

# Not Ashamed of the Gospel

by Paul Washer

Romans chapter 1 verse 16: "*For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*" Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Father, I come before You this evening in the name of Your Son. And Father, I recognize that apart from Him, I would have no part with You—that He and He alone is our salvation, our peace, our reconciliation, and our life. And that to Him and Him alone belong the crown, the throne and the sceptre, the power and the authority, the riches, the honor, and the glory. Father, it is my greatest desire to make the gospel known, and, in doing so, to exalt Christ; to exalt Christ above the earth, above the heavens, and above the heaven of heavens; to make known His glory, the glory of the One who fills all things, the head of the church, the Lord of glory, and the Christ of God. Father, give grace – grace upon grace and mercy upon mercy. Use us as an instrument, Lord. Grant our great desire, that Christ be magnified in the preaching of the gospel. In Jesus' name, Amen.

*"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."* Tonight this church has given me the privilege of taking time out to set before you the gospel as it is revealed in the Scripture. The greatest passion in my life is not creation, even though creation is a wonderful thing. The greatest passion in my life is not the book of Revelation and the study of eschatology, even though that's such an important topic. The greatest passion (and I could say, my magnificent obsession) is that the gospel of Jesus Christ be clearly known by men. I think it is a task, I believe with all my heart, that it is the greatest task to preach the gospel. The greatest privilege and the most holy thing, I believe, that I could dedicate my life to, other than prayer and worship, is the preaching of what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. And so, this evening, we're going to take some time, we're going to go through Scripture; and our great goal is not the salvation of men, even though that is a wonderful and a mighty goal. Our great goal is to see God glorified in His Son; to see God magnified and exalted and worshiped and honored and feared; to see God be God among us, and for us to be His people.

Now we see here: "*For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation.*"

There is so much being said today by so many people. There are so many winds in the air. So many people screaming out and proclaiming this way and that way to be reconciled to God, and to have salvation. But I want you to know something: Scripture is adamant. Scripture is very clear. There is only one way to be reconciled to God the Creator, and that is through what He and He alone has done through His Son Jesus Christ. There is no other way. There is no ability in man. There is no ability in all the world: if we were to gather together all our righteousness, all our force, all our power, all our good deeds, it would be rubbish. There is no way for man to come to God apart from the gospel of Jesus Christ – the victorious good news that God has reconciled His people through the work He has done through His Son and for His glory.

Paul says, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God." When a man truly believes that the only message whereby men might be saved is the gospel of Jesus Christ, he no longer has to turn to manipulation, he no longer has to turn to humanistic means of motivating men to do things. He can simply stand back and preach, believing that if he is in a church in America or he is in the middle of the jungle of Peru, he can walk in with the very power of God behind him, lift up his voice, and

cry out that God saves through His only begotten Son, and that men will be born again by the power of God—because it is God who has said that He will call forth, from this world, a people from every tribe, every tongue, every nation, every language. And He will do it for His own glory, and to demonstrate His power in the world.

Now, I want us to turn for a moment – we're going to lay a foundation – I want us to turn to the book of Galatians.

In the first chapter of Galatians, starting in verse 6, we read a text that ought to terrify us—that ought to absolutely terrify us. The Bible says in Galatians 1:6, *"For I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!"*

The preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ is a dangerous thing, both for the hearer and the preacher. The preacher, who is going to stand before God's people and preach, is called upon to know God's Word and to know the gospel thoroughly, and to preach it clearly and correctly; because if he preaches a gospel that is not the gospel that God ordained, that man is placed under a curse, under a curse of God Almighty. Now I said it's dangerous for the preacher, but it's also dangerous for the hearer. You see, to whom much is given, much is required. If you have lived in this country, you can just about bet on the fact that you've heard the gospel more than any other man in any other place. And every time you hear the gospel preached it brings added responsibility, not only to the lost man who rejects it, but for the congregation of God itself; because, you see, the gospel message is just not for the lost man. It is also for the church, because, through the gospel, we learn to follow God, we learn to love God, we learn to passionately seek God, we learn what God has done for us in Christ; and that is to be the fulcrum that motivates us to follow Him passionately.

And so, every time you hear the gospel of Jesus Christ preached, it is to push you farther, it is to advance you in the things of God, it is to make you holy; it is to make you love God with all your heart, and all your mind, and all your soul. And after all, that's the great thing that we are supposed to be doing anyways. I said that the gospel is our magnificent obsession, and it should be; but there is even a greater obsession, and it should be: seeking God, His face, His will, His Person.

Now having said that, I want us to go to 1 Corinthians. And we're going to begin with one of the most important passages in all of Scripture, with regard to the gospel of Jesus Christ. In 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, Paul says, *"Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures."*

Now let's go back to the first verse. He says, *"Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel."* Now I find this interesting, I've spoken about this quite often, that Paul seems to be redundant here. He is making known the gospel to a people who had already heard the gospel, people who had already believed in the gospel. He was going back again to preach the gospel one more time to believers. And that should be a great truth for us; that should explain to us one of the great uses of the gospel in the Christian faith. And it is this: the gospel is just not for the unbeliever, so that by hearing it he might be converted; but

the gospel is for the believer, that through hearing the gospel, understanding the gospel, growing in our understanding of the gospel, we might fall in love with God. That we might understand every thing that God has done for us in Jesus Christ, and then, passionately, adore God with our life—passionately give God glory with every breath that He gives us. So the gospel should be your obsession. It should be something that you strive to understand constantly – constantly wanting to go deeper and deeper and deeper, to understand what is this great thing that God has done for you in His Son.

Now, he says *"I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you."* It is so very popular today to hear men get up in a pulpit and tell other people how they just want to share their heart with them – "I have something I'd like to share from my heart." I had a young man call me one time from seminary, when I was down in Peru. He called me from the States, and he said, "I would like to come work with you on the mission field." And I said, "Well, how well do you know the Word?" And he said, "Well, I really struggle in my quiet time, in my studies, but I just want to give my life away." And I said, "Well, how are you in prayer?" He said, "Well, I'm not really a prayer warrior, but, you know, I just want to come down to Peru and I want to give my life away." And I said to that young man, "Young man, these people here in Peru don't need your life. They don't need you to share from your heart. What do they need? They need a word from God, clearly proclaimed. And you have no need of going to the mission field until when you open your mouth, the word of God comes out. You have no need of going to the mission field, until you are ready to break knee and intercede on behalf of the people that God has sent you to rescue."

That's what I want you to see, that preaching the old-fashion, stand-back-and-explain-to-men, what God has done in Christ, is the power of communicating this message. We have so come to believe that preaching is not that important – it is of utmost importance! When I train men on the mission field, I want those men to be preachers! I don't need them to be administrators, I don't need them to know how to move people; I need them to know the Word of God, and to be able to stand back and preach. And that's what I want you to see here. When we're talking about the gospel, we are talking about something more than sharing a tract. We are talking about something more than just being able to communicate a few little rules that someone must follow. We are talking about preaching—the glorious, glorious task of proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Now it says, *"I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand."* Now I want us to look at something here that's very, very important. First of all, it has become very, very common in all evangelical, protestant churches, baptist churches—whatever denomination in the evangelical world—it has become very, very common that after the gospel is somewhat proclaimed, we ask men if they will like to receive Jesus. And then we follow by saying, "And if you would, pray this prayer." I want you to know that's not what the Bible is teaching us. When the Bible is talking about receiving Jesus Christ, it is not talking about negotiating some agreement with Him through a few steps, and then a prayer at the end. To receive Jesus Christ is best described by Christ's own words. He said this: that "you must eat My flesh and drink My blood." Now when He said that, He offended many people. He astounded many people. And the amazing thing about it is, Christ did not turn back around to explain to those people. He simply said this in a radical statement: "You must drink My blood, you must eat My flesh."

Now what did He mean by that? He was explaining to us that to receive Jesus Christ, is to take Him in as our very sustenance. He becomes our life. He is not some accessory that you put on, Sunday morning. He is not a new vocabulary you develop. And He does not come to you simply through some tiny prayer. It is the idea of coming into the presence of Jesus Christ – the resurrected Lord of glory – and taking Him in, in His fullness if we could say such a thing, as Savior, as Lord, as Master, as God, as Redeemer.

It's an amazing thing that in the Greek New Testament, Jesus is called "The Despotes". The Despot. You've heard that word. You hear that a ruler is a despot, and it scares you half to death. It means he's an absolute ruler—no one bucks his authority. Unhindered power. The Bible uses that term with regard to Jesus Christ, and when you're talking about receiving Jesus Christ, you're talking about receiving Him as absolute Sovereign and Lord of your life. There is an actual crises when you come into the presence of Jesus Christ, in which you are shaken down to the very foundation of your life. Your whole life is turned upside down. You find yourself on the Road of Damascus almost like the apostle Paul—whose whole life was destroyed by one appearance of Jesus Christ—torn to pieces, turned into rubble, so that he didn't eat or drink for three days. And then looking at this magnificent Lord, and looking at this terrible demand of the gospel – to give your life away – and then saying, "I receive that. I take that in. This is the thing that I desire, that I desire above any other thing." No negotiations, no deals, no "what can I get out of this?", but the God of creation has come, and He has demanded my allegiance through His Son.

Now he says, *"I preached to you the gospel, which also you received, in which also you stand."* What does this mean, stand? It means conviction. It means that the gospel of Jesus Christ—what God has done for you in Christ—becomes the very foundation of your life. In fact, it *is* your life. It is the pillar upon which everything else in your life rests. We're not talking, again, about some little addition to your life. We're talking about the very center of your life. That's why sometimes theologians will use the term "Christocentric" – your whole life is centered in what God has done for you in Jesus Christ. That is your passion. That is your thought. That is your breath. And it comes with conviction. There is no such thing as making some little transaction in which you receive Jesus Christ and then that's done. But it's the idea of your very convictions: the purpose of your life is now built upon Christ, His Person, and what He has done for you through Calvary.

Now, in verse 2, speaking about the gospel, he says, *"By which also you are saved."* I am not only bothered, I get furious, when I hear so many teachers and so many preachers today, who are trying to embellish Christ and make Christ acceptable, by telling you all the wonderful things you can get out of Him if you'll receive Him. Isn't salvation enough? Isn't the mere fact that your sins are forgiven, and you are saved, enough? Maybe being as wicked as I know myself to be, that I cherish this idea more than most, I don't know. But isn't it enough?? Do I need prosperity? No! Do I need a good life? No! Do I need a balanced check book? No! Do I need all these things that they're putting on Christ to make Him attractive? No! No!! A thousand times, No!!! It's Christ, and Christ alone. He's the only One I need. He's the only One! He's the Risen Savior, the Resurrected Lord, the Exalted God of Glory!

"Streets of God"—who cares about streets of gold? "Gates of pearl"—you can have them. It's Christ, and Christ alone. And if He isn't your cherished precious moment, then you have nothing, absolutely nothing. "He who has the Son has life. He who does not have the Son does not have life."

A small parenthesis here: (Dear friend, the gospel is not really about you. It's not really about me. It's not even really about the church. The gospel is about God, and about His glory, and about the manifestation of His glory through Jesus Christ: about Him demonstrating on the theater or the stage of the world, Him demonstrating His excellencies, His perfections, His glory, His beauty, His power, and His strength. The gospel is about these things, and yet we've reduced it down to make it so man-centered).

I would go on. He says, *"By which you are saved, if you hold fast the word I preached to you, unless you believed in vain."* Now look at verse 2. "By which – by the gospel – also you are saved, *if you hold fast.*" Now the idea here, my friend, is that if you do not hold fast, you are not saved by the gospel. Now I want you to understand some things that are very, very important here; because the moment you hear that, you're thinking that I'm saying that you can fall from grace, that salvation can be lost. No, that's not

what I'm saying at all. But I am saying something different than what you think. I am telling you that the great evidence that a man, a woman, or a child, has been born again, is that they continue on in the faith. They continue on in sanctification.

Now we are not throwing out the door the possibility of great struggles, of great fallings, of great trials, of great tribulation, of manifestations of great human weakness and great human need and great human rebellion, and everything else; but I want to tell you something: if God has begun a good work in someone, He will finish it. And "finish it" means, that on the day of God's judgment they will stand before Him in glory. But we have come to believe that if a man makes some little transaction with God and prays some kind of little prayer, and then doesn't continue on following God, that "well, he's saved, but he's only carnal." I'm afraid that's doctrines of men and it's not true. It's simply not true.

Now, I must make a note here, it's very important. Am I talking about perfectionism? Am I talking about the fact that if a person is truly born-again, they will go into growing more and more and more, and reach a state of perfection? No. What I'm talking about is that the evidence of salvation is that God, not you, God will not let you go. Even if you got in your car and you drove as far as you could possibly drive, even if you renounced everything; if you belong to Him, He will bring you back. You cannot escape Him, because as Sovereign Lord He claims His own, He is jealous of His own, and He will give His own to no one—He will not even turn His own over to themselves—but He claims absolute ownership and rights of that upon which He has placed His mark.

Now he says, *"By which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received."* I delivered unto you as of first importance – primary place. The greatest thing in my ministry, Paul says, is making known to you what God...what God...what God has done for you in Jesus Christ through His cross.

I am so tired of this gospel—this center of the entire Bible—being relegated to something for infant believers. "Oh, that's a first truth that you learn, but you've got to go on to greater things." No, my friend, there is no greater thing. There's no greater theology, there's no truer word, there's no deeper thought, there's nothing more noble upon which to place your thoughts, than the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And that is what must be made known. People ask me sometimes, they say, "Paul, where does the passion come from; how can you just have passion? Where does it come from?" I'll tell you where it comes from. It comes from knowing what God has done for you in Christ. It comes from digging in that mine, deeper and deeper and deeper, every day; drinking it in; fighting back the rocks; pulling back the boulders; finding the diamonds; and seeing, "My Lord! what you have done for me goes beyond the words of humans to proclaim! Who is sufficient for such things?"

He said, *"I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received."* Now, I need to take a moment here and talk to you about preaching. Where do I get the authority to tell you what to do? to tell you about God? And then to tell you, there are certain things you need to stop doing, and certain things you need start doing? Some people will tell us that a preacher gets his authority like that by some special anointing that he has received. Well, the book of 1 John tells us that every believer has received that special anointing (1 John 2:27), so you can throw that doctrine out, it's not true. Other preachers will tell you that they get that authority from their calling – they're called to preach – and therefore they have the authority. That's not true either.

Where does authority come from? Authority comes only to the degree that I correctly interpret, and clearly proclaim, what God has written in His Book. Therefore, in the preaching of the gospel or any such type of preaching, my goal, our goal, should be to go into this Book, live here, saturate our life here, so

that when we open up our mouth we open up the bread of life. Only then do we have authority to actually stand up and tell a group of people: "Stop it." Or to tell a group of people: "Start it." Or to tell a group of people: "Thus saith the Lord Almighty."

Now he said, "*I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ . . . that Christ died for our sins . . . that Christ died for our sins.*" That's an eternity worth of meditation: that Christ died for our sin. I would challenge you to go home, sit in the dark, and say that over and over until it brings a tear. And then to keep saying it until it breaks the heart. And then to keep saying it until you're lying face down on the floor, crying out, "Take the royal diadem and crown Him Lord of all," because only at that moment is your heart right. Every time we hear this, we ought to be broken in two. We ought to marvel. We ought to consider it a spectacular thing. It eclipses everything else in Scripture. Everything else. He died for our sins.

He said, "*For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.*" That it wasn't a fluke, it wasn't an accident. The death of Jesus Christ on the cross was not Plan B. Before the foundations of the world were put in their place, God had *ordained* the death of His Son—predetermined, predestined, elected the death of His Son—that His Son would die to manifest the glory of God and to redeem a people.

He says in verse 4, "*And that He was buried.*" Now why would Paul say, "And then He was buried"? Well, there's something very, very important: This simple statement is simply an affirmation that "Yes, He really did die." And He had to really die to pay for our sins. And He had to really die in order to really be resurrected by the power of God.

Now, what we need to do now is we need to take a step back. And we're going to talk for a moment about holiness, righteousness, and sin. Now we have to lay this groundwork because you cannot understand the cross of Jesus Christ, unless you understand the attributes of God. I'm working on a manual right now on how to go through the gospel, how to preach the gospel. And the first several chapters are on God, because unless you understand who God is, you can't understand the gospel. And if you have an American god that looks more like Santa Claus than He does JEHOVAH, then you can never appreciate the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Now first of all, we need to take something – a word called "holy". Holy means that God is morally perfect. Holy also means that God will break fellowship with every thing that is contrary to His holiness. Every thing that deviates from His moral purity, He will have no fellowship with that thing. He cannot, because He is holy. And not only does He break fellowship, God is repulsed—sickened, we could even say—by the aspect, and the idea, and the act and practice of sin. You must understand that God is not lackadaisical, He is not apathetic about sin. The things that are off-color to us, the things about which we snicker, are absolutely grotesque and sickening before the presence of a holy God, in such a degree that you and I, in our culture today, could never understand the sinfulness or filthiness of sin, apart from a revelation from the Spirit of God.

So God is holy, and He must break fellowship, not only with sin, my dear friend, but with the sinner himself. Now not only is God holy, God is just. He is the Sovereign King, Ruler, and Judge of all the created order. He has made this world; He is sovereign over this world; and He will, has, does, and will judge every man (great and small) and every angel. Every created being will be judged by God. Those who are gathered among moral creatures, they will all one day stand before God, and they will be judged. And He *must* judge the world!

The idea today is, why can't God simply just drop this whole thing. Would you want an unjust God? Would you want to live in a universe with an all-powerful, omnipotent Ruler, who was unjust? In your own culture, in your own society, you cannot stand injustice. When a judge does not condemn the guilty, you become furious. And yet, why is it that we think we can call God to task, we can debate with God, when He stands up and says, "I, being just, the just of the just, I will judge the world. I will come in judgment and I will pay every man according to his deeds"? If we demand justice from our own human judges, who are wicked and evil men as all of us are, then how much more should God, not only do so, but have the right to judge His creation? Does a piece of pottery tell the potter what to do? Does the thing made stand back and say, "Why did you make me like this"? That's absolutely absurd, it's preposterous, it's blasphemous, when we relegate that idea to God. You see, my dear friend, He is Lord. He is Creator. He is Sustainer. He made you, He sustains you. Every breath that you take in and exhale came from God. He is your Owner, you are His possession; made for His glory by Him and for Him, and with His own things. Cannot He do He desires? Yes, He most certainly can, because this universe does not revolve men. It revolves around God.

So now we have a problem. We have a holy God who must be separate from the sinner. We have a just God who must pay the sinner according to his deeds, which means, condemnation.

Now, before we go into condemnation, before go into the ideas of wrath, we must do something. We must do something: we must expose sin. We must take a look at the sinfulness of sin. We must go to a place that is so dark, it is so burdensome, it is so dirty. And we must take a look at ourselves in the mirror of God's Word. Now, people ask me many times, they say, "Why do you go to such extent to show the sinfulness of man?" Because only in understanding what we are, can we glorify and appreciate what God has done for us. My friend, God did not gain some great treasure. God rescued the condemned. God did not think, "All of heaven, and all of its beauty, and I Myself, I'm not sufficient to make Me happy. O if I don't have man, I'll be lost." God *never* said that!

Let me tell you something. Tozer said this, and I won't do a direct quote, but he said something like this: "If the stars and the sun and the moon were to shine, and yet all the inhabitants of the earth were to become blind, it would not take away from their light. And if every man on the face of the earth became an atheist, it would not affect God in any way. Because to believe in God adds nothing to him, and for man to doubt God takes nothing away." There is an idea that you must understand this about God. Children will usually ask their parents, "Why did God make me?" and parents will sometimes say, "Well, because He was lonely." I want you to know something: when you said that, you blasphemed God. God has never been lonely. God has never had a need. God is eternal—He existed before this world ever came into being, and He existed in complete happiness. God is self-sustaining and self-sufficient. He needs nothing outside of Himself to add to His joy.

When we finish with the next few moments of looking at Scripture, you're not going to wonder why man is such a great thing. You're going to wonder why God even considers him at all. You're going to say with David, "What is man, that Thou shall take thought of him; or the son of man, that Thou should be concerned for him?"

Now, let's look at the sinfulness of sin. And some of you have gone through this with me before, but we're going to go through it again. I want you to see the sinfulness of sin. And we're going to start in the book of Genesis 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 continuously.*" Now this is the human race prior to the flood. But I want you to know something, there's no difference between the human race prior to the flood and the human race after the flood, because the entire human race comes from one

Adam, and the entire human race has inherited that corrupt Adamic nature. And so, what we see here is something that is absolutely terrifying, that every intent of the thoughts of man's heart is only evil continuously.

A young reporter at a university, after I was preaching, came up to me and he was furious because I had used this text. He said, "That's simply not true." And I said, "Yes, it is true. The Scripture says it is true." And I said, "Also, it proves true in your own life." He said, "No, it doesn't." I said, "Yes, it does." I said, "Young man, if I could take out your heart at this moment, take every thought you have ever had, from your first waking moments as an infant (when you first aware that you had come into this world), up until this very moment; if I could take every thought you have ever had, and place that on a film projector, and show that film before this university in this auditorium, young man you would run out of this auditorium, you would retire from this university, and you will never show your face here again; because you have thought things so evil, so vile, so twisted, so perverted, that you could not even begin to share them with your closest friend."

Now that is true. That's true about me. That's true about you. That's true about all of humanity. You say, "Why are you speaking like this?" I'm speaking like this because I want you to love God. You say, "What do you mean you want me to love God?" One who has been forgiven much loves much. When you realize how sinful you are, you realize how much you've been forgiven. And then you begin to glory, not in your own works of righteousness, not in your ministries, not in what you've "done for God", but you begin to glory in Christ and Christ alone.

Now let's go to Genesis 8:21, "*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 go back farther than youth; go back to infancy. David said that he was "brought forth, conceived in sin, brought forth in iniquity". One of the most classic teachings in Christian theology is that men are born with Adamic natures, and that children carry that nature and they manifest that nature. My friend, you do not have to teach a child how to lie, you do not have to teach a child how to manipulate, you do not have to teach a child how to develop a pecking order.

Let me give you an illustration that was used by a theologian; and it's a shocking illustration, but I believe it's true, a 100% true: You have an 18-month old baby in your arms. And that 18-month old baby sees that shining watch on your hand, reaches for that watch, and you say "No." You grab that baby's hand and put it back. What does that baby do? That baby begins to cry, begins to scream, begins to twist, begins to throw his arms in the air and maybe even in the direction of your own face. You know that's true. Well, this theologian suggested the following; he said if that 18-month old baby had the strength of an 18-year old man, he'd slaughter you where you stand, rip that watch off your arm, walk over your body and out the door, without feeling an ounce of remorse. You say, "I simply do not believe that." My friend, you simply do not believe the classic doctrines of Christian theology, because that is true. And doesn't our newspaper, if you're not going to believe the Word of God except the word of man, doesn't the newspaper testify to the same? It does. You see, we are not sick, we are dead. We are not wandering, we are lost. We are not lost and seeking, we are lost and loving it.

Now let's go to the book of Isaiah chapter 64 verse 6, "*For all of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; and all of us wither like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.*" Verse 6, "For all of us have become like one who is unclean." My friend, have you ever seen a leper? It is a horrifying thing. If there was a leper standing here, you probably would have smelled him before you made it through the front doors. I want you to imagine a leper standing here beside me, from head to toe—rotten flesh, the pus, the body fluid, the blood, the sores, the filth, the

disease—and there he stands. And we decide that we want to make him somehow presentable, so we gather up a committee, we gather some money, we go to St. Louis or Chicago, and buy the finest piece of white silk we can find. And we bring that silk, and we wrap that leper in that silk, and we make him presentable. We make him white and clean, but we do so for only a moment, and then what happens? I'll tell you what happens. The very corruption of that man begins to bleed through the cloth, until the cloth becomes just as contaminated as the man inside.

Now that is why men have no good works before God, can't you see that? You see, even our best works in the eyes of men are contaminated by the filth of our human nature. And therefore, as the hymn writer said, he said, "Nothing in my hands I bring." Have you ever wondered why it says men will stand naked before God? Because, in the Scriptures, when something is clothed, it is the idea of being clothed in righteousness. Men have no righteousness, and so they stand naked before God. There is absolutely nothing you can do to adorn yourself, to make yourself lovely or acceptable, before a holy God. Nothing.

Now let's go to the book of Romans, and we'll finish our description of man's sin. Romans 3:9, "*What then? Are we better than they? (Are the Jews better than the Gentiles? Are the religious better than those who practise no religion?) Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin.*" In preaching, and I want you to understand this, in preaching there is the ministry and the work of condemnation in the sense that we are to preach the righteousness of God so that men come to see their condemned state and their great need of God. We do not preach the law, or preach about God's attributes, in order to simply offend men. It's not our desire to just offend men for the sake of being an offence. But there is a great necessity for men to come and look at themselves in the mirror of God's holiness, and to see what they lack, to see that they are absolutely and completely destitute of the glory of God. And it's so very important. And that is what Paul is doing here.

Have you ever wondered why in the greatest theological document, the book of Romans, that Paul begins with the sinfulness of man and his condemned state before a holy God? Have you ever wondered that? It's because only the desperately-ill seek for a physician. And so in preaching, sometimes, it is necessary, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, under the wisdom of Scripture, to preach in such a way that men fall condemned before God. The preaching of the gospel is not some "more mentality" when we spread out before you all the wonderful blessings of Jesus if you'll just come. Because you can come for selfish motives – everybody wants some blessing. But the preaching of the gospel is bringing men to the awareness of the holiness of God, their own sinfulness, to bring them into a crisis of faith, so that they trust in Christ, and Christ alone.

Now, Romans 3:10, "*As it is written, 'There is none righteous, not even one.'*" The word "righteous" in Hebrew, the idea there is "straight". And the word is used as a standard or a norm, that God is righteous because He conforms to certain standard. Now we have to be very careful here, because to what standard is God going to conform? The standard of His own holiness. God is holy. Morally perfect. His works are righteous because they always conform to His holy nature. Men are righteous, only to the degree that they perfectly conform to the nature of God and the will of God revealed in His law. Men are unrighteous to the degree that they deviate from God's law.

Now, something very important here. The opposite of straight is "crooked". A synonym for crooked is "perverted", "twisted out of shape, out of socket". You need to understand something: men do not simply do bad things; men are bad, twisted out of shape. They are doing things they were never created to do. They are being things they were never created to be. That's why it says, "There is none righteous," and look he says, "no not one." I'm sure if he had left it at "there is just none righteous", someone would have said, "Yes, but..." But Paul leaves no room for that.

*"There is none righteous, no not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks for God."* I want you to understand something. In the marvelous mystery of what we know about God, there is not one person here tonight saved because they sought God. You are saved because God sought you. You did not seek God. I heard one preacher say one time, I don't know whom he was quoting, but it was a very good quote. He said this: "Men seek for God in about the same way a criminal seeks for a policeman."

Let me throw you something out that is very important to understand. Let me give you some descriptions about man. In Romans chapter one we are called "haters of God". Now someone says, "No, I've loved God even before I was a Christian. I always loved God." No, my friend, you loved an idol that you made in your mind. I can walk into churches, and I do this many times: A church will ask me to preach a conference, and I'll ask the pastor, I'll say, "Would you give me permission to preach on the attributes of God?" I get through about the first three nights, and people are furious. I've not even talked about them, I have just preached the classical doctrine of the attributes of God. And when men start hearing about holiness, when they start hearing about justice, when they start hearing about judgment and wrath, you know what they say? They say, "My God is not that way!" So, many people who love God are not loving God at all, they're not loving the God of Scripture; they are loving a god that they have made with their own mind, and gained satisfaction, and believing "that's my God." We ought to be very, very afraid. Do you realize that a whole church can be worshiping God, and yet committing idolatry? because, as they worship, they're worshiping a god that is conformed to what they have made in their own mind, and not the God according to Scripture. We are to be very, very careful here.

Now, *"There is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God; all have turned aside, together they have become useless."* We were created for God, and yet, in our sin we became useless to God. Absolutely useless. "There is none who does good, not even one." None. None. None. Climb the highest mountain, go into the deepest part of the sea, search the cities with a lantern, try to find a good man like the philosopher has done, and you'll not find one. "There is none good, no not one." Some people say, "Well, I haven't sinned much." Adam and Eve sinned once, they were cast out of the presence of God. You've sinned so many times, you couldn't count it with a calculator; how would you stand in the presence of God Almighty? There is none righteous. There is none good. God doesn't have, up in heaven, a big balance or a scale - if you have more good works than bad, you get in. Because if you had a million good works, and one flaw, you go to hell, because God's holiness requires absolute perfection.

Now, verse 19, *"Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God."* My dear friend, the purpose of the Law has never been to save men. God did not have different means or agendas, in different dispensations, to save men. Men have always been saved by believing God. By faith. The purpose of the Law, other than simply directing the morality of a nation that God had chosen for Himself, the purpose of the Law is to reveal who we are. When a man looks, under the conviction of the Holy Spirit, having his mind and heart opened by the power of God, when he looks at the Law the only thing he can do is cry out, "Wretched man that I am! Who will save me from this body of death?" Isaiah said, "Woe to me, I am a undone. I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell amongst a people of unclean lips." The purpose of the Law is to condemn. The old Writers used to speak of the Law as something like Moses chasing the unbeliever, condemning him, chasing him to die. And the unbeliever's only hope was to flee to the City of Refuge, who is Jesus Christ.

Now, verse 23, *"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."* Now, all have sinned – we understand what that means. We have either not lived up to the positive commands of God admonishing us to do things, or we have gone beyond the restrictions God has placed upon us, and

we've lived in rebellion. Any way you cut it, we know what it means to sin against God. But what is this thing of falling short of the glory of God? In the book of Romans chapter one, Paul's argument is that "although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God." What is the chief end or purpose of man? To glorify God, and to enjoy Him fully, forever.

Colossians is clear: We were made *by* God, and we were made *for* God. For His glory. To glorify God. But now, here's a ringer, think about this: You'll say, "Amen, yes we must glorify God." But what does it mean? What is the glory of God? To demonstrate to the world who He is. To reveal to the world His glory, His beauty, His power, His perfections, His excellency. To stand up before His world, on that human stage, and say, "Here I am." That's what it means for God to glorify Himself. Now what does it mean for us to glorify God? It's for us to recognize the infinite worth of God—the infinite worth of His attributes and His works and His beauty—and then to live in light of that. To literally breathe back to God, worship. To not be severed from God, or God to be severed from our thoughts, not even for a moment. That's the only right way for a creature to live before God.

It says we've fallen short of the glory of God. My friend, rule-keeping is not the extent, or rule-breaking is not the extent of our sin. You can keep all the rules and not love God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and all your strength. That's the goal, not church attendance, not a ministry, not certain things you do and don't do, but a passionate chase for God.

Now we go on. We see in verse 23 that all have sinned. Now we get to verse 24, and it says, "*Being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.*"

Now God has done something. God has given something. God has shown forth a great gift for us in Jesus Christ. We have already excluded the possibility that man might be justified before God by his own works. Man is hopelessly lost. But God has done something! God has done something for His people, to redeem His people, and He has done it through His Son Jesus Christ. And yet, I don't hear anyone cry out "hallelujah!" That can only tell me one thing: we have to go deeper again.

My friend, unredeemed humanity, before a holy righteous God, stands absolutely condemned. And the only result that can happen when a holy just God comes into contact with sinful men, the only possible result, is wrath. And you say, "Well, what is wrath?" Wrath in Scripture, I'll just try to sum it all up for you in this definition: It is the holy, just, merciless, violent, furious anger of God, poured out on sinful men. It is the holy hatred of God poured out on man's wickedness. You say, "Now hold it, God is love." And for that very reason, God must hate. If I love children, I must hate partial birth abortion with a passion. You see, it's impossible to love without hating. It is impossible to love that which is virtuous, that which is right, that which is beautiful, that which is holy, without hating that which is twisted, sinful, wicked, corrupt. God in His holiness, He cannot take joy in wickedness. But He must even go farther: He must come against wickedness with His righteous judgment. And that, for us my friend, means condemnation, judgment, eternal damnation in hell.

And some people will say, "Well, hell is hell because God's not there." I've said that before myself. It's not true. Hell is hell because God is there, and you're not righteous. Heaven is heaven because God is there. Hell is hell because God is there. The difference is this: In heaven sin has been atoned for, and nothing but the joys of God are manifested to God's people. In hell there is no atonement for sin, and the fierceness of God's wrath is poured forth on the wicked for eternity. You say, "I don't like a God like that." Most people don't. But God does not take men into counsel. God makes man; men make tiny little gods, but not the real one. Again, we go back to authority: Where do I get the authority to say this? Only to the degree that I correctly interpret Scripture.

Now we go to Christ: verse 25, "*Whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed.*" God displayed publicly, made a public spectacle of His Son. As His Son was on that tree, He became a propitiation for our sin. In Spanish we will use the word "propitio" which means mercy. Propitiation comes from a Latin term, which means it's a sacrifice in order to appease the wrath of God, in order to pay the price that justice demands and so satisfy those demands. In order to bring reconciliation, in order for you and I to be reconciled to God, a perfect Man had to be offered. And on that tree, on that tree He was offered.

But what happened on that tree? When people hear me speak, they think sometimes I'm a broken record, because I say this over and over and over again: what happened on the tree? what happened there that brings about salvation? I'm so distressed by people who think that somehow we're redeemed because the Jews and the Romans forsook Jesus. Or, preachers who would spend lengthy amount of time and texts and words, describing how we whipped Jesus, how we nailed Him to a cross, how we put a crown of thorns on His head, how we mocked Him; and yet entirely miss what it is that truly saves us. What happened on the cross? What saves us is not what occurred between man and Christ. What saves us is what happened between Christ and the Father. And what happened? You know. "*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?*"—"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" The most terrifying words; words that are so difficult to understand.

What is this? The Christ is on a tree, He doesn't cry out, "My God, My God, why have the Jews forsaken Me? My God, My God, what have the Romans done?" No, that's not His problem. Christ knew why they nailed Him to a tree, because men hate God. And if you would have been there, apart from the grace of God, you would have been driving the nails, with passion.

"My God, My God, why have You forsaken me?" And here we go back to the holiness. On that tree Christ became sin. He carried the sins of God's people – all the defilement, all the impurity, all the debasement, all the horror and filth of our iniquity – He carried it. He bore it. The weight of it fell upon Him. And here we have the Christ, the precious holy Son of God, bearing sin. The Father, in His holiness, turns away. The doors are closed. The Father has forsaken the Son.

You see, someone had to die, cut off from the presence of God, from the presence of God's people. Someone had to feel the full force of God's holiness, and be left there to die. Like I've shared so often, that scapegoat in the Old Testament, when Israel would come out and the leaders would place their hands upon the head of that goat, transferring, symbolically, their sins to that goat. And then the most horrifying of thoughts, the goat would be chased outside of the people of God, left to wander outside of the gates of the city, left to wander in the desert, forsaken of God and forsaken of God's people; left there alone to wander, to perish, and to die!

In such a way, Christ went out of the gates of the city; cut off, forsaken, abandoned, left to feel the full force of God's hatred for sin; to pay the full price; to make atonement between God and His people. "*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?*"

Now, it's not just that. It's not just holiness. It's not just being forsaken of God. But something else happened that's terrifying. And it's this: "Father, let this cup pass from Me. Let it pass from Me. Father, let this cup pass from Me." I hear so many people say, "Well, what was in the cup? The cup was the cross, it was the nails, it was..." I even heard one preposterous idea that it was "Christ's fear of Satan." My friend, look up the word "cup" in a concordance, a simple exhaustive concordance. Let me summarize the idea that is relayed to us, communicated to us, in the book of Psalms and the Prophets. It goes something

like this: "Because of the sins, the guilt, the rebellion of the nations, I will hand them the cup of My wrath and the cup of My fury. And I will force them to drink it. And they will drink it, and they will stagger, and they will die."

What was in the cup? What was that terror for Christ in Gethsemane? It was *the wrath of God*. The most amazing thing to me about the cross of Calvary isn't what men, or what Romans, or what Jews, or what I, did to Christ. The most tremendous thing, the thing that in the night it's with me, in the morning it's there, in my Bible, in my prayer, everywhere I look, it's this one thing: That Christ dying outside the gates of the city, bore the tremendous horror of the rage and fury of the holiness of God, in my place. *That* is what mesmerizes! It is this one thing of what God has done in Christ. That it would actually say in Isaiah, "*It pleased the LORD to crush Him.*" - It pleased the Father to crush His only begotten Son.

You say, "What do you mean it pleased Him?" It doesn't mean He got some joyful satisfaction, but it does mean that the good pleasure of God was worked out through the death of His Son. That God the Father *crushed* His Son – that's the word – crushed, grind to powder, break to pieces. The millstone ran over Him. The millstone of the fury of God ran over Him, crushed Him. And it worked out the good pleasure of God in that through the death of the Son, so many marvelous things happened.

Now you say, "So many things marvelous happened: yes we're saved, yes we're blessed, yes we're..." There you go again. Why is "marvelous" always seen somehow wrapped up in you? Why is it marvelous because you got some benefit out of it? Why wouldn't you first think this: It was marvelous because God Almighty was glorified in it. Why can't GOD be there at the center, your fascination, your desire?

Christ died for men, yes that's true; but above all things, Christ died for God. You say, "What do you mean Christ died for God?" The death of Jesus Christ was a vindication of God. In a sense we could even say *a justification of God*. You say, "Now, hold it. What do you mean by that?" Well, let's look at this text. It says in Romans 3:25-26, "*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.*" Now here's the key: As I've said before, this verse is the main verse of the entire Scripture. There is nothing more important. Nothing. You can search high, low, go through any book you want, there's nothing more important than this: that God be *just* and the *justifier*.

You see, here's the problem: In the book of Proverbs 17:15, it says this: "*It is an abomination before Jehovah to justify the wicked.*" To let the wicked go, to pardon the wicked, is an abomination before a holy God. So that presents us with a problem: If it is an abomination before Jehovah God to justify the wicked, then how can God justify you, without it becoming an abomination? This answers that eternal question that people always ask: "Why can't God just drop this holy thing? Why can't He just forgive everybody and let's all go home?" No, my friend. How can God be *just* and condemn the wicked, and at the same time *justify* the ungodly? How can He do that? That is the greatest problem in all of Scripture. Everywhere, from Genesis to Revelation, the book of Leviticus, everywhere you go, it's this one great problem: How can a holy God forgive you and still be holy? How can a holy God pass over your sin and still be just? How can that happen?

There's only one way: an atonement. An atonement, though, an atonement not worked by the hands of men, but worked by the very hand of God. God coming to earth, standing up and lifting His own right hand to heaven, and saying, "By My own great salvation, I'll redeem a people for Myself."

Now, what happened? what happened there? How does all this work? How did Christ vindicate the Father? Well, here's the answer: It says, "In the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed." Now here's the problem: there has never been a time in human history when God has poured out perfect justice. Even in the condemnation of the world in the Flood, God still demonstrated mercy. There has never been a time when God has given to man the perfect justice that man deserves. He has always had mercy. That would make people think that God was apathetic toward sin, that God really wasn't going to do anything about sin, that sin was no big deal with God. And that's the way society is today, isn't it? "God's not going to do anything. He has never done anything, He's not going to do anything now. Sin is no big deal, let's eat, drink, and be merry. God is not going to judge the wicked, I mean, look at history. God has always shown mercy. God is a loving God." So here's the problem: all throughout history we have a God who declares Himself to be perfectly just, and yet never has demonstrated perfect justice, but it's always been mixed with mercy.

But the cross put an end to that. In what way? When Jesus Christ was on that cross, and He bore the sins of God's people, the perfect justice of God was poured out on God's own Son . . . without mercy. The full force of Divine wrath was poured out on the Son Jesus Christ. The full fury for every sin God's people have ever committed, was poured out on the Son. It was poured out on Him. So that now, preachers can stand up before congregations, and say something really very shocking: Do you want to know how much God hates sin? When God's own Son bore our sin, God crushed Him. Will God judge sin? Look at the Son. Look at the Son.

If you are a believer, if you've trusted in Christ and you have assurance of your election, what should you do? Fall down before the Throne of Grace, and worship God who saved you from such wrath. If you've rejected and spurned Christ and turned away from Him all your life, if He's just been an accessory or something you do on Sunday, you ought to tremble! You ought to be so afraid. And that fear ought to drive you to repentance and sorrow over your sin. And you ought to come to Him and throw yourself upon Him. Why? Because He is Mighty to save.

But He died upon that cross, bearing your sin.

Now, I want us to look at a passage in Galatians 3:10. "*For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them.'*" Now, everyone who has disobeyed God, prior to their conversion, is under a curse. And as I always say, there's something terrible in society when words lose their meaning. You can't understand Scripture when words have no meaning. So one of the tasks of a preacher is to spend every ounce of energy that he has, to try to put forth the meaning of a word. I struggled long and hard to try to grasp the idea of what it means to be under a curse, and there's so few people that have taken time to try to really sit down and say, "What's the full force of this?" But let me hand it to you. For someone to be under a curse, it means that before a holy God *and* a holy heaven, in their sin they have become so vile and so wretched, that on the day of judgment when God declares their condemnation and cast them in hell, all of heaven will stand up and applaud; and worship God because God has rid creation of that person.

Now you say, "So what?" No, my friend, your society won't allow you to see the sinfulness of sin. My friend, do you realize that angels fell and God did not send them a savior? Being far more glorious and superior than us, they fell and God did not send them savior. Do you realize, my dear friend, GOD DID NOT HAVE TO SAVE MAN, and He would have still been God? He would have lost nothing! But He has. He has.

And when I think of my own life, and I think of the darkness that indwells every part of my life prior to coming to know Christ, and I think about my struggle with sin until today; and I think, dear friend, about standing before a holy God, robed in my sin; and I think of hearing my condemnation, bowing down and recognizing that it is just. And then the last thing I hear, as I walk through the gates of hell, is the applause of all of creation because God has rid the earth of me. You see, you can't understand the love of God, until you really understand what we are. And that's what breaks my heart. We're not a gift for God, we're not a special treasure. My friend, our point in sin, our depravity, made us so vile before heaven that they're still amazed why God has anything to do with us whatsoever. But when you come to grips with that, O how it sets you free, because it's no longer your righteousness, it's no longer "oh, you've done this, you've done that; you haven't done this." O my friend, the glories of just being thrown upon Christ and Christ alone. What a wonderful thing that is. What a wonderful thing that truly, truly is.

O my dear friend, you know, if it hadn't been for Him, just in my temporal life, just here now (I would be 38 without Christ), where would I be? O my God, where would I be? But to demonstrate His glory, He has intervened on our behalf. Not being coerced, not being forced, not needing to do anything; but He did.

And when Christ died, He vindicated His Father: God is holy. And when God raised Christ from the dead, He vindicated His Son. When He raised Him from the dead, He said: "THIS IS MY BELOVED SON, IN WHOM I AM WELL-PLEASED. O THIS IS HIM! THIS IS HIM! O bring forth, bring forth the royal diadem and crown Him Lord of all. Crown Him with many crowns!" The mountains bow down, and the seas they roar, at the sound of His Name. What a Savior! What a Savior! He has risen. Yes, people of God, He has risen indeed! And not only has He risen, but He has ascended. This Prophet that Calvin wrote about, this King that was declared, is also a faithful High Priest and Mediator, who has ascended into the heavenlies to speak that good word before God, because He has redeemed a people. He, and He alone.

Now, I want us to go to the book of Psalms chapter 24 verse 3, "*Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? And who may stand in His holy place?*" The question is simply this: Who can go to heaven? Who can go there? Well, it's quite simple: "He who has clean hands and a pure heart." That's the one who can go there. Who can stand in the presence of God Almighty? The one who has clean hands and a pure heart, he can stand there. But none of us qualify. Who can ascend the hill of the LORD? Well, who is the one who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood, and who is the one who has not sworn deceitfully? He shall receive a blessing from the LORD. Who can go to heaven? The one who has walked in perfect righteousness before God. Who qualifies? No one. And we're lost.

John wept because there was no one found worthy to open the seal. Job cried out, "O, if there was just somebody, some mediator, who could lay his hand on us both; if there was just someone who could stand in the presence of God and argue my case; if there was someone who could go before me; because as for me, I can wash my sin with the lye (the strongest soap), and yet my sin is still with me." But if there was only someone – the cry of all creation, the cry of all Scripture has been – "If there was only someone, someone who could get in there from the outside, and speak on our behalf."

We come to this passage that, I don't know how correct the theologians of the first five centuries were, but I marvel at their ingenuity. I love this passage: verse 7 is a marvel to me. I want you to imagine Christ resurrected, Christ ascending – Christ the man; the man; yes, God who became a man. And when He became a man, He was not lesser God; because when Christ became a man, He did not stop being God. He became something God had never been: a man – to walk on this earth as a man. A man has sinned, a man must die. And that man who dies must be perfectly righteous as a man. In order to die on Calvary's cross, He has to die a man. In order to rescue the people of God, He has to be God. Only God works

redemption for His people, because salvation is of the LORD. And He became a man. And this man who was born, this man who lived a perfectly righteous life, this man who died a perfect death, is now the same man who ascends up to heaven.

And He comes to heaven's door, in Psalm 24:7. It says, "*Lift up your heads, O gates, and be lifted up, O ancient doors.*"

There was never a time, never a time, in the history of all mankind that anyone had ever called to those gates from the outside. There was never a time in human history, when someone would have even *thought* about stretching forth their hand to grab the latch on that door, and even thinking about twisting it and turning it to pull back those gates. And so you can imagine the way heaven thought, when they heard "Lift up, O ye gates! Be lifted up, ye ancient doors! that the King of glory may come in!"

And then heaven answers back (verse 8): "*Who is this King of glory?*" I can just see the whole idea there. "Who would even dare touch this door?! Who could it be? No man has ever laid their hand to that knob. Who is screaming at these gates?"

And so it says, "And who is the King of glory?"

And then the Lord answers back: "*It is the LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O gates, and lift them up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in!*" And I want you to know, my dear friend, those doors, they came open wide – doors that had never opened – they came open wide.

When heaven, when heaven saw the Christ . . . those angels were made for Him . . . they were only made to look at Him. That's all they were there for. They knew why they were there: greater creation, greater knowledge, greater privilege, greater responsibility to praise: they knew why they lived, they knew why they breathed. And to see the King . . . that had left them for a while: those doors flew open wide, and there stood the Christ. (Amen). And those angels fell down before Him, cried out with such joy, without such weeping (O I love that song, an angel must have helped write that thing): "Bring forth the royal diadem. BRING IT FORTH! Make way! Fall down! Lie prostrate before Him! Here He comes, the King of kings, the Lord of lords; given a Name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that He is Lord. He, and He alone."

And He comes up to the Father: "Father, glorify Me with the glory I had from You since days of old."

And O the Father, looking down at the Son: "O My Son, arise. Take your place."

And then He sits there—a Mighty King, a Powerful Prophet—He sits there a Priest of God.

And someone asked me the other day, he said, "Well, it says He lives forever to make intercession. Does that mean He is constantly praying?" Now, this is something that, in the middle of the night when I can't sleep, I think through. And I thought, is that what it means? And then I thought, well in the book of Hebrews chapter 1, it tells me that He upholds creation by the word of His power. And as I shared before, you know Atlas, don't you, who was cursed by the gods and had to strain under the weight of the earth on his back as he moaned and groaned, but in his power he lifted up the earth. But Christ, Christ is not like that. Christ upholds the earth. Every constellation, every star, every planet, every galaxy, every universe, every being – from angels to crickets – He holds them all up and He makes them sing and He gives them breath. He does it all. And He does it by the word of His power.

And you say, "What does that mean?" I think it means something like this: He [snaps a finger], and it was all created. And He'll go like this someday, maybe raise an eyebrow, and it'll be swept away and rolled up like a scroll. But the amazing thing about this, what does it mean that He upholds all of the universe by the word of His power? I think it means this: He spoke once, He said, "Let there be light". . . And He'll not speak again, until He says, "Let there not be light." And at that moment there will be light no longer. He speaks it, and it is, until He speaks something different. I think He sits on that throne, and He said, "Father, reconciled! forgiven! And so be it." And with one word it stands fast forever.

There He is – the glory, the object of heaven. As my favorite says, John Flavel, he said this: "O fair sun and fair moon, but O fairer Christ. O fair flowers, and fair valleys, and fair mountains, but fairer still, Lord Jesus." And then he said, "No, I'm wrong; I write as one who writes by moonlight; I can't see clearly. Let me restate myself: O black moon and sun, O black flowers and black grass and black valleys, O ugly and twistedness of even the most beautiful of creation; but O fairer Christ – fair, fair, fair Lord Jesus." And He sits on the throne, and He reigns. And He and His own power is calling forth a people for Himself.

And this God, He has commanded now that every creature on the face of the earth, every man, repent of their sin; turn from their sin. Not only to repent from doing wrong, but even to repent from trusting in doing right. You see, what you need to understand about repentance is this: it's not just saying "yes, I'm a sinner", it's not just turning away from. It is repenting from trusting anything other than Christ. It is realizing that your trust in your own self-righteousness – in your church, in your deeds, in your works – it's all rubbish and garbage, and more than rubbish before Christ. And that salvation comes from Christ and Christ alone. And then in your repentance, having nothing in your hands to bring to the Christ, nothing to make you acceptable, you throw yourself upon Him. You throw yourself upon Christ, and Christ alone, as powerful and mighty to save.

And then there's one other thing that you need to understand. You are not saved simply by being forgiven. Understand this. "Who may ascend to the holy hill of God?" O my friend, it takes more than forgiveness to get you there: you have to be perfectly righteous. And that's why you need to understand that it's not only the death of Christ that saves you, and it's not only the resurrection of Christ that saves you. It's the perfect life that Jesus lived for you that saves you. Because on the moment that you trust in Christ, by virtue of His death you are forgiven your sins. But then, He takes off that coat of many colors, He takes that righteousness that is His, and He gives it to you; so that now you're not only forgiven, you're declared perfectly righteous. You see, justification is more than just "not being held liable for sin"; it's being made perfectly righteous, declared righteous (legal statement - God says, "He is righteous!" He just has to say one word, remember that – righteous.)

So we're forgiven by virtue of whom? of Christ. And we're forgiven by virtue of whom? Christ. And we're forgiven by virtue of whom? Christ. And we're made righteous by virtue of whom? Christ. It is by His good merit.

Someone asked me the other day, sometimes young people will come up with the most amazing questions: "How can one man die just a few short hours under the condemnation of God, and yet pay for the sins of all of God's people, and they should have paid for those sins throughout an eternity? How could one man do that?"

Do you want to know why? It's because that one man was worth more than every human being that has ever lived. He was worth more than angel ever created. He was worth more than all the constellations – if you would have put all of men and angels, crickets and clowns, dogs and cats, if you would have put constellations and moons, and stars and planets, and all the earth, and sand and gravel, and everything

else you can find (take everything that has ever been made), put it on the scale, put God in the counter balance; the scale would tip, run, forcefully be drawn down in the direction of God, because His worth is *exceedingly* immeasurable. And, therefore, He could offer a sacrifice sufficient for all.

And we conclude with one thing. And it is this: and you must never forget it: Be very, very careful of making salvation some kind of transaction, agreement, or contract you have fulfilled; because, my friend, salvation is about Christ. It is not just "I believe in Him." It's not just "I have repented of my sins." It is all about the Son – that He has become the most precious, the most dear, the most beautiful, the most noble – the greatest desire of your heart is the Son.

I'll finish with this story. There was a famous painter over in Europe that had a son who painted along his side. They loved one another a lot, and just took joy in each other's works and suggestions and paintings and everything. And then one day, World War II, the son was sent off to fight in a war. The father wondered every day about his son – what would happen to his son? where is his son? And then one day, he got a tragic letter. Another serviceman wrote this letter, he said, "Sir, I'm writing on behalf of your son. While here in the service, in the war, I grew to love him. He taught me how to paint. He was just the most marvelous friend anyone could ever have. But I had come out of the hole and was running across the field, and a bullet came my way, and your son threw himself in front of that bullet, and your son is dead. And I'm alive. Sir, I don't know what I can say; I feel sad that your son had to die, I feel joy that I'm alive; I don't know what to write. Only sir, that I appreciate your son more than any person who has ever lived."

So after the war, the painter was still there painting. And the soldier comes, who was saved, and he said, "Sir, I know you are one of the greatest painters who ever lived. Well, I'm a novice, but I painted a picture of your son, and I would just like you to have it. I know it's nothing, I mean, but he means more to me than anything. And I just want to give you this." And the man pulled out the painting and it was rather crude, but sure enough, there was a kind of likeness to the son. And so he put back all his paintings in the gallery, put them to one side and the other side, moved them out of the place of importance; and in the very center of that gallery, there was the painting of that son.

Then few years went by, and the painter died. And they're having a big auction, everybody from Europe, from North America, all over, they went there to bid on some of the greatest paintings that have ever been painted. And the auction began; an auctioneer brought out, first of all, the painting of the son. And everyone laughed, like, "What is this? No, we came here for the paintings." And the auctioneer said, "Well, according to the will and the contract, this painting must be auctioned first. Who'll give me \$10,000?" And the other paintings were to go for millions. "Who'll give me \$10,000?" Everyone laughed. "Who, who'll give me a thousand?" One said, "Please, come on. Get the joke over, we want to get started with the auction, the important stuff."

This so happened the soldier walked by. He walked in there and he sat down, and noticed that they were auctioning off this painting. And he stood up, and he said, "Sir, I don't have a \$100. I don't have hardly anything to my name. But I have \$6 and some change here, and, you know, I'll buy that painting. I'll do anything, I'll work, whatever it requires, because you don't understand, that, that, he died for me." The auctioneer looked, kind of a strange look on his face, he said, "Sold, then, young man."

And everyone with a sigh of relief thought, "Whew, now the auction begins."

And the auctioneer pulled up that heavy mallet and slammed it down on the table, and he said, "The auction is over."

And everyone said, "The auction is over? It hasn't even begun!"

And the auctioneer pulled out the Last Will and Testament of the father, and it said this: "The one who takes my son gets it all."

And I am so afraid at the way we think. "Oh, it's all about us, isn't it? It's all about us, getting our lives fixed. It's all about us, isn't it, getting our needs met. It's all about us." We want the gospel for the benefits of the gospel. But how many want the gospel because of the Son? How many want the gospel just because of the glory, and the beauty, and the excellency of Christ? How many would rather have hell, than a heaven where there was no Christ?

In our preaching today of the gospel, it is: "Come get this, come get that. Fill your bags." What about: "Look creature, creatures far better than you have been condemned. God has offered His own Son: come, and pour your life out to Him in worship, because He has redeemed your soul." What about Christ? What about Christ at the very center of earth, because He is definitely at the very center of heaven. What about Christ at the very center of the church, because He is the very center of the heart of God. What about Christ at the very center of our thoughts, in our lives, in our minds? because *that* is Christianity. Because the one who gets the Son, the one who takes the son, gets it all.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

*Father, it is always so sad to preach this gospel, because, dear God, there's just no... it hasn't entered into the mind of man; it can't come forth from the heart of man. There aren't any words in the English language. Dear God, it is so pitiful to be able to describe, just once, what You have done for us. O God, make our minds quick, make our hearts wide, make our spirits deep, that we might be able to grasp the glory of Christ and Christ alone, and that we might be able to preach Him. O Lord, for that day when we no longer write or preach by moonlight; but that day that we stand in full presence of Your Son, and see Him as He is. O, O God, O God, how great and mighty You are. O Father, to You belongst the throne, and the sceptre, and the crown. To Your Son belongst the throne, and the sceptre, and the crown, the glory, and the honor, the riches, and praise, for ever and ever. Amen.*

Thank you for the privilege of allowing me to preach this, not only for my own benefit, but for the use at HeartCry. We had to preach this in order to send this tape out to many different places in different areas. I appreciate your willingness to stay here for an hour or so, and go through the gospel. May God's blessing be upon you. Amen.

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