

What is Christianity

by Paul Washer

This sermon emphasizes the core message of Christianity, focusing on the need for Jesus Christ as the only Savior. It highlights the concept of propitiation, explaining how Christ bore the wrath of God on the cross to satisfy divine justice and provide a way for sinners to be pardoned. The importance of repentance, faith in Christ, and the assurance of salvation through His sacrifice are central themes, urging listeners to trust in Jesus for redemption and eternal life.

Scripture: Proverbs 17:15, Psalms 22:1, Galatians 3:13, Psalms 24:7, Psalms 22:1, Romans 3:23, Psalms 24:7, John 14:6, Revelation 22:17

Topics: "Jesus as Savior", "Repentance and Faith"

Description

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Transcript

It's a great privilege for me to be here with you this evening. Can you all hear me okay? Let me pray. Father, I come before you in the name of your son, Jesus Christ.

I pray that you would honor him, that his name would be exalted in this place and in this country, that the gospel of Jesus Christ would enter into hearts here tonight, that people would know your love, your forgiveness, how you are a kind and a merciful God, that your steadfast love extends to the heavens and your faithfulness to the clouds. Lord, help us so that people will know we have been helped to a work in our midst. Jesus name.

Let's go to First Corinthians chapter 15. I know that this is a conference on revival, but I know there are people here tonight you are inquiring as to what is Christianity. Possibly you're wondering, what is all this about? Who is Jesus Christ? What is Christianity? I have to admit that when you look around today at what is called Christianity, there is not a clear definition.

We see people doing all sorts of things in the name of Jesus Christ. A great deal of it is wrong and is not biblical and does not bring glory to the name of Christ, but rather because of the things that are done in his

name, his name is blasphemed and insulted among people who don't truly understand what Christianity is all about. Tonight, I want to share with you Christianity, what it truly is.

And before I read the text, though, I need to say this. In Christianity, we do not have little messiahs running around. We have one messiah, one Christ, one savior, it's Jesus Christ.

The people who preach the gospel are not great men of God. There is no such thing as a great man of God. There are only weak and tiny and sinful, pitiful men of a great and merciful God.

So if you're not clearly introduced to Christianity tonight, I want you to know that you're not coming here tonight to hear some man. Because what are men, the Bible says, nothing more than a nose full of air, a vapor. I stand before you.

Very needy person. Many, many years ago, Jesus Christ came into my life. I needed him, then I need him now.

He has changed me some. He has not changed me completely. I struggle with all sorts of things, but he is faithful.

I know I'm proud, I don't want to be that way. I know that if I could take all the gifts I have, I would trade them just to be able to love my wife as Jesus Christ loves the church. So if you're new to Christianity, I want you to realize you didn't come here tonight to hear some self-proclaimed prophet.

Tonight, you're only going to get a small, broken man who's being fixed. Who has been changed some. Who loves Jesus Christ because Jesus Christ loved him first.

Who is broken because of all the foolishness in the world that is called Christianity and all the wild preachers that have no business preaching. I just want you to know a clear definition of the gospel of Jesus Christ, so that if you walk out of here tonight and you reject the gospel, at least you know exactly what you're rejecting. You understand it from a scriptural and a historical foundation.

Now, why do I say historical for this reason? When we studied the Bible, I studied the Bible, I am one individual living within a certain time, living within a certain culture. Do you understand that? Don't you see how that makes me prone to error? There's so many preachers today and they'll say, well, this is what my Bible says, and another preacher will say, well, this is what my Bible says. You can say all kinds of things about what the Bible says.

One of the things that we do to know that we are truly preaching the word of God is that we take our understanding and we compare it to 2000 years of Christian history. To find out, are we in the center of historic Christianity or have we just invented a new doctrine and about to create a new cult? So what I'm going to teach you is not new. It's not some new revelation.

Anybody comes to you with a new revelation run. It is an old revelation. It was a thing handed down, given to the apostles.

By the spirit of God and then handed down. By faithful men to faithful men, the gospel of Jesus Christ, now let's look in first Corinthians. Chapter 15.

Now, I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preach to you, which also you received, which also you stand by, which also you are saved if you hold fast the word which I preach to you, unless you

believed in vain, for I delivered to you as the first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures and that he was buried and that he was raised on the third day according to the scriptures. This is the gospel of Jesus Christ. Now, let's start at the beginning, verse one.

Now, I make known to you, brethren, the gospel, and I want you to notice something here. Paul has already preached the gospel to these people, these are believers, these are people who have repented of their sins and they have believed in Jesus Christ. God has done and is doing a work in their life.

But he comes back to them now and he says, I make known to you the gospel. What does that teach us? That the gospel, the message of the gospel is not only for the person who has yet to know God, it is also for the believer, even the most mature believer. You see, I am saved because Jesus Christ died for my sins and rose again from the dead, is seated at the right hand of God and in him, in his name, pardon is granted to men.

But I continue on also in my Christian life because of the same thing, the gospel of Jesus Christ not only saves us, but it is the great motivating factor in the Christian life. Why does a Christian do what they do? Why do they seek to walk in a manner pleasing to God? Why do they care about being obedient to the commands? It's all because of Christ. Our entire life as Christians revolves around this one thing, Jesus Christ shed his blood for our souls.

It is this magnificent work of God that motivates us, that moves us, that changes us. And that is why Paul will go on to say here, I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preach to you, which also you received in which also you stand, by which also you are saved. Now, let's go on.

Paul. I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preach to you, which also you receive now. I suppose there are some good things that have come out of my country.

But I know that there are some terrible things that have come out of my country, particularly with regard to the gospel, we have taken the gospel of Jesus Christ and reduced it down to four little spiritual laws. And if you say yes to each one of them and then pray a prayer, someone calls you Christian. That's not true.

That's not what it means to receive the gospel. The gospel presentation is this, Jesus Christ died for your sins. To receive that message is to recognize your sin, turn from your sin and turn your life over to Christ, not only as Savior, but as Lord.

We receive him. Not as some little contract we make with God, but we receive him by trusting in him, by throwing our lives upon him and by building our lives on his teaching. It is the most radical, difficult, dangerous, life changing thing that you could ever do.

You see, many today look at it kind of like this. I've heard preachers say this. They look at a congregation and say, you have a wonderful life.

You have a great family. You have a wonderful job. Things are going well for you, but you lack one little thing.

You need Jesus to make your life complete. That's blasphemy. I'm here to tell you tonight.

But if you do not have Jesus Christ. You have nothing. Your success in this world will rust, your fame will rot, your pleasures will turn into vapors and fly away.

I am telling you tonight, if you're listening to me, that Jesus Christ is not something you receive into your life as some addition to make your life better. Jesus Christ becomes your life. He's everything.

He's the reason you are alive. He's the reason you breathe. He's the reason you do what you do.

Now, it's not a controlling slavery, no, we follow him, we serve him because he loved us, because he made the greatest sacrifice in our place. He died for our sins. So what does it mean to receive Jesus Christ? It doesn't mean that one time you were baptized.

It doesn't mean that one time you prayed a little prayer and now you're going to get to go to heaven to receive Jesus Christ means that you've acknowledged who you are before God. You have seen that you cannot save yourself and you have thrown yourself upon the virtue and merit of Jesus. You are trusting in him alone.

That goes on, he says, I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preach to you, which also you received, in which also you stand. This is very, very important. The Christian life is not something you do just in a moment and then that's all.

But it is believing in Christ and then continuing to believe in Christ all the days of your life, you begin in the Christian faith by repenting of your sins. But if you have truly repented of your sins unto salvation, you continue repenting all the days of your life. You believe in Jesus at the moment of your salvation.

You receive him as savior and Lord, but you continue believing in him. It is true that the moment we repent, the moment we believe we are saved. But the great evidence that we have truly repented and truly believe is that we continue doing so.

We continue standing upon Christ. If I came to you personally tonight and I said, if you died right now, where would you go? And you said, well, I think I'd go to heaven. Why? Well, I'm trusting in Jesus Christ and I'm trying to be a good person and I'm trying to keep his commandments and I'm trying to do the right thing.

I would lovingly have to tell you. That I fear. For your salvation, I fear for your soul because you're not standing on Christ alone, you're standing on Jesus Christ plus something else, and that is not Christianity.

If you ask the true Christian, why do you have a hope of heaven? He will tell you it is because of Christ and Christ alone. And if you even begin to suggest to that person that they're going to heaven because of some moral deed or virtue on their part, they will become so nauseous they may even throw up. They'll scream at you, get away from me.

You're wrong. I am not saved. I am not Christian because of my personal virtue, because of my personal merit.

I am saved because of what Christ did for me on that tree. That's my singular, my only hope. Now he goes on and he says this.

In which also you stand, by which also you are saved. You know, one of the things that really bothers me about contemporary Christianity is it promises all sorts of things that God never promised. And it lures people into Christianity with promises of the very things that God hates.

Peace, prosperity, power, fame. If you trust Christ, everything's going to be wonderful. Rubbish.

That's not true. You do not come to Christ for the sake of any other thing but Christ. You come for him.

You come because he died on the cross for your sins. You come because through him you can be pardoned. You come because through him you can know God.

Not because you can get your best life now or you can prosper economically or you can be healed. No, you come for him and you come because he promises the forgiveness of sins, the cleansing of your conscience, and a new life in God's favor. That's why you come to Christ.

That is the Christian life. So that even if you are a beggar and even if your body screams out 24 hours in pain, it does not matter because you have Christ. Christ is enough.

Goes on and he says, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believe in vain. All of you probably know someone who claims to have been born again. And then after a few weeks, it seems to wear off.

Are people who will say something like this, salvation is by faith, therefore we can live like the devil and still be saved. We hear things like that all the time. What Paul is teaching here is something very, very different.

Look what he says. He says, by which you are also saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you. He says, you are truly Christian, you are truly born again, you truly have a hope in heaven.

Not only if you believe in Christ, but if you hold on to that faith and you continue on until the end. And if you let go of that, if you abandon that, if you walk away from that, you are not Christian. Now, is Paul teaching us that we can lose our salvation? I don't think so.

This is what I believe he's saying. The evidence that a person has truly come to know Christ is that they will continue on. They will hold fast because he who began a good work in them is still working.

The evidence that you are truly Christian is not what comes out of your mouth. It's not that one time you prayed a prayer and asked Jesus to come in. It's not that one time you were baptized.

The evidence that you are Christian is that you continue on in the Christian faith. You continue repenting, you continue believing, you continue growing. And although there may be a great struggle and your Christian life might look like three steps forward and four steps back and five steps forward and one step back, you will nevertheless progress to the goal.

Because he who began a good work in you is going to finish it. Now he goes on and he says this, verse three, for I delivered to you as a first importance what I also received. I look at that.

For I delivered to you as a first importance. That should cause us to doubt the ministry of many, many preachers. And I can tell you why.

I visit many churches and I listen to a lot of people preach and I can hear men preach. Day after day after day and never hear the true gospel come off their lips. Never hear them exalt the cross of Christ.

Never hear them speak much about the gospel. You need to understand something. The most important thing in the Christian life is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Understanding it and being conformed to its truths. Now here's the problem. Most people think, well, I do understand the gospel.

I understood it the first day. No, you didn't. Let me share with you something, there are a lot of people.

Who think that the book of Revelation and the eschatology and the study of last things are so great and so mysterious. Well, they are, but they're nothing in comparison to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Listen to me, the day that Jesus Christ comes back, you're going to understand absolutely everything about the book of Revelation.

But you will be an eternity of eternities in heaven and you will still not comprehend what God has done for you in the cross of Christ. It is no mystery to me why Charles Spurgeon has gone down in history as the prince of all preachers. Because if you study his sermons, and I have studied many of them, you find out that they're all almost just alike.

He only has one theme. He only talks about one thing, and that is Jesus Christ and what Christ did on the cross. And Christ resurrected from the dead and the power of Christ to save.

That's the most important thing. It's the thing you begin with in Christianity and it's the thing you never end with in Christianity. I know a church is solid.

I know a believer is solid when they make much of Jesus and his gospel. And I know that when people leave that behind and speak more of other things, they have gone down a path of error. Now, he goes on in verse three and he tells us what the gospel is.

That Christ died for our sins. Do you know that I have spent, I want to be careful here, but I would imagine I have spent the last 12 years of my life, if I were to add it up, I don't know the average of hours a day I have spent in my study on that one thing. That Christ died for my sins.

There's enough here in this passage, in these few words, to preach an eternity. There's enough here to study for an eternity, and at the end of that eternity, acknowledge that you have not advanced very far in the things of God. Listen to me.

To be saved, you must understand and appreciate the gospel. To grow in Christ, the gospel must become the center theme in your life. If you are truly going to advance in the things of God, you must give yourself to the study of the person of Christ and what he has done for us on that cross.

He died for our sins and he was buried. Why does Paul put that there? To let you know that he really died. He was really buried because he really died.

And why is that important? Without the death of Christ, there is no salvation. He really died. And then he was raised again on the third day.

Why is that important? It is the public declaration of God that he accepted the sacrifice of his son in payment for the sins of his people. Now, I don't want to alarm you, but that was the introduction. Honestly, it was.

You can watch a football game three hours. You can study the gospel that long. Now we're going to take a look at the gospel.

Let's go to Romans chapter three. Verse twenty three. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

My dear friend, I'm not an angry man. I'm not trying to manipulate your emotions. But if you had any idea.

Who God really is. This statement that I have just read would terrify you. It would terrify you.

Now, you may object and say, OK, pastor, what are you going to do now? Are you going to terrify us with terrible visions of a holy and just God full of wrath? Let me share with you something. Do you know what your greatest problem is? Your greatest problem is that God is good. That ought to scare you.

Your greatest problem is that God is love that ought to terrify you. And you say, well, Brother Paul, why should the knowledge that God is good terrify me? Because you're not good. That's why.

You see, criminals are not terrified of corrupt judges. They're terrified of good judges, noble judges. You see, all have sinned, and that causes one of the greatest problems in Scripture.

God is good and he must do something about your violation of law. You have sinned. What does that mean? It means to not be conformed to the law of God.

It means to not be conformed to the will of God. It means to miss the mark as though you were pulling back a bow and shooting an arrow into a bullseye to not only miss the bullseye, but the entire target. That's what you have done.

You have sinned. I have sinned against a good God who is worthy of all obedience, who is worthy of all praise. I want you just to imagine this for a moment.

Imagine on the day of creation, God speaks, and it is. He tells the stars to put themselves in certain areas of space, and they all bow down, worship, and obey. He tells the planets to mark out a path for themselves and to not be moved from the order he gives them, and they all obey.

He tells the mountains to be lifted up and the valleys to be cast down, and they all obey him. He tells the sea, you will come to this point and go no farther, and the sea worships God. Then he looks at you and says, come, and you go, no.

No. No. All have sinned against God.

You say, I haven't sinned against God. I don't even know if he exists, and I don't even know what his law is. This is the Bible's answer to your declaration.

You are lying. The Bible says you do know who God is. And the Bible says that you do know something of his law.

And the Bible says that rather than listen to what you know to be true, since you want to live in your own freedom and your own sin, you deny the truth. You suppress it and hold it down. Mark this.

You do know. Not only that there is a God, you know something about who he is. And you do know that God has given a law and you have violated it.

Now, let's look for a moment at the extent of sin. I want you to go with me to the book of Genesis. Chapter 6, verse 5. Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth and that every intent of

the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

Now, in his omniscience, God looked into the heart of all men living during that time and saw that there was continual evil in the heart and thoughts of men. Now you say, well, that was back then. Well, it's still today.

The flood judged man, but it did not change man. When Noah got off that boat, men were still just as sinful. And his own children, his own sons proved that.

I was preaching about sin one time and a reporter came up to me and he was so angry. He said, how can you say these things about people? And I said, first of all, listen to me. I am not saying these things.

I am reading the text. I am telling you what God says about the heart of all men. But why are you doing that? Well, let me ask you a question.

If I was a doctor and someone had cancer and I refused to tell them about the cancer that would take their life, would I not be treated as immoral, even criminal in my profession? He said, well, yes, but there's something greater than cancer in your heart. It is sin. And though you try to wash yourself with the strongest soap, though you try to purge yourself with fire, you will never be free.

From that sin, there is only one who can do it. That is through his cross, the cross of Jesus Christ. Now, if you still don't believe me about the content of your heart, then I'll give you a challenge.

Let's say right now that I could take out your heart, every thought you have ever thought in your life from the time that you first remember, even until this very moment, every thought that's ever entered into your mind. And I could take those thoughts and put them on a DVD and I could show them here tonight. You would run from this place and you would never show your face here again because you have thought things so vile that you cannot even share them with your closest friend.

As a matter of fact, you have thought things about your closest friend that are so vile that they would no longer be your friend. You know what I'm saying is true. I'm speaking to your conscience.

It's true. You see, when God testifies about a man, his words are true. You have to admit you would not want your thoughts exposed.

Now, would you want your deeds exposed? The things you've done in darkness when no one has been there, the words that you have spoken even against your closest friend, would you want that exposed? Now, I want you to think about something for a moment. You would do everything in your power to keep me from showing the film of your life, of your heart before these people, even though you know these people are just like you. If the thought of other sinful men knowing the evil of your heart bothers you, then what is it going to be like on the day of judgment when you stand before a holy God who has never sinned? This is what the Bible testifies about us.

Now, let's look in Genesis chapter 8. Verse 21, the Lord smelled the soothing aroma and the Lord said to himself, I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth. Now, this is not just speaking about the young, this is speaking even further back from childhood, from from even the point of being a mere babe. We can see the evil in the heart of man.

Why is it that you do not have to teach children how to lie? Why is it that you do not have to teach them how to manipulate? Why is it that you don't have to teach them even in their earliest years in primary school to create a pecking order and make fun of and hurt other children? They do it. Why? Because what the Bible testifies about man is true. Let me give you an illustration that will be appalling to you.

It will offend you. But it's true. Let's say that I'm holding a 18 month old baby in my arms and that baby sees my watch.

Reaches for that watch. And I take his hand away and say, no, is he compliant? Probably reach once again for the watch. And if I tell him, no, he may start squirming and moving his body and frailing his arms even in my direction.

I submit to you that if that 18 month old baby had the strength of an 18 year old man, the baby would slaughter me, take the watch off my arm and walk over my bloody body without feeling an ounce of remorse. And human history proves me to be true. Look at our history.

Look at what we've done. Look at what we do. Everyone talking about peace.

There's no such thing as peace. If there is a supposed time of peace, it's just that everybody's reloading. You know, that's to be true.

The things that we are capable of and as Ireland and England and Wales and the United States and the West moves further and further away from the Christian heritage and the Bible that created them, they become more vile. Look at the crimes that are committed in your own cities here in Ireland. Unspeakable things unmatched except for my own country.

Look at what we do. Look at what our children do to one another. And why? Because what the Bible says about us is true.

And the only way we can be healed is to acknowledge it. To acknowledge it. Now, let's go to Isaiah for a moment.

Isaiah 64 6. For all of us have become like one who is unclean and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment. Years ago, I helped build a church in a leper colony. Have you ever seen leprosy in its worst state? It's a horrible thing.

A body rotting, full of pus, blood, fluid. You can smell the person before you can even see them if you catch the wind just right. That's what he is portraying here about us before God.

He says that we have become corrupt in our hearts. And that is why even some of the greatest pagan moralists and philosophers have sat in silence in the dark, pondering the evil of their own heart and how they can escape from it. And most of them in their life.

Without hope, because no matter what they attempt to do to fix the evil in their own hearts and in the evil of their countrymen, they fail. Why? Our problem with sin is not just that we do some things wrong. Our problem is that we are wrong.

We are wrong, and that's why we do things. They are so wrong. We sin because we are sinners by nature.

And since it is by nature, it cannot be escaped. A coyote in the western part of the United States cannot escape from what he is. He is a coyote.

He is a scavenger. He kills. He eats sheep.

The same way we are sinners. In our very deepest recess, in the very heart of hearts, we are corrupt and therefore our deeds are corrupt. And this is the reason why religion cannot save you.

Good works cannot save you because you do not have any. Let's just imagine for a moment that we had a leper standing here. And we wanted to make him presentable.

So we go out here in Dublin and we find the finest store that sells cloth. We buy the finest white silk imaginable. And we take that silk and we wrap that man from his head to his toe with that beautiful silk and we say, look, we've made him presentable.

But only for a moment. Why? Because the corruption of the man's body is going to bleed through the silk. And the silk that we have wrapped him in will become just as filthy as the man himself.

In the same way, all our good works are like filthy rags. Do you understand that? Before a holy God. Now think for a moment.

The one thing the devil does not want you to do. Think, is it not true what I'm saying? Even some of the deeds that you have done, that people admired, you knew in your heart of hearts you were doing it for the wrong reasons. Secret sins, but not before God.

Let's go on. Go with me to the book of Romans again, chapter three. Look at verse nine.

What then? Are we better than they? Are the Jews better than the Gentiles? Not at all. For we have already charged that both Jews and Gentiles are all under sin as it is written. This is what God says about man.

There is none righteous. And then look what he says. Not even one.

I think if he had said, I think this is a perfect demonstration of the wisdom of God and his knowledge of human nature. If he had simply said there is none righteous, someone would have said, yes, I know. But he said, no, there is none righteous.

No, not one. The idea of righteousness in the scripture, it refers to conformity. To being conformed to a standard, having a straight line or a straight pole and having another pole right beside it, parallel, showing that the both are conformed together.

To be unrighteous is to deviate from that, to lack conformity. Another synonym could be used is twisted. We are unrighteous.

It means that we are twisted. Another word that can be used is that we are perverted. Another word that can be used is that we are dislocated.

That there is nothing sound in us from the top of our head to the bottom of our feet. Sin. There is none righteous.

No, not one. Go on to verse 12. He says, there is no one who does good.

There is not even one. Yet, if I go through the streets of Dublin, if it's anything like my own culture, I will walk up to person after person and ask them about their hope for eternity. And most of them will go back to the belief that they are somehow good.

Sir, if you died right now, where would you go? Well, I think I'd go to heaven. Why? Well, I've never killed anybody. You know, I try to be good.

Does our pride so blind us that we can't see what God's saying and what we know to be true? No, you're not good. You're not. You're just not.

Let me ask you a question. Adolf Hitler. Just think about that for a moment.

You know, at one time he was a little boy playing with his toys. You ask yourself, how did he become such a monster? The question you ought to ask is, why wasn't he more of a monster than he was? The question that you ought to ask even further may be this. Why am I not like Hitler? Or why am I not so evil that I make Hitler look like a choir boy? I'll submit to you the reason.

You judge Hitler, rightly so. He was evil. But the only reason that you have not made Hitler look like a choir boy is that the common grace of God has restrained your evil.

If he were to let you go, madam, gentleman, if he were to pull off of you, as I said, you would run farther past Hitler than any historian could ever imagine and make him look noble. You see, this is one of the hardest things for men to understand. And I don't think at times that preachers are clear enough when we talk about sin.

You see, if you're walking around here and you think yourself a good person, but you do not trust in Christ, you do not care about Christianity, you boast about being good and not needing a crutch, what you need to understand is if you do have any moral fiber in you, if there is any goodness in you, it is because of the God you're denying. He is holding you back. When I travel around universities at times, students will come up to me and go, what about the good atheist? What about the good atheist? And I always say, you know, could you give me that guy's name? Because I've been hearing about him all over, but no one, I've never met him.

Do you have his phone number? I'd like to talk to him. The good atheist. Well, let me share something with you.

Let's say that an atheist in Dublin understands that his enemy in London is sick and is dying. But the atheist in Dublin discovers that there is a medicine he can purchase at the cost of everything he owns to save his enemy. And so the atheist in Dublin sells everything he has, buys the medicine, swims across the ocean, walks all the way to his enemy, gives him the medicine, and he is saved.

Is that a good thing or is that sin? You say, well, it's a good thing. No, the Bible says it's sin in this way. God made you, and he made that atheist, and he made both of you for his own glory.

And everything that you do, whether eating or drinking, is supposed to be done unto the glory and praise of God. But God doesn't fit in this atheist equation. Another thing you need to understand is the only reason that atheist can do any moral deed whatsoever is because he is being restrained by the grace of the very God he denies.

And so this atheist will come under the greatest judgment because the good that he does, he takes credit for not knowing that it comes from the God whom he denies. You see, what you need to understand is this is a God-centered universe, whether you like it or not. It's not a man-centered universe.

It's not about you, regardless of what most contemporary preachers tell you. It's not about you. And if it was about you, it would be a hell on earth because you're not all that.

But if it's about him, if everything's about him, then there is some meaning in this world. There is some glory. There is some mystery.

Now, let's go on. He says in verse 19, Now we know that whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God. Many people believe that they're somehow going to heaven because they have somehow given some sort of acknowledgement to the Ten Commandments.

Do you not understand that the Ten Commandments were never given to save anyone? No one will ever be saved through the keeping of the Ten Commandments because they can't. If you're here today, you have broken every one of God's Ten Commands. You have.

And so the law does not serve as a purpose to save you. It serves a purpose in condemning you. Now, why is that good? When a man looks at the law honestly and realizes he has violated every one of its commands, it should drive him to throw himself upon the mercies of God in Jesus Christ to abandon all hope of self-salvation and look for salvation in the person of Jesus Christ alone.

That's the purpose of the law. You see, you and many contemporary preachers, they just want you to feel good about yourself. They want you to have self-esteem.

They want you to be full of you and proud of you. That's a dead-end street. That's a tomb.

God wants you to see what you are so that you'll come to Christ and in coming to Christ, you will be stored. So let me give you one example. So many people think that, well, I keep the Ten Commandments.

Would you keep them perfectly? Well, no, sort of. OK, well, let me ask you a question. How many times did Adam and Eve sin before they were cast out of the garden and the entire creation fell into judgment? Once.

You have sinned so many times that you couldn't even begin to calculate it on the greatest computer. So with one sin, the entire creation was cast into judgment. You have broken God's law more times than you can count.

Do you honestly think that you can be saved any other way than by a work of God through Jesus Christ? For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Now, we don't have much time for this, but let me just say this. What does it mean to fall short of the glory of God? Today, primarily, people say it means that God had this glorious purpose for man, but man fell short of it.

Well, part of that might be in the interpretation, but it's not the principal idea. Falling short of the glory of God means this. You were made for him.

You were made for his good pleasure. You were made for his delight. You were made for him to walk in love before him, to walk in obedience before him, and you have not done that.

You have not lived for the glory of God. You have lived for the glory of you, and the culture around you promotes that. Be all you can be.

Be everything that you can be. Be the champion. Be the first.

You're the greatest. Yet, the Bible says that everything we do, whether we eat or drink, we are to do it unto the glory of God, and I submit to you that's why you are so miserable. You see, you were created by him and for him.

There's a sense in which there is eternity in your heart, and nothing can fill it. That's why you find something in a catalog or a relationship. You purchase a new car or new clothing or this or that, and you have this desire that it will somehow fill you, but no sooner do you possess the object of your desire than it turns into gravel in your mouth.

It doesn't fill you. And so you look for something else, and something else. You're like an addict.

An addict. If you ever talk to one, he will tell you this. An addict, a person gets high one time, and then for the rest of their life, they're chasing that high.

More and more and more and more drugs, but it will not get them where they want to be again. You can be an addict in this materialistic age. I mean, think about it.

Yesterday, you were born. Today, you're 20. Tomorrow, you'll be 70, and then you'll die.

Man's days are like grass. It's the flower of the field, so he flourishes. When the wind passes over him, he is no more, and the place acknowledges him no more.

That's what the Bible says about you. Your life is a vapor. So what? You become the most famous human being on the face of the earth.

You don't care about famous people who are now dead. So what if you become the richest man on earth? All his money cannot pay off death. So what if you fall in love in the deepest sort of poetic manner? She is going to die in your arms one day.

Nothing will fill you but God in the person of Jesus Christ. Now, we go on. He says, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

Now, this is so important. Listen to me. Being justified.

What does that mean? Christianity is about a very important question. And most religions are about the same question. How can a man be right with God? Isn't this amazing? Almost all the religions in the world deal with this.

That ought to tell you something. Man knows he's not right with God. Even in religions that are not true, this concept of truth still hangs in there.

Men have this gnawing suspicion that they are not right with God. And so every religion almost in the world deals with this question. How can a man be right with God? Well, let's look.

Being justified. This word justified means this. That before the throne of God.

Although you are a sinner. And have committed sinful deeds before the throne of God, you are legally declared to be right with him. So he says being justified, being declared right before the throne of God.

How does that happen? As a gift by His grace. Now I want to show you something. The difference.

There's really only two religions in the whole world. Did you know that? A religion of grace and a religion of works. That's all.

That's all. Just look at it. And Christianity is the only religion that is a religion of grace.

You go to any other religion, I challenge you. And they will put you on some supposed moral pathway to self-improvement. So that somehow through your improvement and good deeds, you will please deity enough so that he'll let you into his house when he dies.

Christianity says, no, not at all. Let's say for a moment that we have a Jewish man here, Muslim man, Christian man. And then we have a radio interviewer who's talking to each one of them.

And first of all, he says to the Jewish man, sir, if you died right now, where would you go? He says, I would go to paradise. Why? Because I love the law of God. I've walked in the ways of the righteous.

I give alms to the poor. I am a righteous man. To the Muslim, sir, if you died right now, where would you go? I'd go to heaven, paradise.

Why? Well, because I love the Koran. I have been an obedient man to the Koran. I have made the pilgrimages.

I am dedicated to the prayers. I am a righteous man. You come to the Christian, the real Christian.

Say, sir, if you died right now, where would you go? Oh, I'd go to heaven. Why? Well, in sin did my mother conceive me. In sin was I born.

I have broken every law that God has ever given. And I am worthy of the greatest judgment. And right there, the reporter stops him and says, sir, I don't understand your religion.

These other men, I understand. They say they're going to heaven because they are good in themselves. Their own virtue and their own merit will carry them to glory.

But sir, I don't understand. You tell me that you're going to heaven. And yet with the same breath, you tell me you deserve nothing but condemnation.

How are you going to heaven? And the Christian says, I'm going to heaven based upon the virtue and the merit of another. Jesus Christ, my Lord. Do you see the difference? That is why the Christian is the only one who can speak about the assurance of heaven and not be boasting.

Because they're boasting in another. Because to become a Christian, they've had to already accept what they are before the throne of God, a vile, radically depraved sinner. But having no hope now in themselves, they have cast themselves upon the mercies of God in the person of Jesus Christ.

Do you see that? Now, he says here, being justified as a gift, this word here is used in another place in the New Testament where it speaks about the Messiah, speaks about Jesus, and it says regarding Jesus, they hated him without a cause. That's what it says. The argument is Jesus never gave anyone a cause at

all.

Hated. No cause whatsoever. That's the same word used here.

And what he's saying is you were declared right. Speaking to Christians, you were declared right before the throne of God without a cause. That means you didn't do anything.

It was not because of you. It was in spite of you. It was because of him.

It was in spite of you. You deserve condemnation. He paid the price.

Now, let's not be twisted here, though, because Paul will later go on in Romans 6 and teach us about regeneration, about the transformation wrought in the heart of a true Christian by the Spirit of God. And what it means is this. Yes, we are saved by faith alone.

It has nothing to do with us. But the one that God saves, he also changes and transforms so that that person is not the same person as before. It is a person who still sins, a person still needy of grace, but absolutely a different person.

Now, let's go on being justified as a gift by his grace. He seems to be redundant, doesn't he? Being justified as a gift, as a gift, as a gift, as a gift. You say, why is he being so redundant? He'll tell you why men hate grace.

Do you know what grace is? God's unmerited favor. Men hate it. Why would they hate it? Because they can't boast in it.

Men want to prove, no, I am a good man. God owes me. Putting themselves above God.

The only way for that man to be saved is to humble himself and recognize that everything God says about him is true, that he cannot save himself, that his greatest works are like filthy rags and he throws himself upon the grace, the unmerited favor of God. Now, let's go on. As a gift by his grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, my dear friend, listen to me, there are some words in the Bible.

When you say them, you ought to stop for a moment. And tremble. One of those words is redemption.

The only way that you could be saved is through the redemption worked out by Christ Jesus. Now, what is redemption? What does it mean to be redeemed? Redemption refers to the liberation of a slave or a captive. By paying a price.

You were a slave to sin. You were a captive waiting your judgment, a prisoner condemned to die. For you to be saved, a price had to be paid.

And that price was paid by Jesus Christ, God's own son on that tree when he died in your place. We're going to talk more about that in a moment. Now we're getting to the main part.

And just bear with me here. This is the most important part of the gospel. I would dare say that if you don't understand this part, if you've never heard this part, you've never really thoroughly heard the gospel.

Speaking of Christ Jesus in verse twenty four, he goes on to say whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation. The great Bible teacher and scholar Martin Lloyd-Jones translates this phrase displayed publicly as whom God placarded as a propitiation. What does that mean? You know how sometimes

you're driving down the road and you see these great signs, these billboards on the road, and they're put in a certain place for everyone to see them.

That's what the apostle Paul is saying about what God did to Christ. He placarded him. He put him in the very center of the religious universe on a crossroads outside that city, hung him on a cross for everyone to see.

Now, why was God doing this? It's whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation. In his blood through faith, propitiation. Now, don't raise your hand, but let me ask you a question.

Could you stand up right now and define that word? Let me ask you this. How long have you been a Christian? If you're a preacher here tonight, how often do you preach on this word? Because I would submit to you that I stand in a line of many theologians much greater than myself who would tell you other than the names of God, it's probably the most important word in the entire Bible. Yet you don't know what it means.

Propitiation. And. In in La Reina Valera, the old Spanish version of the scriptures, a word similar to propitiation is used.

It's propitio. And the word means in kind of an old Spanish, it means mercy. Said propitio, I mean, be merciful to me.

What is this propitiation? Propitiation. Is this. It is a sacrifice.

That is made. On behalf of the sinner. To satisfy divine justice.

To appease the wrath of God against the sinner and to make it possible for a just God to pardon wicked men. Now, herein is where I want you to really listen. Now, listen, this is so important.

Do you know what the greatest problem in the Bible is? Actually, do you know what the Bible is all about? Sacrificial system, Old Testament, everything. It's about one great dilemma. I call it the divine dilemma, a problem that seems to have no solution whatsoever.

The problem is this. If God is just and good, he cannot forgive you. That's the greatest problem in the Bible.

Some of you are saying I've never heard that before and I don't understand what you're saying. You will listen to it again. If God is just and good, he can not forgive you.

Go with me for a moment to the book of Proverbs, just for a second, hold your place in Romans. Proverbs 17. Fifteen, listen.

He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous, both of them alike are an abomination to the Lord. Now, let's put those two together. Now, listen, he who justifies the wicked is an abomination to the Lord and an abomination is about the strongest word in the Bible.

It means that that the person is vile. They are they are disgusting. They are unspeakable in their evil.

They are worthy of the ban of condemnation. Now, he says, listen closely again, the one who justifies the wicked is an abomination before God. You say, Brother Paul, what's the problem? Have you not been

listening to what we said in Romans three? Romans three tells us that God justified the wicked.

And yet Proverbs tells us to justify the wicked is to become an abomination before God. The question is this, how can God be just and at the same time pardon wicked men that ought to be condemned? Let me give you an illustration to help you understand this. Let's say that you go home tonight.

Your family's all at home and and you go home and you find them slaughtered on the floor and the murderer is standing over your last brother or sister. And takes their life while you're looking in a fit of rage, you run across the bodies, you grab the murderer and you throw him on the ground and you tie him up and immediately you call the police. The police come and they take him away and hold him there.

And then his day in court. This man who has murdered your entire family stands before the judge and the judge looks down at this man who was caught in cold blooded murder and says this, I'm a very loving judge. Your pardon, go free.

What's going to be your reaction? You're going to say this is horrid. This is not justice. You're going to you're going to write the authorities.

You're going to call on the prime minister, the government. You're going to write the newspapers. You're going to be on TV and you're going to be saying there is a judge on the bench far more wicked than the criminals he sets free.

Is that not true? Because a judge is to do justice and if God is the judge of all the earth and if he is to do right, the great question is this. How can God be just and at the same time pardon wicked men that ought to die? That's the greatest question in the Bible. How can he do it? And I've heard some evangelists say this.

They didn't know how wrong they were when they said it, but they said it. They look at a congregation and they say instead of being just with you, God was loving. Well, if you study classical logic, that means that God's love toward you was unjust.

That also means that there are inconsistencies in the very nature of God. My dear friend, God must be just with you and at the same time he can choose to be loving. But those two things cannot contradict.

He cannot pardon at the expense of his justice. Would you really want an omnipotent creator ruling the world who was not just? That would be the most terrifying thing you could ever imagine. It would be like giving Hitler the power of God and setting him free on humanity.

No, my dear friend, you want a just God, but therein lies the problem. That just God must deal with you. You are not just.

You have violated the commands of God. So what is he to do with you? I would submit to you that if God were to judge all of humanity and condemn the whole lot of us, heaven would still praise him because he would have been just. But heaven will praise him more because in his wisdom, in his love, in his infinite compassion, God has designed a plan to satisfy his own justice and to pardon wicked men.

And that plan is found in the person of Christ and the gospel. Man has sinned. Man must die.

Under the wrath of God, separated from God for eternity. To save man, another man must die in his place. The blood of bulls and goats are not sufficient.

A man must come who has lived a perfect life before God. But not only must he be a man, he must be more than a man. I have heard people say this.

They say, you know, God searched all of heaven and there wasn't an angel willing. To go and die for us, God searched all over the earth and there wasn't a man worthy to die for us, that's that's utterly absurd. My dear friend, you could empty heaven of all its angels and all of them could die and it would not be enough to save one man.

And if there was a righteous man on this planet, he could not offer his life for the others. The one who died on that tree had to be more than merely a man. He had to be deity.

He had to be God with the value of deity. One time I was teaching at a university and a student, he was kind of angry, stood up and he said, I've got a question for you. He said, how is it that one man can suffer on a tree for only a few hours and pay for the sins of a multitude of men and save them from an eternity of suffering? I said, oh, my dear friend, the answer I have for you is my favorite.

That one man dying on that tree could do that because that one man dying on that tree was worth more than all the others put together. You see, when we talk, when we talk about the the perfect sacrifice of Christ, we're not merely talking about his sinless perfection. We're also talking about his infinite worth.

That he has such a worth. You take everything that is mountains and molehills and crickets and clowns and planets and stars and all of humanity from Adam to the last and you put them in the scale, you put Jesus Christ on the other side of the scale and he outweighs them all. His worth, you see, that is why the Christian life is about a person.

The Christ. He must die and die, he did die, he did. Now here we'll enter into correcting a great deal of heresy.

And. Let me share something with you, you evaluate what I am about to say, determine in your own mind, orthodoxy, heresy, truth, false gospel. On the cross, while Jesus was on the cross, the father looked down from heaven and he saw the suffering inflicted upon his son by the hands of men, and he counted that as payment for our sins.

That's heresy, I hope you recognized it. My dear friend. If you're saved, you're not saved merely because of what the Romans did to Jesus.

You're saved because of what God the father did to his only begotten son. I submit to you, the gospel isn't preached much at all. He's hanging on a tree and he cries out, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? I've heard preachers say this.

God looked down at his son and he couldn't bear to see him suffer. So he turned away. That's not what Jesus said.

He's not saying that God the father lacks the moral fortitude to watch his son die. He says, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me, deserted me, abandoned me? That's what he's saying on that tree. Go with me quickly to Psalms 22.

We are coming to a close. Come with me to Psalms 22. Jesus, when he was on that cross, is directing us to this song and it begins like this.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Far from my deliverance are the words of my groaning. Oh, my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer and by night. But I have no rest.

That's his complaint. That's his condition. That's the state he is in, dying on a tree, abandoned of God.

And then he gives an argument in verse four. He says in you, our fathers trusted. They trusted and you delivered them to you.

They cried out and were delivered in you. They trusted and were not disappointed. His argument is this.

There's never been a time in the history of your covenant people, Israel, that a righteous man cried out to you and you did not deliver him. But I hang on this tree, your own son, and you have forsaken me. Why? It gives the answer.

Verse three, yet you are holy. Verse six, but I am a worm, not a man. When Jesus Christ was on that tree, he bore your sin.

Your sin was imputed to him. It was considered to be his and he was treated before the throne of God as the one guilty for all the sins of the people. He was singled out by Yahweh to bear the sins of his people.

Have you never read where it says? Cursed is every man who does not abide by all the things written in the book of the law so as to perform them. Have you never read that cursed? All of us under a curse because we've not obeyed the book of the law. What does it mean to be under a curse? Let me sum it all up for you.

It means that in our condition as rebels before God, we are so vile, we are so despicable. That when the wicked man takes his first step into hell, the last thing he will hear is all of heaven standing to its feet and applauding God because God has rid the earth of him. That's what it means to be under a curse.

That is you. That all creation, imagine this, when Christ comes back and heaven and earth is renewed and the great judgment throne of all men, if you are outside of Christ and you are standing in your own moral filth, that when you take your last step, your first step into hell, you will hear all of creation standing to its feet and rejoicing because you have been condemned. The Bible says in Galatians 3, 13, that Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law.

He made a curse for us. He became the worm, the thrice holy, the one that Isaiah saw in Isaiah 6, holy, holy, holy. He bore your guilt.

He bore your filth, your moral shame on that tree. And God the Father treated him as guilty. You see, we deserve to die separated from God.

Someone had to die separated from God in your place. And not only that, but think about this. He's in the garden.

He says, let this cup pass from me. Let this cup pass from me. Let this cup pass from me.

And so we have all these preachers saying Christ dreaded the terror of the Roman cross. I beg to differ with them. I don't believe that.

All the cup was Jesus Christ could look forward and he could see the Roman whip coming down across his back, the crown of thorns, the nails in his hands, so on and so forth. No. You're missing the point.

Let me give you a perfect example. Jesus Christ died on a cross after he rose again from the dead and ascended up into heaven. And after the day of Pentecost, we understand that for the next three centuries, at least Christians were nailed to crosses, most of them upside down, covered with pitch and set on fire to provide lights for the streets of Rome.

We also understand that those martyred Christians, that they went to the cross singing joyfully, praising God and offering thanks because they had an opportunity to die for their master. Are you going to tell me that the disciples of Jesus Christ were that bold to go to a Roman cross and yet Christ himself, the captain of their salvation, is cowering in a garden? What was in the cup? I'll tell you what was in the cup. The wrath, the holy hatred, the righteous anger of God against you.

I used a word there that bothers you, the holy hatred, God. I was preaching one time and a lady said. God doesn't hate.

God is love. I said, no, ma'am. God hates because God is love.

You love children, you must hate abortion. You love Africans, you must hate slavery. You see, my dear friend, if you love exceedingly.

That which is perfect and true and right and just and good, then there will be a righteous indignation, a hatred for all that is vile and corrupt, that brings death and disease, that tortures and mutilates the human soul. I want you to know something. There is a real sense in which God so loved the world he gave his only begotten son, but he gave his only begotten son because the world is under the wrath of God.

If the world flees to the sun, that wrath is taken away. But I want you to know this. If you do not flee to the sun, there is nothing left for you but wrath.

In order for us to be saved, someone had to die under that wrath. Do you understand that? Jesus is hanging on that tree, bearing our sin. And all the wrath of God against you for all your crimes was thrown down on him.

Have you never read? Listen to me. The testimony of scripture is that if you are condemned in your sin, on the day no one will vouch for you. But all of creation, heaven and earth will raise its hands and swear that God has done right by you.

But it doesn't have to be that way. Christ died in your place. This is what it means.

He stood in your law place. He bore your guilt. He was crushed under the wrath of almighty God.

It's as though he took the cup of God's wrath that was destined for you out of the hand of God and he drank it down. Every last drop of it. And he died.

And on the third day, he rose again from the dead. Now, what is the significance of that resurrection morning? It is this. Through the resurrection, God publicly declared this is my son.

And his death on that tree satisfied my justice, appeased my wrath. And now all men can be saved by repenting and believing in him and what he has done. And then, and then my favorite part, Psalms 22.

I'm sorry, Psalms 24. Christ, after his resurrection, showed himself to many witnesses. And then on the appointed day, he ascended up and was received into the heavens.

The old patriarchs, the old preachers, the Puritans even, use Psalms 24-7 as a description of that. Christ, the man, the Savior, for the glory of God, for you, for your salvation, he ascends up to the gates of heaven. And in verse 7, he cries out, Lift up your heads, O gates, and be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in.

And then in 8, all of heaven from inside those walls responds, Who is the King of glory? You know what I think they're saying? Who is this? Who dare lay his hand on the latch of this door? No man has ever come to this place. Who is this King of glory? And he answers back, The Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord, mighty in battle, Lift up your heads, O gates, and lift them up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. And for the first time in all of time, the gates were thrown open for a righteous man.

When he passed through those gates, oh, how I would have loved to have been there. You imagine all of heaven falling to its face, worshiping Christ. Can you imagine Him going up to the Father, treading the steps of that throne that an angel could not even touch, sitting down at the right hand of His Father, and His Father saying, Son, it is finished.

Father, it's finished indeed. And this same Jesus who ascended up will come again in like manner. And when He comes, He will not come as a babe wrapped in cloth.

He will not come as a poor man. He will not come as a servant. He will come as Daniel's son of man.

And He will call all the nations to judgment. The dead will rise. Though they try to hide themselves in the very depth of the sea, He will call them forth.

Though men try to hide in their own tombs, He will call them forth. And on that day, He will judge every man and woman for the things they have done, for the things that are written in His book of remembrance. Everything you have ever done, every thought, every word will be judged.

Does that terrify you? Good. Run to Him now. Make peace with Him now.

Kiss the Son now. Throw away all hope whatsoever. All hope whatsoever in your own righteousness.

It's like filthy rags. Throw away all hope in your religious affiliation. Throw yourself upon the person of Christ and His work on your behalf.

Repent of your sins. Acknowledge them. Mourn for them.

And throw yourself upon Christ. He's mighty to save. He's mighty to save.

Do you know what the most pitiful thing is about being a preacher? It's pitiful. Adolf Monod said this, Oh, the cross, preaching the cross. Because it doesn't matter how much you pray, how much you study, you can't even begin to describe to even one person the glory of the person of Jesus Christ and what He did for us on that tree.

It's a shame what I've done here tonight. An absolute disaster when you compare it to what really happened and who He really is. You think I'm exaggerating? I haven't even touched the foothills of who He is.

And I want you to know this. Everything God has ever done and everything God will ever do, He has done it for His Son. And your standing with God will not depend on your church affiliation.

It will not depend on some coat of righteousness you think you wear. It will depend upon your relationship with the Son. He who has the Son has life.

He who has not the Son of God has not life. What will you do today? Will you trust Him? Will you cry out to Him even now? Lord, save me. Will you seek Him? Because He will let Himself be found by you if you seek Him with all your heart.

Repent of your sins. Believe the gospel. Trust in Christ alone.

Oh, I have served Him pitifully for 26 years. But oh, what a Master. What a Savior.

So kind. So full of mercy. Those who are thirsty, come and drink.

Come and drink. Because there is a fountain opened up in the house of David. Oh, I have no bones about it.

If I could wrestle you all to the ground, tie you up, and drag you to Him, I would. But I cannot. I cannot.

Come to Him. Come to Him. You're a skeptic? I'll stay here all night.

I'll talk to you all night. You got questions? You need counseling? We won't leave here. We're not merchants who peddle the gospel for gain.

We're servants of God. Please don't leave here tonight without trusting in Christ, without loving Christ. The world, look at it.

What does it offer you? Father, I come before you and pray, Lord, that you would do a work in the hearts of men and women and youth and young. Oh, God, are you not mighty to save? You are. Father, give wisdom now to those who lead.

In Jesus' name, amen.

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