

# The Heart of the Gospel

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If you come across anything new in Christianity it is wrong. That is very important. In fact, for 2000 years we haven't come to grips with it, we are probably not going to.

Another thing that is extremely important. There is a rule of hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is the study of the Bible, a study of how to study the Bible. There is a rule of hermeneutics that says this. You always do your theology in the context of the Church.

Now what does that mean? It means that when you interpret the Bible it is your interpretation of Scripture. And, in our Post Modern society people are always saying, "Well, that is your interpretation."

So what do you do? You go back through 2000 years of Christian history and if everyone is in agreement with regard to the interpretation of that passage and you disagree with everyone else, you are probably wrong.

So one of the things that is very important when we interpret Scripture is that we do it in the context of history. I can give a secular example to that. It would be this. Americans know nothing about America. They don't know the history of America so they can't know where they are at this point or where they are going. They have no point of saying or point of departure because they know nothing of their history. It is the same way with the evangelical community today.

I submit to you that many of the things I preach and many of the things we practice in Church, if Christians could resurrect from only 100 years ago, they would scoff at us and cast us out of the Church.

So, you see, we simply cannot live in a vacuum. We have to address Scripture. And it is Scripture and the grammar of Scripture, it is the study of the Word. But at the same time we look through history and we compare ourselves to godly Christians down through the ages and when we do that we find that modern day Christianity in some cases cannot be called Christianity at all.

And one of the things that we have done is what I call a gospel reductionism. We have reduced the gospel down to a few little questions that if a person says yes to every one of those questions we popishly declare them to be saved.

My dear friend, people are saved through a supernatural working of the Spirit of God that occurs through the means of preaching the Word of God. It cannot be manipulated, coerced and if someone truly is born again, the evidence is not that one time in their life they prayed a prayer. The evidence is the way they live, the fruit of their life.

“You shall know them by their fruit.”

And when Jesus was saying that he was well aware of what James would later write. He is not saying that salvation is through works. It is not. It is by faith and faith alone in the finished work of Jesus Christ, but salvation is a supernatural work of God and if anyone has been saved they become a new creature and new creatures do new things.

If someone does not consistently do new things or consistently does bad things, they might be a member of the Church, but they are not a new creature and they are not a new creature because they are not born again.

We need to understand. As one preacher came to me, one pastor in Peru once, very angry, arrived at my house, a wonderful evangelist he was, a wonderful preacher, loved souls. He came to my house. He was very angry.

I said, “Brother Zacharias, what is wrong?”

He said, “Well, an evangelist came and preached at my church all week and we had 100 people saved.”

I said, “What’s wrong with that?”

He said, “Not one of them came to church on Sunday.”

And I will submit to you that that 100 people did not get saved. A hundred people made decisions. And in making decisions without being born again they now believe themselves saved and have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof.

We need to be very careful. When we pronounce upon people that they have been born again, when in fact they haven’t. We also need to be very careful when we speak of the cross but do not teach it.

Today I am going to go through some things in Romans chapter three. We will go there. And something that I do quite often is teach on the gospel.

You say, “Brother Paul, why would you teach on the gospel?”

Well, as I said, I stood before 16 seminary students several years ago and asked them one question. What is the gospel? Fifteen of them definitely missed the whole boat and one of them got close, but not close enough.

So we are going to go through the gospel. And you might think that quite unusual, but that is exactly what we are going to do. We are going to go through the gospel so that the message that you do proclaim boldly is the correct one. Because there is only one gospel that has the power to save and that is the correct one. And if we preach any other gospel other than the true gospel, well, you know what Paul tells us in Galatians chapter one, anathema.

And so let's take a look, Romans chapter three verse 23, a verse that you probably one of the first verses you ever memorized and yet so profound. We superficially look at things and don't understand the power that is there.

Romans chapter 3:23.

“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”<sup>1</sup>

We tell people they have sinned today as though it were something like, “Well, you know, everyone is a sinner, don't you?”

Would a doctor walk up to a patient and say, “Well, you know, you have cancer, don't you?”

Sin is a very serious thing. It is a heinous thing. It is a horrifying thing. It is a terrible thing. It is an insane thing. As a matter of fact, the only problem humanity has ever had is sin. Everybody who dies, dies because of sin. But the worst thing about sin is not what it does to men, because men aren't the point. The worst thing about sin is it is offense against an infinitely holy and righteous and good God.

All have sinned.

Men don't tremble at that today when we tell them they have sinned because they don't know who God is.

Do you realize that Sunday in morning in church is about the greatest hour of idolatry throughout the week? Do you want to know why? Because most of the people worshiping God in that church are not worshiping the God of the Bible. They are worshiping a figment of their own imagination, a God that in America looks more like Santa Claus than the God of the Bible. And if the God of the Bible was preached in that church people would become so offended and so angry they would stand up and say, “I could never love a God like that. My God is not like that.”

You see, in America we have tamed him. We have made him palatable to carnal men, a good God. And our definition of good is quite warped. The God of the Bible is a dangerous God. He is a loving God. He is love. But he is not Santa Claus and he is not what most believe him to be. He rules over nations and kings, the smallest and the

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

greatest. He lifts up his hand and no man can pull it down. He slams his hand on the table and not one man can manipulate a finger. He is God and by and large American Christianity doesn't like a God like that. But he is the one.

And in order for men to understand the gravity of sin, they must understand who God is. One of the greatest needs in America today is for pastors to stand up and start teaching about God. But in order to do that, they would have to start studying about God, spend less time studying how to make a church grow and more time studying about the God of the Church.

All have sinned. Westminster Confession says, "Lack of conformity to the law of God."

The old Puritans used to say this. They would say, "You have not offended a governor of a small state, nor the prince and mayor of some tiny village, but against the Lord of glory you have railed."

Every sin would be so vile as to describe it as an affront against God, of seeking to slam yourself in to the very throne room of God and slaughter him. Sin is terrifyingly terrible because of the one against whom it is committed. And so when we tell men that they are sinners there must be love and passion and compassion in us, but there must be a seriousness about the matter. Men have sinned against God. They have broken his law. They deserve to die in hell for eternity.

Not much preaching like that anymore, is there? Sin is sin and it is vile. And it is the job of the preacher to proclaim to men how vile sin is, to preach the law, to bring men to condemnation.

I hear modern preachers today say, "Well, you know, our ministry is not to condemn." Well, then Paul the apostle was quite mistaken because he spent the first three chapters of the book of Romans doing only one thing, seeking to condemn every human being on the face of the earth so that they would look for Jesus, so that they would look for a Savior.

Mark my words, read the book. Go from Romans one, two and three and you will find out that he is doing with every bit of his mental ability every bit of everything in him seeking to do one thing show all men the gravity of their sin and condemn them so that he would leave them with their hand over their mouth not able to say another word, to shut men up to their sin so that they might seek mercy from a good God.

For all have sinned.

We don't understand the greatness of that. Let me try to put it for you this way. God. He stands there in the days of creation and he commands stars, hundreds of times larger than our sun in our solar system, he commands them to put themselves in certain sectors of space and they all bow down and say yes.

He looks at planets and he tells them to put themselves in a certain orbit and to continue in that orbit until he gives them another word and they bow and say, “yes, Lord.”

He tells mountains to be lifted up and seas to be cast down and they all worship him.

He looks at the sea and he says, “You come to this point and come no further.” And they all obey.

And then he looks at man and says, “Come.” And man goes, “No.”

The gravity of our sin is immense. And that is the scandal of our preaching. We think that we ought to be able to go out on those streets and preach and everyone sort of embrace us and appreciate us. Not when we stand against our culture and much of even American Christianity and proclaim the Bible as it is truly declared.

“All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.”<sup>2</sup>

In modern day if you were to go through commentaries, modern day commentaries, they would basically tell you to be falling short of the glory of God means that God created you for a glorious purpose and you have fallen short of that glorious plan.

But if you go back to the old commentaries you won’t hear such things. They have a totally different twist on it. It is not all centered around men. It is centered around God and the passage is usually interpreted this way.

“God made you for himself. He made you for his own glory. He made you to serve him and worship him, to glorify him and you have not done it.”

You see how in America our churches, our preaching, our evangelism, it is all built around men, for man, everything for man.

Scripture and old preaching everything for God. It is the glory of God, for his honor.

I submit to you. Christians in America are the wealthiest, most secure, most protected and well fed group of Christians that has ever existed on the face of the earth. And yet you go into our supposed Christian book stores and you find that half of those books are written about how empty we are.

Why? Because we are empty for the same reason Jesus Christ never was. He said, “I have food to eat that you know not of and my food is to do the will of him who sent me.”

We are so consumed with meeting our felt needs that we have missed the boat with regard to Christianity. As a matter of fact, churches are being built all over this country based upon meeting the felt needs of carnal people instead of teaching people the gospel

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

so that they are no longer carnal and they are only centered in one thing, living, loving, serving and glorifying God.

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

Now he speaks and he says something extremely important. He says in verse 24, speaking of the Christian being justified.

Now what does it mean to be justified? This is very, very important. Many people don't understand justification. Justification, when a person believes in Jesus Christ, they are justified. That does not mean the moment they believe, God makes them righteous. Because if that was the case everyone who believed in Jesus would be perfect from that moment on. What it means is this. The moment a person casts off from themselves every hope in their own good works and trusts only in the finished work of Christ, God legally declares them to be righteous before him, to be right with him. The moment a person believes, a person who has sinned, a person who has not lived for the glory of God, a rebel, a God hater which is what we all were according to the book. The moment that person believes in Christ, believes in the gospel, avails himself of the perfect work of Christ, God legally declares that person right with him before the throne.

Now, it says something very, very important here. It says, “Being justified as a gift by His grace.”<sup>4</sup>

Now this is rather redundant. He is saying the same thing. He is saying being justified is a gift, is a gift.

As a matter of fact, do you know in the place in Scripture where it says they hated him without a cause, they hated Jesus without a cause, that Jesus never gave anyone a reason to hate him? That is the same word used here in the Greek. It is saying, “Being justified even though we never gave him a cause to justify us.”

As a matter of fact, not only did we not give him a cause, he justified us not because of us, but in spite of us, not because he saw some inherent worth in us, not because of a good deed or a good work we had done, he declared us right in spite of us. And it was a gift, a gift based upon the finished work of his precious Son on that tree.

Now, he goes on and he says, “Being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption.”<sup>5</sup>

Redemption means to purchase, to set a slave or a captive free by means of a purchase or a payment, that God has made us right with him, has set us free from the condemnation of his law and the fierceness of his own wrath. He has set us free by making a payment.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Romans 3:24.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

Now what was the payment? The blood of his only begotten Son, not coins, not metals, not things in heaven, but his Son.

Now, what is very important here? To whom was the payment made? If there is a payment and one who gives it, there must be one who receives it.

In the early Patristics, the first five centuries of the Church, it was often common that the Greek theologians would say, well, he paid the devil. He redeemed us from the devil. The devil had a grasp on us and God made payment to the devil.

That is not true. God made payment, according to orthodox Christianity, God made payment to himself.

Now why? I will tell you why. Sometimes people will come to me and they will say, "I have been saved."

And kind of with a twinkle in my eye I will say, "Well, great, from what?"

And they will go, "Well, from hell."

"Well, hell wasn't after you."

"Well, I have been saved from what? From sin."

"Sin is an impersonal thing. It wasn't after you."

Do you want to know from what you have been saved? It would better be to say from whom you have been saved. You have been saved from God.

You see, we have broken God's law. God is just. In order for you to be saved, his justice must be satisfied. Payment must be made. The wages of sin is death.

Who causes that death? God. In his judgment, in his wrath, the sinner must die. In order for the sinner to be saved, a redemption, a payment must be made and that payment is the justice of God. God's justice must be satisfied. It is correct to say that God saved you from himself. God saved you for himself. And God saved you by himself.

So he redeemed us. We have redemption.

And it says this, very, very important. It says, "the redemption which is in Christ Jesus."<sup>6</sup>

There are only two realms. As you go through the New Testament, especially the book of Romans, the writings of Paul in Ephesians, also in Colossians, two realms. That is all. There is no third category. There are two realms. You are either in Adam or you are in

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

Christ. You are either condemned or justified. You are either dead or alive. You are either lost or Christian. The only thing we have is in Christ, not an ecclesiastical system, not in a religious rite, not even in a decision.

Do you realize how many people are lost in America because they are not trusting in Christ, they are trusting in a decision they made. They went through a few steps, made a decision at the end. And if you ask them if they are going to heaven they say yes and you ask them why. Because I made a decision.

No, it is because I have thrown myself upon Christ and what Christ has done.

Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to the cross of Christ I cling and nothing else.

Our redemption is in Christ Jesus and apart from him there is nothing.

Now something, very, very important when you get into world religions. It is extremely important.

One of the greatest things to come across is this. Every religion with the exception of a few eastern ones that aren't really religions to start off with, but every religion has to do with man being right with God. You realize that, which is proof that God really has written his law in the hearts of men and men really do know they are sinful and wicked and wrong with God because every religion on the face of the earth is asking one question. How can I be right with God?

You ask a Muslim how can you be...

Sir.

Let's pretend that I am a reporter and I interview a Muslim.

I say, "Sir, if you died right now, where would you go?"

He would say, "Well, I would go to paradise."

And I say, "Why?"

He would say, "Well, I am a good man. I give alms. I have made the pilgrimages. I make the daily prayers."

Makes sense to me. He is going to paradise because that is where he deserves to go.

I go to an Orthodox Jew and I say, "Sir, if you died right now, where would you go?"

"I would go to heaven."

“Why?”

“Well, because I love the law of God. I keep the Torah. I am a righteous man and I walk in the way of the righteous.”

And I, as a reporter say, “Well, makes sense to me. You are going to heaven because that is exactly where you deserve to go. You are right with God by virtue of your acts.”

And then I come to a genuine Christian. And I say, “Sir, if you died right now where would you go?”

And he says, “I would go to heaven.”

“And, well, sir, what is the basis of your hope?”

He would say, “Well, in sin was I conceived and brought forth into this world. I have broken every law of the good and righteous God. And I deserve the greatest of his wrath.”

And I as a reporter stop him and say, “Sir, this doesn’t make any sense at all. You are telling me you are going to heaven when, in fact, you deserve the very bowels of hell. How can that be?”

And the Christian looks up at me and says, “Because I am going to heaven upon the virtue and the merit of another, Jesus Christ my Lord.”

And that is the difference in all religions. There is only two religions in the world, a religion of works and a religion of grace. And our boast is not in ourselves. Faith is the only eye that never... it never looks back at itself. It is always looking away from itself to the Christ. And it is not the size of our faith. It is the object of our faith.

Let me give you an example. A very bold man looks at a very weak bridge and he has great faith that that weak bridge will hold him. And he walks across that bridge and gets halfway across and it caves in on him and he is destroyed. He perishes. He dies. He had great faith in a weak bridge.

But let’s say a trembling weak soul of a man comes to a great bridge and he begins to walk across that bridge with great fear and doubt and dread. No matter how small his faith, he is going to make it across. Why? Because the bridge, not his faith.

Today in America, oh, it is all about my faith. I am going to heaven because of my faith.

No, your faith can’t save you. It is faith in Christ and Christ is the one who saves. If the bottom of this hotel room right now were to drop out from underneath every one of us sitting here, none of you would go, “Oh, faith.”

You would all go, “Oh, Jesus.”

We can even turn faith into an idol, a decision into an idol. Nothing is strong enough to save you but Jesus Christ and it is looking unto him.

Now, here comes something in verse 25 that I plead with you. If you will understand this, you will understand something that many have forgotten, not something new, something quite old. As a matter of fact, it is the very heart of the gospel.

Many preachers, Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Charles Spurgeon refer to this as acropolis of the Christian faith, the great fortified city. Some theologians have said that if all the Bible were to be removed but a few short verses, these would be the verses to keep, this verse here in verse 25, possibly the most powerful, most important text in the entire Bible and yet few people even investigate it. It is passed over.

It says, “[our] redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith.”<sup>7</sup>

The cross was not an accident.

But also, evangelicals, listen to me. The cross was not plan B. The cross is the greatest manifestation, revelation of God. Without the cross, no one would ever know God, no one, not even principalities, powers, might and dominions in heaven would know God as he is to be known except through the cross of Jesus Christ. And it was God’s doing that his Son be crucified and that he be crucified publicly.

The number one religious city of the world outside of that city on a crossroads. He hung on that tree for everyone to see because God was doing something, teaching something, showing something about himself that had to be explained.

Now, propitiation. What is that about?

Well, let me share with you. I want you to hold your place and I want you to go to the book of Proverbs. I want you to see something that if you can grasp it will help you a great deal. Proverbs 17:15.

“He who justifies the wicked, and he who condemns the righteous, Both of them alike are an abomination to the LORD.”<sup>8</sup>

Do you know what it means? Abomination is the hardest, coarsest word possibly used in all the Scripture. There is nothing harder. To be an abomination before God is to be the worst thing. There is nothing worse. It is vile. It goes beyond words to describe. To be an abomination before God is a horrid, hated thing before God.

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<sup>7</sup> Romans 3:24-25.

<sup>8</sup> Proverbs 17:15.

Now listen to what it says. Listen carefully.

To justify the wicked is what? An abomination. Do you realize what is going on here?

I have been teaching you for the last 15 minutes that God justified the wicked. And I just showed you there is a verse that says anyone who justifies the wicked is an abomination before God. Does anyone see a problem?

I want to submit to you something and, again, anything new is wrong. This is old. The greatest problem in the entire Bible, the greatest problem in all of redemptive history, the thing the Bible is written about, the main one, number one thing is this. If God is just, he cannot forgive you. How can a just God forgive wicked men and still be just? That is the greatest problem in all of Scripture and some of you have never even heard it.

If you were to read all the great theologians down through history, this is it. But not just the theologians, this is what the Bible is teaching. The greatest problem, the reason for everything written is this. If God is just, how can he forgive wicked men and still be just?

Let me give you a secular illustration. Let's say that someone kills your entire family and he is caught red handed with the blood dripping off his hands as the police rush in. As he is strangling the life out of the last dear one in your family, the police rush in and catch him. And they take this man with all the evidence necessary and they present him before the judge and the judge looks down and says, "I am a loving judge. Therefore go free."

What would you say? You would say that that that judge was an abomination, that he was more wicked than the criminals he pardons. Why? Because a judge must do justice and a judge who doesn't do justice is not a judge.

So the question of all of Scripture and this gospel thing that we have been proclaiming around the world, is this. The great problem is God is just and the God of all the earth does right. Man has broken every law of God. How can God be just forgive wicked men and declare them to be righteous when they are not righteous? That is the problem and the basis and the foundation and the reason for the gospel.

Doesn't anyone read old books anymore?

Have you ever shared that with a person?

I was teaching a group of students in Romania several years ago, budding theologians.

Why did Jesus die?

Well, for our sin.

That didn't answer my question.

Why did he have to die for sin?

Well, because the sin is bad.

No, it all goes back to God. God is just and a just God cannot declare something righteous when it is not righteous. To do so would be an abomination and that is the reason why a propitiation had to be made.

What is a propitiation? A sacrifice that satisfies justice, makes full payment to the justice of God so that that just God can then show mercy to wicked men. A payment must be made.

Now, what is that payment? What could that payment be?

Well, first of all that payment has to be a man. A man has to die. Man has sinned. Man must die. For men to be free a man must die in their place. The blood of bulls and goats will not take away sin, it will not cleanse the conscience. It will not satisfy God's justice. A man must die.

Does anyone qualify? Clean hands, pure heart. No one. Job said, "Oh, that there was a mediator, someone who could lay his hands on both of us."

But that one who dies, he must be God.

Why is that?

The one who dies on that tree must be more than a man. He must be God who becomes man and why is that necessary?

Well, let me give you several reasons. First of all, salvation is of the Lord. The abominable doctrine of the Jehovah's Witnesses is they say that Jesus was a creature, was a created being. And in saying that, they are saying the one who died and provided salvation, that one is not God. And God is not our Savior.

That is an abomination. The Bible all throughout the Scriptures declares that salvation is of the Lord and only Yahweh, only God saves. So the one who is on that tree, the one who saves his people, the one who will save his people from their sins, the one named Jesus must be God.

But there is another reason.

Who else but God could withstand the wrath of God and rise again? It says about the fierce fury and the holy hatred of God against sin that when his wrath is poured out the rivers dry up, the mountains melt. Some men boast that on the Day of Judgment they will stand before God. And I tell them, "You will melt before God like a tiny wax figurine before a blast furnace."

Who but God can withstand the wrath of God, pay the full price and die and rise again?

Then there is another reason. A life has to be given. Who has life to give?

Even if you were fit to die, you have no life. For where does your life come? It comes from God. It is borrowed. You don't have your own life.

An angel in heaven, they have no life inherent in them. For them to die they would have to have life. They do not possess it. It comes from God. They are giving away a borrowed thing.

But Jesus said, "I have authority to lay down my life and authority to take it up again."

He is life. He borrows it from no one. He alone has the life to lay down.

One time I was speaking and this is the last reason. I was speaking at a university and after I was talking on the cross of Christ this student popped up wanting to show everyone how smart he was and he said, "Well, I have got a question for you."

And I said, "Well, what is it?"

He said, "How can one man suffer a few short hours on a tree and save a multitude of men from an eternity in hell? It is not right."

And I said, "Young man, this is the reason. That one man could suffer a few short hours on that tree and save a multitude of men from hell because that one man was worth more than all of them put together."

You take everything that is, cosmos and galaxies and planets and crickets and clowns and mountains and molehills, everything that ever has been or will be in any realm and you put it in the balance. And you put the man Jesus Christ on the other side of that scale and he outweighs them all.

That is what theologians mean when they are saying a perfect sacrifice. It doesn't just mean that he was without blemish or without sin. It means the value. Sins were committed against an infinitely good God. They should be punished infinitely. And, therefore, it took a gift of infinite value to pay for your sin.

Now something about the cross that is very important.

I was in a seminary in Eastern Europe, again, a few years ago preaching and I walked into the library and everything was written in German. I was kind of looking around for a book I could read and I saw one there, *The Cross of Christ*. I pulled it off and I began to look through it. If you have read enough books you kind of get to the point where you can just look through a book real quick and find what the author is all about.

So I was going through the book and there it was. This is what he said.

“When Jesus Christ was hanging on that cross the Father looked down from heaven and he saw the affliction of his Son. He saw the suffering of his Son from the hands of Romans and so he saw how his Son was beat by men and whipped by men and nailed to a cross and he looked at that suffering heaped upon him by those men and counted it as payment for our sin.”

That is heresy, did you know that? That is abject heresy. Most Christians don't even recognize it.

My friend, if you are saved here today you are not saved because a bunch of Romans got together and beat up Jesus. If you are saved here today you are saved because when he was nailed to that tree he took upon himself the sins of men and the Father in heaven turned away from him because he became sin and the Father in heaven crushed his only begotten Son under the full force of his wrath, the wrath that you deserve, the wrath that a holy just God must pour out. And if it is not poured out, if it is not satisfied, he cannot forgive you.

Jesus, he is in a garden and he cries out, “Let this cup pass from me.”

What was in the cup?

I hear modern day preachers saying, “Well, that was the cross and the Roman soldiers and the whip that we talk about all the time.”

No, it most certainly was not. Let me show you why.

All right, here we have Jesus frightened over being nailed to a cross. And yet thousands, if not tens of thousands of his followers would willingly go to crosses and die singing hymns full of joy.

Now are you telling me they had such boldness, yet their captain, their Savior hid himself in a garden with terrifying fear? Do you honestly think the Lord of glory was afraid of a whip? Do you honestly think the Lord of glory feared nails or a cross or a crown of thorns?

You see, that is what we talk about all the time, but we don't talk about the real thing that happened.

And what happened? What was in the cup?

I will never forget. I was speaking in a classical reformed school for children back east. And I asked that question. And a little eight year old girl raised her hand.

And I said, “Yes.”

And she stood beside her desk and she said, “Sir, the cup, the wrath of almighty God was in the cup.”

I said, “Yes, you are right and you are the first one that has ever answered correctly.”

If you sum up all the prophets in the Old Testament, just get a concordance out and look up cup. If you were to sum up all the prophets they would say something like this, because of the wickedness 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.

But on that tree the Son of God, he took the cup of God’s justice, of his fierce wrath, of his hatred against sin and he drank it down. And when he cried out, “It is finished,” he turned over the cup and not one drop of wrath came out because the Son drank it all.

“Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? Why have you forsaken me?”

People say in their emotional romantic view of the gospel they say the Father looked down at his Son and saw his suffering and was so moved that he had to turn away.

Where do you get that? That is not what it says?

He said, “You have abandoned me.”

Why?

Go to Psalms 22 just quickly. I will show you the historical context of that prophecy and it is a prophecy.

Psalms 22 verse one.

“My God, my God, why have You forsaken me? Far from my deliverance are the words of my groaning.”<sup>9</sup>

There is the complaint of the Messiah when he is on the tree. And then he gives an argument in verse four he says, “In You our fathers trusted; They trusted and You delivered them.”<sup>10</sup>

What he is saying is there has never been a time in the history of your covenant people Israel that a righteous man cried out to you and you did not answer. Yet I, your only

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<sup>9</sup> Psalm 22:1.

<sup>10</sup> Psalm 22:4.

begotten Son, I am hanging on this tree. I am surrounded by men who hate me and yet you abandon me. Why?

And then he answers his question in verse three.

“Yet you are holy.”<sup>11</sup>

And in verse six, “But I am a worm and not a man.”<sup>12</sup>

The Father turned away because his only begotten Son on that tree, the Son of God on that tree bore your filth and your guilt and your sin and your rebellion and your hatred towards God and your crimes and everything you have ever lifted up against the throne of God. He bore it all and the Father turned away from him because he cannot look upon the vile thing.

And then all the wrath, the holy hatred of a righteous, good and loving God was poured forth on the head of his only begotten Son. As it says in Isaiah 53, “And it pleased Yahweh to crush him.”

You read the story of Abraham and you tell it to your children. Abraham ties his son. He brings forth the knife. He rears back and breaks his own will and begins to slam the knife down into the heart of his only begotten son and his hand is stayed by the providence of God.

The problem is you think the story ends there. But it doesn't, because God takes that knife out of the hand of Abraham and God lays his own hand on his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, and he slaughters him.

Fundamental issue here. I have mentioned the word several times. It is probably very foreign to your language. It is the hatred of God.

I was teaching on the hatred of God a while back and someone got very, very upset and they said, “God doesn't hate. God is love.”

And I said, “No, man. God is love. Therefore, he must hate.”

She said, “What do you mean?”

I said, “Ma'am, do you love the Jews?”

She said, “Well, yes.”

I said, “Then are you neutral about the Holocaust?”

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<sup>11</sup> Psalm 22:3.

<sup>12</sup> Psalm 22:6.

She said, “No, I love the Jews. Therefore I must hate the Holocaust.”

Exactly.

Do you love babies?

Yes.

Then the only way to be consistent is to hate abortion.

You see, ma’am, if you love that which is good, that which is perfect, that which is beautiful, excellent, if you love all that is conformed to righteousness, you must hate unrighteousness. And, ma’am, if you must do that, how much more a holy God?

You see, there is a sense in which every man born into this world is an object of hatred because he is born in sin and he is an enemy of God. And Jesus said the wrath of God abides upon him.

But this God, his love is of such a nature that he can even love the objects of his own hatred. He can love the objects of his wrath, people that ought to die. God can give his Son for them. God can give his Son for them.

And so he dies.

Now, I want to show you something about biblical history. Look at this for a moment.

Why was his Son crucified publicly in this way? He says in verse 25, “This was to demonstrate His righteousness.”<sup>13</sup>

Whose righteousness? God’s.

Because... Why was it necessary? Why was it necessary for God to show everybody that he really was righteous?

“Because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed.”<sup>14</sup>

Now I want you to think about something for a moment, just think about this. We hardly know anything about the origins of the devil except that he was created by God and he fell. And even in that fall we know so very little. We can only grasp a hold of what the Bible tells us. But there was a sense in which there was this creature. He was good and right in everything. He rebelled against the throne of God and he fell. When he fell did God show him mercy? No, none. Perfect justice. Perfect justice.

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<sup>13</sup> Romans 3:25.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

Now, that one who fell is called the accuser, not because primarily because he accuses men, but because primarily he accuses God.

Now think about this for a moment. What is the greatest problem? God, if you are just, why didn't you kill Adam? Why did you give him a promise of salvation? God, if you are just during the flood, why didn't you kill Noah? Because Noah was a sinner, too. And, God, Abraham, your friend, he put his own wife in jeopardy because he was a coward. And David, a man after your own heart. He was an adulterer and a murderer and you call him a son? What has happened to the God of all the earth? It seems like he no longer does right. What is this God? I committed a sin against your throne and perfect justice and these things made out of dirt rebel against you every day. How is it that you could show mercy on such?

Two thousand years ago God answered the question. He looked down and he said, "Do you want to know how I can save Noah? Do you want to know how I can be friends with Abraham? You want to know how I can call David my son? Because my only begotten Son died for them all."

And it is through him, the Lamb slain before the foundation of the earth everyone who has ever gone to heaven whether it be Abraham or the last man ever born on the face of this planet, they went to heaven because of the Son and his perfect work.

And we can say theologically that we are justified through the death of the Son. But it is also biblical to say God is justified through the death of his Son.

In what way? In the way we use the word vindication. God is vindicated. The devil cannot accuse God of unrighteousness in saving wicked men because God paid for all of them. And so now as this text says, he is both just and the justifier. He justifies the wicked and yet still he is just because he paid for all the wicked's crime through the blood of his only begotten Son. His Son died.

But he did not stay dead. Many times in our gospel we forget this. A gospel without the resurrection is not gospel at all. He died. We have letters from the early Church that state that the pastor would come before the small congregation and the first words that would come out of his mouth would be this. "Christ has risen."

And the congregation would say, "Yes, Christ has risen, indeed."

It was God's great declaration that not only Jesus was his Son, but the sacrifice on that tree was accepted as full payment for God's people. If you look over in Romans chapter four just quickly verse 25.

"He who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised..."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Romans 4:25.

In some of your texts it will say, “for,” but a more accurate translation, “...raised because of our justification.”<sup>16</sup>

What does that mean. The resurrection is proof that the payment Christ made fully satisfied the justice of God. So he died and he rose again from the dead. But not only did he rise again from the dead, he ascended into glory. He ascended into heaven.

Now go with me for a moment, we are about to end, Psalms chapter 24. We come up with a very important rhetorical question in verse three.

“Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? And who may stand in His holy place?”<sup>17</sup>

This was Job’s problem. Who could go there for us? Who could stand? Who like us could go for us to stand on our behalf before the throne of God? Here is the qualifications.

“He who has clean hands and a pure heart, Who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood And has not sworn deceitfully.”<sup>18</sup>

Anyone qualify?

No one but Christ the Son of God, God in the flesh and also very man. He lived a perfect life of absolute obedience to the will of God. He bore the sins of his people and was crushed under his Father’s own wrath. In dying he satisfied justice. The Father raised him from the dead. And then he ascended up to glory.

Verse seven. We have an interesting case used by the Patristics, the early church fathers, the ascension psalm.

“Lift up your heads, O gates, And be lifted up, O ancient doors, That the King of glory may come in!”<sup>19</sup>

What is going on? The old Patristics, the old fathers, they would say this, that Christ, God, but also Christ the man did more than what Job could ever imagine. He ascended up and stood outside the very gates of heaven and he cried out, “Lift up your heads, oh gates, and be lifted up old ancient doors that the King of glory may come in.”

And with absolute astonishment, heaven answers back and says, “Who is this King of glory?”

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Psalm 24:4.

<sup>18</sup> Psalm 24:5.

<sup>19</sup> Psalm 24:7.

Basically the question is: Who is this one who dares command these gates? Who is it who would dare lay his hand to the latch of these doors? These doors open for no man. Who is it?

He answers back and he says this. "I will tell you who it is. It is the Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, oh gates, and lift them up old ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in."

And for the first time in all of time, those doors obeyed a man's voice. And they threw themselves open as the seas obey and the mountains obey and the stars obey and the angels obey. They threw themselves open and in walked the King of glory, Jesus Christ the Son of God and Jesus the man on our behalf.

And he walks up to the Father and he sits down at the Father's right hand. And I would suppose, maybe, the Father gives him a glance and says, "It is finished." And he looks at his Father and says, "Father, it is finished, indeed."

And on that throne he will until every enemy has been made his footstool. And this same Jesus who was crucified, God has made him both Lord and Christ.

No one ever needs to be told, "Make Jesus Lord of your life."

That is the most preposterous thing. He is Lord of your life whether you acknowledge him so or not. He is the King of glory and God commands all men in every place, he commands them, he does not ask them, he does not suggest to them, he commands them to repent, to repent of trying to save themselves, to repent of trusting in their own good works, to repent from trusting in anything other than the perfect work he has done.

That is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Let's pray.

*Father, what a privilege to preach to saints, many who have walked longer than I with you and many who are more conformed to the image of your Son than I will be in my last day, preachers of the gospel, bearers of seed, men and women of whom the world is not worthy. They have taken the Word to many peoples and many have been won through their testimony. Oh, God, help us all to grow in our knowledge of the gospel and to preach and to share this thing the way that not only saves men, but honors God. In Jesus' name. Amen.*