

Unpopular!

By Paul Washer

sermonaudio.com

Bible Text: Romans 1; 1 Corinthians 1

Preached on: Saturday, May 13, 2017

Grace Gems!

15455 Glenoaks Blvd. #534

Sylmar, CA 91342

Website: www.gracegems.org

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/gracegems

Emilio Ramos: If we're going to be honest with what the Bible says regarding sin, salvation, heaven, hell, what we're going to find is that the message of Christianity is controversial. It runs against everything that's natural to us and therefore Christianity will always be unpopular.

As we seek to understand the truth of what God has revealed concerning the Gospel, we must begin to talk about man's dilemma, his plight: sin. There really can't be anything more unpopular than what the Bible says regarding sin because the Bible is saying we cannot remedy our condition. You see, the Bible says that everybody is condemned under the wages of sin, the Bible says the soul that sins will die, and so what is the message of Christianity? This is what it says, it says we have all fallen short of God's glory, God's standards. It says we are all guilty before a holy God. And it also says we are all completely powerless to remedy our condition. When you begin talking about the real doctrine of sin the way the Bible teaches it, that message is very very unpopular.

Sin is not just about mistakes that we've made in the past, sin doesn't just deal with the psychological state of mind and the fact that we feel shameful about something, but we define it biblically sin is the transgression of God's law. That's what the Bible says, it says that sin is lawlessness. Now when we break God's law, then we are guilty of breaking an infinite standard and therefore God holds us accountable not to a standard that we think we can measure up to, he holds us accountable not to a standard that we might measure other people by, but he holds us accountable according to his holy standards which is his laws. So when we're thinking about the condition of man, the dilemma that sinners are in, we can't remedy our condition by simply becoming religious. It doesn't matter if a person begins going to church or starts giving to charity or starts trying to better themselves, that's the whole point of the doctrine of sin is that sin tells us we are of such a condition that only God can remedy.

James White: The religions of men seek to channel God's power through various religious activities but it all ends up being upon me. I have to work the system. I have to do the right things. I have to learn the right things. I have to show worthiness, whatever else it might be, but it all comes down to me and the problem with that is, the biblical revelation is, it's actually all about God and not about me.

Paul Washer: God is speaking in the book of Psalms, chapter 50, and he says, "These things you have done and I kept silent. You thought that I was like you. I will reprove you and state the case in order before your eyes." The reason why there is so much confusion about sin is because there is confusion about who is God. Most people do not have a biblical view of God. Their view of God is based upon their own opinions so most people, what they're doing is, they like themselves and they make a god in their own image and they adore their likeness and so that god they've made likes the things they like and hates the things they hate and so they don't have a biblical view of God and because of that, they don't have a biblical view of sin. They can't know what it is or how horrifying it is to God.

James White: If it's focused upon me, then he's just sort of the one who makes a system available. That's not the biblical teaching. The Bible teaches that God is glorifying himself in the salvation of a particular people. It's revealing to the world his love and his mercy and his power and his grace. So it has to be focused upon what he is able to do.

Emilio Ramos: The condition that the sinner is in is primarily a religious problem. It is not primarily a sociological problem, an economical problem, it's not a problem of environment, it's not an ethnic problem. The very first problem between God and man is religious. He needs to have a new heart, he must have a change of nature, and that is only something that God can do.

James White: The Bible is filled with statements about the ability of God to save and how Jesus Christ is able to save perfectly, and then it's filled with a lot of statements about man's not being able to do almost anything whatsoever except being a really good rebel against God. So the contrast, the contrast is very unpopular, it's very offensive to man because what we're being told is, yes, you're a creature, but when the Spirit of God works in your heart, you don't rebel against that anymore, instead you embrace that and you rejoice, not only am I a creature, I'm a creature that is learning that my Creator loves me and has provided perfect salvation for me.

Paul Washer: All the religions in the world with exception of Christianity have one thing in common, they are works based, "Do this and live." Men have a problem with God and there is something they must do in order to have reconciliation with God. Well, if you take every religion, it will be, "Follow these rules, do these rituals and you'll be okay." Christianity says, "No, God is just. You have violated his law. There is punishment. It must be meted out. He cannot deny his own justice even in the name of love, but he has done something. Instead of pouring out judgment on those who have broken the law, he himself becomes a man and takes that punishment himself. He satisfies the demands of his justice and now sinners can come back to God as a gift through faith in what God has done."

Emilio Ramos: What the Bible is telling us is that we are powerless to help ourselves. This is the plight of the human condition. Because we have no strength of our own to save ourselves and we are guilty before a holy God, we desperately need God to act on our behalf and that's exactly what he did and that's what the Gospel really is all about.

But it is not popular today to say man is a sinner, he has violated God's law, he stands guilty before a holy God and on the day of judgment God is going to judge him according to every deed that he has ever done in darkness. When you start saying what the Bible says about sin, expect for popular culture to disagree because this is what popular culture tells you: man is basically good; man can do whatever he needs to do to morally reform himself and to bring himself to a place where he is now morally righteous. So popular culture is telling us this: man has all the resources within his grasp to remedy his condition. The Bible is telling us: man is impotent; he is powerless. The Bible calls it being dead in your transgressions and in your sins.

James White: One of the most powerful pictures in all of Scripture is of the man who stands before the judge and unlike so many in our day where excuses are being made and, "But didn't I do this? Or didn't I do that? I'm not as bad as that guy over there. I'm almost as good as that guy over there." Instead of that, the picture that we have of this man is the head is down, the mouth is closed, there is a recognition of God's right to judge. "I'm guilty. I know I'm guilty. The judge is right to say that I'm guilty." And the Scriptures tell us that's the man who is ready to hear about the perfection of the work of Christ and a Savior who can give eternal life.

Emilio Ramos: We live in a culture that glorifies sin, that trivializes sin, that makes sin less heinous than it is. It is very deceptive to look at sin in a way that makes sense to us. If we see ourselves the way the culture tells us to see ourselves, then man can remedy his condition through technique, but if we see ourselves the way the Bible tells us we really are, then the only remedy for our sin is the work of the Savior.

James White: There are so many people today who have been taught that we have so much power and so much authority in ourselves, we determine our own destiny, we are autonomous, and as unpopular as it might be, the Bible say we are not. We are creatures. We are made in God's image. We are dependent upon him and when it comes to this issue, because we are dead in our sin, we are absolutely dependent. Not 99% but completely dependent upon the work of the Spirit of God to raise us up and once that happens, once the Spirit of God works in our hearts, that person who has experienced that work of grace in our life rejoices to say, "I could not save myself. I was in the very grave of despair and it was Christ by his Spirit who raised me out of that grave." And we don't want to add anything to that. We don't want to claim to have been able to add anything to that. We rejoice in that.

Emilio Ramos: All of our good works, all of our good deeds that we do will never get us into the favor of God. Once we grasp the gravity of our sin, that we are powerless to help ourselves, then we begin to realize the value and the beauty of the cross.

If God is so holy and man is so sinful, how does a holy righteous God bring sinful people to himself safely? The world has all sorts of different ideas about how we can better ourselves or improve ourselves morally but there really is ultimately only one solution: the cross. The cross was considered a scandal. When the Christian church was preaching

the cross, they were preaching something that was taboo in that culture. It was scandalous.

James White: The idea that Paul is making up a new religion or something with this idea of a crucified Messiah, as if that was going to attract people, wouldn't make any sense whatsoever. The cross repulsed people. The cross was unpopular. The cross would be a way of death that would say that the one who died, died under the very curse of God which is exactly what the Scripture writers went ahead and confessed.

Emilio Ramos: But we know what the Bible says about the cross. The Cross is the wisdom of God. It is the means that God has chosen to save sinful humanity so it's through the cross that God saves his people. He justifies his people on the basis of what Jesus did on the cross. What the cross is telling us is that what we so desperately need is completely and utterly outside of us. It's what theologians used to call a righteousness that is extrano, it is something that is alien to us, it's outside of what we're able to do, and that's exactly why Jesus died on the cross, it's because God knows that man cannot save himself.

Paul Washer: The cross is unpopular because it tells us we are wrong. There is no reason for God to become a man and to die in the place of men if we're alright, if we're okay, and so the cross tells me I'm wrong. Also, the cross humbles me. It tells me I cannot save myself. That's why Christianity is the most hated of all religions, because it tells man, "You cannot. God must save you," and that is an affront to our pride.

Emilio Ramos: Theologians talk about an alien righteousness because the work that Jesus did on the cross in essence has nothing to do with us. The righteousness that is given to us is on the basis not of works that we have done, not of our own righteousness, it is the righteousness of Jesus Christ. It is the righteousness that he lived a perfect life but he also died a perfect death to become that offering for our sin so on the basis of Jesus' perfect righteousness, a life that he lived perfectly so that he would be a perfect offering for sin.

James White: He had fulfilled the Father's commandments perfectly. His perfect life is given in exchange for sinners.

Emilio Ramos: Two things happen at the cross: the justice of God is satisfied and sinners can be justified. That's what the work of the cross is all about, God making sinners right through what Jesus did on the cross.

James White: Jesus entered into his own creation. The Bible says that he is the one who made us; that by him were all things made whether in heaven or earth, principalities, powers, dominion or authorities, all things created by him, for him. He is before all things and in him all things hold together. We're talking about the one who gives us every breath of our mouth, every beat of our heart, and yet amazingly, I know this a fantastic claim, amazingly he entered into his own creation and that's hard for people to begin to understand because of the condescension and the love that would be exemplified in that action. But it's important to recognize it wasn't just a good teacher, it wasn't just a good

man who decided to give himself to try to give us an example, he had to be the God-man for the cross to be the cross. It had to be the God-man because, you see, all of history pointed toward the cross, and all of history since then looks back upon the cross. It's the center point of history itself. Why? Because at that one time, that one place, that one God-man, the Son who entered into human flesh, that one was able through the fact that all those who would ever repent and believe in him were joined to him at that time. He voluntarily gave himself so that a great exchange takes place.

Emilio Ramos: This is the opposite of what you and I would have done to save ourselves from our sin, but yet the Bible says this is the wisdom of God at work, offering his Son on behalf of sinners who would put their trust in him. This is God's wisdom on display.

James White: No religion of man has ever contemplated the idea of doing what God did in Jesus Christ. The way that he did it, well, it's very unpopular with the world because it's not a way of great showing of power and pomp and circumstance. In fact from the world's perspective, here is a beaten Jewish man upon a tree, but when you look at that with the eyes that the Bible gives us, what you see there is not only the great condescension of the Son of God himself but the restraint of his power. He had power. He could've destroyed the whole world but because of his love he does not. That power is restrained, he accomplishes his purpose, and he says, "It is finished." So the cross, the cross has caused generation after generation of Christians to live their lives focused upon service to Jesus Christ because we know outside of that cross we have absolutely no hope whatsoever.

Emilio Ramos: If man is able to remedy their condition, then Jesus died just to be another option on the table and the Bible says God gave his only Son, but God doesn't give his only Son to die on the cross if there are many options for salvation. He died on the cross because there was no other way.

Paul Washer: All the religions of the world believe they are the only way or they're not really teaching anything and so the question is: who is or what is the only way? It's Jesus Christ.

James White: For people who have nothing to bring, for people who in fact honestly merit the full fury and wrath of God, their sins are imputed to him, his righteousness imputed to them because he voluntarily gives that one perfect life. Think about if Jesus was who he claimed to be, if he was the eternal Son of God made flesh and he came to give his life a ransom for many, how can there be any other way? How can there be a way to add to this? How can there be some other path? This was an absolutely radical way of providing salvation that was focused, first of all, upon God's glory and then upon the need that we have.

Emilio Ramos: Jesus said in Mark 1:15, "The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand, therefore repent and believe in the gospel." But what did Jesus mean when he said repent? That's what we need to define and we need to define it biblically and carefully.

Paul Washer: The doctrine or teaching of repentance as it's set forth in the Scriptures is unpopular today and the reason why it's unpopular is because we live in an age that has a very strange definition of tolerance and intolerance but only in certain matters. For example, if I go to a doctor and he tells me I have cancer, I'm not mad at him, I'm not angry with him because he told me the truth because I know that he's trying to help me even though it will make me sad. He's trying to save my life. But when we come to areas of religion and philosophy, even politics, and someone tells us we're wrong, we immediately become very very angry and that's why the doctrine of repentance is so unpopular today and many times it's not even taught in churches, it's because we're telling people that they're wrong. Now we're telling people that they're wrong not based upon our own opinions of how they should live but we're telling people they're wrong based upon the Scriptures. We're also not just pointing a finger at someone and saying, "You're wrong," but we're saying, "You're wrong as I also have been wrong."

Emilio Ramos: Jesus gives us a parable in Luke 18 to help us to understand how repentance works. There were two men that went to the temple to pray, one was a Pharisee, the other one a tax collector, and the Pharisee was very self-righteous, he was very prideful of his own righteousness and he thanked God that he wasn't like other sinners, but the tax collector was so weighed down with his guilt, it says he could not even lift his eyes to heaven. He beat on his breast. He asked God to forgive him of his sin, to have mercy on him, and Jesus gave us a declaration that it was the person who humbled themselves to that degree that went home justified. That's the way that repentance works, it's only when we are willing to humble ourselves in the presence of a holy and righteous God that he will forgive us and accept us into his favor.

James White: True biblical repentance is born in the heart by the work of the Holy Spirit of God and therefore it is always going to transcend the merely moral, the merely following of rules. A repentant heart not only loathes the sin that it once committed and rejoiced in, but the truly repentant heart finds joy, finds happiness in following the law that God has given to his creatures because we recognize that law reflects who he is and we want to be like him. So if you're just following rules, you're just trying to get rewarded, a repentant heart wants to follow rules to please the one who made us.

Paul Washer: Repentance and faith, that's the biblical response to the Gospel.

Emilio Ramos: It's only when we acknowledge and when we see ourselves the way that God sees us, it's only when we acknowledge our sin and our misery, that we will see the beauty of the cross for what it is. That is why the Bible calls us to repent. He calls us to repent and the Bible calls us to repent so that we will turn away from the things that are toxic and we embrace what Jesus has done for us. And that is a confession, repentance is a confession that we are turning to the only source that has the power to forgive and to save. That is what repentance is all about.

James White: Mankind has been made by God in his image to recognize that today is not the only day. There is tomorrow. There is a year from now. Then there is eternity to come, as well. Real maturity brought to us by the Spirit of God makes us to understand

that by holding on to that which is destroying us inwardly now, we will absolutely preclude ourselves from experiencing life in the future. If we can look to the future, understand that God has put eternity in our hearts, look beyond just this stuff that's around us in this world to see what really matters, we will be able to understand that what God is calling us to is not for us to give up something that we think feels good, we don't even know what true joy and happiness and fulfillment is as long as all we're doing is playing with these little things here upon this earth that pass away so quickly and want abiding joy. Only God can lead you to understand how to experience that and that is the repentance and faith of Jesus Christ.

Emilio Ramos: The Gospel, as unpopular as it is, contains a great promise. The promise of the Gospel is this: that when we believe in the wisdom of God contrary to all popular opinion, we will find eternal life and we will find rest for our souls.

Redemption accomplished and applied through Jesus Christ, it may not be popular with the world, but this is the means that God has chosen to bring sinners to himself. The call of the Gospel is to trust and to believe in the finished work of Jesus Christ.