

The Cross Centered Life

Our Identity in Christ

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Please turn with me in your Bibles to 1 Peter chapter 2. 1 Peter chapter 2, we'll be looking at verse 24 this morning. The title of the message is "The Cross Centered Life." The cross centered life. 1 Peter 2:24. We'll read verses 21 to 25 to see that verse in context, but we're really going to focus on verse 24. 1 Peter 2:21, we read,

21 For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, 22 who committed no sin, nor was any deceit in His mouth; 23 and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; 24 and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. 25 For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.

Let's pray together.

Father, as we bow before Your word, we acknowledge again our dependence upon You, that You, the God of truth, might give to us the aid of the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of truth, and that You might lead us into the one who says, I am the truth, more understanding of Christ and His cross. For His glory, we pray in His name. Amen.

So the cross centered life, we want to unpack. We looked at this passage last time in the big picture of verses 21 to 25, and this week we want to really look at verse 24 and unpack this wonderful verse. I do want to remind you, if you weren't with us or if you have been, just to be reminded anyway, it is always important when we read the Scriptures to read it in context. The immediate context of the Apostle Peter is his concern is practical Christian living. He wants the people to whom he writes to live out their faith. The first part of the letter, he deals with doctrine and theology, what they believe, and particularly what they believe about who they are, their identity in Christ, is the focus of chapter 1, verse 1, all the way to chapter 2, verse 10. And then he turns the corner in verse 11 of chapter 2 and he starts now, if you know who you are, he's hammered that away, now he turns to the question of how should we live based on who we are. And so

the second half of the book, a little more than half, but the second part of the book is aimed at practical Christian life, the way you live.

In fact, the way of life is a key word in the book of 1 Peter. Let me just show you this. Verse 11, I said turns the corner, verse 11 of chapter 2. Look with me. He says, "Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation." The key word is the word "behavior." It's a word that's repeated seven times in this book. The Greek word underlying the seven occurrences of various forms of this word is *anastrophe*, which means to turn again, to turn about, and so literally, it means to turn around, but metaphorically, the way it's used in everyday language and what Peter is saying here is not just turning around, it means your way of life. It means wherever you happen to be, this is your life and Christ is making a difference in wherever you happen to be, whatever you happen to do; your whole way of life is to be transformed by the gospel. That's the burden of his heart in this part is to say, how do you make this a way of life?

Let me just show you the other six times it occurs. Back in 1:15, chapter 1, verse 15, he says, "Be holy yourselves also in all your behavior." Same word here from *anastrophe*, that is in all your manner of life. Verse 17 he says, "If you address as Father," this is chapter 1 verse 17, "If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth." The verb "conduct yourselves" is on *anastrophe*, that is, as you turn about, it's your conduct. And then in verse 18 he repeats it three times in these four verses. 1:18 he says, "knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life." The phrase "way of life" translates again the same word. It's a way of life. It's behavior. It's conduct. Then chapter 2:12 we just talked about, "Keep your behavior excellent." He's going to say in chapter 3, verse 1, to wives, "In the same way you wives be submissive to your own husbands, so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives." That is the way of life of their wives. Verse 2, "as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior," repeats it. Same thing in chapter 3, verse 16 when he exhorts the believers to keep a good conscience, 1 Peter 3:16, "keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame."

He wants us, Christianity is not just something that changes you in what you believe, it changes your life. We're called to a changed life. It starts at the very core of your being in being born again but it's not merely to stay inside, it is to come out in the way you live. And so Peter is all about helping the believers to whom he writes to experience this changed life. He's calling them to a different way of living and in this context of the verse we're reading today, chapter 2, he has focused in on the way we respond to authority in our lives and the way we respond to suffering. Authority is a part of everyday life and suffering is a part of everyday life and he says we should be different in the way we respond to both. We've seen how his emphasis on submission and subjection to authority is there in chapter 2 verse 17, "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human

institution, whether to a king as the one in authority." So 2:13 to 17, he's saying be submissive to government even if you have to suffer. Then in verses 18 to 20 of chapter 2, look what he says, servants be submissive to your masters. Again, the same idea. Hypotasso, to be subject. So he's saying Christians are people who respond to authority in such a way that they have a disposition to submit. It doesn't mean that we submit, we talked about this, and go back and listen to those messages if you weren't here, that there are places where we refuse to submit to government when they tell us to disobey God. But there's a disposition on the part of the true believer to not resist authority, to be ready to submit unless they're asking us to not submit to our King, Jesus.

So he says that, verses 18 to 20, in the area of employment. Verses 13 to 17, government be submissive, employment, verses 18 to 20. Then he's going to, in chapter 3, verses 1 to 7, talk to wives; in the area of family, there is to be submission. In the middle of that, sandwiched right in the middle of these three sections on submission, and he also talks about suffering, you're going to suffer and still be submissive in suffering. So, submission and suffering is the way of life. In the midst of that, remember he's saying, "I want to affect the way you live. I want to get down to the brass tacks, the nuts and bolts of the Christian life. I want this to impact how you live. Here are some examples. I want you to live in this way in relation to government. I want you to live this way in relation to your boss. I want you to live this way in relation to family members, to your husband. And even when you are suffering, this is to be the way you are to live." It's a supernatural lifestyle. It's something radically different that he's calling us to.

We're to be different in the way we see authority. We're to be different in the way we see suffering. People are to look at us and to want what we have. That's what he's talking about. That's the main thrust of this section. And in the middle, the sandwich, the meat inside the sandwich is verses 21 to 25. How can you do that? How are we going to do this, fulfill this supernatural calling? How can we deal with a world that's going crazy and be submissive? How can we deal with people who hate us and still be kind when reviling, not revile in return? How can you do that? The meat of the sandwich is follow Jesus. Look at Jesus. That's why these verses 21 to 25 are there. The key to the Christian life is union with Christ. It's who Jesus is that enables you to do this. It's who you are in connection with him if you're a follower of Christ.

That's the focus and so that's the power. He says, listen, the faithful Christian life, the faithful Christian life, we're called to a way of life. What's the faithful Christian life? The faithful Christian life is a Christ-centered life. That's what happens in verses 21 to 25. He says, "Listen guys, I know how hard this is. Look at Jesus. Look at Jesus." Follow Jesus we saw last time. Keep looking to Jesus. And we noted last time that he calls our attention to Jesus in really a powerful way. It doesn't come through in most of the translations. I mean, like I wish it did. The King James gets it right here. I mentioned last time that verse 22, verse 23, and verse 24 all begin in the original Greek with the relative pronoun, who. Who. It's there in verse 22 in the New American Standard, which I'm reading. It says after verse 21, he says, you know, you've been called to since Christ suffered for you leaving an example to follow in his steps. You've got to follow Jesus. You've got to follow hard after Jesus. You've got to look at his example. And then he

says, "who committed no sin nor was any deceit in his mouth." Verse 23, "who," that's how it reads in the original, "who while being reviled, did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously." Verse 24, "who Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed."

Three times it hits that refrain, who, and the idea is, look at Christ, look at Christ, look at Christ and there's this ascending force in those three relative clauses that are introduced by the relative pronoun, who. First of all, in verse 22, "who committed no sin." The sinlessness, the perfection of Jesus is there. Verse 23, his example, "who when He was reviled, didn't revile again. When He was suffering, He didn't utter threats." And then finally, it reaches kind of a climax of looking at Jesus when he says, "who bore our sins in His body on the cross." That is, it ascends to the cross. And he says, "Listen, if you're going to follow His example, there's no way to follow the example of Jesus apart from the cross of Jesus, that is, you must experientially place all of your trust in the cross work of Christ." There is no obedience that's true obedience apart from union with Christ. That's what we celebrated in baptism today, that when you come to be saved, what happens is God baptizes you as it were, he joins you to Jesus in such a way that the way Christians are described in the New Testament, this is an interesting observation that Sinclair Ferguson makes in his book, "The Whole Christ," he says how do you think of yourself as a Christian? How do you even label yourself? Most of us say, a Christian. I just said it, right? How do you think of yourself as a Christian? I'm assuming Christian is the way that we talk about ourselves, and most of us do. How long have you been a Christian? When did you come to be a Christian? Right? We say things like that. Nothing wrong with that. I'm not advocating that's a bad thing. But he points out in his book that the New Testament doesn't label us that way. One time it mentions that, and it's enemies of Christ labeling believers in Christ with that label in Acts, one time. You could say, how does the Bible describe us? As disciples, yes. As followers, yes. As students, yes. That is, you know, we're being taught, yes. Those who are born again, yes. But do you know the number one way the Bible speaks about Christians, who we are? It is in the phrase, the prepositional phrase, Christians are people who are, and this is the phrase, "in Christ." In Christ. 100 times, more than 100 times in the letters of Paul, he uses that phrase, "in Christ," that we read it a little bit earlier, you're baptized into Christ.

So in Christ and into Christ, 100 times, that when we come to believe, we come to be saved, what happens is you are joined with Christ in such a way that you are in him. This is where the power comes from for the Christian life, union with Christ. This is what Peter is getting at when he uses this threefold relative clause, who, who, who, and he hits the key point on that last note when he says, "who Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness." How can you possibly when you're reviled, not revile again? How can you possibly when you're mistreated and suffering and people are threatening you, not respond in like manner? The only way you can is because Jesus died and in his death your sins were taken away, even your disposition now to revile, your disposition to be angry is taken away. You still feel it in the flesh, but the power is in union with Christ. You can lay hold of his righteousness in

the moment and he will live through you a life of perfect submission to God and gentleness and kindness toward others.

So this is the context. The Christ-centered life, you can really say, is a cross-centered life. How do you live for God? You need a Christ-centered life, and a Christ-centered life is a cross-centered life. I've got three points this morning that I want us to gather our thoughts around and the first is the centrality of the cross. The centrality of the cross. Here in our text, I've noted the progression, who committed no sin, who while being reviled, who himself bore our sins in his body on the cross. He's raising our attention to the one thing that God has done that makes everything else that has been promised a reality. It is the cross of Jesus Christ.

This is why Paul, in 1 Corinthians 1:23 can say, can summarize his whole preaching ministry in just a few words, "we preach Christ crucified." That's his message. In fact, he says in chapter 2, verse 2, the same same flow of thought into chapter 2, he says, "When I was with you," he's talking to the Corinthians, "When I was with you, I resolved to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified." My whole message was Jesus Christ and him crucified and he explains so that you would not, your faith would not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God, because the power of God resides in the cross. The message of the gospel centers in the cross and resurrection. It's one work, but the cross is the foundation.

So, the centrality of the cross is there in this passage, it's there throughout the New Testament. It's there in the Old Testament background of this verse. In fact, I want to show you this. I mentioned last week, I gave the homework for you to read Isaiah 53. I'm not going to ask for a show of hands who did their homework but just remember that I asked this, so next time when I give homework, you'll maybe remember that. I want you to hold your place in 1 Peter 2. We're going to go back and forth between Isaiah 53 and 1 Peter 2. So turn to Isaiah 53. I mentioned that Peter has this text in mind. I think it's just coursing through his heart as he writes these words. After he introduces our need to look at Christ in verse 21, he has those three relative clauses, who, who, who, and the background for everything he's saying is Isaiah 53.

Look with me at verse 22, first of all, "who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth." Most of your translations should show you in the way they, the font they use there in your Bible, that that's a direct quotation and that is, in fact, a direct quotation from Isaiah 53:9. If you look at Isaiah 53:9, "His grave was assigned with wicked men, Yet He was with a rich man in His death, Because He had done no violence," literally the same wording except violence instead of sin, "Nor was there any deceit in His mouth." Exactly the same in the Greek for that last clause and most of that those two clauses as it is in the Greek of 1 Peter. Remember I'm talking about the Greek of the Old Testament; it was written in Hebrew, but the Septuagint, which was translated around 150 BC, the Hebrew Bible was translated into Greek, and so often the Greek translations are what the authors of Scripture are referencing to and using because they speak that language pretty well, many of them, and they know they're writing in Greek. So they want to write and be

accessible to those they're writing to, so they're looking at the Greek Old Testament. Do you see that? So a word-for-word translation of Isaiah 53:9.

Look at verse 23 now, back to 1 Peter 2. So verse 22 goes to Isaiah 53:9. Verse 23, "and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats." Now look with me at Isaiah 53:7. It's not a quotation, but it's an allusion clearly. Look at verse 7, "He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth." He's silent before the shearers, did not open his mouth, repeated twice. That's what Peter's thinking about as he says what he says in verse 22, reviled, he did not revile in return. Suffering, he uttered no threats.

Now verse 24, when he says, "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross." Look with me at Isaiah 53:11, "As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, As He will bear their iniquities." As he says again at the end of verse 12, if you look at the end, down almost the end of verse 12, "Yet He Himself bore the sin of many." Isaiah, writing more than 700 years before the birth of Jesus, is seeing, by the Spirit of God, the coming Messiah, the Servant of the Lord, and he's describing what he will be and Peter is drawing on this to see this has been fulfilled in Jesus.

Now, verse 24, there's another allusion to another verse, when he says in verse 24, "for by His wounds you were healed," there at the end of verse 24, he's alluding to Isaiah 53:5, where he says, "But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed."

And then finally, verse 25 of chapter 2 of 1 Peter, "For you were continually straying like sheep." It alludes to Isaiah 53:6, "All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him."

I love the story of Richard Ganz. Richard Ganz was raised in a Jewish home, more liberal in their approach to understanding, but still with some religiousness, certainly, and he became a psychologist, got a Phd, actually a psychiatrist so a Phd in psychology and he was working, you know, in New York in the state mental hospital. He went on a trip to Europe and when he was in Labrie, Switzerland he went to, he chanced upon an opportunity to go to actually to the place, Labrie, which is where Francis Schaeffer, a Christian, had a retreat center. And the doors were open to anyone who wanted to come, and you could go and spend time there for pretty reasonable fees, and stay there and be with other people who were pleasant, talk philosophy and things like that. Ganz was sitting there, raised as a Jew, and, you know, he'd been exposed to Christians, he'd heard the gospel before, he was not having any of it, and his story of his conversion, he said, a young man sat down with him and read these words, "He was pierced through for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him." It's Isaiah 53:5. "By His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray." He read the whole chapter of Isaiah 53. I just read a section. And Ganz said,

"I've heard all about Jesus. I don't need to hear any more about him." The guy turned his Bible around and showed him it's the prophecy of Isaiah. He was converted in that moment. He said, "Truly that is the Messiah. Jesus is the Messiah." He's got a wonderful ministry. Now he's become a Christian counselor too. He's put psychology away and now realizes that the true psychology, the true study of the soul is found here in the word of God, the one who made the soul.

Anyway, Isaiah 53. So the centrality of the cross, it was there central in the message of the Old Testament. In fact, if you look at the phrase, "Servant of the Lord" in Isaiah, it's really instructive. In fact, we'll do that. Look with me at chapter 42, verse 1. This is a phrase that Isaiah, as he is ministering to the people of Judah in his day, the Lord helps him see what the Messiah is going to be and do and as he comes to understand that, he sees that the phrase the Lord uses over and over in the prophecy he gives to Isaiah is, "My Servant. My Servant. My Servant is coming." And so as you read through the book of Isaiah, you see this growing hope of the Servant.

Now, if you remember, there's some key passages in Isaiah that are probably very familiar to many of us. Isaiah 7:14, "A virgin shall conceive and bear a child and shall call His name Immanuel." There's a Messiah coming and somehow he's going to be born of a virgin and his name is going to mean "God with us." Isaiah 9:6, we're told that a son will be born to us, the government shall be on his shoulders, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, the name of this child to be born, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace and the government will be upon his shoulders, and the end of his government, there will be no end. And then we read more about all the bad things that are going to happen to Judah because they have abandoned God or turning away from God. God's judgment's going to come. But then again, the promise of the Messiah. In fact, chapter 42, verse 1, we're told about this Messiah who's called the Servant of the Lord. Isaiah 42:1, "Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry out or raise His voice, Nor make His voice heard in the street. A bruised reed He will not break And a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish." Skip on down to verse 6. Here the father is talking to the son, that is the Servant of the Lord, who we will find out is the Son of God. But you see it in verse 6, "I am the LORD, I have called You in righteousness, I will also hold You by the hand and watch over You, And I will appoint You as a covenant to the people, As a light to the nations, To open blind eyes, To bring out prisoners from the dungeon And those who dwell in darkness from the prison. I am the LORD, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another."

Now move on up to chapter 43 and you see the Servant of the Lord again. Verse 10, Isaiah 43, "'You are My witnesses,' declares the LORD, 'And My servant whom I have chosen, So that you may know and believe Me And understand that I am He.'" That's actually the phrase, *ego eimi*, that is found in John's gospel over and over again, where he says, "Before Abraham was, I am." And he says, "I am the Light of the world. I am the bread of life." In the Greek version of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, it reads exactly

the same in Isaiah. You see this ego eimi, John's drawing on that when he tells you the "I am" sayings of Jesus. The Servant is somehow going to be God.

Chapter 49. So, think about how Isaiah's picturing salvation is coming. We need to be saved. Judgment's coming because we're sinners, but salvation is coming, God's sending a Servant, his Servant. His Servant somehow is associated with deity and seems to be God. Isaiah 49:3, "He said to Me, 'You are My Servant, Israel, In Whom I will show My glory.'" That is as Jesus replaces Israel. "In Whom I will show My glory. But I said, 'I have toiled in vain, I have spent My strength for nothing and vanity; Yet surely the justice due to Me is with the LORD, And My reward with My God.' And now says the LORD, who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant, To bring Jacob back to Him." This is Jesus talking now, the pre-incarnate Christ, "that Israel might be gathered to Him (For I am honored in the sight of the LORD, And My God is My strength)." And I love this, he says, that is the Father says to the Son in verse 6, "It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel." That's too small a thing. That's wonderful, that's too small. "I will also make You a light of the nations." Jesus is too wonderful for it just to be about saving Israel and Judah. Aren't you glad that's true? There aren't many of us in this room, I don't believe, who come from the tribe of Israel. Praise God he came to save all who would trust in him.

Now what I'm trying to show you is the Servant of the Lord is coming, the Servant of the Lord is coming, and I think it must have been shocking to turn from this as you're reading through Isaiah and you see the Servant of the Lord excerpts. Look, a little more about the Servant of the Lord. Maybe you're writing down all you're learning about the Servant of the Lord. First time you read the book of Isaiah, imagine you're a Jew and you're reading somewhere between Isaiah's writing and the time of Christ. What's this Servant going to do? He's going to be a light to the nations. He's going to restore Israel. He's going to restore Judah. He's going to be God's ruler who's going to rule over us and bring us back. And then you go to chapter 52, verse 13. I really think this is where chapter 53 begins. The chapter divisions are not inspired. They weren't there in the original. They were added later, and I wish they had started chapter 53 at verse 13 of chapter 52, because it all goes together from this verse all the way through the end of chapter 53. Look what he says in verse 13. Isaiah 52:13, "Behold, My servant will prosper." Okay, that's good. My servant will prosper. This means be completely successful. So completely and thoroughly successful. The Hebrew word used here means, pictures great success and effectiveness. He says, "My Servant is going to do everything He intends to do."

Now again, imagine yourself reading it for the first time. This Savior, he's going to save us. He's coming to deliver us from all of our oppression, all of our suffering. He's coming. In the next clause, "He will be high and lifted up and greatly exalted." Listen, when he says that, that phrase "high and lifted up," you know where those words occur? Isaiah 6 when Isaiah saw the Lord high and lifted up, and the train of his robe filled the temple. He's telling you right there, again, this Servant is associated with Yahweh himself, is Yahweh himself, Jehovah. Two ways of pronouncing the same word, Yahweh,

Jehovah. The German pronunciation, Jehovah, Yahweh, the Hebrew way of pronouncing it.

He will be high and lifted up and greatly exalted. Okay, fantastic, he's coming, he's going to reign. This next verse must have been shocking. "Just as many were," this is verse 14, "Just as many were astonished at you, My people, So His appearance was marred more than any man And His form more than the sons of men." He's saying, "Just as people were astonished at you when I judged you and eradicated Jerusalem and destroyed all the blessings that you had and did," what he's talking about is when Judah was wicked and became idolatrous, when Israel was wicked and became idolatrous, the northern kingdom, God did such a devastation to them because they had had the truth. And the nations around them, who in their hearts, everyone knows that the God of Israel is the true God in their hearts but the fool says in his heart there is no God, but he knows there is. He can't avoid the truth of it. He just suppresses it and hides it and pretends it's not that way. So he says, when God allowed Israel to be wrecked by the Assyrians, destroyed the Northern kingdom, the people around were like, "Man, that is devastation. Surely their God was angry with them. And what we've seen is so amazing, we've never seen people humiliated like those people were. We've never seen a desolation like that." The same thing happened with Judah. The book of Lamentations, Jeremiah's mourning over the incredible destruction of Jerusalem, how God just wiped it out. Now, think about that. We looked at the circumstance, people outside looked at the circumstances of you, Judah and Israel, when you were devastated and they were amazed and appalled that God would do that to you. Now he says, that's how they're going to look at Jesus. They're going to look at Jesus and the Servant of the Lord who's coming, this great Servant who's high and exalted, they're going to look at him and they're going to be astonished. Their mouths are going to fall open that God would treat him the way he treats him.

"His appearance marred more than any man." He was beaten mercilessly but then a ray of hope, verse 15, "Thus He will sprinkle many nations, Kings will shut their mouths on account of Him; For what had not been told them they will see, And what they had not heard they will understand.

thus he will sprinkle many nations, and kings will shut their mouths on account of him. For what had not been told, then they will see. And what they had not heard, they will understand. Who has believed? Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?" Look at his description of Jesus again, the Servant of the Lord, "For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, And like a root out of parched ground; He has no stately form or majesty That we should look upon Him, Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him." There was nothing in his outward appearance as a human being that would make you be drawn to Jesus. He looked like any other man. But look at verse 3, this is how he was treated, "He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face He was despised." He's saying that like somebody that you see in such agony, in such suffering that you can't bear to look, you don't want them to see you and your horrified look as you look at them so you turn away. He said, that was Jesus. That's what

the Messiah, the Servant of the Lord is going to be like. He was despised. He says that again. "He was despised and we did not esteem Him."

How do you explain this? What is going on? Why is God treating his Holy Son this way? Verse 4 begins to answer that. "Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted." He is carrying our sorrows. He's suffering for our sin. He's bearing our iniquity. And yet the people and all of us too, we share in this, in and of ourselves we look at him and we see him as smitten of God and afflicted. We see God's dealing with him. "Boy, He must be a bad guy." That's how people thought about him. "Look how bad He must be to be treated like He's being treated." So adding on to what he was doing in sacrificing for those he came to save, he receives the condemnation even for bearing it, the double load of being despised and forsaken.

"But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities." The reason this is happening, the reason that this appalling thing is happening to Jesus is because he's bearing our sins. You look carefully at the cross, you expound the cross to people, if they really look at the cross, they're left wondering, why would God do this to a good and holy and wonderful man like Jesus who went around doing nothing but good? He never sinned. There was never deceit found in his mouth. He went around healing everywhere. He went around speaking the truth so wonderfully that people when they heard it, they heard him, they said, "Never did a man speak like this." Remember that's what the temple guard said. Remember they were told in John 7 to go arrest Jesus, "Go arrest Him." That's what the priest told him, "Go arrest Him." They come back and they said, "Where's Jesus? You didn't arrest him." "Never did a man speak like He speaks," they said. His words were life. The leper said to him, leprosy, a disease that was highly contagious that rendered a person at that time a complete outcast. They were required by law to tell you as you approach them, they were required to say, "Unclean! Unclean!" so that you could keep a wide berth away from them so that you would not get their awful disease. A leper comes up to him and says, "If You are willing, You can cleanse me." I'm sure he was standing back ways, even though he knows Jesus. "If You're willing, You can cleanse me." Jesus walked forward and touched him and said, he touched him and said, "I'm willing. Be clean."

He encountered men born blind, he encountered people who were deaf, he encountered people who were demon-possessed, and he always set them free. He was giving sight to those who were blind, hearing to those who were deaf, loosening the tongues of those who were dumb. He was proclaiming liberty to captives everywhere he went. This was his heartbeat. This was his life. And yet what did he receive in return? He was despised and forsaken. He was hated everywhere he went. Why? Because God had willed it to be that way. Evil wanted to attack him. Evil hated him. Sin hates Jesus because, why? Darkness hates light. But as he goes around just dispensing life, oozing love and compassion so much so that those who were the outcasts of society, not just the lepers, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes and the drunkards who found in Jesus a welcoming reception, a loving response so that he was known to be the friend of tax collectors because those who are sick need a physician. And so Jesus dispensing that kind

of love and grace, and yet what did he receive in return? Ostracism, people despising him, hating him, and then when God pulled back his hand, they beat him mercilessly before he was crucified. The rage in the hearts of the men who were doing that, supernatural rage, motivated by Satan himself, striking out at the Son and God allowing it to happen. He suffered so much the night before he was crucified in Gethsemane that he needed an angel to strengthen him. He's suffering now the punishment of the Jews who beat him and strike him and mock him. He suffers under the Romans who beat him and strike him and then flog him mercilessly. And he suffers the agony of the cross. And more than all of that, far more than all of that, he suffers by bearing our sins on the cross, and becoming the sin bearer, and being separated from the Father, just like we talked about last week, pictured in the Day of Atonement. He was, as he bore our sins, God turned his back, as it were, on Jesus, and he cries out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Never has anyone experienced what he experienced. And this is what the whole Bible is pointing to, the cross. Everything is the cross.

Now the resurrection is the vindication of the cross. Sunday happened, he gets up on Sunday and he walks out of the grave, his body alive, his heart beating, and his living body, his glorified human body, living, physical, touch, you can touch him, you can hold him, is seated at the right hand of God even now. But the cross was the avenue, the cross was the key moment. The resurrection is the stamp and seal of approval. But the offering of the cross is everything. In fact, the whole Bible is about the cross. The whole Bible is. Genesis 3, when man sins, and they hide from God, remember? And God gives a promise there in the wake of their sin. Genesis 3:15, in talking to the serpent, he says to the serpent, he preaches the gospel, the first preaching of the gospel, Genesis 3:15 right in the wake of sin, he says to the serpent, "The seed of the woman is coming and you will bruise His heel and He will bruise your head." That's the cross. The seed of the woman, there's only one seed of the woman ever been born, that was the virgin born Son of God. Usually the seed comes from the man, but not in the case of Jesus. The seed of the woman is Jesus, and he's going to come and Satan's going to bruise his heel, but in the bruising of his heel, the Son is going to smash Satan's head and win the victory. And that's also seen, the cross is seen there, but it's also seen in, remember how they covered their nakedness? They sewed fig leaves together. They got out a needle and thread and started putting fig leaves together. First sewing class. They sewed those together and then, but the Lord said, "That is not acceptable." And so what he did is he killed animals and he clothed them with animal skins. What covers sin? Blood. And they offered sacrifices, Job's offering sacrifices, Abraham's offering sacrifices, Isaac's offering sacrifices, Jacob's offering sacrifices until way later God tells them in Exodus and Leviticus to offer sacrifices and exactly how to do it. They knew from the beginning because actually Genesis 4 Cain and Abel. Cain offers a sacrifice of plants, some really choice vegetables, fruit, whatever he had grown; he offers it and God has no regard for it. God regards Abel's offering. Abel killed an animal and it was a blood sacrifice and God accepted Abel's sacrifice and did not accept Cain's. But he says to Cain, he was gracious and says to Cain, "If you do well, you'll be received. There's only one way to approach Me. You're a sinner. There must be blood shed for you to come into My presence."

So all of these sacrifices, you read Exodus, you see the Passover lamb sacrificed so that they can leave Egypt. Then you see when they get to Sinai, now they're going to have the presence of God dwelling among them. God gives them sacrifice after sacrifice. Leviticus chapters 1 to 6, all these sacrifices that must happen. How can sinners dwell with God? There must be blood shed. And every time they offered an animal, the faithful should have been asking themselves this question, "How can I approach God? Something must die for me to approach God because my sin is so great." And right after that, isn't it obvious, "How can the blood of a bull or goat atone for my sin?" And then back to Genesis 3:15, it's the seed of a woman that's coming. Genesis 22, Abraham, no, he offers his son, but God says, "No, it's not your son. It's My Son who will come."

It's all about the sacrifice. It's all about the cross. Everything's about the cross. In fact, let me just mention this. Someone has said, I think it's such a helpful observation that the four gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are essentially passion narratives with long introductions. Think about that. A passion narrative. They are the story of the cross with a long introduction. Matthew, eight chapters out of 20 deal with the last week of Jesus' life, the road to the cross and the resurrection. Mark chapters 11 to 16 all about the last week of Jesus' life. Luke 19 to 24, and John chapter 12 to 21. It's like 25% of Luke, 29% of Matthew, 39% of Mark, and 49% of John are all about the last week of Jesus' life. Think about that. "I want to tell you about Jesus," the gospel writer says, "and this is what I want to tell you about Jesus is He died for you and here's the lead up to help you understand why He died."

It's all the cross. We preach Christ and him crucified and the only way to live a holy life is to be united to Christ in his crucifixion. That's the glory of the gospel. Jesus said, "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and," what? "To give His life a ransom for many." Remember when he's talking to the disciples on the road to Emmaus, Luke 24? They're talking about what happened this weekend. He acts like he doesn't know, or he just says, "Tell Me what you're talking about." And they assume he doesn't know. They say, "You don't know? You've been in Jerusalem and you don't know all that's been happening?" They were supernaturally hindered from recognizing him. And so they start telling him and then he says to them in Luke 24, "Oh, you foolish and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have written. Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer and die and then to be raised again and to receive his kingdom? Did you not see the whole Old Testament's been telling you this? It's all the cross." That's how salvation happens. You come to see there's no hope for you, but the cross. That's what we heard in the testimonies we heard this morning. It's not about religion. It's not about going through the motions. It's about coming to see your sin and your need of God's provision, which is in Christ.

And then we're going to see, we have to look at this next time, because we're going to have to finish next week, this sermon, but we're going to see how the cross is the key to your sanctification. It begins with the cross. It's always about the cross. It ends with the cross. This, and this is why in heaven, we will be praising the Lamb. The marriage supper is the marriage supper of the Lamb. Why is it the marriage supper of the Lamb? Because he came to die and that's the most glorious reality, that God would leave heaven, come

take humanity to himself, and then experience what he experienced, the suffering, the agony, and ultimately the death that we deserved. He's taken the sins of everyone who would ever believe out of the way forever. He bore our sins in his body on the cross. Finished. He said, "It is finished," before he died. "The work is done and there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." What a glorious Savior.

Let's go to him in prayer.

Our Father, how grateful we are for the wonder of the gospel. Lord, we know that as we reflect on the indescribable gift of Your Son bearing our sins, we're unable to fully comprehend the magnitude of that amazing sacrifice, that unspeakable gift. Lord, You know each heart, You know whether we have truly come to You and responded to Your saving grace or not. We pray that You would have Your way in every single heart. Lord, You've shown us in the cross that everything that is necessary for every sinner to be saved has been done. Your death is sufficient for every single person and the invitation goes out to all, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved. Put all of your trust in everything that Jesus is and has done, and none of your trust in yourself, and that's salvation. Surrender yourselves to Jesus. He always says yes when you come.