



Made Right with God-Part 4
God's Payment for Lawbreakers
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It has been said that one of the common graces that God has provided us as human beings is that, though we have the ability to recall the details of our past, we are not allowed, we are prevented from seeing the details about our future. And if you think about that that is a grace from God, no doubt about. It would be terrible to try and enjoy an afternoon today and how many peaceful times like this would be spoiled if we could see with any kind of detail the painful trials that are coming into our lives tomorrow. That would be rough. Or even just the practical matters of life. If you could see everything in the future to think to yourself about buying a new house or a new car and having just all the foresight as to everything that's going to go wrong and this is going to break and someone is going to, you know, rear end you in the parking lot here and that door is going to be dinged up in a week, it may be hard to know with specificity all those things that would happen. Or maybe more painful or most painful is to sit around at some time with your friends and try and enjoy that time knowing that maybe just in a matter of months or years that you would have someone there you trusted become a person that turns their back on you and walks away. That would be tough.

And if you think about that grace that God has provided us as humans, it's a grace that was not provided to Jesus Christ. Am I right? Jesus could see with crystal clarity everything that was coming. When it came to his betrayal he knew not only who would betray him but he knew all the circumstances that surrounded how Judas would betray him. When it came to him just thinking about his life, that last week on this earth when he would be so brutally killed, that he had that, I mean, in the foresight of his mind, I mean, from very early on in his life. He could say with precision that he had a mission and his mission was to die, die very young and to die a brutal death and he could come and say, "Listen, I didn't come to be served. I came to serve and to give my life." He knew he was going to die as a ransom for many. And just having that in your mind as the day drew closer and closer, what a burden that would be to bear because the God/man, Jesus Christ, knew all that was coming. That's tough. That would have been tough. It must have been tough. As our study in his life in Luke comes near that final week, one more time in this Gospel he speaks about the details of that final week and we reach it this morning in Luke Chapter 18 verses 31 through 34.

Now Jesus, as you turn to this passage, has alluded to his death in several ways and he's specifically spoken of, as the editorial heading might suggest above this paragraph if you have an ESV at least, an English Standard Version, this is the third specific time that he speaks about what's going to happen the week that he dies. But it's not that he hasn't referred to it, but here he refers with a kind of detail that we have not seen.

And he's about to get there. He's been through Galilee, he's spent time in Judea, he's been over in Perea on the other side of the Jordan River, I guess on this side for you, and he's going to come back across the Jordan, he is going to go through Jericho, he's going to come to Bethany, he's going to come to Jerusalem and then he's going to die there on that Passover week, being betrayed by Judas and turned over to the officials and be executed on a Roman execution rack. All of this now, he starts the detail with more specifics than we've seen in the past and I must say this isn't a happy sermon. If you came for a happy sermon this morning I'm sorry about that. This is not a happy one, as a matter of fact, it's one you won't leave feeling good about yourself. I know sometimes you want to go to a church where you feel good about yourself when the sermons are done and sometimes that's the case, I suppose. We talk about the blessings of God, our inheritance in Christ, the

fellowship we can have as Christians but this is one that reminds us that we're sinners. And without apology, I say you'll probably leave feeling bad about you, which is alright. I'd rather you feel bad about the sinner than the Savior because really it's about you feeling good about what God did for you. He is the deserving one and yet he suffered this terrible fate that he's about to detail to his disciples. And it's important we grapple with that because if we can understand these four verses in the New Testament, just right here, we would really catch the essence of what New Testament theology is all about. Matter of fact, to not understand this, which frankly we're about to read the disciples didn't when he gave this detailed prophecy to them, it's really to miss the whole of what Christianity is.

The distinctive feature of Christianity is to know what he's about to talk about here. As a matter fact, the crowning achievement of Christ, that everything is moving toward, the crowning achievement of Christ is a cross. Now I know you're probably immune to the shock and the juxtaposition and the hard contrast of those two statements, that the crowning victory of Christ was dying on a Roman execution rack. But if you weren't insulated from that and that was a new statement for you, that would be shocking. How in the world is this a positive? Oh, I know you know the formula, Jesus died for me and all that, it's a good thing, but this is a horrific thing and it's weighing heavy on his mind.

Look at it with me, verses 31 through 34 in Luke Chapter 18 as he describes it to his disciples. Verse 31, "And taking the twelve, he said to them, 'See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise.' But they understood none of these things. This saying was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what he said.

There are a lot of people who don't grasp what Jesus said right there. They don't grasp it today. But if you leave grasping this today, I think you'll find that these pericopes, these paragraphs, these sections that we've been moving through, this is the fourth of seven that we're looking at together as this series we call, "Made Right With God," it started with a statement that really was boiled down to one word that describes being made right with God and that's the word "justification" in the parable Jesus tells about the Pharisee who goes up to the Temple Mount and the tax collector. And he says, that tax collector who sat there, who beat his chest and wouldn't even look up to God, he wouldn't even cast his eyes up at the pillars of Herod's remodeled temple, he stood at a distance and he said, "Be merciful to me, a sinner." He prayed to God about his own sin and he was overwhelmed with that thought and Jesus said that man went home justified. Not the other guy, who was comparing himself, filled with lateral comparisons, and he just said, "Well, I'm better than the other guys and I'm really grateful for that." And then Jesus turns to the disciples, as we saw in that second section, that second pericopes, and he says, "You know, you need to understand that if you want to receive the kingdom, the only way you can receive it, you will never enter it unless you receive it like a child." And we looked at that statement where he not only values children, he values them in and of themselves, but he says that the greatest illustration you can have about what it means to humbly put yourself in the backseat and put God in the front seat and have him provide your needs for you. And when you say you want God's mercy, I said that unique word there, and that unique word, only used twice in the New Testament, is not the word normally translated "mercy" it's the word we see elsewhere translated "propitiation" that there is a satisfaction that solves your problem, that calling out to solve your problem is that childlike response saying, "God, I need you to fix this because I can't fix it myself by reforming myself, by getting better, by doing good works. You must fix my problem."

And then we were introduced last time we were together to the man who was the antithesis of all that. We call him the rich young ruler because Matthew, Mark and Luke all describe him and they all give him those characteristics. And in one passage and another, we piece together some kind of important, young, rich, influential kind of leader and when Jesus starts talking about his need, talking about the law, he says, "Well, I'm OK with all that. I've kept all those rules from my youth." Talk about not trusting in God to solve the problem, not looking to the satisfaction, the propitiation that was provided in Christ, he says, "I'm pretty good." Jesus, of course, calls him out masterfully on that as we studied last week. But after all of that it leaves us still with wondering how in the world can God justify the sinner? And so it's natural that we have in this fourth section that we're covering, the fourth part of our series in being made right with God, he gives us the answer and it's horrific when you think about it. Look at the words in verse 32 and 33, it's being mocked, being shamefully treated, spit upon, flogged and killed. That's the centerpiece of how you and I get right with God? And yet that's been the theology of Christianity from the very beginning. And it is the stumbling block, as Paul wrote to the Corinthians, the Corinthians were a lot like the Orange Countians. They had a culture where it was nice and sanitized and cleaned up and materialistically wealthy and they did not like the concept of the cross and there's a lot of people today who don't. They may have one on the building but when it comes to really looking hard at what that means, they struggle with that because it doesn't let them leave church feeling good about themselves. That's a struggle I know we all face and in a sermon like this, and I'm sorry if it's not the time that you wanted to have it, it's a time that we've got to spend today looking at what this all means.

Let's start with verse 31 and saying, I know that this is not something new to the New Testament, according to this passage, this is something that was written about from the very beginning. The Son of Man was going to be someone who has all these things happen to him: mocked, shamefully treated, spit upon, flogging and killed. All of that was going to be true including this bizarre turn around that he would one day rise again, just three days later. That is a remarkable prophecy but all those things aren't new, it's been planned. Taking the twelve he says, "we're going up to Jerusalem, we're headed to the Passover." And speaking of the Passover, we saw even imbedded in the Passover ceremony, that there would be some kind of innocent death for the guilty to be freed from their penalty. That's the picture of the Passover.

And as he goes up to the Passover with his disciples he says to them, "This is all the things the prophets have been talking about." He's been planning to fix this problem from the beginning and I'm so glad that word *hilaskomai* was used there translated "mercy." It's the word to settle the problem, to deliver them from the consequences, to satisfactory untie the knot. And God has been trying and seeking and planning and working toward the fulfillment of that from the very beginning. And I say the very beginning because the problem emerged in Chapter 3 of Genesis and even in Chapter 3 of Genesis, God starts talking about how Jesus is going to come, although the word is not used, Jesus, but through the descendant of the woman you would see in that scenario the crushing of the head of the enemy who caused this problem humanly speaking. And it would all be reversed because God was going to send a deliverer. We see that from the very beginning. We see it in the Passover ceremony. It was all God saying, "I purpose from the beginning to bring you a solution to your problem. When you define that, the Bible says that's the ultimate expression of love. Isn't that what the Bible says? I mean, God has demonstrated his love for us in this. I'm quoting now Romans Chapter 5 verse 8, "That while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." That's an odd thing but that is the expression that I want to talk about when we think about God leading up to the crucifixion of Christ on the cross. It may not be something you'll see on the cover of any kind of greeting card that has the word love on the front of it but that is God's ultimate expression of love and I'd like to ponder that a little bit.



Number one on our outline. Let us "Ponder God's Redemptive Love." You and I need to do that when we think about the cross. Not the kind of picture we want in our mind when we're thinking about God's love because in our dictionaries, if you look up the word love, you're going to have definitions like this, just right out of the dictionary: "Feelings of affection, romantic attachments, pleasure, sex, warm sentiments." There's the definition of love in our dictionaries, the definition of love.

In the Bible, though, is Jesus saying, "No greater love has anyone than this, that a man would lay down his life, die for his friends." See, here's the definition of love biblically, if I can summarize it, it's that when someone at great personal cost to themselves meets someone else's need. They see the need and they purpose for the good of that person to fix that problem and it cost them a great deal. As a matter fact, love is measured by the sacrifice it takes to provide the solution to the problem. That is love. That's how the Bible would define it. God demonstrates his love in that you guys are sinners, the Bible says, we have a problem and God says, "I'm going to send my Son and the ultimate expression of love is that he will die for you." Now, that may be a disconnect in people's thinking. Why does he need to die as an expression of love? Well, because, in the very beginning, he said in Genesis 2, "If you eat from the tree you're going to die. I've got a rule for you and the rule is don't eat from that tree and if you eat from that tree you are going to have a penalty and the penalty is death," which for us, we think about coffins and graveyards and that's death, but death is much broader than that. As a matter of fact, there are two things that happen when we think about death in Genesis Chapter 3. That is they reach out and they eat from that tree and that day that they eat from it, in that day, in that actual day, they literally died and that's clear by everything that happens in the context. And we're not talking about their biological cells shutting down. We're talking about the fact that their relationship with God was changed, radically changed. Instead of having fellowship with God, now, God, they hide from him. Now, God, they don't have a relationship with, at least not the way they had it before. They're ashamed of themselves and they're running and hiding. They, let's put it this way, relationally died. Death is separation. They were separated, just like physical death is separation. Your dog dies, the dog's body is there, but Rover is gone, he's separated from me. Death! That's what death does. Biological death separates us from the animated spirit of that animal or that person. The reality is that God said you will physically die, but let me twist this here a little bit for you in your thinking, that act of physical death was really an act of God's first expression of love in response to relational death. What? When you are separated from God relationally, you now have a problem that needs to be fixed. Sin has to be somehow punished. Now, if we punish you and now keep this relationship at odds, if there's always a chasm, a barrier, a wall between you two, then you're never going to have this made right unless somehow we can start over, we need a reset. And here's exactly what God did in his act of grace. "Don't let them reach out their hand and eat from the Tree of Life." Now there was a Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. That was the test of obedience, but there's another tree in the garden. "Let's make sure they don't reach out their hand and take and eat that, lest," here's how the Bible reads in Genesis 3, "lest, they live forever." Well wait a minute, you said that they're going to die. Does that mean you're going to keep them from this tree that was going to keep them alive?

No. The point was "You're relationally dead at the moment you ate of it. But now I don't want you to stay stuck in that mode. Matter of fact, here's an act of grace, let's make sure that we get the reset. Let's do something in human history where we can somehow pay for that reset. And then when we reset that and we revive you from the dust of the earth, what will happen in this, is you can be now in a relationship that is back to the way it was in the Garden. We can restore all of this. So let's make sure that they don't stay stuck in this relational death. Let's give them biological death that will give us an opportunity if I do something in the process, like this 'seed of the woman' in this old Hebrew idiom, and we raise up someone 'who will crush the head of the serpent even though you'll

bruise the heel."

That picture right there is the beginning of grace, including this little detail that's thrown in, and there's an economy of words in Genesis 3. You could have said a lot and a lot of questions we still have about it, but one story they put in the middle of all that is, here they are ashamed, and one of the weird things that happens is they're ashamed of their own nakedness, and God says I'm going to cover your shame and nakedness. And he does it with what? Fig leaves, right? No. He didn't do it with fig leaves, he does it with animal skins. Now, this was a real shock to the zoo-keeping vegetarians who lived in the garden, Adam and Eve. They, all of a sudden, now, we don't get the details as to what they watch, but God has to slaughter an animal in their presence and then give them clothing based on the skin of that animal. How weird is that? And here's the word, "To cover them." In Hebrew, that word "cover" is the root word of the word that's translated elsewhere "to atone", "to cover."

"You've got shame, you've got a problem, you've got something that reminds you of your death relationally with me. I'm going to cover that temporarily while we give you life for a period of time, so that we can solve this problem of relational death. Now, I've got to pay for it at some point. So then we can get you reset in this thing called the resurrection and we can get you back to a relationship where you need to be.

"Well, my relationship with God is already fixed. I'm a Christian." If that's the way you think, you haven't read the Bible carefully. No, it is relationally, forensically, judicially, legally fixed, I understand that. If your sins have been forgiven, you're right with God but your relationship with God is not what it will be. And the Bible has a lot to say about that. Even Paul, I think, had a better quiet time in his average Sunday morning than you and I do. Right? He knew God well. He had a good relationship and yet he pined away with the fact that "I just want to know him. I want to know the power of his resurrection. I want to see him because right now I see him through a glass dimly. I have a distant relationship with him but I want to see him then face to face." And he wrote often about the glorious revealing of the sons of God. When I'm reset in this thing called biological resurrection, I get a chance now to have the fullness of everything that God had promised to people in right relationship with him, the return to the Garden but something better than the Garden because there's now no longer a state of innocence but a state of redemption and in that redemption there's no longer opportunity for sin. And he says I can't wait for that.

We groan, the Bible says in Romans 8. I can't wait for that day when that is all fixed. Yeah, we have a foretaste of what it is, at least to not have the guilt we had before we were Christians but we should be waiting for God to finish the process of fixing the problem that he, by the way, had no obligation to fix. That's love when someone doesn't have to fix it, and at great personal cost to himself he sees a need and the cost is so amazingly high to fix that need and he says, "I love you. I'm going to fix that need." And he steps in, as he does in the Bible, and fixes it with these symbols of death and it starts in the worship center. I said it started just before they pinned all the requirements for the sacrifices. Here was the Passover, the Passover that Jesus was going up to commemorate in Jerusalem, commemorated something in Exodus 12, where they killed an animal after having it live in their home for a period of time. They then took that animal that all your kids were now attached to, your toddlers were used to petting at night and having in the home. It was weird, you'd pull in a blemish-free animal. But here it was in the house living like a pet and then you slaughtered that pet with your kids tearful about it. And then you took that pet animal, that lamb, and you plastered his blood, as grotesque as that seems, all over the doorpost of your house. So when the judgment came on Egypt and it should come on everyone, because it's not just the Egyptians who are sinful, the Israelites are sinful too. But if you were to do what I asked you to do,



then that judgment won't come on you, that angel will pass over you and you'll not receive the punishment that you deserve.

And so God said this is your one primary, fundamental starting point for worship with me, the celebration of the Passover. It's the first thing that's given to them and it's the time when Jesus is coming to the Temple Mount, and as Paul said, "He himself becomes the Passover lamb that is slain." As John said, "All the ceremonies of the lambs being killed were a picture of the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.

Leviticus Chapter 1 verse 4, the worshiper is supposed to lay his hand on the head of that animal as the high priest took the knife and cut its throat and the blood spilled out of his neck and splattered on your sandals and on your toes and your family stands at a distance watching all of this as you represent your family before the priest and that animal is to be accepted on behalf of your sins to make atonement for it, which of course the Bible goes on to continually remind us is not the blood of bulls and goats and lambs or any other animal. Matter of fact, what God needs is some kind of substitution. And though he's 100% opposed to human sacrifice, he was willing to drive the Canaanites out of the land for sacrificing their children to Molech, he starts in Genesis 22 by kind of playing out a drama that looks a lot like human sacrifice. He says to Abraham, "Hey, I want you to take your son, your human living son, your only son, the son that you love and I want you to take him up to this mountain that I'm going to show you." It happens to be Mt. Mariah. If you've been in our Old Testament Survey class on Thursday nights, you know that Mt. Mariah ends up being Araunah's threshing floor that David goes out and purchases on the north end of the city of David, that old city the Jebusites. The threshing floor where the breeze came through and could blow the chaff out of your wheat.

And because the plague was stopped there David pays for that piece of property. He wants to build a temple there. God says, "You're not building a temple there, you're a man of war, I'm going to have your son Solomon build it," and he puts an altar on that very place where Abraham had taken his son to go through the motions of a human sacrifice. The most awful thing that God would ban among the Israelites, don't ever engage in human sacrifice and yet he says, "Here, I'm going to take you through the motions of human sacrifice," which, of course, would have meant nothing. It would have been as useless as a bull or a goat or a lamb being sacrificed. Why? Because the imperfect, sinful Isaac could never in any way atone for the sins of his dad, Abraham. This was all just a picture to show that one day what I really need is someone who's going to live a perfect life, who somehow was going to stand in the stead of people who are sinful. As odd as that sounds, it has been the point, according to this passage, from the very beginning. That everything written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be, and I love this word, "teleos," it will be accomplished, it'll be finished. I know you know the perfect passive form of that word because you hear it from preachers and in your reading you'll hear the word on the cross in John 19 as Jesus, just before he breathes his last, the last word that he said was the perfect passive form of that word, teleos. It's the word, what? "Tetelestai". And he says, "It is finished." This is the word right here.

"One day, within a week or two, I'm going to go up to the Passover celebration. We've got a few things to happen before we get there. And then I'm going to be able to say, everything that the prophets spoke of is completed." That's the love of God in action. I know it's hard to see, particularly when we're looking at something as gruesome as a mocking and shameful treatment and spitting and flogging and killing.

But it is what the whole Bible has been trying to tell us from the beginning. "You have a problem, the wages of sin is death, I need somehow to get sinful people to be somehow substituted for by a

perfect person with infinite worth so that your sins can be blotted out."

Matter of fact, you read about it this week if you were in our Daily Bible Reading and I hope that you keep up with this in the Daily Bible Reading, if not, get on right now. You might as we'll get on now and finish the year out with us. We just read, yesterday, Saturday's reading, was Isaiah 53. Turn there real quick, call it up on your phone or your tablet or turn in your Bibles to Isaiah 53. Let's just read this real quick. Let's look at this passage and see when Jesus says, "All that was written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be teleo, it will be finished." It will be as he says in the perfect passive form, "It will be tetelestai in just a matter of weeks." Did you find it, Isaiah 53? Scroll back up to Isaiah 52, the paragraph that starts this in verse 13. It's an unfortunate chapter division there after verse 15, but look at verse 13. Let's get this started so we know exactly what we're talking about. "Behold, my servant," God says, "shall act wisely." Now, that's good because if you've been with us in Old Testament Survey, just this last Thursday, we're talking about all these kings, the kings of the north that are a problem that Isaiah is prophesying against, the kings of the south that are a problem and increasingly we see all kinds of things that are just absolutely irreversible, they are not wise leaders and yet, God's got a wise servant.

What kind of wise servant? Well, "One who is going to be high and lifted up and exalted." Wow! Really? This sounds like a great king, better than David. This sounds awesome. We need a king like that in Israel right now. What does he look like? He must have some regal robes and a great crown and a scepter, I can see it all. "Many were astonished at you," God says. This is great. I can't wait to hear about him. "His appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind." That's when you wonder if you skipped a verse. Right? What are you talking about? You got to servant who is going to fix our problem, you've got a servant who is going to be hailed as a great king, who's going to be high, lifted up and exalted. That's awesome. And now you're telling me this high and lifted up and exalted servant is going to astonish everyone, not because he's regal and powerful and awesome, but because he's marred, his face is beaten beyond human recognition. You can't even recognize who he was because he's so beaten down. What are you talking about? Sounds like he's beaten to the place of even bleeding. No, talking about blood, he is bleeding, verse 15. "So he shall," here's the symbol now, "sprinkle." Now think about this sprinkle. If you grew up in a church, a Lutheran Church, a Catholic Church, you think water, in the Old Testament they would take the hyssop branch, it's like a big, you know, bristly cauliflower, and you dip it in the blood of the animal and you sprinkle it on the altar, you sprinkle it there in the worship and that sprinkling of blood, as odd as that is, you don't want to clean anything with blood, you wouldn't think, but the picture is that blood is a symbol of what cleanses the guilty sinner. And here it is.

This person who is so beaten and so marred beyond human recognition, he is going to die and his blood is going to be some means of cleansing? "So he shall sprinkle many in Israel." Is that what it says? No. Many what? "Many nations." What? Wait a minute. I mean, the context of Isaiah thinking about the hope for Israel, the hope for Judah, the hope for the future of God's descendants of Abraham, and now you're telling me the nations? That's code for non-Jews here. What are you talking about? You're going to have this person who grows up as the key servant of Israel, high and lifted up, he's going to be beaten and now his blood is going to cleanse people from all nations? Yes, all nations. Not just the lowly, even the kings, they will be kings who have nothing to say, they "will shut their mouths because of him." They have no response. They have no excuse. There's nothing they can say. They start to get this, "for that which has not been told they see, and that which they have not heard they understand." And they will and some already do. And they weren't there to see, and as Paul said about the Galatians, "Whom Christ was crucified before your very eyes." Now, they didn't see it, but the preaching of the crucified Christ portrays in their mind's eye

the bleeding Christ on a cross. And here are even leaders who, at one point, have to cover their mouth because they have no excuse, there's nothing they can say, they've been told, they get it, and in judgment everyone will. The Bible says, "Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord."

Verse 1, Chapter 53, yesterday's Bible reading for us here at Compass. "Who's believed what he has heard from us?" Seems hard to believe? Why is that? "To whom is the arm of the Lord been revealed?" Who's he helping now? Who are the people who are helped by this? Well let's think about it. "For he," this servant, this wise, lifted up, exalted servant "grew up before him," before God, "like a young plant," that seems weak, not strong, "like a root out of dry ground." Oh, that's like the weeds that start growing up between the pavers in your driveway, that doesn't seem like something majestic or stately. No, he wasn't. Matter of fact, he had no form or majesty that we should look at. So this servant of yours, that is going to fix our problems and somehow going to solve our sin issues, that's high and lifted up and exalted, you're telling me he didn't look like a king, he didn't have any majesty. You can go back to the Old Testament and you look at the most impressive kings that are described in the Bible, they always described how good they looked, how tall they are. Saul, head and shoulders above the rest. Absalom, not a defect from the top of his head to the bottom of his foot. I mean these are the statements of Scripture regarding the majestic leaders, look at how good they look.

And we've got four biographers of Christ, not a single time do we have a mention of what he looked like. Now, we don't know the color his hair, we don't know the color of his eyes, we don't know how tall he was. Nothing. "No form or majesty that we should look at him, no beauty that we should desire him." I guess they didn't talk about him because he was not all that to look at. Well, matter of fact, people saw him and they would turn away. "He is despised and rejected by men." Matter of fact, he wasn't much for my joke book. Right? "He's a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Like one from whom men hide their faces, he was despised." Ever see someone at the store you don't want to see and you hide your face. I don't want to talk to that guy. That was Jesus. "Jesus? What do you mean, this high and exalted, lifted up servant. The one who solves our sin problem like the sprinkling of blood upon the altar."

That's him. But he wasn't what you expected. No form, no majesty and "we esteemed him not." And most people rejected him like the stone the builders rejected and yet "surely he has borne our griefs," we've had griefs but he seemed to take those on himself. "He carried our sorrows. There was something about our problem and he seemed to take that away. What's with this? It seemed like he was "stricken and smitten by God, that's how we esteemed him." And yet he was "pierced." Now there's an interesting word. Who is piercing him? Matter of fact, if it was the Romans who are doing it, that's one thing and I get it, although the Romans were not even known at the time Isaiah wrote this. But, the Jewish people would certainly stone their criminals. If he was that despised by the people of God, he'd be under a pile of rocks, he wouldn't be pierced. What is he being nailed to something, or is there some spearhead of some Roman spear? Well, that's what happens. "Crushed," it's what you do to bugs, you crush them, you kill them.

Now he was pierced though it wasn't for his transgressions but for ours, "he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him the chastisement," that means punishment, the punishment that I deserve, "the chastisement that brought us peace." I have a problem, the wages of sin is death. I'm a sinner, I need to be made right with God, I need somehow for my relationship with God to be made right. And now the punishment that I deserve that brought me peace was on him and his wounds, his stripes, the furrows on his body, the cuts that he has, "by those cuts, I'm healed."

This is not, by the way, about your physical healing. But the problem of an alienated relationship with the Creator, about a God whose arm is holy and strong, a just king and judge, and now I need that problem fixed. Then he gets beaten, he gets bloodied, his blood runs and his wounds somehow fix that problem? "Ah, do I really have a problem?" Yeah, all of us have a problem, verse 6. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we've turned -- every one -- to his own way," everyone. Everyone is a sinner. "And the Lord has laid upon him the iniquity of us all." Why? Because we all have it and all of our sin gets credited to him.

"He was oppressed, and he was afflicted." Yet, when he was being punished for all this, "he didn't open his mouth; like a lamb led to the slaughter. And like a sheep that before it's shearers is silent, so he didn't open his mouth." You get a dog and you corner a dog, he starts to growl, starts to the bark. You get most animals in a pinned situation where they fear for their lives, they're going to lash out at you, but not lambs, they're docile, they're stupid, you can put the knife right up to their neck and put your hand on their head like it says in Leviticus 1:4, they're just going to stand there. Sheep, they don't fight back. Jesus didn't fight back. In fact, one of the things that frustrated Caiaphas and Pilate is that he wouldn't answer the questions. He stood there like a victim.

Well, he stood before magistrates, verse 8, "By oppression and judgment he was taken away." I mean you had a court, it was a kangaroo court, but he went through all the motions. People stood there and accused him. There were witnesses called. "And as for his generation," what did the people who saw him think, what did the people of his day think? "They considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living." "This guy's dead. He's got no right to live." Stricken though, God's commentary, "He was stricken for the transgression of my people?" My people? That includes the nations and kings of other countries? That's how this started.

"And they made his grave with the wicked," that's how they planned it. You die a death of a criminal on a cross outside the gates of Jerusalem along the path where everyone can jeer at you and make fun of you and then you get taken to the pauper's grave, maybe thrown in the Valley of Hinnom and you rot there like a donkey's carcass, and that's the end of your life and that's what they assigned to him. He had a grave just like every other criminal. "And yet he was with a rich man in his death." That was a strange twist and it's funny that it's in the Bible. Here comes a rich man, Joseph of Arimathea, and says, "I want him in my family tomb." He gets permission to take his body off the cross and instead of going to that grave with the wicked, he gets his body put in a mausoleum for the rich. Although, this whole oppression and judgment that brought him there, "He'd done no violence." OK, well that's good, I'm glad he's not a insurrectionist, a murderer or some kind of conspirator, that's good.

"And there was no deceit in his mouth." Oh, wait a minute. We've already talked about it in this passage, we're all sinners, we've all gone our own way. There's iniquity for us all to contribute to the problem, yet this one, not only is he not a violent person, he hadn't had any deceit his mouth? I mean, any deceit ever been in your mouth? And if you answer "no" I've got a very recent example of how deceit has been in your mouth. All of us have lied. Matter of fact, the Bible makes that clear. Everyone has lied. And here's someone, never, no lie in his mouth. This might be the perfect one. This might be the equation that actually solves our problem. Yes, God says, "It is his will," verse 10, "to crush him." That's what you do to kill bugs, you crush them.

Who killed Christ? Some people made a big deal out of the hatred of the Gentile Christians toward the Jews. The Jews didn't kill Christ. "Oh yeah, it was the Romans, ultimately, their spears went through his side, their nails went into his feet and his hands." Yeah, that's true, I suppose they were the agency of it, but you want to know who killed Christ, it's right here. The Lord killed Christ. It

was his will to crush him. "He has put him to grief," not just death, to grief. He's made him suffer.

"When his soul makes an offering for guilt." Now, you're not raised in an Old Testament Jewish worship context, but if you were, that would just jump off the page at you. A person becomes a guilt offering? The whole point of Leviticus there at the beginning of that chapter, Chapter 1, you have the picture of what it is to offer a transgression or a guilt offering to the priest on behalf of yourself, your family for your own sin, and you never bring a person. That's horrific, that's Molech stuff, that's Baal-worship, that's not God-worship. And yet here is a person dying, a servant who's going to be exalted and is going to be hailed by God as great and yet he becomes a guilt offering like an animal. "And yet he shall see his offspring." How is that? What kind of offspring are we talking about? I thought Jesus didn't have any kids. He didn't, but like the Apostle Paul, he had several true sons of the faith, didn't he? And when Paul was leaving he said, "I fought the good fight, finished the race," I'm leaving you behind. He said goodbye to Timothy and Titus. He said I'm not going to see you here again, and yet, this one, somehow he gets killed and crushed, and yet he's going to see his offspring, his people, his disciples.

"You shall prolong his days." Now, that's a head scratcher. How do you have someone die as a guilt offering, no lamb comes back from that, no bull climbs off the altar after being a guilt offering and lives and yet "his days are prolonged; the will of the Lord," which seems to be more than just crushing him, "is going to prosper in his hand." So God's got a good plan for him? Yes. It says he's going to be exalted, highly exalted and lifted up.

"Out of the anguish of his soul, he," the Lord, "shall see and," these are key words, "be satisfied." "Hilasterion," that the word that's translated, propitiation, that concept, you want an Old Testament Hebrew equivalent of that? Here it is, "satisfied." There is an offering and when the offering is done, as it says in Leviticus 1, that offering will be given to make atonement for your sin. It doesn't make atonement, it's a symbol as the Bible continually says, it doesn't take away your sins, the bulls or lambs and goats and anything else. But, there is going to be something that is satisfactory. It wouldn't be satisfactory to kill Isaac for the sake of Abraham. It is not going to really work to kill animals for the sake of your moral failures. But, there is something that's satisfactory. There's something that would lead to God, not only the sacrificial lamb but the God who receives it, saying it is finished, acceptable, paid in full.

Teleo. Tetelastai. It's going to be done. He'll see it and be satisfied. "By his knowledge," his whole plan, "shall the righteous one, my servant," God says, "make many to be," here's a great word, "accounted righteous." That's how we started this whole thing. To be justified, I said, is to have the imputation of all that I need be given to me. How can I be made justified before it? How am I made right with God? God has to take righteousness and somehow say, it's now Mike Fabarez's righteousness. Mike gets this righteousness. How does that work? And gets credited. "Logizomai," the New Testament word in Romans Chapter 4. It is credited, it's an accounting term. Somehow I get righteousness accounted to me. It's what Luther, as long as we're talking about Luther, what Luther said, right? This legal fiction of me being accredited as a righteous person, though I am a sinner and somehow this is now assigned to me, credited righteous. How can I be righteous, I'm a sinner? Well, no, no, he's going to, bottom of verse 11, "bear their iniquities." I'm going to take them.

"Therefore," man, what a great transaction, I'm satisfied with the transaction, "I will divide him a portion with the many." Now, how in the world does he get the benefits of any kind of celebration on some satisfactory transaction if, in fact, he's been crushed and killed? I don't get it.

"He shall divide the spoil with the strong." That's what you get when you win something but you have to be alive to experience that. And it says, but yet "he's poured out his soul unto death." But because he's poured out his soul unto death, he gets to divide this portion with the many, he gets to divide the spoil with the strong. How does that work? Spell right there, if you will, "resurrection." Right? That's what we see going on in this passage. "Because everything written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished." And one of the things written about the Son of Man is that he will rise. He's not going to stay dead. This passage precludes it. It makes no grammatical sense unless I understand that that death was not final, it didn't hold him. "Yet he was numbered with the transgressors," he hung between two criminals on the side of the road outside the gates of Jerusalem and in that act "he bore the sins of many." I took them upon myself. And now that he's done and he's a victory, he's highly exalted, "He makes intercession for the transgressors." He stands before God as my advocate.

This plan, the redemption in the blood of Christ, "the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, he lavished it upon us, in all wisdom and insight, making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ, a plan for the fullness of time." I'm quoting Ephesians 1. The fullness of time.

Apparently Jesus said, it's the fullness of time. Not only this week when I'm moving toward Jerusalem, got to go through Jericho and into Bethany and then I'll get to Jerusalem and it's the right time in my life, but even the time that I came to this planet is the right time. Why is it the right time? Let me suggest versus 32 and 33 of our passage.

All that was written about the Son of Man is going to be accomplished and it is to be accomplished with some kind of death, that's described as a Gentile death. "For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles." Now this is the first time Jesus gets so specific that he says the death that I'm going to die is going to be at the hands of the Gentiles. Before it just made it very general. It's the elders and the scribes and the chief priests who are going to crucify me, they're going to betray me, they're going to speak up against me, they're going to oppress me, but it's not going to be them directly. They will give me over to the Gentiles. Why? Because the Jewish people could no longer, they no longer had jurisdiction to execute anybody. Capital crimes had to be deferred to the Romans, they were in charge. So the Romans had to do it and the Gentiles here, he makes very clear, are going to be the ones who carry out my execution. And it's going to involve mocking, look at it, shameful treatment, I'm going to be spit upon, flogging and kill me before I rise again. Five statements.

All of these statements, we understand now, they took place in the context of crucifixion. Crucifixion. Now about the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, and even back in Daniel's day, during the exile, fifth century B.C., we started to see, historically, at least our historians tell us, the rise of crucifixion. It was a terrible way to die, to hang you on a post or hang you on a cross. Scythians got really good at it just before the time of Christ. Depictions in history found in India as well prior to the time of Christ. But you had the Romans take it over just before the time of Christ and they, I hate to say this, but they perfected the method of crucifixion. And they involved all these things, it just wasn't about dying, it was about being tortured for a long period of time and then dying. That's what crucifixion was all about. And if you think about this, well Jesus died for me, you might even say, as I'm trying to pull the pieces the sermon together, Jesus loves me, God loves me, he died for me, and so I can be forgiven and if you know that, that's great, but think about what you're saying. It's not that his death was the thing. It wasn't like he just said, "OK, I'm going to breath my last." I mean, it wasn't like a spear through the heart and then he just collapses and he died for me. This was a long, torturous process.



When Ephesians 1 says, that all of this came together, let me just read it again, "The redemption we have in his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, he lavished on us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will" was hard to gather. The disciples couldn't even catch it in this passage. "According to his purpose which he sent forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time."

Let me suggest this. Your Sunday School answer, I'm not saying it's wrong, but the one about, "Well, it was the perfect time because the Roman roads, it enabled to take the Gospel everywhere in the ancient world." And maybe you really looked at, you know, some Sunday school teachers said, "Well, Koine Greek, such an exacting language, it was perfect, it was more precise, it was a perfect language, just the perfect time because Koine Greek and the Roman roads and all of that." Let me suggest to you that one of the things that God waited for was the perfecting of the most cruel and vicious way to kill a person you could ever come up with in the depraved humanity in the history of this world. Because it hasn't gone back to this. I mean this is not what's going on today. The process of torturing someone is exactly what God had to have happen so that he could pay the penalty for your sin. If you just put those concepts together, you've recognized where this sermon is going. And that is, that when it comes down to it, what Jesus experienced is what you and I should have experienced, because the things that he experienced, not him having his head chopped off or being hung or somehow being skewered or, to modernize it, being put in an electric chair or at a firing squad or having some kind of lethal injection, that is not what saved us. "By his wounds we are healed." It's the dying process. Did it have to culminate in death? Yes, absolutely. But it was a process in the fullness of time, partly the fullness was a method of killing people that was the most tortuous that men could ever come up with so that God could put his Son through that saying, this is how sinners need to be treated. And if you really want to, and I dare you to write it down, number two on your outline, I mean, let's just get really down to where the rubber meets the road, what really happened in this situation is Jesus getting what we deserved and you and I need to consider that. I warned you about this sermon. Right? Consider what we deserve. "No, I don't deserve all that." Really? Really. "Well, I don't. I mean, I looked in the mirror this morning, I'm not that bad of a person. I've got people who like me, and my kids think I'm alright, my wife doesn't think I'm half bad and I can live with myself, I've got friends at work who think I'm pretty cool, I'm sure God thinks I'm all right." Here's what the Bible says about sinners, let's just look at the list: to be mocked. "Well, God doesn't want to mock me. I mean, I may not be perfect and I'm not into Christianity like you are, Pastor Mike, but come on, God's not going to mock me."

A couple passages for you. How about Psalm 2. The Bible talks about sinners this way, that in their sin and rebellion, it says the Lord looks at them and holds them in derision. He laughs at them. That's a description of mocking someone. If you want the actual word go to Proverbs Chapter 1. That was Psalm 2. Proverbs 1 speaks of wisdom, personifying God's mind, and it says wisdom there is going to watch you investing in sin and starting to reap the calamity of your sin the sowing and reaping, and when you get there wisdom will mock you to your face. Mocking.

Now here is God saying, I'm going to take my Son and I'm going to have him mocked in a series of shameful and awful treatments and it will be my expression of mocking toward sinners, and I'm going to treat my Son as though he were Mike Fabarez and every other sinner I'm going to save and I'm going to now take what Mike deserves and do this to my own Son. Mocking, shameful treatment. Even the word shame often goes back to Genesis Chapter 3. Their embarrassment about their nakedness, which is a strange thing we could talk about for a while but that connection to their own sin.

Shameful treatment. Because of sin and it is such a shameful thing against the holy backdrop of



who God is, that God says, "You should be ashamed for what you did." Even like a mom saying, "You should be ashamed of yourself." Well that's shame, we need to catch it in such a visceral way that God says, it's like you being exposed in your nakedness. Now here are some passages for you, Jeremiah 2 says this: sinners ought to have, and he pictured it this way, the women of Israel should have their skirts lifted up and put over their head and caused to walk among the Israelites. Think about that. The exposure.

In Isaiah Chapter 47, that's the example. We just read it in our Daily Bible Reading, I jotted it down. It speaks of the nakedness, the exposure of nakedness, being the example of what needs to happen to people who are sinful. They need to be exposed and embarrassed and humiliated by their nakedness. I even just read one recently, since we ran across that in the Daily Bible Reading, I was reading in Second Maccabees when Antiochus Epiphanes, he has a commander who betrays him and he executes him, but before he executes him, he has him strip off all of his clothes and walk through the city to be shamed by everyone in his nakedness. Now there is a lot that was shameful about the cross, but one thing that was shameful that you and I never really get in the Renaissance paintings of Christ on a cross, or even the worst and most gratuitous looking, you know, depictions when Mel Gibson tries to write a movie and a script and has a guy get on made up and hung on a cross, there's still those nicely draped pieces of cloth covering his shameful nakedness, isn't there?

Now, that isn't how it happened. These Romans, they stripped their clothes off. They made them walk through the city naked. They made them carry the cross with their backs filleted open, completely nude. They were hung up and pinned to a cross and yanked into the hole in the ground and having their flesh in their rib cage yell in pain while they were completely naked, as mom and disciples and family members and people jeered at your nakedness. The shame of that. Bible says, "Sinners deserve that kind of shame and I'm going to make Jesus experience that shame." To have someone spit in your face... "Listen Mike, I don't deserve to be spit in the face." Here's what the Bible says, Deuteronomy Chapter 29 when it speaks of people who in that case and that particular passage when they wrongly accuse someone for their own motives and they do something that's nefarious by wrongly accusing someone it says, you should have the elders of the Israelites come and have that person stand before them and you are to spit in their face. This is an act of complete, utter derision to that person. Even back in, remember Deuteronomy when Miriam and Aaron were rising up against Moses, even that and Moses pleads for his sister and yet God says, even if she did this in a different context wouldn't you have someone spit in her face. That's a demeaning and degrading thing but that's according to what God says. That's really the picture and the feel before a Holy God that sinners should experience. And here's the thing, "I'm not going to have that happen in your case when righteousness, through the agency of humans, because I'm doing it. I'm not going to have that happen to you. I'm going to do that, though, to Christ. It's my will to crush him and one of the crushing things is not only a shameful, naked, completely embarrassing, mocking reality, but I'm going to have people spit into the face of Christ." And Jesus saw it coming. And the flogging, that's the next word there, "And after flogging him, they will kill him."

Isaiah 10. We had a lot of these references in our recent Daily Bible Reading and in Isaiah 10 it speaks of the rulers who were oppressing other nations and that those leaders should have their backs ripped open, they should be whipped. I mean there are lots of examples of that in the Bible, physical pain. Then he says, "I'm going to have my Son do that and everything written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished, and one of the things is before he dies, they'll be mocking, shameful treatment, spitting, flogging and then he'll die.

Now, that's not how we kill people today. If we're going to execute someone for their crimes, you look at John Wayne Gacy for instance, molesting all those little boys, killing them, burying them in



his yard, remember that in Chicago area? They executed him. They put the sodium pentothal in his arm and the cocktail of, you know, respiration medications that slows respiration and, you know, the pain killer and all the rest. But that was first, of course, after they hooked up the heart monitors and they had two doctors on hand, they had two clergy and that was after giving him a last meal, they always let them have, that's not just in the movies, you get a last meal. John Wayne Gacy, he ordered a bucket of Kentucky Fried Chicken for his last meal.

Or when Timothy McVeigh blew up that big truck bomb in front of Oklahoma, killed all those people, those kids in the daycare, just before they executed him, they let him pick what he wanted. He got two pints of mint and chip ice cream that he got to eat before he died. Then he was brought in on the gurney. And he was able to, like every other person to get executed in the modern day, they put a pillow under his head. He got to invite five friends. I don't know if they're friends, if you can invite them to your execution but five people you could invite. Of course the press is there to watch. You lay on a padded gurney and pillow under your head and then we try to get it to happen as soon as possible, as fast as possible, that's how it is even with hanging and firing squads and the guillotine and all these other..., we just kill them quickly. But according to the Bible, that's not the point of what God's will was for his Son, it was to have him suffer. All the feelings that we deserve to feel.

Ernst Holmberg in the 17th century got that very clearly when he spoke of Christ feeling what I deserve to feel. Listen to these words from his hymn. "Jesus, source of my salvation, conqueror of death and hell, thou who did my oblation," that's my sacrifice, "feel what I deserve to feel. Through thy sufferings death and merit, I eternal life inherit, thousand, thousands thanks to thee, dearest Lord, forever be."

If you're not as grateful for your salvation as Ernst Holmberg, maybe that's in part because we don't recognize that all that he felt was what we deserved to feel. "Jesus, source of my salvation, conqueror of death and hell. Thou who did my oblation, feel what I deserve to feel. Through thy sufferings, death and merit, I eternal life inherit, a thousand, thousands thanks to thee, dearest Lord, forever be." It doesn't make me feel good about myself either. But it does make me very grateful for the cross.

My prayer for you is verse 34, that you become the opposite of what's happening in this passage, that you get it. They didn't get it. Look at our passage, printed on your work sheet. They understood none of these things. This saying was hidden from them, not because God somehow said, "I'm going to hide this from them." I don't think that has anything to do with this. As a matter of fact, I think there are enough examples of them responding to this statement and other passages, say like in Mark, that they were distressed, or in Matthew 16 when Jesus starts saying, "I'm going to go be killed and I'm gonna be suffering at the hands of these people," Peter stands up and rebukes him and says, "Never, never Lord. It will never be that way for you." They didn't get it because they didn't understand. Their priorities were not God's priorities. They did not grasp what he said. I pray that you would.

Matter of fact, you need to pray that you would and I need to pray that I would. Number 3, "Pray To Fully Grasp The Good News." The good news isn't that Jesus is going to march into your life and set up this kingdom and everything is going to be great. That's what the Apostles wanted and they did not understand that you could not have the crown without the cross. They did not understand that you can have this triumph, you can have joy, love, peace, patience, kindness, get all of that, without the cross that makes you recognize that what you deserve, he was willing to suffer for you, that they needed that, you have to have that.



You can't have the blessing of God without the curse being removed and the curse can't be removed by divine fiat. You have to have some mechanism for that, and God has provided it with the mocking, the shameful treatment, the spitting, the flogging, the crucifixion of Christ. But they understood none of those things.

I mentioned Matthew 16, Peter rebukes Jesus. That's a strong word, saying, "Far be it from you Lord. It shall never happen to you. All the suffering with the elders, chief priest, scribes, killing, forget all that. You're not going to have that happen." And Jesus responds, let me read verse 23, "I'm sorry. I got carried away. You're right, I should be more positive." That's what Jesus said.

No. After Peter rebukes him, Jesus rebukes him back. Jesus turned to him and said, you know the words, "Peter, get behind me," here's a new nickname for you, "Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but the things of man." You've got your mind on the things of man. Let me suggest to you the reason the cross is not a frequent topic of discussion in churches, that really is more than a logo or a piece of jewelry or some kind of monogram on the bulletin, the reason we don't hear the teaching of the cross, the flogging, the mocking, the spitting, the killing, the torture that you and I deserve, that he was willing to feel what I deserve to feel, is because we don't like, any more than the Apostles did, the realization that the things of God require some kind of payment, oblation as put in the words of Ernst Holmberg, a sacrifice for our sins.

Our minds need to be on the things of God. If they're not, this will be an uncomfortable exercise in perseverance for you this morning. "Why are we listening to all this? Can't we just have a positive, upbeat..." I understand that we want that. But if this becomes something distasteful to you, not in the sense that it's distasteful as a topic because it is for all of us, but that I can't bear to think of that, I don't want to think of that, just give me the good stuff without the bad stuff, then I would say you fall into the category of what the Apostle Paul said in First Corinthians Chapter 1 and that is the teaching of the cross, the message of the cross, it's foolishness to the Gentiles because they don't think they really need all that. "I don't think God should spit in my face, I don't think God should reject me, I don't think I should be mocked, I don't think I should be embarrassed, I don't think I should be flogged, I don't think I should have pain from God. I like myself, people like me, God must like me."

Paul said listen, "I come and preach Christ crucified," that's what I come to do, "a stumbling block to the Jews and it's folly to the Gentiles, BUT to those who are called ... Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God." Here's the power of God: that your sin somehow can be appended to someone else so that you would never have to bear them. That the pain and anger that your sin should cause you are somehow transferred to someone else.

That because justice demands some kind of settling of the account of your moral rebellion that there is a person who suffered it all for you, and then, from time to time, you to put that reminder right in front of your face and say the cross of Christ was the crowning achievement of Christ, because that cross paid for my sin in full, as uncomfortable as that is, as bizarre as it is to celebrate the death and execution of someone, that is the thing we pin our hope on.

You've got to grasp that that's the good news of the gospel. We need the Spirit to do that, I understand it. The Spirit will come, as in the upper room discourse Jesus explained in John 16:8, to "convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment."



Think about that. What I want is the Spirit, but what I want from the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness gentleness. I want all of that. It starts with this: "conviction," that means I'm feeling it in a very poignant way. "Sin." Whose sin? My neighbor's sin? No. The tax collector's sin? No. My sin. "Righteousness." The standard that I fall far short of and "Judgment." Whoa, I don't even want to think about judgment. If you don't have the conviction of those three things we haven't even begun the Christian life. And once you have that spirit then you're able to, as it says in First Corinthians 2, to spiritually discern the things of God. A natural person does not have the Spirit of God, they do not understand them, they're folly to him, he's not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. There are a lot of places you can go and never hear this kind of teaching and it's unfortunate that there's still a cross on the building or there's some kind of statement in relation to Christ or deference to the message of something that happened on Calvary 2,000 years ago, but in reality, unless we come to grips with the cross, we can't celebrate the forgiveness or any of the goodies that God would like to bestow on his children.

It's a stone that's been rejected by men but I hope it's a stone that's precious in your sight, as it says in First Peter 1. I love First Peter 1, in particular after I read Luke 18, because I realize the one who didn't get it in this passage is extolling the virtues of the rejected Christ in First Peter. He understood that God's payment for law breakers had been made. You hear a message like this I guess you can say, "Well, this is good for the non-Christian. I hope the non-Christians are listening." And I do too, I really do. I hope the non-Christian in the room, if God has been working on your heart and you're ready to respond. You don't need an aisle, you don't need a hand up, you don't need to sign a card, you don't need to come forward, you just need to do business with God, and like the tax collector, you need to say, "Have mercy on me, a sinner, solve my problem. Christ, solve it." Turning to Christ with that penitent faith is what you need to do.

But if you're a Christian and you say, "Listen, I've checked the box, I know that I know that I know that I'm right with God. "And I know what you're going to say, Pastor Mike, well then you need live thankfully." And, I mean, you don't need a preacher to tell you that. I hope you recognize one of the most natural applications of a passage like this is Be Thankful For The Cross.

Let me challenge you to go a step further. One of the greatest summations of all that we just read in Isaiah 53, is the statement in Second Corinthians Chapter 5 that says, "God made him to be sin, the one who knew no sin," innocent, no deceit even in his mouth, "so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." I need to be right with God, so God made him, he didn't know any sin, to be sin. God treated him like he was me, so that I might come away from that transaction being just like the righteousness of Christ, the righteousness of God. Do you know the verse that precedes that? It speaks to our role in this world. You are ambassadors of Christ as though God were making his appeal through us. It's such a great message and for those who know it and are thankful for it, the application in Second Corinthians 5 is, "Man, are you representing it to the world?"

If I say the word Salvation Army, I wonder what you think of. If you're like me you might think of an old second hand shop with rows of old clothes for sale really cheap. Or maybe you think of the red kettle and the bell ringer at Christmas in December. Or speaking of Christmas and the Salvation Army, maybe you think, "Hey, my kids don't want my old sofa but I can take it down to Salvation Army and I can get a good write-off on my taxes. Or speaking of the end of the year maybe it's Rose Parade. That's when you think of the Salvation Army because you've got those old guys who still want to be in a marching band who dress in those red outfits who march down Colorado Avenue, the Salvation Army band, maybe you think of that.

One of those things or what you think of when you think of the Salvation Army, you're not thinking



of the Salvation Army the way that the founder wanted you to think about the Salvation Army. William Booth started the Salvation Army in 1860s in London. He started because he was a zealous evangelist. He wanted nothing more than to raise up a group of people who would so be zealous about the salvation message of the good news of the gospel, the mercy found in Christ, that they would be mobilized to march on the streets, not with instruments, not with red buckets and kettles and bells, but to have people represent the good news of the gospel to a lost world.

If you do a little research on what happened and the catalyst for his thinking, part of it was the fact that London was growing at a record rate in terms of population. In 1860s it had finally reached about, the demographers say, just over three million people in the Greater London area. When I read that I thought, man, how ironic. I mean, I always think of the masses here in Orange County, that's just right where our population is, just over 3 million people. And as he sees all these people massing into his backyard, he really wants them to hear the message of the Gospel. And instead of saying, "I'm to go out every day and just win people to Christ," he says, "When are the people going to be mobilized to hear the call to be ambassadors of Christ, who understand this transaction of the cross." And he got the response I get all the time, "That's not my calling. I'm just my prayer warrior. I'm not real good with people and when I bring up religion and politics people get mad, I just don't wanna talk about it." Well here's his writings in response to that: "Not called," not called to share the gospel? "Haven't heard the call?" Well then, here goes, "Then put your ear down to the Bible, and hear the Lord bid you to go and pull sinners out of the fire of sin. Put your ear down to the agonized heart of humanity." Those that are starting to recognize, like the tax collector, that they are sinners in need mercy.

Listen to this: "Go stand by the gates of hell and hear the damned entreat you to go to their father's house and bid their brothers and sisters not to come there. Then look to Christ, look him in the face -- whose mercy you profess to obey -- and tell him whether you will join heart and soul and body and circumstances in the march to publish his mercy to the world." Now we need leaders like that.

He says, you know what we really need? We need an army of workers to take the message of the gospel to people who really understand the cross isn't a logo, the cross is not just some, you know, sad thing that we think about during the Lord's Supper. This is what it is all about. The need of sinners to come to the cross and have the transaction of substitutionary atonement apply to their lives. We need a Salvation Army to take the message to people, to neighbors, to coworkers. I don't think I get through three sermons in a month without, at some point, bringing up that call in your life. But if you haven't responded recently to that exhortation from the platform to be a fisher of men and women, to go out with the message of the gospel, maybe it's time for you to put your ear to the Bible, put your ear to the agonizing of those who know they've reached the end of their rope when it comes to sin. Or as he said so poignantly, "Listen from the gates of hell to the damned, who say and entreat you to go to their father's house to bid their brothers and sisters not to come there." And if all else fails, "Look to the face of Christ, whose mercy," Booth says, "you claim to obey and tell him whether or not you're willing to put your all on the line to share the message of the gospel with friends and neighbors, to take the message of hope, of mercy to the world." I hope you're willing to do that.

Let's pray. God. we need that now more than ever in a day when we're, at least in this country, reaching a period of time we've not seen before of hostility against people who are going to speak up about Christ. The things I've heard this week, kids in our church not even able to have their teachers let them pick Christ as their hero. That's just too offensive to the other students.

People that won't be allowed in school to write about the Bible because it's too divisive. Oxford



University freshman not able to have people join their Christian club because it might offend other people. God, in a day where people have fallen to the lie of the enemy to insulate themselves from the message of life, how ironic, how the demons must laugh at the way that they are trying to keep us from speaking up about the truth and how, unfortunately, many of us are far too docile and lean. We roll over and say, "I guess I'll be quiet about that. We'll talk about it at church on the patio but not at work." God help us please to be revived, to hear the voice of our Savior who says to us that he went to be shamefully treated, to be mocked, to be spit upon, to be flogged and killed so that we might be forgiven. And while we may have ours, we may say we're saved, we know that we're saved, we have neighbors and friends who aren't.

So God allow us to have the courage to speak up this week, to tactfully, diplomatically bring the message and words of life to more people. God revive us, our country is never going to get back to where it needs to be in terms of the spiritual vibrancy we once had, unless we're willing to speak up as your ambassadors. And God, all that said, that's important, but it's not as important as the few that may be here being convicted by your Spirit about their own sin. Let them call out to you today, I pray. May their lives be changed, may we hear about their testimony from the baptismal tanks in the future as they talked about the fact they've been convicted of sin, righteousness and judgment. They put their trust in you fully, like a child in the back seat saying, "Take us to safety." Trusting you like a tax collector on his temple mount saying, "I realize I'm a sinner, what I need is mercy." God, please do all this, I pray, for your glory and your good and the strength of your church and the good of the society in which we find ourselves in. Revive your church, revive our hearts. Thank you for getting us through this sermon. It makes us think poignantly and soberly about the truth of our need that was met in Christ on the cross. Thank you for it.

In Jesus name, Amen.