

The True Gospel – (VCY America Rally for Youth) **sermonaudio.com**

Top Recommended Washer Sermons

By Paul Washer

Bible Text: Romans 3:23-26

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Grace Community Church

311 Hedges St.

San Antonio, TX 78203

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It is a great privilege for me to be here with you. A great privilege. Although I must say that I feel somewhat like a story that I heard about John Wesley. He had been preaching throughout the countryside and as he was riding his horse and meditating on God's word, he realized that in three days no one had persecuted him: no one had chased him; no one had cursed him; no one had tried to buffet his body with stones and sticks. And so he got off his horse and he began to pray and search his heart. He said, "God, have I become a carnal man? Has my message become so worldly that no one any longer persecutes me?" Just then as he was praying, a farmer who hated John Wesley, saw him praying and picked up a brick and threw it at him and it barely scraped his nose. Wesley praised God and he said, "God, thank you so much that I know now that you've confirmed your favor toward me." So when you get up and people applaud, it's a little bit scary. You hope that it is a reflection of both parties' godliness but we're never for sure. We must realize that Christianity will never be a friend of this world. Christianity holds out the only arm of salvation to this world. They will never be friends. Christianity will never cross over but demands that the world crosses over to it.

Tonight as I look out over this congregation, I realize that I'm helpless and I'm hopeless. There are so many needs here tonight that if a thousand sermons were preached, I would suppose that in the power of men it would not be enough to minister to all the people here tonight. That is why a preacher when he preaches, he is cast upon the mercies of God. Every time you stand up before a group of people, you are as Ezekiel, standing in that valley of dry bones and you know that no one will live unless the Spirit of God moves upon the hearts of men.

Tonight, what should I do? Well, I'm going to do what I usually do when I have only one chance to preach to a group of people. I'm going to preach the Gospel. I'm going to lay out for you the Gospel of Jesus Christ and many of you will probably say, "Well why? We know about that." No, you don't. You know about four spiritual laws and you know

about five things God wants you to know and you know how to lead people in decisions and confirm their salvation even though God is a thousand miles from what you're doing but you probably don't know much about the Gospel. The greatest need in the evangelical community today is to learn the Gospel of Jesus Christ because in simply surveying the sermons and the witnessing techniques and the methodology of church growth and everything else that I see, I can only come to one conclusion: we know not the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Look what we've done. We walk up to a man and we say this, "Do you know you're a sinner?" If he says yes, then we go on to the next question, "Would you like to go to heaven?" If he says yes, then we go on to the next question, "Would you like to pray and ask Jesus Christ to come into your heart?" If he says yes and he prays that prayer, we ask him if he was sincere. If he says yes, we popishly lead declare him to be born again. That is not the Gospel of Jesus Christ and that methodology and evangelism has done more to hurt this country than every heresy introduced by every cult combined. Millions of people in this country whose lives have never been changed believe themselves born again because we have so reduced the Gospel of Jesus Christ that it means now nothing more than a simple decision that will only take five minutes of your time.

Let's look at that for a moment. "Do you know you're a sinner?" If a person says yes, what does that mean? Absolutely nothing. Go ask the devil if he knows he's a sinner and he'll say, "Yes, I am and a mighty fine one at that." The question is not, "Do you know you're a sinner?" The question is this, "Since you have sat under the preaching of the Gospel, has God so worked in your heart that the sin you once loved you now hate?" That's the question. The question is not, "Do you want to go to heaven?" Everybody wants to go to heaven. They just don't want God to be there when they get there. That's what political theory is all about. That's why we're having an election. Everybody wants a good place to live. The question is not, "Do you want to go to heaven?" The question is, "As the Gospel has been preached to you, has God, God Almighty, so done a sovereign supernatural work in your heart that the God you once hated and ignored, you now desire and esteem worthy above all things?" Then, "Would you like to pray a prayer and ask Jesus to come into your heart?" You will be hard-pressed to find a biblical basis for that question in the New Testament. You say, "Oh no, it says receive him." Do you honestly think when the Bible speaks about receiving Christ that it's talking about mumbling some little evangelical rite? When it talks about receiving Christ, it is through repentance and faith. It is not taking him in as some accessory to your life. It is taking him in as the very sustenance of your life. Christ isn't just something in your life that makes it better, Christ is your life. He is your life.

Jesus did not come, it does not say in the book of Mark that the time was fulfilled. Jesus did not say that, "The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand. Now, who would like to pray and ask me to come into their heart?" But rather he said, "Repent and believe the Gospel." And never forget throughout all the teaching of the New Testament and the Old, repentance is evidenced by fruit, by the way someone lives. Most people today believe they are saved because they are trusting in the sincerity of their decision and not the work of Christ, nor the power of God in salvation. "Are you saved?" Yes.

"How do you know?" Well, three years ago I prayed a prayer and asked Jesus to come into my heart. "Really?" And how many others have done that? The evidence of salvation, the evidence of repentance, the evidence of faith, is a changed and a changing life. How do you know you that you repented unto salvation years ago? Because you continue to repent today. How do you know that you believed unto salvation years ago? Because you continue believing today. How do you know that God had an encounter with you years ago? Because he continues having an encounter with you. Through the work of sanctification, he has not only changed your life, he continues changing your life.

But the Gospel we preach today is a ritual. Yes, some people get saved but not because of our preaching, rather in spite of it. God still works even though we know not the Gospel. Let's go to the book of Romans 3:23, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith." Spurgeon, Martyn Lloyd-Jones, others, referred to this text as the acropolis of the Christian faith. The fortified city, the city set on a hill. Many theologians have said if they had to lose all the Bible and could keep only one text, it would be this one because in this text is a portion, a fragment, a seed, of the Gospel.

Although there's enough theology here to keep us studying for an eternity, why do I say a seed or a fragment of the Gospel? Let me share with you something very, very important before we begin our sermon: much to-do today about the Second Coming. Everybody wants to know about the Second Coming. You will understand everything about the Second Coming on the day it occurs. On the day Jesus comes back, you will understand absolutely everything about how he's going to do it and when he's going to do it and what exactly will be the signs leading up to him doing that thing he's going to do. So the day he comes back, you'll understand everything there is to understand about the Second Coming but you will spend an eternity of eternities in heaven and you still will not begin to comprehend the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is not a message among many, it is the message of Scripture and the message of Christianity. The sad thing is, it is no longer the message of the church in America and I can prove it to you. Go to all those bookstores of yours. If we were to think back only 200 years ago, 300 years ago, we would see that the talk of Christianity was about the Gospel. The books that were written by the Spurgeons and the Puritans and the Edwards, it was about what is the Gospel? How can we comprehend the Gospel? How do we preach the Gospel? What is true conversion? How can we know when someone has truly been born again? Go into those bookstores of yours today and try to find a volume written on such themes. You'll find nothing. It's all filled with how-to and ten steps.

There is a big to-do today about discipleship and I believe we ought to do discipleship but I often hear people saying today, "We have so many people coming in through the front door of the church but the moment they come in, they're leaving through the back door of

the church and the reason why they're not staying is because we're not discipling them." That is not true. The reason why they're not staying is because they were never born again. We got them to make a decision. We got them to raise their hand. But their life never changed. Do we need to do personal discipleship? Of course we do but if God saves a man, he who began a good work in him will finish it. Why is there so little power today? Because we don't know the Gospel. Because we don't concern ourselves with true conversion. Because we don't make the important things important. But we replace it with the proper use of media in the service; with the right kind of singing to alter the mood; with flashy speakers who tell us everything we want to hear so that we can our best life now because that is indeed what we want. More than God. There is no power because the Gospel is lost. You bring the Gospel back and you'll see the power of God move upon the lives of men, women and children. The simple Gospel.

Now let's look at our text, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." We don't fully understand what that means because if you did, you would either be trembling in terror because you know it's not right with you or you would be rejoicing almost out of control over what God has saved you from. All have sinned. Why does that not move us? Because we do not understand the heinous nature of sin. Why do we not understand the heinous nature of sin? It's because we don't know who God is. We don't know God. I am amazed as I go through this country and this world and talk to leaders of seminaries and Bible institutes and I ask them questions. I say, "How many semesters do your students study theology proper? Simply the doctrines of God?" "Well, we cover that in, you know, a month." How many sermons today on the doctrine of God? If I were to even take an exam here tonight, give each of you a piece of paper and say, "Write out for me the doctrine of God. Classical historical theology. Write down for me a list of the characteristics or attributes of God and give me a biblical explanation of God." The people of God perish for lack of knowledge.

In all this getting that we're getting, in all this knowledge, in all these books, in all these bookstores and all these tapes and all these conferences, is anybody simply talking about God? Who is he? That is the reason why Sunday morning in America is the greatest hour of idolatry in the whole week. Why? Because most people who are even worshiping God are worshiping a God they don't know. They're worshiping a God that looks more like Santa Claus than the God of Scripture. They're worshiping a God that is a figment of their own imagination. They created a God in their own likeness and they worship the God they've made. Why is that? Again, it goes back to the pulpit. In the pulpit, we're not doing what we're supposed to be doing. What is that? Teaching men about God so that they might know in the light of his revelation where they stand and what they need.

"All have sinned." Westminster tells us that means a lack of conformity to the law of God; a deviation from the will of God; a detour from the manifest character of God. Picture this for a moment: God stands there in the creation of the universe and he says, "Stars, put yourself in the places I have marked out for you," and every star in creation bows and says, "Amen." "Planets, put yourself in the circles I have drawn for you and stay there until I give you another word. Move exactly as I command you," and they bow and they worship. He tells the mountains to be lifted up. He tells the valleys to be cast

down and they tremble before him. He tells the sea to come to this point and do not come any further and the sea obeys. But he looks at man, he looks at you and says, "Come," and you go, "No."

In any debate, in any speaking at a university, the problem with hell in the minds of most men is that it is of eternal duration. How can the punishment go on forever? How can it be, so to speak, an infinite punishment poured out on men? Because they have sinned against an infinitely worthy God. The crime is punished with such severity because it is a severe crime and it is a severe crime because of the one against whom they have railed, the God of glory. If men do not understand the infinite worth of this God, they cannot know the heinous nature of their sin.

Even so far today I've heard one preacher who says, "We do not speak about sin in our church." Then I can tell him that the Holy Spirit of God does not work in his church nor in his ministry. Why? Because one of the principle ministries of the Holy Spirit is to convict the world of sin so if you do not talk much about sin, count on it, the Holy Spirit is not much in your ministry. But what does it mean to say sin? It means nothing. We live in a culture that drinks down iniquity like it was water. Fish do not know they're wet, neither do men know what it means to sin against God and for this very reason – now listen to me those of you who are going to be preachers one day – we are not to be mean spirited; we are not to go around seeking zealously to hurt people or break them. But know this: if you are properly going to expound the word, you must make much of sin. You must expose sin. You must define sin. You must explain it specifically so that the word of God cuts into the heart of men. I can prove my point in this: we do not have a systematic theology in Scripture but the closest we come to that is the book of Romans and if you will notice in this great treatise of the Apostle Paul, he spends his first three chapters laboring with all his might to do one thing, to condemn the entire world. That is his job. Look over here in chapter 3, 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." Men must sit under preaching that speaks about the reality of their problem in terms that they can't understand and from which they cannot escape.

I always use this illustration: if I were to jingle some keys in front of the microphone tonight, it probably wouldn't make you happy. It probably wouldn't fill your heart full of delight. Why is that? Because you're not locked away in a dungeon to be executed. But if you were locked away in a dungeon knowing that the sentence of death were hanging over your head, then the sound of keys would bring a delight to your heart. I submit to you that men cannot appreciate the Gospel because of the way we preach. Let me ask you something: at 12 o'clock this day, this afternoon, where did all the stars go? Did someone put them in a basket and carry them all away? Where did they go? They were there. Why couldn't you see them for all the light? But the stars and the beauty of those stars, they came out, didn't they in the darkness? So it can be said of the grace of God and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. If you want grace to be seen, then it helps to paint a pitch black night that men might see what they are and in seeing what they truly are, having their hearts exposed, they will see their need of a Savior. But while you play with them and

coddle them and protect their so-called self-esteem, you at the same time damn their soul to hell.

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Men are not just rebels, they are dislocated from what they are to be. They have perverted their entire being and the course of their lives. Why were we made? For what reason does our heart beat? For what reason does our chest heave and draw in breath? There is only one reason: it is for him. Men were not made for men. This world was not made for men. Men were made for God and men will be destitute and perverted and hopeless without him. Isn't it amazing, I've spent a great deal of my life in the third world. I just returned from basically my second home, Peru, where I was there for a month preaching. The poverty sometimes in the third world is absolutely astounding. Brothers and sisters in Christ, suffering so. But when I come back to the States, I see something: I see that we as Americans are the wealthiest Christians who ever walked on the face of the earth. We are the most protected Christians that ever walked on the face of the earth and yet we are the emptiest Christians who ever walked on the face of the earth. You go into so-called Christian bookstores today and 75% of the books that are there are dealing with how empty we are. Why are we empty? We're empty for the very reason Jesus never was empty. He said, "I have food to eat that you know not of. My food is to do the will of my Father."

More and more and more the evangelical church is becoming humanistic, humanistic, humanistic. Everything is about man. We just pronounce a few Christian words over it in order to baptize it and make it look Christian but everything's about you. Everything's about your felt needs. Everything's about your self-esteem. No. That is an endless pit that will suck every ounce of life out of you. You don't need self-esteem, you need the knowledge of God. As a matter of fact, apart from Christ, you shouldn't have any self-esteem and in him you know that it is only in him that your life is right. Men need God and they need to be turned toward God and only then will their lives be corrected. It's all about him. Your heart beats for him. You were given breath for him. You were given strength for him. You were given a mind for him. You were given everything you were given for him. And it is only by living for him that you're ever going to find purpose or meaning and even in that, you will not find purpose and meaning if your goal is to find purpose and meaning for your goal should be his glory even if to attain that glory, every bit of purpose is destroyed in your life.

It's all about him, not about us. That is the fundamental problem with humanity and the fundamental problem in American Christianity is it's now all about us. A church that I was listening to just recently that has grown to be very, very large and someone asked the pastor, "Well, what are you doing?" He says, "We're simply meeting all the needs of the people." That's not church. And what happens when you can't meet all their needs? And what happens when there are soldiers standing at the door? They'd say, "If you confess Christ, I'll take away your fine home that Jesus gave you. I'll take away your cars that Jesus gave you. I'll take away your little Izod sweaters that Jesus gave you." If you build churches and build Christianity around this Jesus will meet all your needs, you will not have Christianity. You will have an exalted humanism and a Jesus who is made a servant of men. The old preachers giving a hypothetical lesson were often fond of saying this:

you should believe in Jesus Christ, you should repent and you should serve him even if he sends you to hell because he is worthy of repentance, he is worthy of faith and he is worthy of service though you get nothing from it. Do you understand that kind of Christianity? Where it's all about him and not about men?

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Now speaking about the true believer, he says, "being justified." What does that mean to be justified? Does it mean that the moment a person places his faith in Jesus Christ that person is made righteous? No, because if that were the case, the person would never sin again. Justification, to be justified, is a legal or a forensic term. It means the moment that a person places their faith in Jesus Christ, God legally declares that person to be right with him. It's a legal declaration coming forth from the throne of God. "This sinner is justified. He is legally right with me."

How are we justified? This is the question of the ages. "As a gift by His grace." Now I want you to notice something here: he says, "being justified as a gift." The same Greek word is used in another text where it says of the Messiah, "They hated him without a cause." Did Jesus Christ ever give anyone a cause to hate him? No. They hated him although they had no reason whatsoever to do so. That's the same thing being taught here that God declares the sinner right with him without a cause. The sinner never gave God a cause to justify him or declare him right. As a matter of fact, the only thing a sinner could ever motivate a holy God to do is condemn him. But God has done a great work so that the sinner might be made right with God. Irregardless of all his trespasses, irregardless of all his sins and crimes against deity, God has justified men even though men never gave him a cause.

If we were to set the three major religions as they tell us up here tonight and we were to ask an Orthodox Jew, "If you died right now, where would you go?" He might respond, "Well, I would go to heaven." Why is that? "Because I love the law of God. I am a servant of God. I am a righteous man." Then the reporter goes to the Muslim and says, "Sir, if you died right now, where would you go?" I would go to Paradise. "Why?" I love the Koran. I have made the prayers, the pilgrimages. I give alms to the poor. I am a righteous man. He comes to the true Christian and he says, "Sir, if you died right now, where would you go?" He says, "Heaven." What is the reason for the hope that is within you? And the Christian says, "I was born in sin. In sin my mother conceived me. I have broken every law of God and I deserve the full extent of his just wrath against me." The reporter stops him and says, "Sir, I don't understand. The other two men I quite understand. They are righteous men by their own virtue, their own merit indeed and they believe they're going to heaven because they have done good things. But sir, you bewilder me. You're an enigma. You're telling me that you're going to heaven even though you deserve just the opposite. What is the basis for your hope?" And that Christian cries out, "I am trusting in the virtue and the merit of another, Jesus Christ my Lord."

"All to him.
Nothing in my hands I bring,

Simply to the cross I cling.
I need no other argument.
I need no other plea.
It is enough that Jesus died – that he died for me."

Declared right with God even though we gave him no cause. No cause whatsoever to do anything but to condemn us. A few times in my ministry, this used to happen. That song isn't sung anymore much, praise God, but it seemed like every time I'd get up to preach in a meeting, some person would get up and sing a song that asked the question, "O God, what did you see in me that you saved me?" I felt like a kid at school with his hand raised in the back, "Oh, pick me! I'll tell you!" What did God see in you? He saw an object of wrath. He saw someone that had broken every law he'd ever made and lived a dislocated, perverted life. That's what he saw. Why did he save you? Two reasons: God is love; secondly, to demonstrate his glory, his mercy, his attributes to not only the world but even beyond. Or that song that was real popular a few years ago where it says, "God never gave up on me." That's because he never put any hope in you to start off with. He never gave up on you? Who teaches you these things? He never gave up because he never put hope in you, he put hope in his own promise, in his own oath, in his own covenant. He put hope where hope belongs: in his person, in his decrees and his works.

So he justified men. "Being justified as a gift by His grace." Unmerited favor. This is what drives the man of God. This is what drives the woman of God. Grace. Grace. Grace. The unmerited favor of God through the infinitely valuable sacrifice of his Son Jesus Christ. We become a prisoner of grace. We become a prisoner of hope. We become a prisoner of the Gospel. "I must live for him!" Why? "Grace manifested toward me in the person of Christ. I am constrained by that love."

He says, "We are saved by grace," and he goes on and says, "through the redemption." I forget his name, I should have remembered it but I've heard tell of an old Puritan. They said that some words he would read in Scripture and after reading them, he would sit silently with a trembling lip because there were some words that were just almost too sacred to say. If we follow that line of thinking, I would say that redemption is one of those. How common that word has become. I remember the first time crossing the Andes mountains with an old veteran missionary and I wondered how he could sleep on the train in the midst of all the beauty we were seeing out the window of the train. Years later as I was taking a group of young men across the Andes mountains I realized I did the same, I slept. Some things are so spectacular and they do not change in character or value but our hearts become cold and things become commonplace that we can even think on the word redemption and not weep. It would be enough if we had been bought because that's what the word means, to buy, to set someone at liberty, a slave or a captive by paying a price. It would have been enough if it had been silver or gold. It would have been enough if it had been some valuable thing in heaven but it was the blood of God's own Son and, again, that truth is what ought to control us.

I appreciate what the young man said up here: Christianity is not about morality. There are a lot of moral people who will go to hell. Christianity will result in a biblical morality

but Christianity is not about morality, it's about him. It's not just about being nice people. It's not just about doing nice things. It's not just about dotting every "i" and crossing every "t". It's about a passion, a heart set on fire because it realizes it has been bought with the blood of God's Son.

We have been redeemed and as it says here in our text, that redemption is in Christ Jesus. In Christ Jesus, possibly the most powerful phrase in the Bible, "in Christ." Paul became so enamored with that phrase that when we look at the first chapter of Ephesians, half the chapter is just one long sentence, all of it repeating over and over, "in him, in Christ, in the Beloved." You are here tonight in one of two spheres: you are in Adam and condemned or you are in Christ and justified. A young man came to me one time and said, "You're right, Brother Paul, you're right. Jesus is all we need." I said, "Young man, Jesus is all we have, he's not just all we need." Outside of him there is nothing. You need to understand that that great book of Colossians not only teaches us that the world was created by Christ and for him, it was created in Christ. Everything outside of Jesus Christ is not reality. Everything outside of Jesus Christ is absolutely absurd. Everything outside of Jesus Christ is death. There is nothing. There is no reality. There is no logic. There is no sense. There is no reason. There is no rhyme. Nothing works. Everything was made to be in Christ. People here tonight with so many problems. "I have problems," you might say, "in my marriage. I have problems in my finances. I have problems here and problems there." Your greatest problem is lashing yourself down to this truth: total surrender to the person and will of Jesus Christ for the glory of Jesus Christ.

"In Christ, whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation." Propitiation. Maybe other than the names of God, the most important word in the entire Bible. Do you know what it means? Propitiation. It says, "God displayed his Son publicly." There is a reason why the Son of God was lifted up in the center of the religious universe, outside the most important religious city in the world. While he was lifted up on a tree at the crossroads of that great city, God through the cross of Jesus Christ is not only saving men but he is revealing things about himself. He is making himself known to the world through that cross thus it was necessary. This word can also mean that God placarded his Son, made a public display of his Son. We suppose that God could have put away sin secretly but he didn't. He made a public display of his Son for all, not only the world, but all of creation to see.

It says that, "God displayed him publicly as a propitiation." What is a propitiation? The word propicio, we even use it in old Spanish in ??? the old version that we use. Se propicio a mi. Be merciful to me. It is a sacrifice that enables God to demonstrate mercy to the wicked. We're going to further explain that but now I want to take you to something – now listen to me: if you can catch this one thing I'm going to teach you tonight, this will help you. This is about the cross. This is the cross. It's the reason for it, the reason under it. Why a cross? Why a death? The greatest problem in all the Bible is found in an obscure text in Proverbs. Let's just go there for a moment. Listen to the text, "He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous, Both of them alike are an abomination to the LORD." You say, "What does that have to do with the Gospel?" Alright, let's put the first and last part together, "He who justifies the wicked is an

abomination to the LORD." Anyone, especially authority such as a judge or a king, anyone who justifies the wicked is an abomination to God. What's an abomination? It's probably the hardest word in Scripture. It's something that is loathsome. Something that is disgusting, vile, heinous, unspeakably wicked. So anyone who justifies a wicked man, anyone who legally declares a wicked man to be right is an abomination before God.

Do any of you see the problem? For the last 20 minutes, what have I spoken of? God has justified the wicked and yet and Scripture cannot be broken, to justify the wicked is an abomination to God and that is what the Gospel is all about and many of you have never even heard that before. The greatest problem in all of Scripture is this: if God is just, he cannot forgive you. You say, "Well, why not?" By that question, you're just demonstrating that you're a child of your culture that knows nothing of justice. God is holy. God is just. God cannot simply turn his back on sin. He cannot simply look over your sin. He cannot simply pardon you. If God is just, he must judge you righteously and a righteous judgment means your death in hell forever. The greatest question in all the Bible is: how can God be just and the justifier of the wicked? Look what Paul says here, verse 26, "for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier." This is the problem. This is what the cross is all about. This is the divine dilemma: if God is just, how can he justly forgive wicked men and declare them to be legally right before him?

Let me give you an illustration that I've used a million times. Let's say that you were to go home from this preaching tonight and find your family has been slaughtered. You see the assassin standing before the last one with a little bit of life in their body. He breaks their neck and drops them to the floor and laughs. He runs out the door, you run out the other door and you knock him to the ground. You bind his hands and you call the police. The police come and pick up this man who has murdered your entire family and they lock him away. Then in due time, they present him before the judge. The judge looks down at the man who has murdered your entire family and he says this, "I am a very loving judge. I pardon you. Go free." What is going to be your response? You're going to demand justice. You're going to write the newspapers. You're going to call the television stations. You're going to write congressman. You're going to say that there is a judge on the bench far more wicked than the criminals he pardons. There is something even in you that cries out for justice. "This cannot be." Then shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

I have heard evangelists say this not knowing that they were speaking blasphemies and heresies against God. I have heard them say, "Instead of being just with you, God was loving." Do you know what they're saying? God's love is unjust. That God can be unjust. There is even among our race of people a what? An unjust love. People love things unjustly. They demonstrate affection in a wicked way. You cannot say and be biblical that instead of being just God was loving. God's love must be just. God must satisfy justice that cries out against you because of your sin.

Now, it's not as some suppose. Some people will think, "Well, are you saying that there's this rule of justice that even God has to submit to?" No, that's not what I'm saying at all. What I'm saying is: God himself is just and God is perfect and consistent in all his

attributes. In order to pardon the wicked, the justice of God must first be satisfied and the wrath of God appeased. Something must – and this is a very important word and you can look it up in the dictionary – someone must interpose. Someone must intervene. Someone must do something. And being there are only two parties, one being God and the other man, we put no hope in man. God himself must intervene to satisfy his justice, appease his wrath and make it possible to express his love in salvation toward wicked men.

Now let me talk for a moment about something that will be quite offensive to you. I want to talk a moment about the hatred of God. May I ask you a question? How many of you, just raise your hand, have ever heard a sermon on the hatred of God? One, two, three, four, five. Wow, this is better than normal. The hatred of God. "Brother Paul," as one lady said, "God doesn't hate. God is love, therefore he cannot hate." No, God is love, therefore he must hate.

Before we go to the Scripture let me just give you an idea. Do you love babies? I do. I've got a bunch of them in my house. I just love babies. The hardest thing about my ministry is being away from my babies. I don't care if they're eight feet tall, they're still going to be my babies. If I love babies, I must hate abortion. Do you love Jews? I do. You must hate the Holocaust? Do you love African Americans? You've got to hate slavery then. I'm sorry, there's just no neutrality. You see, if you truly do love that which is right, that which is perfect, that which is good, there is also an animosity, an enmity, against all that that contradicts that standard. God loves all that is right, all that is true, all that is good, all that is virtuous but Scripture after Scripture after Scripture in the Bible tells us that his hatred is manifest against wickedness. I could remove it if you'd like. I could be silent if you like but I wouldn't be faithful to God.

Let me give you a good text. Go to Psalm 5 just for a moment. Psalm 5:5, "The boastful shall not stand before Your eyes; You hate all who do iniquity." Now you know that wonderful statement that goes something like this, "God loves the sinner and hates the sin"? Just look at this text. Is that what it teaches? It's not what it teaches. I'm sorry. I know it's a pretty thing to say and it looks good on the back of a contemporary Christian t-shirt but it's not what the Scriptures teach. It does not say here that God's hatred is manifested towards the wicked deed. It says God's hatred is manifested towards the one who commits it. Now do not be mistaken: God's hatred is not like ours. It is not a self-centered, egotistical, selfish hatred. It is the reaction of a holy God against men who are vile. "Who are you speaking of?" Every man who was ever born a son of Adam. Just what do you think the wrath of God is? Some impersonal thing that flies out from behind the throne of God? It is God. When people come to me and they say, "Brother Paul, God saved me," I always love to ask them this question, "From what did he save you?" Well, he saved me from my sin. No, he saved you from him.

Do you know all those passages, prepare to meet thy God? God is holy. He cannot look upon iniquity, his eyes are too pure? That the wrath of God is revealed against all unrighteousness? You and your sin being encountered by a holy God, there is only one response: wrath. But God's love is of such a character that it is even able to love and show love and demonstrate love toward the objects of his wrath. It is though with one

hand God is holding back his justice against this world and with another hand he is pleading for men to come but one day, both hands will be dropped. You know that don't you?

Let me give you another example: heaven is heaven because God is there. Well, that is true but then the counter is not true: hell is hell because God is not there. That's not what Scripture teaches. Hell is the wrath of Almighty God. It is his perfect justice revealed against men throughout an eternity.

Now some of you will walk out of here tonight shocked. You'll say, "I've never heard anything like that." You'll say, "He was mean spirited," all sorts of things but I can assure you if you would only read old books you would find out this is what preachers have always said. They don't say it anymore because they want big churches. We must warn men. We must tell men that God all day long extends out his hand to a disobedient obstinate people but at the same time, the wrath of God comes upon the world because God is a righteous holy God. Have you not read the book of Revelation? This is not just Old Testament teaching that the wrath of God will come in such a way that men will cry out, the great captains and leaders of this world will cry out that the rocks fall upon them to hide them from the wrath of the Lamb.

The wrath of God. "Well, I just don't believe that." Well, just what you believe doesn't really matter. What does Scripture teach? There is the wrath of God and it is the result of him being righteous and holy and even loving and good. Can God be loving and not move against wickedness? No. Can God be good and be apathetic towards evil? Absolutely not. God will judge men. He will. But the question is this: how can anyone be saved? Here's our answer: the cross of Jesus Christ. You say, "What do you mean, Brother Paul?" The cross of Christ. That Christ went to that tree and he died and with his death, he satisfied the justice of God. The Bible says, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." The Bible says, "The wages of sin is death." Christ became a man, lived a perfect life under the law, went to that tree and died the death of his people and in dying that death, he satisfied God's justice and appeased the wrath of God.

Now let's look for a moment in the time that we have at the cross. Now listen: I was teaching several years ago in a seminary in eastern Europe. It was all Germanic and I was very tired and I had been teaching all day so I went into the library and I was looking there for a book to read. I came across a book that said, "The Cross of Christ." It wasn't John Stott's book, it was another one. It said, "The Cross of Christ," so I pulled it off and I began to read it and I found the place and this is what the author said, "God looked down from heaven at the suffering that was inflicted upon his Son by the hands of the Romans on that cross and he counted that as payment for our sin." That's heresy. Did you catch it? That's heresy. You say, "What do you mean, it's heresy?" My dear friend, if you are saved here tonight, you are not saved merely because the Romans beat Jesus. You are not saved merely because they nailed him to a tree. If you are saved, you are saved because when he was nailed to that tree, he bore your sin and God the Father crushed his only begotten Son. It was God who had to measure out the punishment. It is God who had been offended. It was God's wrath that had been kindled. It is God's justice that had

to be poured out. Someone to save a people for God had to interpose and suffer the judgment, the wrath, the justice of God.

Have you never read in Isaiah 53:10, "And it pleased the LORD to crush him." It fulfilled the will of Yahweh to crush his only begotten Son. Now, let's just look at that for a moment. Jesus is on that tree and on that tree he cries out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" I heard one preacher, I've heard it several times preachers saying, "God could no longer look upon his Son because he couldn't bear to see his Son's affliction." That's not what Jesus taught. What did he teach? "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why have you abandoned me?" He's directing us back to Psalm 22 and I want you to go there just quickly with me. We won't get through our text but at least we'll get some of it. Psalm 22:1, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me? Far from my deliverance are the words of my groaning. O my God, I cry by day, but You do not answer; And by night, but I have no rest." Here is the complaint of the Messiah while he's on that tree. "Why have You forsaken me?" Then he gives an argument in verse 4, "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." "There has never been a time in the history of the covenant people of Israel that a righteous man called out to you and you did not deliver him but I, your Son, the Messiah, I hang on this tree. I have done no wrong. Why have you forsaken me?" Then he gives the answer, verse 3, "You are holy." Verse 6, "But I am a worm."

On the cross. Well, you know all those little tracts, don't you? God is holy and man is not and there's this great division in between the two? Don't you see that in order to close that breach, someone had to die outside of the favorable presence of God? Someone had to bear sin. Someone had to become a curse. Someone had to be like that scapegoat. The leaders of Israel would come out and lay their hands upon that goat symbolically transferring the sins of Israel to that goat. One goat would be slaughtered and another would be driven outside the gates of the city, left in the wilderness to wander and die. So Christ suffered outside the gates of the city, cut off from God, cut off from his favorable presence and cut off from the people of God. In order for that gap we're always talking about to be brought back together, someone had to die separated from God's favorable presence and separated because he bore the sins of his people and became a curse. Even before his own Father.

Have you never read Galatians 3, "Cursed is every man who does not abide by all the things written in the book of the law so as to perform them." Every man who has broken even one law of God is under a curse. What does it mean to be under a curse? It's a very difficult thing. It's such a horrible idea. Let me put it to you this way: to be accursed means that before a holy God and a holy heaven, we would be so heinous in our sins, so vile, that the last thing we would hear when we took our first step into hell would be all of creation standing to its feet and applauding God because he's rid the earth of us. But then it goes on in Galatians 3:13 and it says, "But Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law." How? "Becoming a curse for us," on our behalf.

The filth, the guilt, the shame, before a holy God. The sense of being cut off from his favorable presence. Of dying without him. Separation. And then, not just separation but wrath. Justice had to be poured out. It had to be. Now it will be poured out on some of you. I'm not a prophet; I have no insight into your heart. But it would be very vain and unwise to suppose that every human being listening to my voice whether here or via the internet or whatever, is truly a child of God. Wrath will be poured out on some of you throughout an eternity in hell because of the crimes you have committed and will continue to commit throughout all eternity. The raging of your heart against the sovereignty of a good God.

But on that tree, the wrath of God, the justice of God, was poured out upon the head of his only begotten Son. As I have already quoted, "It pleased the LORD to crush him." You know, when Jesus is in the Garden and three times he prays, "Let this cup pass from me," I have heard preachers say, "Well, the cup was the cross. The cup was the nails. The cup was the Roman whip." Absolutely preposterous because if that were the case, then tell me: how is it that the Captain of our salvation is not as brave as his own followers? Is it not true that after the ascension of Christ countless thousands of Christians have died on crosses, crucified? Not only crucified, crucified upside down, covered in tar and set on fire to light the streets of Rome and yet many of them went to those crosses singing hymns full of joy. So are you going to tell me that the disciples of Jesus go to the cross singing hymns full of joy but the Captain of their salvation, the Messiah himself, cowers in a garden and doesn't want to go? Do you honestly think that the Lord of glory feared a whip?

What was in the cup? Throughout the Bible it tells us what's in the cup. If I were to sum up all the prophets and put them all together, I could say something like this, God speaking, "Because of the iniquity and 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." Someone had to drink the cup of God's wrath to satisfy his justice. On that tree, Christ took the cup of wrath and drank it down.

You've all heard the story of Abraham and Isaac. He goes up on that mountain to offer his only son. The old man draws back the knife, lays his hand on the brow of his boy and draws back the knife and when the old man's will has given in to God's, he brings the knife down and God stops him. You say, "What a beautiful ending to the story." That's not the end, it's the intermission. Years and years and years roll past and then God's only Son is hanging on a tree and God lays his hand on the brow of his only begotten Son and brings the knife down and slaughters him. Are you beginning to see what the cross is really about?

Now, if I was up here with some new revelation, you should all walk out the door. This is not new revelation, this is just historical Christianity that no one preaches anymore because we've reduced this Gospel down to four spiritual laws or five things God wants you to know and that's why it has no power. Look at what God has done. He has taken it upon himself to do our sin away. His only Son submitted in love and joy to that will. He became a man. He lived a perfect life. He went to that tree. A price had to be paid. A

death under the wrath of God to satisfy his justice and Jesus Christ stood in our place and was crushed under the will of his Father.

It's as though he drank down that cup and when he cried out, "It is finished," he turned it over and not one drop of wrath came out. It was finished. He paid it all. He paid it all. This same Jesus who died, did not remain dead. He vindicated his Father on that tree. You say, "How, Brother Paul?" He proved once and for all that God is just even though he justifies wicked men. Here's the accusation against God throughout all of human history. Can you imagine the devil? What did the devil do? He sinned and what happened? Perfect justice was laid out before him and there was no need for an explanation. God is just. He sinned. Justice has been done. But then there's Adam's sins. Can you imagine the accuser of God, "Oh God, what is this? I sin and justice. This one, this ball of dirt, rails against you and you give him a promise? What's happened to your justice? Oh, and Abraham. He's your friend now. Where's your holiness gone? Oh, and Israel, your people, how many times have they committed idolatry against you? How many times should they have died? And David, a man after your own heart? What's happened to the justice of God?" Two thousand years ago, God gave his answer. "Do you want to know how I can spare man from the beginning even with their father, Adam? Do you want to know how I can call Abraham my friend? Do you want to know how I can call David a son? Because there is my Son now dying for them all."

So now God is just. Why? He has punished our sin but he has punished our sin in his only begotten Son. He alone is uniquely qualified to carry it away because the blood of bulls and goats will not take away sin so a body was prepared and the Son of God was born, the man Christ Jesus. Adam had sinned, the son of Adam must die. He became a son of Adam and died in the place of his people. He had to be man but he also had to be God. That's why the doctrine of the Jehovah's Witnesses is so vile because they claim that Christ was nothing more than a mere creature that God sent down to do a work of salvation. No, God came down to do a work of salvation.

He had to be God. Why did he have to be God? If he's not God, he's not a Savior and if he is a Savior, he must be God because as Jonah says, "Salvation belongs to the Lord." It comes from the Lord and no one else. Why did he have to be God? Who but God can withstand the wrath of God and rise again? Why did he have to be God? He had to give his life away. I hear all these people saying, "Well, you know, if God couldn't find a perfect angel, God couldn't find a perfect man." It wouldn't have mattered if he'd of found a perfect angel or a perfect man, it still wouldn't have worked. God came down. God became a man. God. For you he gave his life away.

Let me ask you a small question: the life that you have, can you give it away? It's not even yours to start off with. It's not inherent in you. It's something derived. Your life comes from God. Me giving my life away is like me giving your car away. It's not mine to start off with. But Christ said, "I have authority to lay down my life and I have authority to take it back up again." It's his own.

Why did he have to be God? A university student stood up one time in the middle of the congregation and he said, "I've got a question for you. How is it that one man can suffer for a few short hours on that tree and pay for the sins of a multitude of men throughout eternity? It's not fair. How can that be? How can God accept that as justice?" I said, "Oh, young man, thank you for that question. That one man could die on that tree and suffer a few short hours and save a multitude of men from an eternity in hell because that one man on that tree was worth more than all of them put together." It's his infinite worth. You take everything that is: crickets and clowns, mountains and molehills, stars and dust and whatever else you find and you put it in a scale and you put Jesus on the other side and he outweighs them all. He died and rose again from the dead. Now has Christ vindicated his Father by dying on that tree? The Father vindicated his Son by raising him from the dead. It was God's public declaration that, "What my Son did on that tree pays for the sins of my people and pays in full."

Now, to close, I want to go to a passage that was used by the patristics. It's called the Ascension Psalm. Psalm 24:7. The old preachers used to say this: Christ was raised from the dead and forty days later, he ascended up into heaven and as he ascended up, as Christ, the man, Christ, the Son of God, Christ, the God-man, he comes to the doors of heaven and calls out, verse 7, "Lift up your heads, O gates, And be lifted up, O ancient doors, That the King of glory may come in!" Can you imagine? The shock. It's almost as though the angels would gather around the other side of the door and say, "Who is this that cries out to these doors? No man has ever ascended to this place. Who would dare lay their hand to the latch of this door and think he worthy to pass through?" Then the answer comes again, "Lift up your heads, O gates, And be lifted up, O ancient doors, That the King of glory may come in!" And Christ, the Son of God, Christ, the God-man, Christ, the man for us, entered into glory and sat down at the right hand of his Father.

And now God does not tell you to pray a little prayer in five minutes and ask Jesus to come into your heart. That's not what he does. You say, "Well, I got saved that way." Possibly you did but the Bible says that God commands all men everywhere to repent of their sins and believe the Gospel and to bring forth fruit worthy of repentance. You're saying, "Brother Paul, are you talking about a works salvation?" Absolutely not. I'm talking about a lost doctrine in the church. And bear with me for just a second longer, I'll close my Bible in good faith that I am leaving. Bear with me a second longer. If there is a lost doctrine in the church today that has destroyed evangelism: it is the doctrine of regeneration. Regeneration is not merely a human decision. You do not get saved simply because you decided to jump out of the line going to hell in order to jump into the line going to heaven. Salvation is a supernatural work of God whereby the power of God is manifest to such a degree that it parallels or exceeds the very power of God manifested in the creation of the universe. The universe was created *ex nihilo*, out of nothing but when God saves a man, he recreates him out of a corrupt mass. When people have truly repented, when people have truly believed, there is a work of regeneration going on in which that person becomes a new creature and as a new creature with a new nature, they will live a different life. The evidence of regeneration is not that you made a decision one time in an evangelistic campaign. The evidence of regeneration is that your life is being transformed. Do you think that God just transforms some of his children?

The doctrine of a Christian living in a continuous state of carnality is absolute heresy. Do Christians sin? Yes. Can Christians fall into carnality? Yes. Can Christians walk in immaturity for a while? Yes. But can Christians live a godless, worldly life all the days of their life? Absolutely not. Why? Because salvation is a supernatural work of God whereby if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature and new creatures live a different way. That's why when people tell me today that there's just as much sin in the church as outside of the church, there's just as much divorce and pornography and lying and hating and bickering in the church as outside of the church, that is a lie. The church of Jesus Christ in America today is beautiful. She is broken, she is confessional, she is walking with her God and when she sins, it breaks her heart and she returns to him. Your problem is what you're calling the church is not the church. If the church is as most people say, then every New Covenant promise in the Bible has failed but God says in the New Covenant that he will make a people and he will be their God and they will be his people and the law of God will be written on their heart and they will walk in it. The evidence of conversion is not a decision card filled out, it's a life being lived out.

A dear friend of mine called a very important Christian scholar in history, Dr. Dallimore, and said, "Dr. Dallimore, I have a question. The Puritans really didn't give invitations and things like we do today. How did they know when someone got saved?" Dallimore said this, "Well, that was easy. Their life changed and they kept coming to church." How do we know they got saved? They don't come to church, their life doesn't change but they got saved because they raised their hand. Look at what we've done. Just look. Look.

If you're here tonight and you're troubled about your soul, I will not ask you to raise your hand and I will not ask you to fill out a card but I will stay here until 6 o'clock in the morning when my plane leaves to counsel you. You see, that's the problem, isn't it? The great assumption. People come forward, they sign a card, we talk to them for five minutes about salvation, we declare them saved and then we wonder why we have to pour so much discipleship in them and they still won't grow. We've made the great assumption. We've passed them through an evangelical rite and because they said all the right answers, we declare them saved and we never worry about it again. That's wrong. I'll tell you this: if you repent and believe in Christ tonight, if you have done that, he saved you. But I'll tell you this: if you've made a decision for Christ and you see Christ as Lord tonight and you profess him in faith, he's saved you. But if you walk out of here and your life doesn't change and you do not begin to grow and he who began a good work in you doesn't complete it, what happened here tonight wasn't genuine conversion because the evidence of genuine conversion is an ongoing work of God in the soul of a man.

That's the old way. That's historical Christianity. How many of you and how many people do you know? Is it not true? Maybe you have a child and they made a profession of faith when they were six because someone asked them if they wanted to go to heaven or if they loved Jesus. Of course they raised their hand. Then when they got 14, 15, they started living in the world, hating the things of God and you go to them and you go, "But you're a Christian. You need to act differently." You are wrong in the way you are approaching them. You need to approach them this way, "You made a profession of faith

in Christ but every bit of evidence in your life at this moment dictates that maybe your profession of faith in Jesus Christ was false and you are still in your sin and if you died, you would go to hell. Now make your calling and election sure. Repent. Return to Christ."

Do you see how superficial our Christianity has become? Oh, my dear friend, these things should not be so but they are. Awaken to the Gospel, the real Gospel. Not the reduced kind. It is a Gospel of grace and a Gospel of power that he who began a good work in you will finish it.

Let's pray.

Father, O Father, so many words, so much to say. Father, I fear that a lot of times I don't trust in you. I try to teach everything in an hour but take this, Father, and use it in the life of men, women and children for your glory and their good. In his name. Amen.

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