

# True Gospel - Pt2 - What Is the Gospel?

by Paul Washer

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*The mercies of God are the motivation for presenting our bodies as living sacrifices, and justification is a gift by His grace, not based on our works, but on the virtue and merit of Jesus Christ.*

**Duration:** 1:26:46

**Scripture:** Romans 3:10-12, Romans 3:20, Romans 3:23, Romans 5:8, Romans 6:23, Romans 8:1, Romans 12:1

**Topics:** "The Cross", "Redemption"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker expresses his disbelief and disappointment in hearing someone casually mention the crucifixion of Jesus on the radio. He emphasizes the gravity and significance of Jesus dying on the cross to save the world. The speaker describes the darkness and silence that enveloped the earth on the day of the crucifixion, emphasizing the profound impact it had. He urges Christians to recognize the holiness of Jesus and to treat him with reverence. The speaker also highlights the love and sacrifice of Jesus in redeeming humanity from slavery to sin.

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## Transcript

Let's open up our Bibles to Romans chapter 3. Romans chapter 3. As I did this morning, I would like to share that, before we take our major text, to realize the purpose of what the Lord has laid on my heart for this week. Paul said this, Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. Here Paul speaks with a pastor's heart, urging and pleading with the people of God, the people whom he loves dearly, with a love that young men can't understand.

This is the love of a tried man, of an aged man, of a man who has walked years and years and years with Jesus Christ. This is the love of a man who knows his weaknesses, his failures, and is afraid, not only for those whom he loves, but also for himself. And he realizes that we will begin and finish this race only being urged by those who love us and those who have walked before us.

There are so many young people here tonight. You're Christians. You're Christians.

You know not what you've got yourself into. And at 20 years of walking with Christ, I'm still a boy of God, not a man of God. But I listen to this, what the Apostle Paul is saying, and he's urging believers to present their bodies as living sacrifices to God.

And it's a reasonable thing to do, he tells them. It's a spiritual thing to do. The most spiritual thing you can do is offer yourself as a sacrifice for the glory of God, for the honor of God, for the good pleasure of God.

But in such a great endeavor, where are we going to find the motivation? To give away the only life we have, where are we going to find the motivation not to walk with Jesus a week, or even a year, but year after year after year after year, and not surrounded by friends and comforting believers, but standing alone and in the dark, and when your body is wracked with pain, and when temptation comes in on you like a flood, where are you going to find the motivation necessary? I believe that it's found in only one place. And it's what Paul says here, the mercies of God. After twenty years with the Lord, I'm not near as holy as I was when I was your age.

I'm not near as strong, and I'm not near as wise as I thought myself to be twenty years ago, when I first started preaching. As a matter of fact, now when I look in the mirror, I don't see a man most of the time that I'm very proud of, or that I would put much confidence in. I'm not motivated by past successes, I'm not motivated by having been used of the Lord.

I'm motivated by the fact that God has not given me what I deserve. I deserve hell, and God has not given me hell. And not only has He not given me what I deserve, He has given me what I do not deserve, and that's Him.

I would never mention something so low as heaven. Heaven could never motivate me. Streets of gold and gates of pearl could never carry me onto the finish line.

It's Him. It's Him that makes heaven, heaven. If you never learn that, you'll be quite deluded.

You won't have much strength. It's Him. And what He has done for us in Jesus Christ, that's the only thing.

What did you come out to hear tonight? Who did you come out to see? A dead piece of wood? Because that's what you get. A man with deaf ears? Well, that's the one standing before you. A man with a tongue of lead? That's a pretty good description of me.

You see, there are no great men of God, and there are no great saints, and there are no great preachers. The word great can only be used with regard to God. The word holy only belongs to Him and Him alone.

Worthy of being heard? I've not met a man yet worthy of being heard. But that God might speak through dumb men with dull hearts and deaf ears? Another example of mercy. And for you young people who are here, and some of you young guys called to preach, you were raised in a vain culture of Christianity that thinks that somehow if you can grasp a hold of some secret truth or reach some stage of sanctification, if you can do what I've done, then you'll be where I am someday.

That's a lie straight out of the pit of hell. You will always be what you are by the mercies of God. Only God says, I am who I am.

Paul said, I am what I am by the grace of God. And so where does a bunch of feeble, self-centered people like me find the motivation to go on, find the motivation to keep going up the hill, to keep running the race? It is in what God has done for us in His Son Jesus Christ. If that heavenly vision was not before me, even now, I'd step down out of this pulpit and I'd walk out of this church and I'd turn my back on 20 years.

The only thing that can cause you, move you, motivate you to persevere, to continue on, to be what God has called you to be is that heavenly vision, not of a celestial city, but of the Son of God hanging on a tree. The mercies of God. Paul urges God's people by what God has done for them in Jesus Christ.

This morning, what we looked at was us. I spent a great deal of time, as I've told you, to turn to Romans chapter 3. I spent the entire hour and even more time on Romans 3.23. And why did I do that? To a verse that you memorized when you were in Sunday school. Because this right here could exhaust a lifetime of preaching.

And it should exhaust a great deal of preaching. And do you want to know why? You can never be before God as you should be unless you recognize what you are apart from His grace. It's impossible! That is why God so many times throughout history has used the most vile creatures on the face of the earth.

Having saved them, He has used them in great ways because they understood their vileness, at least to some degree. It's hard for people who have a high standing in society and have a right to hold their head up among men. It's hard for those people to ever be used of God.

Very, very difficult. Will someone like that ever enter into the kingdom of God? You see, we spent an hour and a half this morning on sin and on depravity and on our wickedness and on our evil. And I put us all together with the Hitlers and the Mussolinis and the Saddam Husseins of the world because they are us.

The only thing that keeps you from making them look like choir boys is the grace of Almighty God. And that God moved on your behalf was an act of mercy. Mercy that sprang forth from its own fountain.

What do I mean by that? Your worth and your value did not draw the love out of God. We have no handle on God whatsoever. God finds no motivation in us to save us.

But He saves us for His own sake, for His own glory, to demonstrate His power in the world. But He also saves us. Don't forget, theologians, because He is love.

And He loves the unlovable. And as I have been taught, He even loves the objects of His own hatred. His love is so strong.

And so what I want us to see is the mercy of God. Never forget this. You will never attain to some spiritual height to where you will be something other than what you are.

And do you know what you are if you're a Christian here tonight? You are a vessel of mercy. You are a recipient of grace. That is your only boast.

Your only boast. Everything else is dung and so much excrement. Everything else.

Your only boast you will ever have is He shed His own blood for your soul. That's it. Nothing else.

Now when we look at verse 23, For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. I'm not going to go back through everything I preached, but I will say this again. We don't understand this verse.

You don't understand this verse. I can tell you don't understand it. By the way you're sitting.

By the expressions on your face. If we truly were standing, if we truly were standing in the very presence of God, if we knew something of His holiness, of His righteousness, of His majesty, if we heard this

declaration against ourselves, it would make us mad. We would go wild with fear.

We would go wild with dread. We would look for every nook and hole and cranny to hide in and to crawl in. You see, we can't understand the vileness or the sinfulness of sin because we live in a culture that loves sin and drinks down iniquity like water.

I'm a man of unclean lips and I dwell among a people of unclean lips. But what happened to that man when he saw Lord Yahweh, when he saw Jehovah sitting on that throne? That's another thing young people don't quite understand. You've got so many charlatans today saying God is here and God is there and God showed up last night.

I dare say that He doesn't show up much. Because when God really shows up, it's not to tickle. The presence of God is as terrible as it is wonderful.

And when He comes, when He comes, you know it's God. It says, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. We divided this in two things.

First of all, we are sinners in that we violate God's law. We have broken every law God has ever given prior to our conversions. It's not that sometimes we did wrong.

The only thing we ever did was wrong. Even our greatest works, our most righteous works, as men might call something righteous, nothing more than filthy rags. And that the disobedience to God's law is not the terrible offense, even though it is a great one.

The most terrible offense is not only did we break His law. We offended His majesty. We offended His glory.

Prior to God regenerating your heart by the power of the Holy Spirit, you were nothing more than a God-hating rebel. And as I shared this morning, most people in the world want to go to heaven. It's just that the majority of them do not want God to be there once they get there.

Because we are godless. Apart from God's grace in us, in salvation, we are godless. We are without God and we love it that way.

We have fallen short of the glory of God. We do not desire to live for His honor or His glory or any such thing. We are truly a vile people.

A wretched people. Blind, poor, naked, and not at all victims. Never forget this.

Sinners are not victims. They are culprits and criminals. And lost sheep are lost sheep.

Because they both hated and rebelled against the shepherd. The only way anyone in this room can ever be saved is if they are brought to the point to say, I am the one, oh wretched man that I am, who will save me from this body of death. And if you have never been brought to that point, then your Christianity is too clean.

It's too respectable. And it has no power. In order to be saved, you must be brought to a crisis.

And that's why Paul works so hard. And this morning I worked so hard. His first three chapters of the book, he is working so hard to bring men to a crisis of seeing themselves as they truly are before God so that

they will cast off all hope in themselves and throw themselves only upon the mercy of God.

That's a part of preaching that men do not understand. We are to always be cutting under the foundation of men. We are to cut it away and cut it away so it falls like clay into the water and dissolves and they crash into the sea.

And they can only cry out for help. That's what we are to do. And that's where you must be if you are to ever be saved.

It's not Jesus plus something. You and Jesus don't got your own thing going. It is Him.

The purpose of the law, as I said this morning, is to destroy a man's confidence, to destroy a man's hope in himself so that he throws himself at the mercy of the court, the mercy of the judge, that he throws himself upon Christ. We spoke about repentance this morning. And it's important to review this.

We spoke about repentance. Not simply repentance from disobedience, but more so repentance from good works. Repentance.

Hating and even loathing the good works that you trusted in. Realizing they are nothing before God and they cannot save you. Bringing a man to a point where if someone were to say, you're saved by your good works, the man would become nauseous in his heart and cry out, no, no, you've judged wrong.

I am saved by grace. Nothing in my hands I bring. Simply to the cross I cling.

That's why we have to deal so often with sin. And we have to be reminded. And for those of you who are believers, are genuine children of God, being reminded of your sin does not lead to despair because the grace of God is manifest and magnified in that.

And it causes Christ to become more glorious. It doesn't matter the price. If we have to be defamed, if we have to be humbled, if we have to be brought low, wonderful! If it exalts the grace of God and Jesus Christ.

Now, He speaks to us as the vilest of sorts. He speaks to us as men and women who could in no way motivate or cause a holy God to move on their behalf. But then He says, in verse 24, being justified as a gift by His grace.

Being justified. This morning I made a remark that to say that justification means just as if I never sinned, that that remark is incomplete. And it is in itself.

And that's the reason why I have trouble with that. It's not the statement because I use it myself. But it's when men stop there.

As I was talking to the pastor this afternoon. Justification, as he said, does not just mean just as if I'd never sinned. But justification also means that the very righteousness of Christ has been... Now look at this.

You and I, wretches, poor, blind, naked, paupers, rebels, criminals against the throne of God. And what happens? We are justified. We are declared to be right by the very voice of God.

Now, one of the things that Paul is dealing with through the entire book of Romans is how can a man have a right standing before God? And the great mountain that he's trying to overcome, especially among his



That God can somehow become man's debtor. That man can turn the tables on God and bring God to the point where God must give salvation because He owes it to a man. And it is the same thing men have always been trying to do, and that is make themselves God over God.

But Paul says, being justified as a gift by His grace. Now I want you to look for a moment, just quickly, hold your place, but go to Galatians. There is a marvelous text in Galatians.

Chapter 2, verse 16. Now listen to this. This is amazing.

This is absolutely amazing. Galatians 2, verse 16. Nevertheless, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, since by the works of the law no flesh will be justified.

Three times he says the same thing. Man cannot be saved by works. Man is saved by Jesus Christ and not works.

We have believed in Jesus Christ and therefore we are not justified by works because by works no one will be justified. I mean, it is absolutely amazing how he goes in circles. He would have got a very bad grade in literature here.

He has serious problems defending his grammar. He just keeps going and going and going. And that is what he is doing here in Romans chapter 3. Being justified as a gift by his grace, his unmerited favor.

You see, this is why I can hear a man, and I very rarely hear men do this, but this is why I can hear a man stand up and preach about the sin of my race, about my own fallen people. I can hear him look me right in the face and call me everything I am. And when I walk out of the church, I am floating on clouds because Jesus Christ is made all the more precious to me.

Remember what I said this morning. She loved much because she has been forgiven much and she knew that she had been forgiven much because she knew how sinful she was. We love not much because we do not realize how much we have been forgiven.

And we do not realize how much we have been forgiven because we do not realize how sinful we were. Because we live in a culture that cannot even understand the vileness of sin. He says being justified as a gift by his grace.

Now, let me say something quickly about justification that is so important. When it says that we have been justified, it does not mean that God made us righteous. You are not righteous.

There is not a righteous person in this room. A righteous person is a perfect sinless person. That is not you and that is not me.

When it says that we have been justified, it does not mean that he made us righteous. It means he declared us to be righteous. He legally declared you to be right before him, not based on your own works, but on the virtue and the merit of another.

Another thing I want you to understand is that being justified means more than simply being forgiven. In order to go to heaven, you have to be more than forgiven. Did you know that? In order to go to heaven, you have to have clean hands and a pure heart.

You have to be more than forgiven. You have to be perfectly righteous. And that is why justification means that not only did God forgive you, but the perfect life that Jesus Christ lived those years that he walked in the flesh on this earth, his perfect life under the law, his perfect life that caused the Father to speak out of heaven, this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, that perfect life has been given to you, to all who believe.

It has been given to you. So you are legally declared to be right before God through the virtue and the merit of Jesus Christ. I remember when I was a young man, young farm boy, and all my friends and I, we had beat up old cars that we bought with our hay hauling money and trucks and just pitiful.

Among all our cars, you put them all together, you wouldn't have got a good bumper out of the whole bunch. But then there was always the kids that lived on the other side of the tracks, who when they were 16 got the brand new cars and would drive them in and just drive by us with their noses up in the air until one of my good old hunting buddies would yell out his window and go, your daddy sure bought you a nice car. And then you would see that young rich boy inside that car just deflate.

Or he'd be talking to some girl that he won, lured her in with his beautiful new car. One of my good old buddies would walk over there and say, it's a pretty nice car your daddy bought you, does he know you have it out right now? And you would see that boy's chest just deflate and turn red. Well, why did I bring that up? It doesn't matter how precious the thing you have is, if it's a gift that you have not earned.

There's no cause for boasting. There's no cause for an inflated chest or an inflated head. But there's no cause for sorrow either.

What you have, if you are a Christian, you did not earn. You did not earn one percent of it. You did not earn 0.0000001. You earned nothing.

That is why the Christian is the only person who can say, I am going to heaven and not be proud. You talk to a Muslim and ask him if he's going to go to paradise, he will say yes. You ask him why? Because I've obeyed the Koran, because I've made the pilgrimages, I've fed the poor, I gave alms, I did this, I did that, I'm a righteous man, I'm going to heaven.

You talk to an Orthodox Jew, are you going to go to heaven? Yes, I am. Why? Because I keep the way of the law. I love the law of God.

I study the law of God. I am a righteous man. You talk to a Christian, a real Christian.

Sir, are you on your way to heaven? Yes, I am. Well, why? Give your reason for the hope that is within you. Okay.

I was born in sin. In sin my mother conceived me. I have broken every law that God has ever given.

All my works, even my best works, are nothing more than filthy rags. And there the interview stops and the man says, Sir, you've got me confused. You say you're going to heaven like the rest, but you portray yourself as the most vile, the most undeserving of all men.

How is it that you're going to heaven? I'm going to heaven on the virtue and the merit of another, my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory throughout all the ages and ages to come. All hail the power of Jesus' name.

Let angels prostrate fall. Bring forth the royal diadem and crown Him Lord of all. Now how is it that we have such a gift of salvation? By His grace through.

This is not theatrics. This is true. There's a word here that I have a very difficult time speaking.

Through the redemption. I've read that Jews were always afraid to say the name Yahweh for fear that they would take the Lord's name in vain. I'm afraid to speak this word.

I don't know where this fear has come from, but this word makes me tremble. Now I want to speak of God in a human way so that you will understand and realize do not press this illustration too far. What enters into the mind of the Father? And I know, again, I'm speaking in human ways.

I'm speaking foolishly. We cannot say these things. But what enters into the mind of the Father when He hears this word? Sometimes I am so sick of us.

The way we scream out words. The way we blab them. The noise and the confusion and the yelling and the screaming.

Like little children playing marbles with diamonds. Like fools rushing in where angels fear to tread. Speaking words that are priceless, that mean so much.

And yet without any understanding, we vainly confess them to God. What enters into the mind of the Father? And this was truly brought home to me after I felt the love that I felt for my little boy when he was born. I had always thought about the son dying on that tree.

Never thought much about the father until my son was born. It's like having given your son. There is no strength in me to do something like that.

There is no strength in me to give my son for you. I'm sorry, I would let you die. But if I could give my son and then have you turn what he has done into some kind of silly little children's nursery rhyme.

And speak words about him that were meaningless. Because you made them meaningless because of your lack of knowledge and because of the way you spoke them. He's just here through the price that was paid.

Through the price that was paid. You know, I heard of an old Puritan. I can't remember his name.

In my mind, I don't remember things very well. But I can remember being touched by something I read in a book one time. It said that this old Puritan, sometimes he would say certain things.

Use certain words, names. Like Jesus. Like redemption.

And he could not say them without having to stop. And bow his head for a moment. They said you could see the old man's lip tremble.

When he pondered on such words that were coming out of his mouth. You see, this is why Satan wants you to be ignorant of truth. You see, this is why Satan wants to fill the world up with all those preachers who don't know any of that doctrine stuff.

So that you will not realize what words mean. That's why post-modernism, even in your own school here, as it is infected with it, will choose to teach you that words don't mean much. So that when you speak

about Christ, it won't mean much.

It won't mean much. I turned on the radio a while back and someone was screaming on there, comes down to a man dying on the cross, saving the world. I shut off the radio.

I said, what was that? What was that? How could you say that that way? Just because it rhymes? You've got the right to do that? Do you know what you just said? The Son of God dying on a tree? And you said it that way? I don't know a lot and my heart is very dull, and I'm not a spiritual man, but that is not right. Shouldn't you bow your head or something? Shouldn't you fall down or something? Or does the beat carry you away? Mention these things and not be afraid. Things into which angels long to look, and you will talk about these things? Like a little foolish boy, bratty and clammy and whiny, playing marbles with diamonds? I think the one great regret that we will all have when we come into the presence of God will be the regret of not treating His Son as holy.

You see, if you could only be there for a moment. I mean angels, when they opened up their eyes the first time, they were looking in the face of Christ, and it would take a mighty force to pull them away from that face. The preciousness of the Lamb, the beauty of the Son, the reflection of the Father, the Spirit crying out, Hallelujah! And then us, making nursery rhymes.

What's wrong with us? Through the redemption, the purchase Christ paid, slaves bought. Slaves bought! Slaves to sin! Slaves to our own selfish desires! Slaves to our own egos! Slaves to our own arrogance! Slaves to the vileness of our heart and the filth that dwelt within! Slaves! Slaves! Slaves! And He bought us! You gather up the whole group together and they're not worth a sixpence. And the One who is worth, you take all the galaxies, all the mountains, all the seas, all the planets, all the stars, all the crickets, all the clowns, all the men, all the mole hills, all the dust, all the suns, all the moons, everything that is, and you put them in a scale and you set the Christ on the other side and they'll fling off into eternity because they have no worth.

And He offered up His life for this. I'll never forget when I was a brand new Christian and I came back to my home from the University of Texas. I'd been a Christian for a few months and I happened to bump into a fellow who I knew at another university and we met there in a little pizza place and I just happened to bump into him and he said, what's been going on? And I said, you know, I was going to be a lawyer.

Well, I've been saved and God is calling me to preach. And he stood up and he goes, I've been saved too and God's called me to preach. Isn't it amazing? God's starting to save some really, really good people now to do some stuff.

And I couldn't have found John 3.16 in the Bible. I was a brand new Christian, but all of a sudden a fear shot through my heart and I just wanted to lay down on the ground and say, oh God, those words did not come out of my mouth, but they would have apart from Your grace. When George Mueller begins the autobiography, I'm not sure if it's in the smaller version, but in the larger version, he speaks about mentioning his sin.

The first page, he addresses it with caution and he explains to the reader why. He goes, I do not enjoy telling you about my wicked past. I do not want to promote sin, but from such a black sky the star of Christ will be most exalted.

As I shared with you this morning, where did the stars go today? They stayed in the sky, but the light kept them hidden. When you go out to purchase that very, very tiny engagement stone for your wife to be, that jeweler is smart. He's smart.

He lays that thing out on a black velvet and that thing becomes four times its size and its brightness grows because he knows that darkness will set off the brilliance of that. Well, then so be it. If I am to boast in anything, let me boast in my weakness.

If I am to boast in anything, let me boast in what I am apart from the grace of God that the Son might be exalted. People say, talk that way. You're just destroying your self-esteem.

No, because my esteem is not found in self. It's found in the Savior. It's found in Him which is in Christ Jesus.

I begin much of my praying, not just public praying, but I begin much of my hidden devotion with this prayer. O God, apart from Your Son, I would have no part with You. That is the truth.

You know, people say, Jesus is all you need! Let me tell you something, Jesus is all you have. He's not just all you need. He's the only thing you have.

And apart from Him, the only thing that would await you is the just, furious wrath of Almighty God. Jesus is it. Jesus is all.

Jesus is everything. And beware, because it's not so much that you say you know Him. It is more that He says He knows you.

I've said so many times, if I were to go to the White House this evening and stand there at the entrance to the gate and try to get in, and when a soldier stopped me, I said, I know George Bush! I would still not get in. But if George Bush came out of the White House and said, I know Paul Washer, I'm going in. Protocol to the wind, I'm going in.

Because the one who must speak spoke, and it was a good word. I'm going in. He says, many will come before me on that day and say, I'm in Christ, I'm in Christ, I'm in Christ.

And He'll say, depart from me. I never knew you. I never knew you.

You see, Jesus says, I know you know this. And I'm ashamed that I can't say it better. And I wish that somehow my lips would be set on fire to explain one truth, that Jesus is absolutely everything.

He is everything. For those of you who are here arrogant and bold enough to stick out your chest believing that God did a good thing when He saved you, then lay down in the dust and grovel and let your pride die. And then for some of you saints who are here thinking, oh, will I get in? Can I sneak in the back door of mercy? Could He allow one such as I to enter in? Rejoice, you humble saints! Because your entranceway is through the Son, Jesus Christ, and He has shed His blood for your soul.

Oh, it's all about Jesus. So many people have this idea, you know, this militant type of Christianity today that just is so silly. I don't know what other word to say.

We have this idea of earning crowns and this and that and all sorts of silly putrid things. As though we were going to stand in heaven one day and I would call my brother up and then call a group of people

such as yourself and say, come on now, listen, I want to glorify God by telling you all the wonderful things my brother did. And you'll do well! Boast much of Jesus and you'll do well! Boast much of Jesus and you will do well! Hide! Hide! Hide! And boast much of Jesus and you'll do well! In my life, I have seen God move.

I've seen Him move in the jungle and seen people by the hundreds in a downpour and lightning confess Christ as Savior as they come out of the jungle like dark shadows. I've seen God move in ways to slay an entire congregation and throw them on the ground. And I can't find one reason why except that I am the most pathetic specimen of a preacher that ever walked on the face of the earth, except that I am a spectacle to angels that He would take the lowest of His people to do something that He might gain greater glory for Himself.

Oh, make much of Jesus! You want to be so full of knowledge so that you can preach? You want to have so many things so that you can do well? I'll tell you how to do well. Humble yourself before God. Say, not unto us, O Lord, but unto Thee be the glory and boast much of Christ and you'll do well! You'll do well.

You say, oh, I want to know how to witness better. Boast much of Christ and you'll do well. You say, oh, I need motivation.

Think much on the price that was paid for you and you will have all the motivation you need. Make much of Christ whom God displayed publicly. Whom God displayed publicly.

Now we come to a cross whom God displayed publicly. Look at that. Sense the sovereignty.

Don't try to weasel out of this. Don't try to make God look like Santa Claus. Look at what's going on here.

God displayed His own Son on a tree. It was God's doing. Yes, He was delivered up by the hands of wicked men, but it was God's doing to put Him on that tree.

It was the plan of God before the foundation of the world. It was God orchestrating and moving to put His Son on a tree to display Him. I hear preachers preaching Christ's death as though it was some sort of accident, that Christ was wrenched from the hands of God and pitifully thrown upon a cross.

The Bible said that it was God who displayed His Son publicly as a propitiation. Now, I've often thought about that. Christ could have put away sin in a closet.

Why is it that it was according to the foreordained plan of God that His Son be hung on a garbage dump in Jerusalem? To be a spectacle to men and angels and not just in those short hours, but throughout history, throughout eternity. Why? First, how did He display His Son? As a propitiation. A propitiation.

If you did not learn anything tonight, learn something of this Word. I won't say learn what this Word means because I don't know the full extent of what this Word means. But learn something of this Word and you will do well.

We say in ancient Spanish, we use the word propitio. It means be merciful. But now, here we're coming to the big stone you must climb if you're ever to understand the Gospel.

Apart from the Gospel, apart from this, you cannot understand the Gospel. Apart from understanding this Word, you cannot understand the cross. Propitiation.

A sacrifice that would enable God to show mercy to criminals. Because see, you see, that's the greatest problem. Listen to me.

Fix your eyes on me. Do not allow your mind to be taken for a moment. Listen to this.

Some of you know this well. Others will hear something tonight you've never heard. And I could spend my life doing nothing but studying and preaching on this Word and preaching the same message over a thousand times a day, and I do not believe I would ever tire of this.

And men who know me know this to be true that I am like a broken record and I cannot get away. God will not release me and I don't want to be released. And it is this.

The greatest problem in all of Scripture is this. If God is just, then He cannot forgive you. Do you understand that? That's what this whole Bible is about! Do you understand? The whole Bible seeks to answer this question how can a just God forgive criminals? So these liberal theologians and university people, not all of them, but some of them, they're appalled whenever I speak about heaven.

I just don't see how in the 21st century you could actually believe that God would throw someone in hell. And don't ever come back with the answer God doesn't throw anyone in hell. They walk there themselves because you'll be lying because Jesus said that God throws men in hell.

They say, I just don't understand. It seems unfair that God would send men to hell. It seems unjust that God would send men to hell.

Do you know what the Bible says? There is a problem with regard to that, but it's completely opposite of what men say. Men say it's unjust for God to send men to hell. But the Scriptures say it's unjust for God to forgive men and take them to heaven.

You see, what is your great complaint? And now listen to me! This is not some little accessory to the message. This is the message. This is what it is all about.

What is your greatest complaint? You study your social sciences and everything else. When you discuss the politics, you read the newspaper. What is your greatest complaint? That judges are corrupt.

Isn't that true? They do not dispense justice. They forgive the criminal. They take bribes.

It's an abomination to you. Whenever a vile criminal is set free because of a judge, you say, he's not just. He's wicked.

He's justice criminal. It's a vile thing. It's an abomination.

Well, I want you to know God says the same thing. In Proverbs 17, 15 it says that to justify the wicked is an abomination before God. Now listen to me! Listen! Do you hear what these words are saying? To justify the wicked is an abomination before God.

What are we going to do with all our songs? What do we sing about? We sing about all the time God justifying the wicked. We rejoice in the fact that God has justified the wicked. We read here in the Bible that God has justified the wicked.

But even the Bible itself says it's an abomination before God if anyone justifies the wicked. Do you see the problem? How can God be a just God and forgive those who have broken every law and must die? If God forgives you, it's wrong. It's so hard for us to understand that because we live in a culture that knows nothing about sin and nothing about justice.

That is the problem in Scripture. If God is just, He cannot forgive you. The demands of not just the law as something independent of God, but the demands of God's law, the demands of God's very nature must be satisfied.

God as a person has been offended. It's not just His law. Some men hold up the law as though it was higher than God.

That God had to satisfy something greater than Himself. No! God had to satisfy Himself. He has been offended.

The law, His law, has been broken. Let me give you an example. If you go home and you find your entire family slaughtered on the floor, and while you're there weeping you hear the back door slam.

You run out of the house. You see the man with blood on his hands. You knock him to the ground.

You take him to the police and the police take him to the judge and the judge looks down and says, I'm a very loving judge. I let you go. What would you do? You would scream for justice.

You'd write the newspapers. You'd call the congressman. You'd be angry.

You'd say that that judge is more a criminal than the man who slaughtered your family. Well, then do you see the problem? If God is just, He cannot forgive. He must do justice.

Imagine the railings of Satan. We always think, because we're so man-centered today, that he's called Satan because he's the accuser of the brethren. Well, he is the accuser of the brethren, but more important, he's the accuser of God.

Satan sins. I don't know how it happened. I don't know when it happened and neither does anyone else.

But something happened. He rebelled against God. Now, what happened to him? Justice.

Justice. Think about this. Let me just take a sidestep for a moment at how superficial and hypocritical we can be.

How self-centered we can be. I'll give you an example. I never hear anyone complaining that God did nothing to save Satan.

But if we think for a moment that someone is teaching a doctrine where God did nothing to save someone else, a man, we get very angry. Do you realize that the angels fell? Creatures much more splendid than balls of dirt such as ourselves. The angels fell and God did not send them a Savior.

Do you realize that? Well, let me share with you something. Those of you who believe yourself to be the great worth of the universe, God did not have to send you a Savior either. He would have still been God.

As a matter of fact, if God had never sent a Savior, if God had never saved anyone, there would be no problem in the Bible. We would just say, God is just. God is good.

God is loving. And we are a vile and wretched group that must pay the penalty for our sins. And the book would be closed.

There would be no need for explanation. Everyone in heaven would be in agreement. And even you, when you stood before God and looked Him in the face, you would be in agreement about that punishment that He put upon you.

Because you would realize that it is perfectly just. Because the moment you looked Him in the face, you would see for the first time in your life that your sin is truly worth an eternity in hell. Let me give you an example, my friend.

I hear these evangelists. And they say, you know, the reason why God will dry every eye in heaven and wipe every tear is because we will see our lost ones going into hell, people we did not witness to, and it will break our hearts. That makes for fun stories, but it's not true.

I want you to know something, what will happen on judgment day. Don't think with your condemnation you're going to wrench sorrow into the hearts of others. As a matter of fact, on judgment day, when all the grace of God, yes, you, even you who have rebelled against the law and refused Christ, you have still been a recipient of grace.

On that great day when you stand before God and all grace is pulled back from you, you will be seen to be by all creation, you will be seen as you truly have been always a monster. And when you take your first step into hell, the last thing you will hear is all of creation standing to its feet and applauding God because He has rid the earth of you. It's frightening.

But imagine Satan on that day. Imagine Satan. If God simply forgives, if God just simply passes over sin and forgives, imagine Satan.

God, what happened to justice? You remember, don't you? The justice you poured out on me and my kind? And here this people now, you've dispensed with justice? You no longer worry about such things? Why, God, I look in your face and I see myself because you have become as evil as I. Where's your justice, God? Where's your hatred of sin? Where's your holiness? Where's your purity? Where is this great judge of all the earth that must do right? Here's the question. How can God forgive men who must die? There's only one way. That very God, that judge becomes man and walks on this earth, born of woman, born under the law, and lives a perfectly righteous life hearing from the Father, this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.

And then according to the foreordained plan of God, He goes to a cross. Delivered up, yes, by the hands of wicked men, but according to the predetermined plan of God. Now, let me tell you what the Gospel is not.

I don't know where all of you go to church. I know all of you do not go here. But if some preacher stands up on Easter morning and begins to say things like this, look at the nails in his hands.

Look at the nails in his feet. Look at the spear in his side. Look at what we did to him.

And God turned His face away from His own Son because He was so sad to see all that we were doing to His Son. But through what we did to His Son, our sins have been paid for and we are redeemed. You hear somebody preach like that, get up and walk out as fast as you can.

Because that is not the Gospel of Jesus Christ. My friend, if you are saved here tonight, you are not saved simply because they nailed Him to a cross. You are not saved because they put a spear in His side.

You are not saved simply because they put a crown of thorns on His head. You are not saved because on the cross, the Romans and the Jews and everyone else rejected Him. If you are saved, it is because on that cross He bore your sin and the Father crushed Him.

His own Father crushed Him. Do you understand? I am so tired of this evangelico romantico, they call it, this romantic gospel that has no power. My dear friend, my dear brother and sister in Christ, let us exalt Christ.

Let us see the cross. You know, the kind that does not sell very well today. They have taken it out of the display window and put it back in the storage room somewhere.

And that is why there is no power, because this particular cross is the only one that has power. It is on that cross He bore your sin. I know what your little tracks say.

Man is sinful, God is holy, and therefore there is a separation. We can do great evil by not saying enough. What is this little separation? Most people would be happy with a separation from God.

As I said this morning, so many people, everyone wants to go to heaven, but most people do not want God to be there when they get there. What is this separation? What is this turning of the head? Listen to me, especially you young people. Listen to me.

The gospel you preach, be careful, it is anemic and without power possibly, because it is not right. God is holy and righteous. God cannot look upon sin.

God hates sin. God loathes sin. And the holy hatred of God is poured out on the workers of iniquity.

You deserve to die under the furious, just wrath of a holy and righteous God. You deserve for Him to forsake you in justice and to turn away from you and then to crush you under the full force, the furnace blast of His almighty wrath. Do you understand that? In order for you to be spared, God became a man, the Son of God.

We are not talking about someone who began with the incarnation. No, the Son of God, the eternal Son of God. Do you know why it is blasphemy to tell your children that God created them because He was lonely? Do you know why that is blasphemous? Because He wasn't lonely.

The Father constantly beholding His own reflection in the face of His Son. The Son constantly beholding the beauty of the Father. For them to turn their eyes away from each other to any other thing would have been a great act of mercy in itself.

In the Father is all fullness. And the Son looks deep into the heart of the Father. And in the Son, the Father sees His perfect reflection.

And the love there goes beyond. He says, if we being evil know how to give good gifts to our children, I love my son so much I think sometimes my heart is going to burst. And if I being evil can love that way, what is it like for a holy God to passionately and wildly love His Son? But He gives His Son.

And then the Son takes upon Himself all the sin of God's people. Have you ever done something horrible? And then felt such remorse you wish you could rip your heart out? You being evil can feel such things? Then what about the Son of God? Perfect, sinless. And He takes upon Himself the sins of God's people.

And the Father turns His face away. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Someone had to die in your place, forsaken of God. We've lived most of our lives outside of God's favor in a sense, saving favor.

Most of us were saved when we were older. We've lived most of our lives separated from God and spiritually dead and absolutely everything else. We can't understand what that means.

But for the Son who constantly beheld the Father's face, for the Son who dwelt in the bosom of the Father, for Him to be forsaken of the Father. Nails? Do you honestly think that the Son of God, when He was in the garden, was afraid of nails? Have you ever read Foxe's Book of Martyrs? How some of Christ's lesser brothers and lesser sisters faced firing squads, faced flaming torches and stakes and gallows and hangman's noose with their chest out playing the man, not trembling a bit. And now you're going to tell me that our Master trembles because of a few nails? You have very, very low opinion of our Lord.

Our Lord who could face the demons of hell, Satan himself, and laugh at their vanity and their stupidity and their weakness, command them to jump into pigs and they obeyed. He's going to be afraid of a whip and a Roman soldier? You think too little of our Lord. Do you think that's what caused Him to tremble? Do you think that is what made Him cry out, let this cup pass from me? Read your Bible, you'll see something quite different.

What was in that cup? The wrath of Almighty God. Two things that I want you to look at, just look at them for a moment. Look at Psalms 22.

Look at it. It's amazing to me that many preachers will turn to this text and go immediately to the latter part of the text in order only to talk about the physical suffering of Christ. And I do not want to diminish in any way His physical suffering, but they're missing the point.

If you look in the first verse of Psalms 22, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Far from deliverance are the words of my groaning. Oh my God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but have no rest. That's His complaint.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? He says forsaken, it's a strong word. Abandon is another word, a synonym. Why have you left me here? Why have you turned your face away from me? He gives an argument in verse 4. And you our fathers trusted.

They trusted and you delivered them. To you they cried out and were delivered. And you they trusted and were not disappointed.

His argument is this. The fathers of Israel, the patriarchs, those who followed you, there never was a case when they cried out to you and you did not help them. But here I am, your Son, your Christ, your Messiah.

The apple of your eye, I hang here on this tree. The bulls of Bashan have surrounded me. Men are tearing at my flesh.

They've nailed me to a cross. I'm here naked and I cry out to you, Oh my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? And you do not speak. Then he gives his answer of why.

Verse 3. Yet you are holy. Verse 6. But I am a worm. You see, the Holy Son of God, He carried your filth. He carried your sin and mine. He became the serpent lifted up in the wilderness. He became the scapegoat, chased out to die.

It said He suffered outside the gates of the city, cut off as it would be from the people of God, cut off as it would be from God Himself, His own Father, because He became sin who knew no sin. And He did that for you by the mercies of God. I urge you to offer your lives as living sacrifices to Him.

And then as though that were not enough, Isaiah 53.10 prophesied and it came true. It pleased the Lord to crush Him. It pleased the Lord to crush Him.

You don't understand, do you? Imagine a 10,000 pound millstone with another 10,000 pound millstone on top and then taking the slightest kernel or grain of wheat and passing it through that stone. The Son of God was crushed under the fierce judgment and the holy hatred of His own Father. Do you understand what I'm saying? It pleased the Father to crush His only begotten Son.

You see, my friend, so much silly talk today. People come to me and they go, I'm saved! I say, from what? From sin! I say, sin wasn't chasing you. As a matter of fact, you and sin were quite good friends, as I understand it.

What do you mean you're saved from sin? If you're saved here tonight, do you know what you're saved from? You were saved from God. You say, I hear these preachers, we made ourselves enemies of God, but God was never our enemy. That's a lie.

Christ died on that cross to save you from God. God sent His only begotten Son to save you from Him because in His holy justice He was coming after you. You have broken His law.

You have offended His holiness and His righteousness. You have spurned His love, His correction. You are the vilest of criminals.

All heaven itself cries out for your death and will even stand in judgment of God if He does not do something about you. And God Himself came to earth, carried your sin and died crushed under His own fierce hatred for sin. I hear people tell me all the time, they say, God doesn't hate, God is love.

No, you misunderstand. God hates because He is love. If you love children, you must hate abortion.

You see, if you love some things, you must hate others. If you love what is righteous and pure and excellent and beautiful, then you must hate all that contradicts it. God's fierce hatred, His wrath was against us.

I say this to the young students I teach. Whenever I have the opportunity to teach a discipleship group, I make them understand God saved you from Himself, God saved you for Himself, and God saved you by Himself. Jeremiah.

God commands Jeremiah and says, Pass a cup, Jeremiah, among all the nations, and make them drink it, the cup of My fury. For their rebellion and their sin, give them the cup and make them drink it. On that cross, the Son of God took the cup of wrath destined for the people of God.

He took the cup of God's wrath and He drank it down in your place. And when He cried out, It is finished, He turned over the cup and not one drop came out. That's what Christ did for you.

By the mercies of God. I urge you now. I urge you by the mercies of God.

Something very important, I don't have much time to get to it, but a student asked me today, they said, what is this I've heard about Christ dying for God? Did Christ die for God? Yes, He did. Christ died for God. Did Christ die for men? Yes, Christ died for men.

But Christ died for God. Now remember what it says, that He displayed His Son publicly as a propitiation? Why? This was to demonstrate His righteousness, God's righteousness, because in the forbearance of God, He passed over sins previously committed. Here's the thing that you need to understand.

Now stick with me on this. God has always displayed His mercy on this earth. He displayed mercy with our fallen parents.

He displayed mercy to the human race even in the flood. Noah should have died and put an end to us all. Even then, His hand of judgment was stayed and mercy was poured out.

And then He called Abraham, a sinful man, His friend. And then He called Israel, a sinful nation, His beloved. And then He called David, a sometimes very wicked king, His son.

And then that passed on to Solomon. I mean, throughout biblical history, God's got some serious explaining to do. Because He's not looking too righteous, and He's not looking too just.

When you look at what He has done in pouring out mercy and not justice, when you look at the persons whom He has loved and whom He has befriended, He's not looking too just. Abraham was a liar. He put his own wife in jeopardy.

Noah, do you really think it was His righteousness that pulled him through that flood? He got drunk as soon as it was over. Israel? Was there ever a time when they obeyed Him? King David? Are you kidding? The man broke almost every law that was written for a king. Committed adultery and murder.

How could God love Adam's fallen race? How could God love Abraham? How could God love Noah? Save Noah? How could God count Abraham's faith as righteousness? See, He can't do that. How could God love David? There's only one way. God loved Abraham and David, Noah and his people, because Jesus Christ died for them all.

What is this preposterous idea that in the Old Testament people were saved by keeping the law? What is this silly idea that in the Old Testament God can just wink at sin? No. A demonstration of God's righteousness had to be made. God had to be vindicated of the accusation that He is not just.

Well, God's not just. Look at the way He's dealt with the human race. Mercy here.

Mercy there. Mercy here. Grace.

Mercy. Where's the justice? So once and for all, a demonstration of justice is given. How can God explain loving the likes of Abraham? Because God's Son died for the likes of Abraham.

How can God explain letting someone like you into heaven? Because Christ died for the likes of you. He died for the likes of you. The only thing that silences the accusation of the enemy against God is not your good behavior, my friend, but it is the life and the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord.

There is a sense that it can be said, yes, it is true, that when Christ died on that cross, He died to justify men, to make it possible for God to declare men righteous based upon the work that Christ has done. But it is also possible to say that on the cross, Christ died to justify God or vindicate Him, to prove once and for all He is holy. You've got questions about God's righteousness? You don't think He's going to judge sin? Well, then look at the cross.

Do you want to know how much God hates sin? I'll tell you. When His own Son bore our sin, God crushed Him. What do you think He'll do to you? Once and for all, God has demonstrated His justice.

And now forever all accusation, all accusation is stopped. He saved us through His Son. He redeemed us through His Son.

When His Son died on that cross, He justified a people and He vindicated God. And I want to tell you something, the part that I just love that is so splendid. When God raised His Son from the dead, He vindicated His Son.

You can argue with a Jewish carpenter with a Nazarean accent standing up on a park bench screaming out, I'm the way, the truth, and the life. But when He comes out of the tomb, it's another story. We have been made acceptable in the Beloved because the Beloved is acceptable.

Oh, my dear friend. And these little people with their tight spirits and narrow minds, they say, well, how is it then that a person could just die and suffer under the wrath of God for, I don't know, a few short hours or whatever and redeem a multitude of people? That's just not right! How can Christ dying on that cross under the wrath of God for a few hours save men from an eternity in hell? They say. I love it when they ask me that question.

Do you know how Christ could do that? Because Jesus Christ was worth more than all of them put together. That's how. He was worth more than everyone put together.

The price that was paid, you've not been redeemed with coins out of coffers. You have been redeemed by the precious blood of God's own Son. I have to say this, that God has taught me much through my children.

I have to tell you this, before I had a child, I would have said that God redeemed you through the blood of the Lamb, and that is true. But now understanding just a tiny fraction of the love that the Father must have for His dearly beloved Son, He gave His blood. He gave His blood.

I'm going to finish by, I don't know what to do. He rose from the dead and He ascended up into glory. Can you imagine when He ascended up into glory? Can you imagine? Can you imagine the cross? I wish you could see that day.

It is so black. The night was so dark. I would swear that the darkness swallowed up stars that night.

That day that became night. I would swear that the earth lost her feeling. I would swear that Adams no longer knew what to do.

I would swear that there was a silence from heaven as sharp as a dagger. I would say that a man could only look upon the spectacle a short time before he would go mad. I would say that you need to be a person who lives their life between two days, the day that Jesus Christ hung on that cross before men, and the day that all men will stand naked before Jesus Christ seated on His glorious throne.

What's my message to you? If you are a Christian, if you are a Christian, if you are a Christian, you still only have one hope that God would give you eyes to see. That God would reveal. You see, everyone is going to acquire the fire.

Get this and get that. It's all childish rubbish. All these little methods of men to prop up your faith.

All these little things designed to catch you on fire. They're preposterous, silly, fleshly, enthusiasm, worthless. There's only one thing that will build a fire, and that is a heavenly vision sent by God.

Pray for that. Have you lost all faith in the supernatural? Pray that God would show you what has been done for you. Pray that He give you a spirit of revelation.

Pray that He give you wisdom to open up your eyes. And then you won't have to be propped up with a retreat or some conference far away from a guy who speaks well. You need a heavenly vision.

And these tight-spirited theologians that say that visions don't exist anymore, that might explain why their preaching is so boring, don't give me academics. Show me your power. Show me what you have seen with your eyes.

Touched with your hands. That's what you need, Christian. Pray for that.

Pray for that. You're trying to jump the cart. You're trying to put the cart before the horse.

Don't do it. You're trying to figure out ways to get yourself excited about Jesus. You're trying to build a fire.

You're like a football team getting psyched up for the big game. It doesn't work that way. You have to fall on your face and cry out, O God, but You reveal Yourself to me.

I am a dead stone, a rotten log. O God, open up the heavens and let me see Your glorious Son. One glimpse! One glimpse of Him.

You'll need not props. You'll need not props. And if you're lost, if you know not Christ, you've heard of madman, you think.

Then listen to the words of a madman. You know what I've said about you is true. We don't even have to argue that point.

You know. Now, you might hate it. That I don't know about your heart.

But you know it's true. As a matter of fact, you know enough about its truth to know you hate it. You're not blind, except that you close your own eyes.

What should you do? Call on the name of the Lord and you'll not be disappointed. Cry out, Save me, O God. Save me.

When and where shall I do this, preacher? Do it now! Do it where you're seated because you might not even live past another step or a breath. Do it now. Do it now.

Let's pray. Father, thank You for Your Son. Thank You very much.

Amen. Pastor?

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