the murder and the crimes and everything else.

But in your book, God has no right to be angry. I tell you He is angry. He is so angry that on the day He pulls back His mercy and He comes to judge the world, the great captains of this world will cry out for mountains to be picked up and thrown on top of them to hide them from the wrath of the Lamb.

What would you think about a God who could look down at Auschwitz and be apathetic? Who could give Hitler a hug? Who can watch the United States of America murder thousands of babies every day and say, I'm okay and you're okay? He's angry. And if He wasn't angry, He'd be immoral, just like me. If I read a terrible newspaper clipping like that and laughed about it or was neutral about it or said, every man for himself, you know, we're all free.

You'd look at me and say, you're sick. You should be angry. Well, how much more angry should God be? But not just with the Hitlers of the world.

With you. For all your crimes and trespasses against Him and His creation. You see? And let's talk a minute about Psalms, chapter 5. Look at this text.

Just look at the Bible. I have so many people who'll tell me, I don't believe that. And I say, well, look at the Bible.

No, I'm not going to because I just don't believe that. That's okay when you're at a university and you're speaking to an agnostic professor. But someone who claims to be Christian and does the same thing,

there's a serious problem.

I just refuse. Look at it. What does it say? The boastful shall not stand before your eyes.

You hate all who do iniquity. You hate all those who do wrong. You hate workers of iniquity.

These are the different translations. It doesn't say that God's hatred is directed toward the iniquity or the sin. It says God's hatred is directed towards the man who commits it and did not the loving, lowly Jesus say the same thing? That those who did not believe in Him, the wrath of God abides upon them.

John chapter 3. What do you think the wrath of God is? Wrath of God in Hebrew comes from a word that literally means nostril or the flaring of a nostril. I being a farm boy, we raised charlay cattle. I know exactly what that means.

We had a couple of two and three thousand pound bulls, perfect bulls. You walk across that lot and that bull flare his nostrils, you know your party is over. You better run.

When it talks about the wrath of God in the Bible, it's the flaring of the nostrils. That deity would be so angry. And it says that at the breath of his mouth, the mountains melt.

Young guy one time said, I'll stand there on judgment day and I won't be afraid. And I said, no, young man, you will melt before God like a tiny wax figurine and before a blast furnace. God comes with hatred against evil.

God comes with anger against evil. And you say, brother Paul, but no, as one lady said one time, she goes, no, God can't hate because God is love. I said, well, first of all, we have to go not on philosophical inferences.

We have to go on Scripture. And when Scripture said God hates, you better believe it. But second of all, let's be philosophical for a moment.

You say God is love and therefore he can't hate. I tell you that God is love, therefore he must hate. Do you love Jews? You must hate the Holocaust.

If I told you, hey, did you read about the Holocaust? And you said, yeah, yeah, I'm pretty neutral about that. I mean, you know what anybody wants to do. You know, it was Hitler's idea.

It's OK with me. I would think you a monster. You'd probably be thrown in jail for a hate crime.

If you love Jews, you must hate the Holocaust. Do you love children? How many of you have said with your own voice, I hate abortion? Oh, so you have the right to hate because of all the great love in your heart. But you think it's strange that God would hate because he loves.

You see, God loves all that is beautiful and lovely and excellent. Let's just all wrap it up in one basket. God loves everything that's like him.

That's where the problem comes from. We have the right to love everything we choose to love, but we think God ought to love everything that we love. God loves everything that is like him because he is absolute perfection and he comes with wrath against everything that contradicts his nature and will.

And that is us. Everyone in this room has broken every law God has ever made. If you don't understand that, you don't understand Christianity.

Now, I want us to go for a moment to the book of Proverbs. And I'm going to show you the greatest problem in all of Scripture. Proverbs chapter 17, verse 15.

He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous, both of them alike are an abomination to the Lord. Abomination is probably the strongest word we have in all of Scripture. There's just nothing more horrible before God than an abomination.

And what's an abomination to God? An abomination is this. He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous, both of them alike are an abomination. Now, let's go back to our main text.

We've looked at for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Now, let's look at this. Speaking about Christians, those who have truly been converted, regenerated by the Holy Spirit, those who have believed in Jesus Christ unto salvation, he says this about them.

Although they have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, they are justified. Justified. Now, what does it mean to be justified? Justified does not mean God treats me just as if I'd never sinned.

I know it rhymes and everything, but that's not the meaning of the word. Justified does not mean that the moment you believe in Jesus, God makes you just, perfectly righteous, because if that was the case, you'd never sin again. Justified means that the moment the sinner looks unto Jesus with saving faith, that sinner is legally declared by God to be right before Him.

To be righteous before Him and right with Him. Actually, justification is a forensic term or a legal term. God the Judge looks down upon the sinner who places his faith in Christ and declares that sinner to be legally right with Him.

Now, how does that work? Well, it says this. He says, being justified as a gift by His grace. Now, Paul's being redundant here.

Being justified. Being justified as a gift by His grace. How are we justified? It's a gift.

It's a gift. Do you know where it says about the Messiah, they hated me without a cause? Did Jesus ever give anyone a cause to hate Him? No. You would argue, no, no, no, no, no.

Jesus never gave even the tiniest hint of a cause for someone to hate Him. They hated Him without a cause. That's the same word used here.

That the Christian is justified without a cause. That means, sir, ma'am, young person, you gave God absolutely no cause to declare you right. I don't know why God saved me.

Well, I can tell you this. It was not because of you. It was in spite of you.

What worth did God see in me? Absolutely none. He said, He declared you right even though you did not give Him a cause to do so. He justified you without cause by His grace.

Now, I want you to look at something. Most religions today, most religions seek to answer only one question. Think about it.

All the religions out there except for some eastern mystic religions, but most religions seek to answer only one question. How can a man be right with God? If you go into some African pagan tribes or South America or even here in the United States where they're returning to paganism and they're offering blood sacrifices to trees and demon gods and everything else, all over the world throughout history, men have had this reality that they were wrong with God, whatever God they believed in. They had this knowing in their conscience that there was a problem.

And that demonstrates one thing, that Romans chapter 1 is true, that all men know enough about the one true God and enough about His will to know that they have broken His law and that He is against them and they are against Him. But let's just interview for a second three men from your main religions. The reporter comes up to the orthodox Jew and says, Sir, if you died right now, where would you go? Well, I'd go to paradise.

Why? I love the law of God. I am a righteous man. I do good works.

I study His law, love His law, feed upon His law. I am a righteous man. And the reporter goes, Okay, I understand that.

Okay, Muslim, if you died right now, where would you go? I would go to paradise. Why? Because I love the Koran. I have made all the pilgrimages.

I make the daily prayers. I give alms to the poor. So on and so forth.

I am a righteous man. The reporter says, Okay, I understand that. Comes to the Christian, the true Christian.

You have to keep saying that in America because everyone believes they're Christian. You come to the Christian and the reporter says, Sir, if you died right now, where would you go? I'd go to heaven. Why? Well, I was born in sin.

In sin did my mother conceive me. I have broken every law that God has ever given. Thoroughly found unrighteous and lacking in merit and worth.

I deserve the deepest, darkest judgments. The reporter says, Stop! The other guys, I understand. They say they're going to heaven because they deserve to go to heaven.

God owes them. God is their debtor. They've proved themselves worthy.

God must give them heaven. But you, I don't understand. You're telling me with joy that you're going to heaven, but then you're telling me you have no worth or merit to go there? How are you going to heaven? And the Christian smiles and he says, Because I'm going to heaven based upon the merit and the worth of another, Jesus Christ my Lord.

Now of those three, who gives glory to God? And who gives glory to men? You see that? This is not about us. This is not about our morality and our goodness. This is about Him.

I have trouble with reporters. A reporter came up to me and says, Why are you always talking about sin? I said, Because I want you to love God. He said, What do you mean you want me to love God? I said, Have you never read? She loved much because she was forgiven much.

Sir, you don't love God much because you don't know how much you've been forgiven and you don't know how much you've been forgiven because no one ever told you how sinful you are. I say, I can invite Bill Gates to my house to eat a bowl of Cheerios. He won't be kissing my hands or on his knees weeping in gratitude.

But many places where I have served around the world, if I were to give someone a bowl of Cheerios, they would fall on their face and kiss my hands because they were starving and needy. It is only when we recognize our need and we have dropped all these silly, trite ideas of our own value and worth and righteousness that we can see the glory of the love of God. It goes on.

Being justified as a gift by His grace. How? Through the redemption. I have come to believe as I have read some older men that there are certain words in the Bible that we ought to be very careful mentioning.

We say things so quickly. Think about this for a moment. All this fancy singing today.

All this yay-hoo and ha-hoo and every kind of singing that's going on. Yeah, that Jesus died for me! You walk up to me and I've just lost my son and you say, your little boy died! I'll just look at you and go, what are you? Do you know what you're saying? Jesus died? Should not there be a dropping of the head, a trembling of the lip, a thought of honor to the Father who gave His Son? Or can we just sing these silly southern gospel songs and hoop and holler and do all this stuff? He died! The Father gave His Son! When you say things like, Jesus died, shouldn't you stop for a moment or something? It's like my father was in World War II and fought in some of the most horrible battles. I mean, anyone else could watch a film on World War II on the History Channel and just talk about strategy and coldly talk about what happened and didn't happen, but my dad would just kind of sit there.

Because all his friends died. The guy's discussing Vietnam and they're talking about whether it's right or wrong or political this and political that and warfare and everything. But the guy's coming out of Vietnam and they hear about it and they go, you can only talk that way because you weren't there.

And sometimes Christians who come to grasp something of Jesus died, how can you say that with a hoop holler in your voice? Like to make it rhyme in a song. Jesus died. And He says that we are justified through redemption.

To redeem something is to buy a slave or a captive to pay a price. But the price that was paid was not emptying coffers in heaven and streets of gold, tearing them up and sending them down to pay off the devil. He gave the blood of His only begotten Son.

I remember when my firstborn son, my child was born, my son Ian. And it was a few days after his birth and I was driving back to the farm, my old blue Ford Ranger truck. And I'd always thought about Jesus died, Jesus died, but as some of you fathers know, the moment I laid eyes on that boy, my boy who was born, I mean, I'd have fought an army for him.

I would have died a thousand deaths for him. I'd have thrown my body in front of a train for him. I couldn't believe it.

It was scary. There was so much love that I had for that little hairless lizard in the cradle. I mean, he was just the most beautiful thing I had ever seen in my life.

And it struck me for the first time in my life, not just the son's pain, but the Father giving His Son. He gave Him to die. I couldn't do that.

I wouldn't give my son for you. Maybe I would give myself for you. I don't know.

But I would not give my son for you. Shouldn't there be some words in the Bible that when we speak them, we just stop for a moment? Isn't it true that even the most precious phrases can become nothing more than empty clichés because we say them over and over without even thinking about it? I mean, He died. He really died.

And it was His blood shed on that tree that's the only reason the black filth of your sin can be washed away. That blood on that tree. The slaughter of the Son of God.

As one theologian has said, how much does He love you? Look to the cross. How much did it cost? How vile and dark was your sin? Look to that tree. It will tell you everything.

So He redeemed us. Redemption which is in Christ Jesus. One time I was preaching and a young man came up afterwards.

He was all excited. He goes, you're right, Brother Paul. Jesus is all we need.

And I said, young man, Jesus is all we have. Outside of Him, there's nothing. You are either in Christianity.

You are either in one realm or the other. You must understand this. You are either in Adam or in Christ.

You are either in death or in life. You are either in the flesh or in the Spirit. You are either condemned or set free.

It goes on and on and on. The only thing we have is Christ. I was speaking years ago at Oral Roberts Seminary.

I was invited there. I don't know why, but I went. I was invited.

I'll go. And I found some very, very decent Christians there. But one of them came up to me afterwards and says, boy, you're one of those old Puritan guys.

And I said, what makes you think that? And he said, your prayer. Because you said this, God, I come before you in the name of Jesus. And I know that apart from Him, I have no part with you.

In Christ, in Christ. That is why Paul the Apostle goes wild in the book of Ephesians. He doesn't even know where to put the period.

He just keeps writing and writing and writing because it's all in Him, in Him, in Him, in Christ, in Christ, in the Son, in Him. It's all about Christ. It's nothing about you.

And that is why I love that old hymn singer who said, nothing in my hands I bring. It's Christ or nothing. And you better want it that way.

Why? Because if it was 99.99% Christ and .01% you, you'd go to hell. It is Christ and Christ alone. Now, he goes on and he says this.

I want to link up verse 24. Being justified. Well, let's link the whole thing up.

Sinners. Wicked people. Verse 23.

Verse 24. God justified us when we were wicked. Proverbs 17, 15.

The problem. Anyone who justifies the wicked is an abomination to God. Now, think about Proverbs for a moment.

Look what it's teaching us. Anyone who justifies a wicked man is what? An abomination to God. But what have we been rejoicing in the last few minutes? God justified us even though we were wicked.

Does anybody see a problem? If God says that anyone who justifies the wicked is an abomination before Him, then how can God justify you being wicked without becoming an abomination? And that is the greatest problem in all the Scripture. And that is what the Gospel of Jesus Christ is all about. The greatest dilemma in all the Bible is this.

If God is just, He cannot forgive you. You say, well, why not? That question just shows that you are a child of this age who knows nothing about justice. Let me give you an example.

You left part of your family at home. You return tonight about 10 o'clock and you find that they've been slaughtered. Violently slaughtered.

You walk through the door and the man who's done it has blood on his hands and he's strangling the life out of your last child. With the force of a bull, you come running across that room, you charge that man, you grab him and you throw him to the ground. You call the police and you hand this violent murderer of your entire life, everything you've ever lived for, he has dashed to pieces.

You hand him over to the police and the police take him to the judge. And as were all the townspeople are in that courtroom, the judge looks down at the man who slaughtered your entire family and says this, I'm a very loving judge and I never get angry with anybody. You're free to go.

I forgive you. What are you going to do? Is everybody in the courtroom going to come together, hold hands and sing Kumbaya? What are you going to do? I'll tell you exactly what you're going to do. You're going to jump right off of that seat and you're going to go, I demand justice.

You're going to write the congressman, the senator, the president. You're going to go into the newspaper. You're going to go to the television and you're going to say, there is a judge sitting on that bench that's more wicked than the man who slaughtered my family because a judge is supposed to do right.

He's supposed to do justice. He cannot justify the wicked. See the problem? You would demand justice from your own judges, but you get mad when someone tells you that God is just.

The greatest problem in the Bible is this, if God is just, He cannot forgive you without becoming wicked. The question of all the Scripture. See, this is what I mean when I say, people don't understand the Gospel today.

When was the last time you heard this? Like I always go to students, especially over in Europe, I say, why did Jesus die? They say, well, because of our sin. Okay, why did Jesus die? Well, because of our sin. No, you're not answering the question.

You've got to go deeper than that. Why is the sin a problem? Well, because sin is wrong. No, that's not the problem.

The problem is this, God is a just God and He's the judge of all the earth and He must do right. He must be consistent with His own character. God is holy and just.

If He looks over sin and sets the wicked free, He's just as contemptible, He's just as wicked as that judge I just described. So the greatest problem in all the Bible, the divine dilemma of all of inspired Scripture is this, if God is just, He cannot forgive you. So the question is, how can God justify wicked men and still be just? Sometimes I've heard evangelists say this, God could have been just with you, but instead of being just, He was loving.

Do you know what that means? God's love is unjust. Do you see that? People say a lot of stupid things. God's great love for you caused Him to turn His back on His own justice and sin in order to save you.

That is the problem. How can God be just and at the same time justify wicked men? Now let me say something. It's important that you understand, God must be just not because there's this law that's even greater than God over Him to which He must conform.

Some universal law of justice that God cannot break. That's not what the Bible teaches. God must be just because He is just.

God must be consistent with who He is. He is a just God. He cannot do injustice even in the name of love.

God's love is holy. God's love is just. So the question is, how can God be just and justify the wicked? The answer is found in this one word.

Verse 25, propitiation. Now, other than the names of God, I would submit to you this is the most important word in the entire Bible. And yet, if I were to hand out pieces of paper and tell you, each of you now define for me what is the word propitiation, most people wouldn't be able to do it.

You see, we're not gospel hardened. We're gospel ignorant. It's the most important word in the Bible, yet most people don't know it.

The most important concept in all the Bible is how can God be just and the justifier of the wicked, yet some of you have never heard it. It says, whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation. God displayed Christ publicly to put away sin.

Now, Martyn Lloyd-Jones said that God placarded His Son. Just like when you go through Missouri and you see all those billboards out in the fields everywhere. You can't even see the nature for all the billboards that are out there.

Those are placarded everywhere. Signs everywhere you look. God placarded His Son in the center of the world.

The most important religious city on the face of the earth. There in the crossroads. A cross was lifted up and His Son was nailed to it.

Now, why did God publicly display His Son? Because God was doing a lot more than just saving men on that tree. We're going to talk about that in just a little while. But let's go on.

Whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation. What is a propitiation? A propitiation is a sacrifice made in the place of the guilty party that justifies or satisfies the justice of God and makes it possible for God to forgive wicked men. A sacrifice made in the place of the wicked so that justice that demands their death God's justice will be satisfied and His wrath, holy hatred against sin, will be appeased and it's all done so that He can now freely forgive.

And that sacrifice was Christ. Now, let's talk about the death of Christ for a moment. We know that the one who dies on that tree must be a man.

We know that, don't we? Because the blood of bulls and goats will not take away our sin. It is Adam who has sinned. It is Adam's race that has fallen.

It is a son of Adam who must die in the place of the guilty. We know that. A man must die on that tree.

But then again, more than a man must die on that tree. The one who dies on that tree must also be God. Now, let's look at this for just a moment.

Let's just look. Why must the one who dies on that tree be deity, be God in the flesh, be God the Son, the Son of God? Why? Well, first of all, a small statement in the book of Jonah. Salvation is of the Lord.

Isaiah is quite clear. God shares the title of Savior with no one. That is why the doctrine of the Jehovah Witnesses is such an abomination because they say that God created an innocent creature to go down and save men, to put away sin.

And if that's the case, then it is a creature that has saved us. But what you need to understand is Christ was no creature, but the Creator, the eternal Son of God who stepped down out of heaven, did not consider equality with God a thing to be grasped, but came down from heaven. He did not lay aside His deity.

He laid aside the glory and privilege of His deity. He did not become something less than God, but He became something God had never been. He took to His divine nature, human nature.

He took to Himself flesh and He became a man. And He went to that tree as the God-man. And He died on that tree as the God-man.

And He rose again from the dead as the God-man. And the one that we call Savior is not just man, but He is God. And so, the words of Jonah remain intact.

Salvation is of the Lord. Why is it that the one on that tree must be God? Well, just look at this for a moment. The one on the tree must lay down his life.

You say, well, a man can do that. No, he can't. An angel can do that.

No, he can't. Why? Now, let's say you need a car. And I'm driving one I've borrowed from the pastor.

And I see your great need. So I give you the pastor's car. I've not given you my life.

I've not given you my car. I've given you something borrowed from another. From where does the life of a man come? It comes from God.

Angels, do they have life inherent in themselves? No. But Jesus said, I have authority to lay down this life of mine and take it up again. The one who dies on that tree must lay down his life.

Not life borrowed from another. Real life. Why must the one on that tree be God? Who else but God can withstand the wrath of God and rise again? The mountains melt before the wrath of God.

The rivers dry up before the wrath of God. Nations are destroyed before the wrath of God. One day all the universe will be dissolved into fire by the wrath of God.

Who but God can withstand the wrath of God and rise again? Why must the one on that tree be God? I was speaking at university years ago. And after speaking, question and answer, this student stood up. He was kind of angry.

And he said, I've got a problem for you, preacher. I said, okay. How can one man suffer for a few short hours on that tree and pay for the sins of a multitude of men and save them from an eternity in hell? It isn't right.

And I just began to cry. I said, young man, thank you for asking that question. Because the answer is my most favorite answer.

That one man could suffer for a few short hours on that tree and save a multitude of men from an eternity in hell because that one man was worth more than all of them put together. When theologians talk about the perfect sacrifice of Christ, they're not just saying He was sinless. They're also talking about the infinite value of the life given.

You take a gigantic cosmic scale. You put everything in it that you can find. You put stars and galaxies, suns and moons and planets and earth, mountains and mole hills, moths and men, crickets and clowns, everything you can find, dusts and rocks of granite, everything you can find of creation.

And you put it in a scale. And you put Jesus on the other side and He outweighs them all. It's His value.

He's God. His worth cannot be valued, nor can it be emptied or compared. You see the preciousness of Christ.

Someone had to die there that was a man. Someone had to die there that was God. And Christ fulfills both of those.

Let's talk about His death. It says in His blood, propitiation in His blood, He had to die. Not swoon, not suffer, not sleep.

Had to give up His life. He had to die. But how? I was in Europe several years ago and I was teaching, actually a bunch of gypsy missionaries.

And it was in a Germanic seminary and after teaching I was rather tired and I went into the library and I was looking for a book to read. Everything was in German, I was trying to find something to read. And finally I found a book called The Cross of Christ.

It wasn't Stott's book, it was another one, one I'd never heard of before. It said The Cross of Christ. So I opened up the book and I began to look through it, see what the author was saying.

And this is what he said. When Jesus Christ was on that tree, God looked down from heaven and saw the suffering that was inflicted upon the Son of God by the hands of the Romans and He counted that as payment for our sins. That is heresy.

That is heresy. But if you listen to most preaching today, that's all you'll ever hear. When Mel Gibson's film came out about the passion, I never saw the film, I have no desire to wrangle about it or nothing.

I just couldn't go see it. But while all that was going on, a very famous preacher came on the radio one day when I was working on the farm. I turned up the radio, I sat back in the truck listening and he said, because of all this about the passion and the movie, I just felt that it would be good for me to take this teaching time that I have on the radio with you every day and explain to you the real meaning of the cross.

And I thought, oh, praise God. He spent half an hour talking about everything that the Romans did to Jesus and then said, because of that, our sins have been paid for. He talked about the beatings, the clubbings.

He talked about the whip and the cat of nine tails. He talked about Christ crawling up to the tree. He talked about Him being thrown down.

He talked about the nails and the crown and the cloak. He talked about the spear in His side. He talked about suffocation of crucifixion.

He talked about absolutely everything. But I want you to know, I don't want to take anything away from the physical sufferings of Christ, but the man totally missed the gospel. If you're saved here today, you are not saved because the Romans nailed Jesus to a tree.

You are not saved because the Jews whipped Him or beat Him. If you are saved here today, it's because when He was on that tree, He bore our sin and His own Father crushed Him. We are not saved because of what the Romans did to Jesus.

We're saved because of what God did to Jesus. He slaughtered His only begotten Son. Think about it for a moment.

He's on that tree and He cries out, My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? I hear so many preachers say, God the Father looked at His Son and when He saw all the wounds and the suffering, He turned away because He couldn't bear to see it anymore. That is a romantic lie. That's not what Jesus said.

Jesus Himself bore witness that the Father utterly forsook Him. Why? Because He became sin. He was bearing your sin.

He became the scapegoat. He became the worm. He became the serpent lifted up in the wilderness.

Read for a moment. Turn to Psalms 22 for just a second. Look at verse 1. My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me? Far from My deliverance are the words of My groaning.

O my God, I cry by day, but You do not answer, and by night, but I have no rest. Yet You are holy. In the first two verses, He cries out to God.

And that's His complaint. My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me? And then He gives an argument in verse 4. In You our fathers trusted. They trusted in You and You delivered them.

They cried out to You and were delivered. They trusted in You and were not disappointed. His argument is this.

Father, there's never been a time in the history of Your covenant people, Israel, that a man cried out to You and You forsook him. But here I am hanging on this tree, Your only Son, the Messiah. Why have You forsaken Me? And then He answers His own question.

Verse 3. Yet You are holy. Verse 6. And I am a worm. I am a worm.

Under the law, the nation of Israel, the leaders would come out, the elders of Israel, and they would lay their hands upon a goat, symbolically transferring, imputing the sins of the people to the head of the goat. One goat would be slaughtered. Another would be driven outside the gates of the camp to wander in the wilderness and die.

So the writer of Hebrews said that Jesus Christ suffered outside the gates of the city, forsaken of God and forsaken of God's people, the bearer of sin, the triagon, the three times holy one. Don't you understand? Have you ever read Isaiah 6? In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple, and above Him stood the seraph, each having six wings. With two He covered his face, and with two He covered his feet, and with two He did fly, and one cried unto another, Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of hosts.

The whole earth is full of His glory. And the poster door moved, and the voice of Him who cried, and the house was filled with smoke. John chapter 12 tells us that the God that Isaiah saw was the Son of God.

Isaiah saw His glory. And this glorious one that the greatest archangels in heaven cannot even look at because of His loveliness and His beauty and His purity. The seraphs are called burning ones in Hebrew.

They do not burn by their own fuel. They're only a reflection of the burning holiness of the Son of God, the reflection of His beauty. And yet this one left a throne.

A throne where His entire robe filled everything that is to be filled. Where His glory without measure filled everything in the earth and sky and even hell. And He left that throne, and He became a man, and He went to the tree, and He who knew no sin became sin for us.

The law says, Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all the things written in the book of the law so as to perform them. Do you know what it means to be cursed? It's a hard one. You have to go all through the Old Testament.

It's just hard. You have to stay up all night for nights to figure this one out. How can you communicate to a people what it means when God curses them? It says, first of all, Cursed is every man who does not abide by all the things written in the book of the law so as to perform them.

That means that prior to your conversion, you were under the very curse of God. Do you know what it means to be under the curse of God? This is the only way I can define it. It means that the sinner is so vile and so sickening and wicked and loathsome, not only before a holy God, but a holy heaven, that the last thing that sinner will hear when he takes his first step into hell is all of creation standing to its feet and

applauding God because God's rid the earth of him.

Yet the Scriptures say, but Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law. He became a curse for us. Don't you see? You say, Brother Paul, my heart is so hard, I can't weep.

Then weep for your hardened heart. He became a curse, the wretch, a vile thing. And now, go to the garden for a moment.

Father, let this cup pass from me. Let this cup pass from me. Drops of blood, sweating, coming from His brow.

Father, let this cup pass from me. These preachers, they say, oh, Jesus didn't want to go to that Roman cross. That's a lie.

Oh, Jesus. These charismatic preachers. Jesus was afraid of the devil.

Blasphemy. Oh, that Roman cross, that whip, He didn't want to go to it. Absurd.

Absurd. Let me ask you a question. Just for a second.

I want you to think about this for just a moment. After the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, since that time, it is estimated that 50 million men and women and children have died for their profession of faith in Jesus Christ. They've died as martyrs.

In the early church, through the time of the Puritans and the Reformation. Do you know? Let's just use the early church for example. Many of Jesus' followers were crucified.

Not only crucified, they were crucified upside down. Not only crucified upside down, they were pitched, filled, covered with pitch and set on fire to provide lights for the streets of Rome. But many of those followers of Jesus in chains being taken off to be crucified sang hymns full of joy.

Do you honestly believe the Captain of our salvation is in a garden cowering because of a cross even though His disciples went to the same cross with joy in their heart? Do you think that the Captain of our salvation is so weak? Think man! Jesus wasn't afraid of a cross or a nail or a spear or a crown of thorns. What was in the cup? I'll never forget at a Reformed school. Theologically Reformed school several years ago.

I went there and I said, well, you've called me here to preach. I'm here. They said, you'll be preaching out in the auditorium.

I said, wonderful. What ages? And they said, well, kindergarten to the 12th grade. And I said, well, I'm going to be teaching on propitiation.

It's kind of a wide berth, don't you think? They said, it won't be a problem, Mr. Washer. So I walked out there and as I was preaching, I stopped and I said, what was in the cup? What is it that caused Christ to tremble? And I'll never forget this little eight-year-old girl raised her hand. And I said, yes.

And she stood up. Stood beside her desk. And she said, Mr. Washer, the wrath of God was in the cup.

God's fierce hatred for all that is evil was in the cup. A wooden cross? All men are under the fierce just wrath of God because of their vile wickedness. Someone had to drink down that wrath.

Jesus Christ on that tree bore the guilt of His people and stood in their law place. Then all the holy just hatred, wrath, judgment, and justice of God like blinding white light came crushing down on the head of His only begotten Son. Have you never read? And it pleased the Lord, Yahweh, to crush Him, to grind Him to powder.

Imagine for a moment a dam 10,000 miles high and 10,000 miles wide and you're standing below the thing a mile back from the wall. And all of a sudden, in a second, the wall is pulled away and all that water comes crushing down upon you. But right before it gets to your feet, the ground opens up and swallows it down.

So the wrath of God destined for people. The Son of God took that cup out of His Father's hand and He drank every drop. And when He cried out, It is finished, He turned it over and not one drop fell out.

He drank it all. If I were to summarize the cup of wrath in the Old Testament, it would be something like this. God saying, because of the wickedness and the rebellion of the nations, I will send them the full force of My wrath.

I will hand them My cup and I will make them drink it. And they will drink it and they will stagger and they will die. But on that tree, Christ drank the cup.

You've heard the story of Abraham and his son. Go up to that mountain and slaughter your only son. Abraham goes to that mountain in obedience.

He ties his son down. His son offers no resistance it seems. The old man goes for the knife.

Lays his hand upon the brow of his son. And as the hand comes down, he is stopped. God will provide.

And you say, oh, what a wonderful story. There it was. The animal there trapped by its horns in the bush.

What a wonderful ending to the story. It wasn't the ending. It was the intermission.

Hundreds of years later, on a hill called Calvary, God the Father laid His hand on the head of His only begotten Son. And He slaughtered Him. Someone had to die.

You see, this is the cross that all these modern day preachers put in the back of the store and not in the storefront window because it's a shameful thing. It's a horrid thing. It's a terrible thing.

Some of you are looking at each other as though I've never heard anything like this before. Absolutely. And that's why the cross has so little power in your life.

This is a horrid thing. A vile thing. Not the kind of thing you wear around your neck.

Someone had to die. Justice had to be satisfied. To demonstrate love, God had to put away sin first.

And there was only one way to do it. The death of the only begotten Son of God. He died.

And you see, this is what the Christian life is all about. Paul says in Romans chapter 12, he pleads with the people. He says, I urge you, as a pastor would urge a loving flock.

He says, I urge you to do what? To lay down your life, to offer your life as a living and holy sacrifice acceptable to God. But Paul gives the motivation. He says to lay down your life because of, based upon

the mercies of God.

And what is he talking about? The thing that ought to motivate you to lay down your life for Christ are the mercies of God. But in Romans chapter 12, the mercies of God are referring to the first 11 chapters of the book of Romans. Where in the first 11 chapters of the book of Romans, Paul explains everything God has done for us in Christ.

And he's saying, since God has done all this in Christ, now lay down your life for Him. And the more you know of this cross, the more you are given to lay down your life for Him. He's no longer this little accessory that you put on your life to make it better.

He is your life. You are consumed by Him. You are constrained by Him.

Every thought, every judgment, every word, everything you do. Why do you do this, sir? Why do you do that, sir? Because Christ has shed His own blood for my soul. The love of God in Christ constrains me.

He died. Offer up the sacrifice. Creation sends forth a call.

Offer up the sacrifice. One life to pay for them all. Offer up the sacrifice.

The innocent one must be slain. Offer up the sacrifice and bring man back to God again. He died.

It's amazing what the Spirit can do when He's here. It's amazing what is not done when He's not. But Christ died.

Those words should be enough to break your heart into a thousand pieces and to cast you to the floor and worship. Christ died for you. But Paul tells us, Scripture tells us, that He did not remain dead.

It is not just the death of Jesus Christ that saves us. It is the resurrection of Jesus Christ also that has a great part in this story. If He had remained dead, there would be nothing.

There would be no hope. All things would be dashed to pieces. But God has vindicated His only begotten Son by raising Him from the dead.

And in raising Him from the dead, God has set His seal and told us, declared publicly through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, that His sacrifice was sufficient to atone for the sins of His people. Christ died. Christ rose again from the dead.

And Christ ascended 40 days later to the right hand of His Father. The old ancients, the patristics of the first five centuries, patriarchs, they would always use the Ascension Psalm, Psalm 24, to describe the ascension of Jesus Christ into heaven. And this is where we'll bring this to a close.

As evangelicals, rightly so, we are constantly defending the deity of Jesus Christ. But never forget this. Jesus Christ was God in the most complete and full sense of the term.

But Jesus Christ was man in the most complete and full sense of the term. There is one God and one mediator between God and men. The man, Christ, Jesus.

A man has sinned. A race of men are fallen. A man must die.

And a man must rise again from the dead. And then that long-awaited prayer of Job must be answered. You see, a ladder that reaches only to the top, Charles Spurgeon tells us, is no good.

And a ladder that reaches only to the bottom will do us no help. We need a ladder that reaches from the bottom to the top and the top to the bottom. We need a Savior who is God and man.

And that man, that God, that man, Christ Jesus, rose again from the dead. And on the 40th day, He ascended up to the right hand of His Father. And for the first time in all the history of history, a man walked up to the doors of heaven and cried out what we find here in verse 7, Lift up your heads, O gates, and be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in.

And all of heaven behind those doors are in utter shock, in silence, in wonder. Finally, a brave one lifts his head and begins to speak, Who is this King of glory? Who dares speak to these doors? No man has ever dared come this far or lay his hand to the latch of this wall. Who is this King of glory? And then all of a sudden, the Lord, the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God, the man for us cries out, The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle, Lift up your heads, O gates, lift up your heads, lift them up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in.

And in the first time of all time, those doors open. For a man, he walked through those doors and everything that has ever been made fell on its face. All hail the power of Jesus' name.

Let angels prostrate fall. Bring forth the royal diadem and crown Him, Lord of all, crown Him with many crowns, this Lamb upon the throne. And I can just see Him now walking up to His Father, bold, it was His right, climbing the steps of this throne that would make Solomon's throne look like paper mache, and sits down without even asking permission, and looks at His Father, not as a question, but as an affirmation, and says, Father, it is finished.

And the Father says, Son, it is finished indeed. This Jesus, whom you crucified, God has made Him both Lord and Christ of all. Don't think I will even ask you to make Jesus Lord of your life.

That's the most preposterous thing I could ever tell you to do. Jesus Christ is Lord of your life. Whether you serve Him or not, whether you bless Him, curse Him, hate Him or love Him, He is the Lord of your life because God has given Him a name that is above every name, so that the name of Jesus Christ, every knee shall bow and tongue confess that He is Lord.

Some of you will bow out of the grace that has been given to you, and others will bow because your kneecaps will be broken by the one who rules the nations with a rod of iron. And I'll not apologize for this God of the Bible. I come from a long line of men, most of them buried, but all of them well received in glory, who thinks not about the opinions of men or the way the rest of the evangelical community is going to walk.

I want you to know there is a God in heaven, and He is worthy of all praise and glory and honor, and He demands such from you. And He has made it possible in His glory, in His love, for you to come to Him. And He cries out, all who are thirsty, come and drink.

All who are hungry, come and eat. Why do you spend your money on that which will not satisfy? Come and drink from Me, He says. Wine and milk.

Based upon the sure mercies of David, I will treat you good. For My ways are not your ways. They are higher than your ways.

As the seed grows because water is poured upon it, My Word, My promise will not fail. He commands everyone in this room to repent of their sins and believe the Gospel. To seek Him while He may be found.

Brother Paul, can I be saved? I don't know. Let me ask you a question. Maybe you came here tonight.

You came, someone invited you. The only thing you've been doing is looking at your watch, wondering when is this going to be over. Your mind has been wandering.

You could care less. Christ means nothing to you. No more than when you entered into these doors.

Then my answer to you is no, you cannot be saved. At least not now. Because you have no repentance in your heart.

No brokenness over sin. No brokenness over the price that was paid for you that you might live. But maybe you're saying, Brother Paul, I came in here tonight.

I had no intention of listening to anything. But maybe during the worship, God caught your heart and you began to think on eternal things. And maybe as you heard the Gospel preached, you became aware of your sin and your vileness before a holy God.

And then you heard about Christ and your heart leaped with joy. And you've said to yourself, I'm the vilest of creatures. Is there hope for me? Yes, there's hope for you.

You have repentance, at least the seeds of it in your heart. Now you lack one thing. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.

You shall be saved. You shall be saved. For all who call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

And of all those who have believed in Him, none of them are disappointed. But know this, the clock is ticking and time is fleeing and death and hell are moving. Christ will return.

People tell me, I don't care. He's not going to return for a thousand years. Maybe so.

But inside of 25, 50, 60 years, everyone in this room is going to see Him. Either you're going there or He's coming here. It really makes no difference.

You will see Him. You will stand before Him. He's coming.

And when He comes, it will be both wonderful and absolutely terrifying. As one preacher said, I have good news and bad news. The good news is God is here.

The bad news is God is here. It depends which side of the line you're standing on. He will come.

He will burst forth from this sky. And the greatest and mightiest of men and all their armies, one glimpse of the One who rides that horse, they will cry out for mountains to bury them. You see, you need to understand, His sovereignty and power is such that He sits over everything with absolute sovereignty.

And if all the created universe, angels and men, demons and devils, all turned against Him to fight, they would have no more strength than if one of them, the weakest of them, stood alone against Him. They'd have no more strength than a mite beating its head against a piece of granite. You will be judged.

And if your name is not written in the Lamb's Book of Life, you will be found lacking. And you will be cast into hell. And don't buy into this mess that says heaven's heaven's because God is there and hell is hell because God's not there.

No, my friend. Hell is hell because God is there. Hell is the pure, flaming wrath and justice of God.

Have you not read? And the smoke of their torment ascended up in the presence of the Lamb. It isn't the devil who rules over hell. It's God who rules over hell.

You say, well, I've never heard of such a thing. I know that's your problem. That's your problem.

Repent. Believe the Gospel. The best thing I can do for you now is turn you away from men and turn you to God.

Seek the Lord till He has saved you. Seek the Lord. Call upon Him.

Believe in Him. But know this, if tonight something happens in your life and you believe that God has saved you, I want you to know something. It is not just tonight that is necessary to give you assurance that God has saved you.

Because if you think God saved you tonight, but you walk out of this church building and you do not begin to change, and you do not begin to grow in grace, and you do not begin to grow in the things of God and desire, and you do not continue walking with Him, but you fall away like so many others, know this, you've got nothing here tonight. The evidence of your salvation is not that one time in your life you prayed a prayer. The evidence of your salvation is that you continue walking with Him and that He who began a good work in you finishes it.

Let's pray. Father, Father, I come before You in the name of Your Son. What a Son! What a Savior! Glory to God.

Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing my great Redeemer's praise. Oh, hail the power of Jesus' name. Let angels prostrate fall.

Bring forth the royal diadem. Crown Him Lord of all. Amen.

Pastor?

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