

# What is the Gospel?

*Gospel*

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I am here tonight to talk about the gospel. How many of you know what the gospel is? Anybody? Ok, a few of you. Do you realize that on the day that Jesus Christ returns you will understand everything there is to understand about eschatology, about the Second Coming. You will understand it all at that moment. The blink of an eye, everything you have ever wondered about will be answered. Yet at the same time you will spend an eternity of eternities in heaven and you will still not begin to understand the gospel of Jesus Christ.

You live in America, a country that is inundated with a reductionistic gospel. We have taken the glorious gospel of our blessed God and reduced it down to four spiritual laws or five things God wants you to know. If you read through it and you agree and you say the little prayer at the end, congratulations. You are in. That is not the gospel of Jesus Christ. That is not the gospel of Jesus Christ.

There is so much activity that goes on America and American Christianity, so much noise. But do we even begin to understand the beginning of Christianity?

According to the Scriptures the greatest knowledge that a man can possess is knowledge of God. If I handed out a sheet of paper right now and I asked you to write down a paragraph definition of each of the attributes of God, would you know that? In all your Christianity, are you learning the important things? When you no longer have the substance of Christianity, the power of Christianity, the truth of Christianity. You have to prop it up with all kinds of artificial things. You have to turn the Church of Jesus Christ into a six flags over Jesus just to get people to come.

There are two things that are going to happen in this country, a revival or judgment. But know this. Judgment does not begin with liberal politicians or immoral Hollywood. It begins with the Church. And therein lies another very important subject. Just where is the Church? What is the Church?

I can tell you today that so much of what is called the Church is not the Church, that the true Church of Jesus Christ is believing in him, is repenting of sin, is growing in holiness

and love. It is not self absorbed or seeking self fulfillment, but it demonstrates a disinterest in itself in pouring itself out upon others in the name of God.

You see, I have great fear for you because so much of what you are and so much of what I am is not based on Scripture, but based on culture. It must stop. We must relearn not truths that no one has ever discovered. We must learn the truths that have been the basic truths throughout historical Christianity. You must, as Christians, if you are Christian, return to the rock from which you were cut. “Seek out,” the prophet said, “the old paths and learn to walk in them.”

And where can we begin? We begin with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Tonight we are going to look at what most theologians have considered the most important passage of Scripture in the entire Bible. As a matter of fact, I would say that if I had to lose all Scripture except one, this would be the one that I keep. Many have referred to it as the acropolis of the Christian faith, that strong, fortified city of God.

So let's turn in our Bibles, if you have them, to the book of Romans.

Now while I am speaking—Romans chapter three—I want you to understand. I don't look relevant to a modern culture. And the things that I will say tonight will not be appealing to my culture. As a matter of fact most of what I say tonight will be scandalous to my culture.

You see, Christianity does not have impact in the world because it is like the world, because it has given out a questionnaire to find out what the world wants and then it conforms itself to what the world wants. No. Christianity is true and it comes to men and confronts them with truth. And with that truth, men have to deal.

Because I can assure you. You will deal with the truth now or you will deal with the truth later before the judgment throne of God.

You see, when it comes to God there is a doctrine. It says he is eternal. He will not be voted out. There will not be another regime to take his place. There will be no changing of the guard. The God that I speak about tonight will be the God with whom you will always have to deal and you will not be able to avoid him no matter how hard you try.

Romans chapter three verse 23.

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, that He might be just and the

justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith.<sup>1</sup>

Let us pray.

*Father, you know me. I stand before you in the name of your Son Jesus Christ and I fear you because you are one to be feared and I love you because you loved me first. Father, by your name for the sake of your Son honor your gospel. Father, you know that I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell among a people of unclean lips. You know this culture, how repulsive, how against you it truly is. And you know your people, how they have been so influenced by all that is wrong. And I pray that you would turn the heart of your people back to you and they would honor you, fear you, love you, that everything would be like dung to them compared to the knowledge of you. Father, do not send me on a fool's errand. Work here tonight or dismiss us now. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

“For all have sinned.”<sup>2</sup>

That doesn't terrify you. It should.

You see, because we are people who really don't know God he looks something like Santa Claus to us today, because we have this tame, domesticated, harmless god that you can stick in your pocket and whenever you need to make a wish you pull him out. Because we have so little knowledge of Scripture we do not know God. And because we do not know God we do not know us and we do not know what sin truly is.

Let me give you some words. Disgusting, vile, abomination. Some of the very things that you watched tonight on television before you came here and you laughed at were a vile, abhorrent thing before God, the very God you claim to worship when you walked into this building. This God, he is not a part of your life. He is not something that you add to an already successful career. He is everything or he is nothing. He does not have clubs and he does not play games. He is God.

And the Bible says that all of us have sinned against him.

The Puritans used to say it this way. You have not sinned against the mayor of some small village. You have not trespassed against your own kind, but you have sinned against the Creator of the universe, one who is so good that he is deserving of absolutely every good thing you could render to him and yet you have not. You have sinned.

I want you to think for a moment. In the creation of the world, God stands there on that day and he commands stars so much larger than our sun to put themselves in different places in space and they all bow down and obey him. He tells planets to set themselves in an order and not to remove themselves from that order until he gives them another command and they bow down and worship. He tells the mountains to be lifted up and he

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 3:23-27.

<sup>2</sup> Romans 3:23.

tells the valleys to be cast down and they obey. He tells the sea, yes the great sea, “You will come to this place and you will come no further,” and the sea cries out, “Amen. And he tells you, “Come,” and you go, “No, no, I will not or I will come, but I will come my way in my form of religion, just enough to make my conscience quiet, but not conformed to what you desire.”

Sin, all have sinned. To trespass the commands of God, to either go past them or not to come toward them. You have sinned.

“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”<sup>3</sup>

Today in a modern contemporary interpretation of that text is that God made you for a glorious purpose and because of sin you have not achieved that glorious purpose. That is just a tiny, tiny fraction of what this text really means. This text is not about you and your purpose. It is not about you and self fulfillment. It is about God. What the text really means is this. You were made for him, not for you, for him. And being made for him you will never have peace until you are for him, not just part way, not just yes he is in my life, not just me and Jesus got our own thing going. No. Till you give yourself to him, you will be wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked no matter how much wealth and fame you amass on this planet. You will be a wretch. You were made for him.

As a matter of fact, every malady on this planet is because men have turned away from their purpose. They have dislocated themselves.

You have probably heard because of the moral crisis in America today that we better be careful because we will be judged. That is not true. Let me tell you what is true. According to the book of Romans chapter one, the fact that we have a moral crisis is evidence we have already been measured, found wanting and judged.

You see, all the horrible, violent, immoral things you hear about, they are not going to bring the judgment of God. They are the judgment of God because of a greater sin that was committed. And this is the sin.

“For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him.”<sup>4</sup> And so what did God do? He turned them over to themselves.

You want autonomy? You want sovereignty over your own life? God said, “Here it is.” But that autonomy he gave you is enslaved to a corrupt heart and a corrupt society and you take your freedom to destroy yourself. That is the judgment of God. Know that it is already fallen. It has. This is a reality. Why did you come here tonight? To hear a Christian pep talk? Or to hear truth? This is truth. You can go to 1000 churches, 100 Sundays and hear nothing but ring around Jesus. Let’s all get together and have a group

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Romans 1:21.

hug and sing kumbya. But the fact of the matter is there really is a God and this book really is true. It really is true.

“All have sinned and fallen short of God.”<sup>5</sup>

I don't care if you amass the whole world. It is not big enough. You were made for eternity. You were made for him, for him.

I have been a Christian longer than most of you have been alive. I have been in the ministry longer than most of you have been alive. I regret nothing I have lost for the sake of Christ. I regret absolutely everything I have kept for my own.

“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”<sup>6</sup>

And then he turns to verse 24 and he says, speaking of Christians... Now I have to be careful here. Why? Sixty-five percent of America thinks they are Christian.

If you were to take simply classical theology, classical definition of Christianity that is written in all our Christian confessions, you would have to come to the realization that probably less than 15 percent of all the people who profess Christ in America are even converted, are even Christian. There are some of you here tonight that believe yourself Christian when, in fact, you bear no fruit of it, no real genuine inward fruit of it. And the problem is, you sit under preaching where no one makes you think. No one makes you afraid.

Let me tell you. There are some things of which you should be afraid. But speaking of a true Christian he says, “Being justified...”<sup>7</sup>

Do you know what that means? Again, one of the most important words in Christianity. Do you know what it means? Being justified... I have heard people say justified means just as if I had never sinned.

No, that is not what it means. Justified is a legal term, a forensic term. And this is what it means. The moment a person places their faith, genuine faith in Jesus Christ, they are justified. God legally declares them to be right with him.

Now, understand the terminology because truth is important. You must discern this. When a person trusts in Christ it does not mean they become righteous, become is the word. It doesn't mean they become righteous because if that was the case you would never sin again. You would be a perfectly moral being. You are not recreated at that moment as a completely, perfectly righteous being. You are still susceptible to sin even as a Christian. But to be justified means that God from his throne declares you to be right with him and he treats you as right with him, justified.

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<sup>5</sup> Romans 3:23.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Romans 3:24.

Now here is where something that all the religions of the world have in common, well, the major religions anyway. It is this. How can a man be right with God? Most religions... actually you can take all religions and reduce them down to two: a religion of works and a religion of grace. All the religions of the world are saying, "Do this, do that and make yourself worthy before God. Make God your debtor. Live in such a way that God must save you because he owes you." That is what works is actually saying.

And then there is a salvation by grace. It is a gift.

We go to a Muslim man and we ask him, "If you died right now, where would you go?"

And he says, "I will go to paradise."

"Why?"

"Well, because I have read the Koran. I have made the pilgrimages. I have made the prayers. I am a righteous man. I am a good man."

Ok. Go to the orthodox Jew and you say, "If you died right now, where would you go?"

"I would go to paradise."

"Why?"

"Well, I love the law of God. I am a righteous man. I fast. I pray."

Then you go to the Christian, the real Christian and you say, "If you died right now, where would you go?"

"To heaven."

"Why?"

And the Christian says this. "In sin did my mother conceive me and in sin was I born. Going astray from God from the womb, I have broken every law."

Let's say the reporter looks at this person and says, "Well, I don't understand. I mean, I understand the other two gentlemen. They are going to heaven. They are right with God because they deserve it, because they are good, because they have worked for it, because God owes them. But you are telling me you are going to heaven and yet there is no reason why you should be going to heaven. What is the foundation of your hope?"

And the Christian goes, "I am going to heaven based upon the virtue and the merit of another, Jesus Christ my Lord."

And that is why Paul ends up this text saying there is no boasting, no boasting whatsoever, because all our hope is found not in our own righteousness, not in our own deeds, not in what we have accomplished, not what we can wrangle out of the hands of God because he owes us, because we have been so good before him. Our hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest 'frain, but holy lean on Jesus' name.

That is why the Christian is the only person who can claim to be going to heaven and not be boasting, because he is not going there because of his own works or his own deeds, but because Christ.

Now the argument will be thrown back at me, "Well, that is what we all know. The Christians just take it as a gift. They receive it. And then they live like a demon."

No, they don't. Unconverted church members do that and unconverted university students who claim to know Christ do that. They say, "Salvation is a gift." And then they live just like the world.

But the true Christian, the more he understands that salvation is a gift, that it is not based upon his own works, the more broken he is over his own sin and the more he desires to live for Christ. It is not a duty to be accomplished. It is promoted by love. It is motivated by grace.

You see, he says, "We are justified." Now look at this, "...as a gift by his grace."

Now you don't have to be a literature major or a Greek scholar to know there is something of redundancy here. What do you mean we are justified as a gift by his grace? Isn't grace a gift? Isn't he sort of saying we are made right with God as a gift, as a gift, not as something we earned?

Yes, that is exactly what he is trying to teach us.

Now there is something very interesting about this word. He says, "Being justified as a gift."

This word "gift" in the Greek is found in another place in the book of John where it says this. Speaking of Jesus it says, "They hated him without a cause."

That phrase, "Without a cause" is translated from the very same word that gift is translated from here. And so what it is saying is this. No one ever had a reason for hating Jesus. No one ever had a reason for hating him. And in the same way God had no reason to justify him. When God looks down at man he can find no reason in man for justifying him or declaring him right. When God looks at a man the only thing he can see is sin and the laws demand that this man die.

So if God has declared you to be right with him, he did not because of you or me, but in spite of you and me.

Do you remember the woman who loved Christ so much? She was something of an evil woman and she came and she threw herself down at his feet and Jesus said to all the righteous Pharisees, he said, “This woman loves much because she has been forgiven much.”

I once had a reporter come up to me just so angry and he said, “Why are you always talking about sin?”

And I said, “Because I want you to love God.”

He said, “I don’t understand.”

I said, “Listen to me. The woman loved much because she had been forgiven much because she knew how sinful she was.”

We today, you and your culture, and the preachers of your day, they coddle you and protect you and don’t want to offend you because they want to keep you and use you. They never tell you about the genuine wickedness that is inside your heart and because you think you are better than you truly are, you don’t appreciate what has been given to you. That is why I have seen drug addicts and prostitutes come to know Christ and afterwards with such a passion because they knew the filth they had been saved from.

The more I know about the nature of man according to Scripture and the more I apply it to my own heart, the more it leads me to worship, to worship.

I work in many third world countries where people starve to death. If I were to walk up to you with just a ham sandwich with two pieces of old bread and one piece of cheese and one tiny piece of meat and hand it to you and say, “Here.” You would probably despise it and turn away. Yet there are some countries where if I did that, they have. They would kiss my hands for giving them such a meal. Their poverty leads to appreciation. That is one of the reasons why Jesus said, “Blessed are the poor in spirit,” those who know what they are because then they can appreciate the love of God. And that love will move them to service.

Now he says, “Being justified by His grace,”<sup>8</sup> unmerited favor.

You think that when a preacher gets up and says, “Look, salvation is a gift. It is favor that is not merited,” that men would just jump at the chance to have such a thing. But they don’t. Do you know why? Men are proud.

“I don’t need anything from anybody. I don’t need anything from your God. I can do everything on my own.”

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.



Sir, you cannot breathe apart from the grace of God.

And even the hardened Atheist who clenches his fist and shakes it in the face of God cursing his name can only do so by the power of God. Everything is grace. Everything is God's unmerited favor.

One time there was something of a move of God and some people came forward and I went down and I was praying and this young man had come up and he was praying beside me and this is what he prayed. He said, "God, I just want you to give me what I deserve."

I have never stopped a person praying before, but I stopped him. I hit him on the shoulder. He looked. He kept praying. I hit him again. He looked at me. I said, "Don't, don't, don't you ever pray that again, because, young man, the only thing you deserve is an eternity in hell. You need to cry out that God would give you what you do not deserve, grace, unmerited favor, eternal life in the person of Jesus Christ."

Now he goes on.

We have been justified. We have been declared right as a gift by his grace through the redemption.

Do you know what that means? There are some words, the old Puritans said, that after we speak them we should be silent and stand still with a trembling lip because they are almost too sacred to speak. This is one of them.

It means to buy the freedom of a slave or a prisoner or a captive for a price to be paid. So it means that this unmerited favor of God, this right standing before God that it cost something. And what did it cost, the blood of bulls and goats? No. Gold and silver from our former manner of living? No. The blood of God's own Son. We had to be purchased. We had to be bought.

Now a good question is this. From whom? From whom did we have to be bought? Down through the ages there has been all kinds of unbiblical theories. The Greek fathers were often in error saying that the price had to be paid to Satan. Man had fallen and because of that he was under the dominion of Satan and the price had to be paid to Satan to set him free. That is not true.

Do you want to know to whom the price was paid? The price was paid to God. God made the demand. You have sinned. You have died. But God also paid the price, the blood of his own Son.

Now we are going to talk about that a little more extensively in just a moment, but I want us to go on.

“Being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.”<sup>9</sup>

One time a young man came up to me and he goes, “Brother Paul,” he says, “You are right. Jesus is all we need.”

And is said, “Young man, Jesus is all we have. Outside of Jesus you have nothing. You have nothing.”

You see, the Scriptures, the New Testament always works in two opposing spheres. You are either in the flesh and lost or you are in the Spirit and saved. You are either in Adam and condemned or you are in Christ and justified. There is only two possibilities.

If you are in Christ you have salvation. Outside of Christ you have nothing. And that is why the genuine believer who knows these truths clings on to Christ.

You have all heard the story of iron workers who work thousand feet above the city and they walk confidently along the beams and the piers. And then one day one of them slips on some ice and before he falls he grabs a hold of a beam and he grabs so tightly to that beam with such fear that they have to break his arms to loosen him because he will not let go. That is the way we hold on to Christ because we know that outside of him we have nothing, nothing, nothing.

And he says in Christ... now look at this, “Whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation.”<sup>10</sup>

Now don't answer. But do you know the meaning of that word? Most theologians would tell you that apart from the name of God this is the most important word in the Bible and yet in all your going to church has anyone even told you what it meant? Do you see how churchy you can be and so far away from Christianity you can fall?

What is propitiation? Well, let's look. It says, “Whom God displayed publicly.”<sup>11</sup>

Now this word could also be given in a sense of whom God placarded. If you go through Tennessee and different states that have no laws against billboards you go down through there and you see billboards everywhere, placards, signs that have been placarded, messages that are put before the public eye. And it says that God purposely displayed Christ publicly on that tree. He placarded him there for all to see. Do you understand that? He wanted every one to see what was going on.

Now, I submit to you that God could have put away sin hidden somewhere in a closet. But for some reason the putting away of sin was done publicly in the center of the

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Romans 5:25.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

religious universe in the religious city of Jerusalem, there in the cross roads. Christ was lifted up and God purposely did it publicly.

Now why is that? Because God wanted to show something.

Ok, what did God want to show? Ok, let's go on.

“Whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation.”<sup>12</sup>

Now we even use something of this word in Spanish and in older, ancient [?]. If you say, for example, in old, old Spanish, [?] it means be merciful to me. Don't give me what I deserve.

It would be something like this. A thief is caught by his master for stealing and the crime is punishable by death and the master grabs the thief by the back of the neck and is hauling him off to the gallows and the thief gets loose and falls to the ground and gets on his knees and what does he do? He begs for mercy. Don't do to me what I deserve. Don't do to me what the law demands.

What is a propitiation? It is a sacrifice that makes it possible for God to be merciful to the guilty.

Now, what is the problem? Now I am going to put before you the greatest problem in Christianity. This is what the gospel is all about. It is it. It is the core. It is the heart of the gospel.

I want you to hold your place and I want you to go to Proverbs for just a moment. Proverbs 17:15. Now listen to what it says. Now hear, students. You are in a place of higher learning. Supposedly you have done well on your entrance exams. You got into this place. Now think. Think.

Christianity is not about checking your brain at the door. It is about starting to think. It is about using it. Now think. Look at what it says in Proverbs 17:15.

“He who justifies the wicked, and he who condemns the righteous, Both of them alike are an abomination to the LORD.”<sup>13</sup>

Now let's just look at one side of that.

“He who justifies the wicked... is an abomination to the LORD.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Proverbs 17:15.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

An abomination is probably the strongest word in all of Scriptures. It is detestable, disgusting, vile, accursed, anathema. So whoever justifies a wicked man is vile and loathsome and abomination before God.

Now that presents us with a great problem. Do you see it? I have spent the last 20 minutes telling you that God has justified the wicked, that when a person believes in Jesus Christ God legally declares that person right.

Do you still not get the problem? Let me put it before you this way. Let's say that you go home tonight and you live off campus with your family and you go home tonight and when you walk through the door you see your entire family slaughtered and you see the murderer standing over your family with blood on his hands wringing the life out of your youngest sibling, drops them on the floor a dead corpse. In a rage you run across the room and you grab the man and you throw him to the ground. But you come to your senses and you realize that vengeance isn't the answer and you tie him up and then you go to the phone and you dial 911. The police come and carry him away with all the evidence.

And then months go by and the man is brought before the judge. And this man who is guilty of murdering your entire family stands before the judge and the judge says this.

"I am a very loving judge and I am very compassionate. Therefore, I justify you. You are pardoned. You are free. You can go."

What would be your response? I will tell you what your response would be. You would write the newspapers. You would call the media. You would be writing congressmen. You would even try to write the president. You would do whatever you could do to say that there is a judge on the bench who is more vile and more wicked than the criminals he sets free. Judges are supposed to do righteousness. It is what you demand.

Isn't it our great complaint that one of the things wrong in the country is that the judges are corrupt? Well, just think about that. The universal judge, God almighty, the wicked stand before him and he says, "You are justified and I will treat you as that."

That is the greatest problem in the Scripture. How can God be just and yet pardon the wicked?

I bet in all your gospel hearing and in all your gospel preaching you have never even heard of such a thing. Do you understand why I now say we know so little about the gospel? I am just teaching you the basic historic truths of the gospel that many preachers do not know, that the problem in all the Scripture is this. If God is righteous, he cannot forgive you. The law demands your death. If God is righteous, he cannot simply pass over sin. He must deal with it.

Now let me share with you some things about God that are totally not politically correct and they will be scandalous to you.

When was the last time you heard a sermon on the hatred of God? When was the last time you heard a sermon on how much God hates the wicked? When was the last time you heard something like this: God loves the sinner, but he hates the sin?

I am here to tell you. Although that looks good on the back of a Christian t-shirt, it is not biblical and it is not historical Christianity. Just look for a moment. Hold your place and turn to Psalms five.

Psalms 5:5. “The boastful shall not stand before Thine eyes; Thou dost hate all who do iniquity.”<sup>15</sup>

One translation. You hate all those who do wrong. Anybody qualify? Have you done iniquity? Yes. Have you done wrong? Yes. What does this text say? Does it say that God just hates the sin and loves the sinner? No, it says he hates all those who do iniquity.

And you say this. “But what about John 3:16? John 3:16 says, ‘For God so loved the world...’<sup>16</sup> It is in the Bible.”

Yes, it is in the Bible and it is true, but Psalms 5:5 is in the Bible and it is just as true and you have got to deal with it. That is the problem in American Christianity. You only take one side of the coin.

And I don’t know if you have studied logic, but that is impossible. Coins always come with two sides. You will hear sermon after sermon after sermon about the love of God and yet the Bible speaks explicitly about the hatred of God and most of you have never heard one sermon about it. You are only getting one side of the story. And that is very dangerous.

You say, “God doesn’t hate because God is love.”

And I tell you, “No, God does hate because God is love.”

“Well, what do you mean, brother Paul?”

Well, let me ask you a question. Do you love Jews? I hope so. If you love Jews can you be neutral about the Holocaust? You are going to hate the Holocaust. If I come up and talk to you about African American slavery and segregation and you go, “Well, you know, it wasn’t really that big a deal. I am just kind of neutral on it.”

Then do you love African Americans? No. Do you love babies? You must hate abortion. You see?

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<sup>15</sup> Psalm 5:5.

<sup>16</sup> John 3:16.

If I came up to you with a piece of newspaper that said a little boy had been captured by a pedophile and kept in his basement for 10 years being abused and I read that to you and you went, "Well, you know, everybody has a, you know, alternative lifestyle." If you did that I would think you were just as much a monster as the guy who abducted the little boy.

You see, even you when you hear stories about horrible things that have happened and in justices, you get mad, don't you? You get angry. So you have the right to do that and God doesn't? You who have broken all the laws of God, you have a right to stand up and be angry because someone did something worse than you, but God is love so he just has to sit there and be neutral?

Did you ever hear preachers say, "Now the first thing I want to tell you is God is not an angry God."

Have you ever heard someone say that? Well, I have got news for you. God is an angry God. As a matter of fact, the Bible says he is angry every day. Now that is what the Bible says.

And I am not going to play around with this just to protect God's reputation. Or to turn him into somebody that you are going to like. I am going to tell you who he really is.

You say, "Brother Paul, what about love?"

It is only in this context that you can understand love. You see, God is righteous and holy. He loves everything beautiful and good. And because of that he hates that which is twisted and defiled and wicked and harmful. Do you see that?

Do you realize you have broken every law? I could go down just through the Decalogue, the 10 Commandments and show you how you and I have broken every one of them. God should be angry. And he is. But here is the amazing thing. The love of God is of such a nature that he can even demonstrate love towards the objects of his wrath and work for their salvation.

But now here is the problem. We have broken God's law and God's justice demands that we die.

Now, here is what you need to understand. You live in a world today where there is no justice. You live in a world today where everything everybody does that is wrong can be explained. It is some kind of sickness or it really wasn't their fault. But that is not true. There is evil. And we have participated in it.

My dear friend, if I pulled out your heart right now and I took every thought you have ever had and I put it on a DVD and I showed it here tonight, you would run off of this university campus and you would never show your face here again, because you have thought things so vile, you cannot even share them with your closest friends. You would

be ashamed even before us even though you know we have done the same thing. Then how will you stand before a holy God? You see? Do you see?

But here is the question. If God is holy and he is righteous and, therefore, he must act upon the wicked, how can the wicked be saved? There is only one way. Someone stands in the place of the wicked, takes upon himself the guilt of the wicked and is judged and condemned in the wicked's place and that is exactly what Jesus Christ has done. And in this is the demonstration of the love of God.

You see, I painted this pitch black picture. Why? Well, I will tell you why. This afternoon let me ask you a question. Where did all the stars go? Did some big cosmic giant come by and put them all in a basket and carry them to the other side of the world? Where did they all go? They didn't anywhere. Then why couldn't we see them? Because there was so much light from the sun. But in the darkness of the night those lights shine so bright. That is the same way with the love of God. If someone comes in here and paints a picture of you that is just ok and everything is fine and you are ok and I am ok and God loves us because we are really nice people, you don't see grace. You don't see love. You don't see anything to worship. But when you see in the pitch blackness of your sin, it is on that background that the glory of God's love comes, a love that you do not deserve, that you cannot deserve.

But here is the wonderful thing, especially when you are an older Christian like I am. If I didn't deserve it to begin with, I don't have to deserve it now, that my life is not under law, but it is under grace, that because of Jesus Christ God loves me in all my failure, in all my frailty, in all my brokenness, in all my sin. God loves me because it has never been about me or what I have done. It has been about Jesus and what he has done for me. So I don't have to live my life before God like some performance trying to gain his favor. He loves me. It is finished. It was finished 2000 years ago on that tree, a perfect God, a perfect man paying a perfect price.

Now, I want us to look at something that is very important. Now this is the most important part so bear with me. I know we have gone, but just listen. When people talk about the cross they are always talking about the nails in his hands, in his feet, the spear in his side, the crown of thorns on his head, the mockings, the beatings, the whippings, all about the physical sufferings of Christ. And I don't want to take anything away from that, but if that is all you know about the cross you know nothing about the cross. You don't understand the cross.

We are not saved simply because the Romans and the Jews rejected Jesus and they nailed him to a tree or they speared him in the side or they beat him with a whip. We are saved because on that tree he bore our sin, was forsaken by his Father and God almighty crushed his only begotten Son under the full force of his hatred against our sin.

You say, "I have never heard of such a thing."

It is just historic Christianity. You see, when you hear about the cross, all you hear about is what men did to him. We are not saved merely because of what men did to him. We are saved because of what happened between him and his Father.

You see, those tracts of yours, you know, that God is holy and man is a sinner and there is a big gulf in between the two and man can't come over to God. Well, that is true. Man is separated from God. But the only way to close that breach was for someone to die in man's place separated from God. When Jesus was on that tree he cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Do you see that? Do you know how much God hates sin and what he will do to sin on that final day? What you have got to realize is that when Jesus was on that tree he bore the sin, the guilt of his people and he was treated by God the Father in the way that we should have been treated. He was crushed under the wrath of God. He was abandoned of God.

Just look in Psalms 22 for just a moment.

You know when Jesus was on the cross he cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Listen to Psalms 22 verse one.

My God, my God, why have You forsaken me? Far from my deliverance are the words of my groaning. O my God, I cry by day, but You do not answer; And by night, but I have no rest. Yet You are holy, O You who are enthroned upon the praises of Israel. In You our fathers trusted; They trusted and You delivered them. To You they cried out and were delivered; In You they trusted and were not disappointed. But I am a worm and not a man, A reproach of men and despised by the people.<sup>17</sup>

What is he saying? He gives his complaint, his question. "My God, why have you forsaken me?"

And then he gives his argument. "There has never been a time in the history of your covenant people that a righteous man cried out to you and you did not answer, but here I am on this cross, your only begotten Son and I cry out to you and you do not answer me. Why?"

And then he answers his own question.

"You are holy and I am a worm, a reproach."

You see, someone had to bear your guilt. Someone had to bear your sin.

I have heard people say, "Well, you know what? God looked all through heaven and there was no angel willing. He looked all through earth and there was no man able."

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<sup>17</sup> Psalm 21:1-6.



That is absolutely preposterous. If all the angels in heaven had been willing, it would not have paid the price. You see, the one who died there had to be a man. It is man who sinned. It is man who must die. God became man. He became our brother, our elder brother is what Hebrews is about. He became one of us. He identified with us and was able to go to that tree on our behalf.

One time I was preaching at a university and this student stood up and he said, "I have got a question for you." He goes, "How is it that one man can suffer for a few hours on that tree and yet pay the price for a multitude of men and save them from an eternity in hell?"

I said, "Young man, there is only one way, because that one man who was on that cross was worth more than all the men put together."

You take everything that there is, mountains and mole hills, crickets and clowns, stars and angels and suns and planets and moons and mountains and streams, everything beautiful and you put it on this side of the scale and you put Jesus on the other and he outweighs them all. He could do that because of his infinite worth.

One theologian put it this way. The Son looked up into heaven bearing our sin and cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" And God the Father slammed heaven's door in his face and said, "The Lord your God damns you."

Someone had to die under the fury of God's hatred against our sin.

Do you want to know how much God hates sin? When his own Son bore sin, God crushed him. What do you think he will do to you on the day of judgment if you appear before him uncovered, if you appear before him without Christ?

You say, "This is horrible."

It is biblical.

This is scandalous.

It is true. And I can tell you, there are a whole lot more verses in the Bible that back up what I am saying than what contemporary Christianity is saying today in America.

Now, he is in the garden and three times he cries out, "Let this cup pass from me. Let this cup pass from me. Let this cup pass from me."

The question is: What was so terrible in that cup? What was the cup?

If you look in the Scriptures, especially in the book of Psalms, the book of Jeremiah talks about the cup. Let me summarize just kind of a... or give you a summary of the truths

about this cup. If you summed up the psalms and the prophets together they would say something like this.

Because of the iniquity, the rebellion of the nations, I will hand them the cup of my wrath. And I will force them to drink it and they will drink it and they will stagger and they will die. But on that tree, God gave that cup to his Son. And his Son drank down the punishment of a holy, righteous, loving God against the sins of his people. And when he cried out, "It is finished," he turned that up over and not one drop was left. He drank it all.

Imagine a damn 10,000 miles high and 10,000 miles wide filled to the brim with water and down below it is your village an eighth of a mile away. A tiny village made of straw. And all of the sudden you wake up one morning and you go outside and you hear a massive crack and before you know it the damn is broken and all that water is rushing down upon you. You are never to be seen again. And before the water reaches the village, the ground opens up and swallows it down so that not one drop of that water touches the pant leg of your clothing. That is what Christ did on that tree.

Imagine a mill stone 1000 pounds and another on top of equal weight grinding counterclockwise, one against the other. And you put in a tiny grain of wheat. At first the pressure builds upon the hull, it explodes and it is pulverized. Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit.

That is the cross. And it says here, look, verse 26.

"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."<sup>18</sup>

In verse 25 this was to demonstrate his righteousness because in the forbearance of God he passed over the sins previously committed.

What does that mean? This is what it means. Adam and Eve sinned against God. They should have died that day. There shouldn't have been mercy. They should have been destroyed.

The great flood that took away all the nations except for Noah, there is only one problem. Noah was a sinner. He should have died, too.

God calls forth Abraham out of the nations and calls him a friend. There is only one problem. Abraham disbelieved God and also sinned.

God called David his Son and David basically committed murder and most certainly committed adultery. And because of his pride caused the death of many of his countrymen. Can you imagine the accuser?

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<sup>18</sup> Romans 3:26.

Do you see that up until this time only justice as known? Satan rebelled in heaven and justice, perfect justice swept him away. Do you see that? No mercy, justice.

Can you imagine on that day that he gave a gracious prophecy to Adam. Do you imagine Satan standing there going, “God, what is wrong? You are no longer just? He must die. How can you pardon him?”

Can you imagine Noah in the ark? “God, what is wrong? Have you come down off of your throne? This man should have died, too. David, you call him a son? How can you do all this and be a just God? How can you pardon his sin? He must die?”

Two thousand years God answered the question. Do you want to know how I can give a favorable prophecy to Adam? Do you want to know how I can save Noah, a sinful man from the certainty of death in a raging flood? Do you want to know how I can call a man named Abraham from the city of Ur and call him my friend? Do you want to know how I can call David a son? Here is your answer. My Son has died for them all. So once and for all, 2000 years ago God demonstrated how he can now be both just and the justifier of wicked men because his Son paid the price for them.

And, yes, you need to understand something. Abraham and Noah and David were saved the same way you are. They looked to the promise of God. They believed God.

But what you need to understand is believing God is not enough to save you unless God has paid for the price. Your faith doesn't pay the price. Your faith must be in the one who paid it and that is Jesus Christ. So God is just and the justifier of the wicked. Jesus died and three days later he rose again from the dead and God says this is the sign I will give you. And if this sign is not enough for you, there will not be another. This is the demonstration of God that this Jesus, the carpenter from Nazareth was the Son of God. This is God's sign that that death that he died on that tree satisfied the judgment and the justice of God, appeased the wrath of God and now all men can be saved. How?

Not by praying a prayer and asking Jesus into your heart.

I am sorry. I can't find that anywhere in Scripture. And I can't find it anywhere in Church history until modern American evangelicalism. Jump through the four little hoops, say yes to all the right questions, pray this prayer and if nothing happens the evangelist will still tell you he came in because he said he would. That is worthless.

When Jesus came to Israel he did not say, “The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand. Now, who would like to raise their hand and then ask me into their heart?”

That is not what he said. He said, “The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Now repent and believe the gospel. Turn from your sin and throw yourself on Christ, not Christ plus the Church, not Christ plus baptism, throw yourself on Christ and Christ alone.”

My hope is built on nothing less than Christ.

The believing man says something like this. “Jesus, I will trust in you and if you by yourself are not strong enough to save me, I will be in hell because I will not trust any other thing. I trust in you alone, in Christ alone.”

You say, “Brother Paul, what is repentance?”

It literally means to change your mind.

You say, “Well, that doesn’t... Ok, I changed my mind.”

Now, see, there is your problem. There is two words that you have got really confused. Mind and heart. You think changing of the mind is superficial. It is not. Your mind in Scripture, or your heart is the very control center of your being. It is who you really are. It is the essence of you as a person. When the Bible says your heart, when the Bible says your mind, it is saying the very essence, the very control center of everything you are and everything you do is going to change. And if that changes, my dear friend, everything else is going to change.

Change your mind. About what?

Paul the apostle is the greatest demonstration of that. He was going on the road to Damascus and this is what this mind thought, that Jesus Christ is the greatest blasphemer, that the Christians deserve to die and the he is going to kill them all or, at least, put them all in prison. All of the sudden Christ appears. And do you realize that for three days that man sat blind, neither eating nor drinking. Do you know what it is demonstrating? Christ totally and completely demolished his reality, disintegrated his world. It is like all of the sudden you wake up one morning and you find it really is a matrix. Everything is fake.

I mean, imagine this. His whole worldview was completely demolished. And now he believes that the one he thought was the greatest blasphemer and that he himself blasphemed, he now realizes he is God the Son and I must serve him with my entire life. He now realizes that the people he just went out to imprison, to kill, to maim are the people of God and he must do everything in his power for the rest of his life to bless them. That is repentance.

It is when a college student many, many years ago who thinks that money and muscles and good looks and fine clothes and being Mr. all about campus realizes that he is a dead, filthy wretch, a hollow self centered, horrible thing of a person and that the God that had blessed his family with wealth and intelligence and all the things that go with the American dream, that the God who had done all that he had done nothing but blaspheme, ignored and fought against. And to go from being all about the world to standing on a street corner on campus and preaching and having all your friends think you have lost your mind. You can pray that little prayer until the cows come how and you will still be

lost. You can ask Jesus Christ into your heart all day long and it means nothing. I can tell you that. You are saved not by repeating a ritualistic prayer. You are saved by calling upon the name of the Lord by faith, by trusting him.

And don't think that your life is really good, you just lack one thing to make it all perfect and that is Jesus. I am here to tell you. I don't care who you are or what you have, if you don't have Jesus your life is rubbish and everything you gain at this university will just add to your punishment on the day of judgment, that the only thing that matters is Jesus Christ and if you do not have him, you have nothing, nothing.

You say, "The world scorns your message."

And I say, "And I scorn the world."

Paul said, "The word is dead to me and I am dead to the world, but alive to Christ and preaching the good news, that this is not about a bunch of Americans just getting a hold of something that will make their life better so that they can have their best life now. This is about dying to every one of your dreams, dying to your own will, dying to your own self, your own autonomy and self government and throwing yourself upon Christ and believing that what he did on that tree was sufficient.

What should you do tonight? Some of you ought to just go home and cry out to God until you know he saved you. Some of you maybe are true believers, but the world has gotten a hold of you a bit. You need to hate yourself for what you have done and you need to throw yourself upon God. You do. Some of you probably think you are Christian, but you have no fruit.

Jesus said, "Not everyone who comes before me on that day and says, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter into the kingdom of heaven. You will know them by their fruits."

You are not saved by works. That is blasphemous. But if you are saved, you have been born again. You have become a new creatures who is going to live a different way, a way that will cut against the world and offend the worldly.

Jesus Christ offers you two promises tonight, eternal life and a cross. That is the gospel. Come to him. Be saved.

Now I will not give an invitation and I will not ask people to raise their hands and bow their head. I will ask you to go to God and cry out to him in faith until God tells you he has saved you, until you have an assurance not given my man but given by the Holy Spirit that God has wrought the supernatural work in you and changed you.

"Brother Paul, how will I know I have been saved?"

There will be some immediate confirmation. There will be a sense of your guilt having been taken away. There may even be a sense of joy, a sense of peace. But that won't be all. You will begin to live a different life.

Will I be without sin?

No, you will still have sin. You will struggle with sin, but that will just be it. You will struggle against it. You will no longer walk as a friend with it. And little by little you will be changed.

The evidence that you are converted, the evidence that one time long ago you really repented and you really believed is that you are still repenting and still believing today. And you are growing in Christ.

Oh, dear students, listen to me. This world has nothing for you. It has nothing. Don't come here and chase some American dream. Everything you do you do for the glory of God and you think, well, what do you want us to go all into ministry?

No. What I am telling you is that if you are Christian nothing is secular. If you are a carpenter, if you are an engineer, if you are a ditch digger, if you are a doctor everything is sacred if you believe in Christ. Everything you do is for him and for his glory.

All right. Let's pray.

*Father, to wake up, Lord, to wake up, for these students to know you, not to be coddled, but to be ravished by God, to know you, to know your Son, to follow you, a real sort of thing, real Christianity. Father, I pray that students here will surrender their lives to you, that some of them will go the ends of the earth to preach the gospel, the real gospel, not an Americanized gospel, not an easy believism, not five or six steps to you, but a gospel that they will come into repentance and faith, that you would use them, that you would put your Spirit upon them, indwell them, empower them and fill them in a mighty way. Give them mighty intellects. Give them great hearts. Give them, Lord, strong, strong, strong conviction that in their weakness you are strong, in Jesus' name. Amen.*

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Please visit our website at Heart Cry Missionary dot com. There you will find information about the ministry, our purpose, beliefs and methodologies and extensive information about some missionaries we are privileged to serve.