

The Price of Calvary

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Bible Text: Isaiah 53

Preached On: Saturday, April 5, 2014

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I want to share with you this evening an exercise I've been conducting on my own for my own spiritual benefit. I'll share it with you because I hope it can help you as well as it has blessed me. What I have done, friends, is this: I have gone back to Calvary. I don't mean physically revisiting the city of Jerusalem and traveling to Golgotha but I do mean I have spent lately a great deal of my time and meditation on the aspects of what took place on Calvary, especially the sufferings of Christ because of sin. I've been doing this because I feel it is greatly needed in my own life because it's easy to treat what Christ did on my behalf in regard to my redemption, to treat it lightly because of my familiarity with it but the trouble is, we are not familiar enough with what actually transpired there on that hill far away outside the city of Jerusalem in regard to what Christ Jesus suffered on our behalf because of our wretched sins.

So, this evening, I want us to reflect very somberly, mind you, on the sufferings of Christ in our redemption. Easter is fast approaching and once again we will celebrate the resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, but for now, this evening, let us take a walk to Calvary and behold the Prince of Glory and the price of Calvary, the Lord who died there on our behalf because of sin and that is the title of my message this evening: "The Price of Calvary." I fear too many of us take for granted what the Lord Jesus Christ endured on our behalf. I hope this message breaks some hearts and that the tears will flow because we broke the heart of God with our vile sins and the Savior poured out his precious blood and his precious life on our behalf to save us from our sins.

On that day at Calvary, there was a price to be paid, a debt owed and punishment carried out because of sin. He took our place on that bloody tree. He did that for you and me. Our sins nailed him there. We were the spit on his blessed face. We placed the crown of thorns upon his noble head and we nailed and hammered his hands and feet to that cross that day.

Before we get started, I want to recommend to you two Bible commentaries. I'm a big believer in solid Bible commentaries; I've learned much from them through the years. The two I want to recommend to you this evening are Matthew Henry's Bible Commentary and the other one is the New Testament Commentary by William Hendrickson and Simon Kistemaker. I hope I pronounced his name right. This multi-volume set is published by my publisher Baker Books and what I'm going to suggest to

you may sound like too much work but I'd like to give you each an assignment and if you'll take me up on it and take the time to do it, I promise you, you will benefit greatly from the investment of your time.

This is what I've been doing lately: I've taken the four gospel commentaries of the New Testament Commentary and I have studied in depth the passages relating to Christ's sufferings before and on the cross. My intention is to get such a glimpse of Calvary and what Jesus did there for me that I will loathe sin with a new loathsomeness, I will see more clearly what Jesus endured on my behalf so I will not sin against him. I want to see the spit on his face as it hangs there for I have learned that over 100 Roman soldiers spit in his face as they abused him that day. One-by-one they came and knelt before him and mocked him and held him as a false king. Then as they rose to their feet, they drew up as much phlegm as they could and spit right in his blessed face. The stench of their spit stayed on him until he died for he could not wash that filth off his face. Can you just imagine the smell of those vile soldiers' spittle on his beard and skin? That alone sickens me immensely and shames me greatly for the sins of my life.

Then each soldier took the reed or pole from his hand which was a mock scepter and brought it down with force upon the crown of thorns on his head causing Jesus to bleed even more and to feel more intense pain. A wound in the temple is a bleeding wound and a painful wound and he had already been scourged and dragged about without any sleep the night before. He endured that humiliation for me. He took the pain that I deserved. He just sat there and took it and he took it for me. If somebody spits in my face, they're going to have a fight on their hands because that's the normal reaction of my flesh but my Jesus, he just sat there silently and took it. They just kept spitting on him over and over again until his face was caked with their vile retchings.

I have made it a point in my early morning quiet times to reflect on the sufferings of Christ on my behalf. It has been a fruitful exercise in how I view sin. You see friends, we don't hear many sermons anymore on the sinfulness of sin, the blackness of sin. We seldom hear sermons on sin at all these days but we need to. The Puritans knew how to preach and I believe they were better preachers than all of us put together and they preached often on the sinfulness of sin. We take sin lightly today because of our culture. We are desensitized to sin. But we must maintain a high view of sin so we can walk more closely with our God.

In my spare time, I have made this exercise of studying the sufferings of Christ my primary object lately. It has been very time-consuming to read all these commentaries along with Matthew Henry's comments as well. I know I have an advantage over many of you because I don't have a tv. I used to sit in front of my television until my eyes grew as big as saucers and my brain the size of a pea but I got rid of that thing. I got rid of my television some time ago and I've never missed it nor the filth that poured out of it into my living room.

So, I have more time to be in my Bible and on my knees and this exercise of studying the sufferings of Christ has brought me to a place of shame for my own lack of understanding

what really transpired along that way to the cross on Calvary. We shrink from it because it is too gruesome to behold, to painful to witness. Perhaps that is why all the disciples were absent from Calvary with the exception of John. They just did not want to witness their Master suffer such horrific pain. And when we read our own Bibles, we often go to it for an encouraging word to get us through but we seldom focus on the last sections of the gospels where Christ is in Gethsemane and on his way to Calvary. We just skip over that part because it's too painful to read and we don't like it.

But like it we must for without Calvary, friend, we surely would be sent to hell for we deserve to go there. I am a guilty rebel who has broken the law of God time and time again and the sentencing of that law must be carried out by the divine Judge and shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? God demands perfection to get into his heaven and if my life is held up against the strict and severe law of God, I will fail that test because I am a poor sinner and a guilty rebel duly charged. I cannot stand in my own merits and pass that test. I deserve hell and so do you, my self-righteous friend, so do you. I need to stand in the merits of another, the Lord Jesus Christ and I need to get under his blood for his blood washes away all my sins.

I took my teenage daughter down to Florida recently and we were walking out on the beach and she began to write something in the sand with her toes. I asked her what she was writing and she said, "Just wait, Daddy, you will see." It took her a while to finish it but when she did, I walked over to where I could read it and she had written, "Jesus washes away my sins," and she told me, "This is what he has done for me and when the waves come in, they will wash away what I wrote in the sand just like he washes away all my sins." Goodness gracious! That girl knows her theology better than her Daddy.

And I'm telling you, friends, that's what Jesus did on Calvary. He suffered and agonized and bled and he endured the turned face of the Father who cannot look upon sin because Jesus became sin for me, he took God's wrath upon him that was due me. I deserved it. You deserved it. The most agonizing aspect of the cross to me is not so much the physical aspects of Christ's sufferings as horrible and unthinkable as they are but the thing that cuts me most in my heart is how Christ who lived to please the Father and who did only what the Father told him to do, he looked up to heaven when he needed his Father the most, at a time when hell was converging on Calvary, and hell was all over him that day on the cross to such a degree that God had to look away because God is holy and he cannot look at sin.

And Christ became sin on my behalf and he cried out to his Daddy, so-to-speak. He cried out to him and for the first time ever, the Father did not answer the Son and this agony in the heart of God for looking away from his beloved Son and the Son's agony of not feeling his Father's presence for the first time, it was just too terrible to comprehend, my friends. It's just too much for me. My sins did that. My sins broke the heart of God. My sins broke the body of Christ on that tree.

The wrath of God was poured out on Christ Jesus, the Lamb of God, my substitute and he took it all with the turned face of the Father that heeded hell on him for sin because me

and my rotten sins, my rotten wretched sins, there was a price to be paid on Calvary that day, a debt must be met. My debt. My debt which I could never pay. Jesus paid for me. He took my sin debt and died for me. Glory to God in the highest! That is what Easter is about, friends. "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." Did you hear that word "atonement," friend? That is what Jesus did for me. I'm nothing more than a poor sinner saved by grace and washed in the blood of the Lamb.

So please, friend, please take my advice and get those commentaries and study the sufferings of Christ for the nourishment of your soul so you can have a closer walk with God and have a clearer view of eternity. Oh friends, if we could only get a sense of the price of Calvary because of our sins! I want to encourage you to meditate on what Christ has done on your behalf. Get serious with God and he will get serious with you.

Listen friends, this is a sad day in our land when sin abounds like a great plague and perversion spills all over American like an open sewer. The entire nation has gone crazy for the pleasures of sin and the indulgence of sin and this nation shakes its fist in the face of God and cries out, "Oh, where is the promise of his coming?" They mock. They ridicule God. And the church mirrors the world to such a sad degree that we are indistinguishable from it today. Oh, how we need a fresh look at Calvary! How we need to see him bleed! We should be ashamed for our lack of vital Christianity in this land at this hour. We have no excuse for being so consumed with this world. It's merely a place we are passing through.

I want to finish this solemn message with a reading from Isaiah 53. Let each sentence burn into your soul. Feel its reality, friend, as I read you what Jesus did on our behalf.

"1 Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? 2 For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. 3 He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. 4 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. 5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. 7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. 8 He was taken

from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. 9 And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. 10 Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. 11 He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. 12 Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”

There was a price of Calvary, friend, and that price was paid with his blood.