



No Greater Love-Part 4 The Price of Forgiveness Pastor Mike Fabarez

Well I wonder if you've ever been punched in the nose. There's a nice memory, Pastor Mike, thanks. No, no. Maybe it wasn't a fist. Maybe it was like a soccer ball when you were a kid getting kicked right into the middle of your face. Maybe that was the experience you had. Maybe you were playing basketball, yeah, under the rims, somebody got an elbow up against the side of your head, or maybe you tripped and fell on your face, literally fell on your face and hit your face on the ground. I mean, there's nothing like the experience of getting clocked in the head really hard. Right? I mean that experience of your eyes watering up and your ears start to ring and you start to see that kind of digital fuzz, you know, of pink and black. It's awful, your brain starts to throb immediately. It's a really horrible experience. It's one thing when it's an accident and someone kicks a ball in your face. Now it's kind of a whole other level of horror when someone is doing it on purpose. I mean, some of us have had the experience of being, you know, physically, violently beat in the face and that's rough. I mean, I remember my most memorable beating of fist to the face. It came from the fist of a professional golfer, believe it or not, a PGA Tour winner. I'm not kidding. I stood in the middle of the street and he started wailing on me. We were having a dispute about the borders of our bike Hide-and-Seek, bike ditch-em we called it, we were in elementary school, before he was on the tour. We were just kids.

But even then he had a great swing. He just right up into my face and we were so angry at each other, went to blows there, dropped our bikes, you know, our Schwinn bikes and went at it. And I remember the feeling, I can still feel and kind of remember just what a just a jarring feeling to get knocked in the head. Now, you know, being elementary school boys, sixth graders or whatever we were, you know, we made up real quick, got back to playing games and it was, you know, on with the afternoon.

Now I don't mean to make light of getting punched in the face because I know some of you, unlike me, have been punched in the face in a violent assault by an adult and that, I mean, that's a whole another ballgame. I mean that's atrocious, it's a horrific experience. Maybe some thug, some criminal comes up in some situation, you got mugged or something, I don't know, that is really, really tough. It's even tough to see it or to witness it. I mean, you know, if you're weird, you're going to watch those videos of people getting smacked on the Internet. You get a visceral reaction to that kind of thing. It's unpleasant.

But as unpleasant as it is to watch something like that, that is God's will for your life this morning, to watch the beating of Jesus Christ as we go verse by verse, line by line, through the Gospel of Luke. We've reached Luke Chapter 22 verse 63 and in verses 63 through 65, we encounter the historic scene, the recounting and the narrative of Christ being beaten in the face. That's a tough thing for us to read. It's a hard thing for us to study. It's really a challenge and I risk offending you this morning by spending our entire time of studying God's Word by looking at these three verses where Jesus is being beat up. But I want you to take your Bibles and look at it because this is important for us to understand.

I think the first observation about this situation is we see going from the Garden and we're heading to the Cross. We've gone from Thursday night in the prayer garden there and, "Not my will but yours be done," the guys show up, these temple officials, you got Roman soldiers who are soon

going to be handed off to this terrible horrific violent scene of beating on Christ. It's right before he goes to Pilot and Herod and all the rest who will study in Chapter 23. But this particular scene reminds us that Jesus didn't come to be executed. Of course he was executed on a Roman execution rack, but it was all these things leading up to it, the culmination of Christ's redemptive work included a beating, a physical corporal beating, of violence being done to his body. I mean, of course we went on to, as we'll see, the whipping by the Roman soldiers, but it's starting with a beating. It's not with him putting his dukes up in the middle of the street in his childhood neighborhood. This is him with his hands tied behind his back and, as we'll see in the middle of this passage, being blindfolded while people take shots at him, strong Temple guards beating on him. And it reminds us that the death of Christ, it involves all this physical pain. He wasn't beheaded, he wasn't hung by a rope on the gallows, which they could have done. I mean they did kill people that way in old times. But, this was a torturous, humiliating experience. And as unpleasant as it is here on a Sunday morning in an air-conditioned building, I think it's important for us to stop and to look at this and to understand it and to take it in as uncomfortable as it is and try to understand how this fits in what Christ said would happen to him.

So take your Bibles if you haven't already and look with me at Luke Chapter 22 versus 63 through 65, three short verses, about all we can stomach this morning of the abuse of Jesus Christ. Look now in verse 63. I'll read from the English Standard Version as the text reads that, "The men who were holding Jesus in custody, they were mocking him as they beat him." Humiliation, physical, violent attack. "And they also blindfolded him," verse 64, "and kept asking him, 'Prophesy! Who is it that struck you?'" "Oh, Mr. prophet, that's what they say you are. Let's put this bag over your head. Let's put this cloak over your face and let's just see if, you know, who was it? Was that Rufus, Antonio? Who was it that just hit you? Tell us Mr. clairvoyant." And they said in verse 65, "They said many other things against him, blaspheming him." That's an interesting phrase, blaspheming him.

And that's enough for us to try and figure out this morning and the first thing we need to figure out when we look at a passage like this in verse 63 is why in the world is he being beaten? What's that all about? And you've got to see it through the proper lens because, unfortunately, there's a lot of liberals, who don't even know they're theological liberals, who look at a passage like this and they've been conditioned by theological liberals and theologically liberal pastors and simply see in this passage, all they see is a cruel injustice done to an innocent person. That's what they see. That's what they read, that's what they see. Now that's certainly there. Right? You see the innocent Son of God having this cruelty and this injustice done to him, and they see that and that's all they see, and really the death of Christ becomes that. Here's an example of an innocent person being cruelly and unjustly treated and therefore go out and make sure that doesn't happen in your society, don't let it happen in your family, don't let it happen in your neighborhood. You go out and preach the good news of the Gospel based on what we learn from the crucifixion and don't be unjust or cruel to the downtrodden or the vulnerable or the innocent. Stop, don't do that. And if you do that good stuff, then you've done the essence of Christianity. Well, Christ didn't leave us that option.

When Christ turned his attention toward Jerusalem, and he said, "I'm going to Jerusalem and I'm going to be beaten, they're going to spit upon me, they're going to mock me, they're going to flog me and they're going to kill me." That's what he says in essence, that's the summary from Luke 18. "I'm going to go to Jerusalem these things are going to happen to me." It was always put in the context, it was always given to us to be seen through the lens that he was coming to do something as it relates to our redemption. Here's the word, if you don't know any other passage, I suppose, from Christ's ministry, you'll remember this quote when he said, "The son of man," referring to

himself, back from Daniel 7, "I didn't come to be served." Right? Certainly not in the first coming. "But I came to serve and to give my life a..." you know the next word, "ransom, a ransom for many."

Maybe like me you like to put in, you know, the cool dimmer switches in your house. Now they're all electronic and one of the companies that does it is the Lutron Company, which I think is a mishmash of the word like "illuminates" and "tron" like electronics. But they smashed together two English words, I'm thinking, I have to ask the company spokesman, but in doing that what they inadvertently have done is they gave us the exact same transliterated spelling of the key word in that verse, and that's the word "lutron." The Lutron switch you have in your house, next time you see the Lutron switch, just know that's the word "ransom" in Greek, lutron. Why is that important? Well, we only see it twice in the New Testament but we see another word, that's the root word, that's built on that word that you see all the time, and you say it all the time if you have any biblical ease at all and you talk about biblical terms. It's the word, you put an "apo" in front of it, "apolutron" and what you have then is the word "redemption." We talk about the redemption of Christ. Redemption. Redemption is that you are purchased out of some bad situation by someone paying a lutron, paying a price. Christ said, "I've come so that I could be a lutron," a price, a payment, so that you would no longer be in a perilous situation. You could be redeemed. You could be freed from that.

Now, of course in the Bible, we understand that the problem that we have, it's been said to us from the very beginning, you have a sin problem. And in that sin problem the wages of sin are all these things you could put under the rubric or the banner or the umbrella of this word "death." It's all these negative things. It's all these painful things. All of that bad that comes from your sin, that's the problem. You are in a perilous situation. That is the captivity that you have. You are a slave to sin. The law, as it says, of sin and death, the wages of sin is death. If you do this you're going to have a lot of trouble because God, the holy God, cannot bless you. Unfortunately, he must curse you and there must be penalty for that. But here's the news, you can be redeemed from that. How? Well, God can forgive you. Well how does that work? There has to be a lutron, there has to be a payment. And Christ said, I'm going to Jerusalem so that I can be that payment. It was the whole point of the Old Testament prophecy that one day there would be a suffering servant, not the servant with the crown on his head, but a suffering servant, who would give his life as a payment for many, that he would bear the iniquities of the people of God. And that he would be punished so others wouldn't have to be punished.

Now you could walk in the door one by one this morning and I could say, "Wait. Stop. Pastoral question, theological question, for you." And if I ask you, "Wait, before you come into church I just want to know this: Did Christ die for your sins?" I think most people would say, "Yeah. I agree with Christ died for me. Christ died for my sins."

But you see what you need to understand is it wasn't an execution, a beheading, a hanging. It wasn't that they just threw him over a cliff and he fell and died. He was tortured, humiliated, whipped, beaten, spat upon and he died. All of that, the Bible would say, was the lutron for your sin and for my sin. That necessitates something that's a stumbling block for you. It's bad enough for us to focus on the beating of Christ this morning. But even worse is to put it in its proper theological context, which is this: that that's the punishment that you deserved. You want to know why the cross is a stumbling block to people, as Paul said in First Corinthians 1, because they don't think they deserve any of that. That's the problem. It's bad enough you invite your neighbor to church this morning and he hears me talking about, "Well, let's just focus on the beating of Christ." It's worse that I'm saying that's the beating that you deserve.

So let's start with that, verse 63. He's being mocked and beaten. I want you, in that simple verse, to stand back and make this observation. Number one, you need to "Consider the Demands of Justice," the demands of justice. Sin demands some kind of response, a response of a guilty person incurring the penalty for their sin. The demands of justice. That is what we deserve. And I know that it's very hard for us. Hard for us to imagine, particularly when we want to put it in some context of someone being physically beaten.

Now I know we're too sophisticated for this because we carry around smartphones in our pockets and all that. But you do understand that there's something so visceral and basic and fundamental to the virtue that you and I carry around, it's called that concept of justice that we rightly understand, that this bad, immoral, difficult thing that someone's done to the egregious response of someone else. In other words, we've done wrong, some bad thing that's happened, what we deserve is bad in response. You deserve to feel bad and you deserve bad things that happen to you. That kind of quid-pro-quo, that kind of you've done bad, and this needs to happen. That's a sense of justice. To make it right, you should be punished for that.

And when you put it in terms of someone being whipped and you're picturing Mel Gibson's *Passion of the Christ* and you think about it that way, it's one thing when you know Hollywood makeup artists are making that all happen. But if you go on YouTube this afternoon and you just punch in, even for, you know, censored, mild mannered YouTube. Right? This is not just the wild west of the open Internet. And you just punch in something about caning, or something about whipping or something about it. Put this in, put in Singapore rape and whipping or beating. You'll find videos out there, as unpleasant as it is, of people today in a court situation with guys in uniforms, there's one in Malaysia that I watched as uncomfortable as it was, and a man gets strapped to a post. He's being punished for rape. And then what they do is they take his pants down and they strap his hips to this pole and he hangs there while guys in uniform have given him the sentence of so many lashes to his naked posterior end. And it is brutal to watch.

Matter of fact, you're going to have the response, I'm assuming, unless you're some kind of masochist, you are going to look at that and you go, "That is awful. That's gross. That's awful." You're going to be saying in your gut that... you'll have this visceral reaction of, "Stop. Oh, stop!" And you'll see him start to bleed, you'll see the flesh start to splay, you'll start to say, "I can't take this anymore. I don't want to see it anymore." You want it to stop.

Unless, of course, that naked posterior end was raping your daughter or raping your wife or raping your mother or your sister. And then you're saying, "This is a whole different experience." Then you're saying, "You know what? That's what he deserved. As a matter of fact, even worse." Even as they methodically whip this rear-end with a guy screaming in pain, you're going to say, "Faster, more, harder." Right? I know that you think this at the core of your being reflecting something fundamental called justice, because you go pay 10 bucks to watch movies of people with these, you know, *Robocop* and *Terminator* and anything Bruce Willis has ever done, all these movies that you watch. You're eating handfuls of popcorn wanting the bad guy to get his. I know you. I know you. You're like when the bad guy gets it and there's blood and it's bad you go, "Yeah!" You know what that is? That's a sense of satisfaction that the bad guy got what he deserved.

Now, of course, the script and Hollywood's trying to make it clear, "Hey, this is the bad guy." And so when the good guy beats him up, cuts him up, kills him, shoots him, falls to the ground bleeding, you're going to go, "Yeah!!!!" Sometimes you go to a theater that's crowded and you actually hear

the cheers. Right? You blood thirsty people. What are you doing? Why are you so into that? Because you believe in justice. And you want it for everyone else. We don't want it for ourselves.

That's why we understand that other people should be punished because they are really bad. But when it comes to my sin, I got excuses and reasons, but if you really get honest about who you are, and you start looking against the benchmark of God and his holy standard, you start to realize, "I probably deserve some punishment too." And in the Bible it says, here's the thing, the pain of what you've done, the pain that you've caused against the standard of holiness, the tribunal of God, even the pain you've caused to God's heart, Genesis 6:6, there should be pain, there should be a response. There should be not only physical pain, there should be emotional pain. That's why they're mocking him and beating him. Right?

What is mocking? Scorn, derision, contempt. Why? Because you're contemptible, you're scornful, you are bad, you're rejectable. It's the rejection. And the Bible says that this was what the suffering servant came to do. Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53. It would be worth turning to. We got a second here, we've got no fourth service, right? So let's just plow on through the afternoon. Go to Isaiah 53 and look at this with me please. Isaiah Chapter 53, and recognize that this concept of us having a Suffering Servant, "Like one from whom men hide their faces." This is an important concept for us to see, the physical rejection. Let's just start in verse 3. Isaiah 53:3. "He was despised and rejected by men." Why? Because we need to recognize that those who do rejectable, contemptible, scornful things, they should be treated with scorn and contempt and be rejected. That's what should happen. And you would cheer that. Right? That's why he was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces. He was despised and we esteemed him not. Surely, he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." Our sorrows, not that, "Hey, I really felt bad because I missed the bus." No, this is, "I feel bad about the sins that I've committed. I've done something egregious."

Have you ever cried over your sin, like, "I've done something bad? I hate this, I hate myself?" He's "carried those sorrows; yet we esteemed him," look at this, "stricken." These are words you probably didn't use this week, "smitten." We don't mean like, "Oh, I'm smitten by that person." No. Beaten. "Stricken, smitten, beaten by God and afflicted. He was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement," that punishment, "that brought us peace, and with his wounds..." You know what that Hebrew word means? His stripes, his beating. It's like the fillet of that buttock on that video, of that open wound, which I know you know, though because it's different when we see it in real life even on a video than a Hollywood movie, the splaying of Christ's back when the cat-o-nine tails went through his back and cut open and blood poured down his back, the one that would be leaning against a raw beam on which he was crucified, that back, those wounds, by those wounds, those stripes, that blood, "we are healed."

It's not a Pentecostal verse about your healing in the hospital. This is not about your health. This is about the problem you have with a holy God being fixed. Why? "Because all we like sheep have gone astray; each of us has turned to his own way," we're sinners. We haven't lived up to the standard of God. "And the Lord has laid on him," there's the bearing of sin, laid on him, "the iniquity of us all."

Now, we call this in theology the penal substitutionary atonement of Christ. "Penal, P-E-N-A-L as in the word "penalty" the penalty. Right? "Substitution." Now there's a penalty and instead of me having it, here's the great gospel of God, someone else is going to do it for me. Someone's going to stand in for me. One who wasn't sinful becoming the target as though he were sin for me, so that in

him I might become atoned for the righteous of God. "Atoned for," what does that mean? My sins are forgiven, my sins are blotted out, my sins are covered. "Penal." What's that? It's the punishment, the penalty that I deserve. "Substitution." Someone steps in for me and then I'm atoned, no longer guilty. The penal substitutionary atonement of Christ. People hate this doctrine. Moderns, they hate it. They write books like this, bestselling book, sold way more books than I'll ever sell. They say, "if God wants to forgive us, why doesn't he just do it? How does punishing an innocent person make things better? It just sounds like one more injustice in the cosmic equation. It sounds like divine child abuse to me."

This has been echoed throughout a lot of the bestselling Christian books in our generation. We've rejected the penal, the punishment, the penalty of our sins, being substituted by Christ on a cross, so that when he was beaten, God was saying, there's the payment. So that we can be atoned for. Are you still in Isaiah 53? Look at verse 10. "Yet it was his will, the will of the Lord to crush him; putting him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt," like a lamb going to the slaughter, here's this lamb, he is now accepted as the guilty party even though he's the blemish less lamb, it's just an animal, just a symbol, as though he were me. I put my hand on his head, Leviticus 1 verse 4, and I say, "Here he is. Priest, kill him instead of me." "He makes his soul a guilt offering, yet he shall see his offspring; He shall prolong his days," that's called resurrection. He's going to live after this, and "the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand," one day he'll come back a second time and receive his kingdom. "Out of the anguish of his soul," when he's being mocked, beaten, spit upon and derided. "He," the Father, "shall see and be," guess what? Like you eating handfuls of popcorn to going, "Yeah!!!"

"Oh that's awful." Is it awful? Is that why you go home feeling bad about rooting for the good guy and rooting against the bad guy. No, you don't. You feel good about that. Matter of fact, that's why you go to another one of those movies. I just want to see the bad guy get his day. The Bible says, the Father is going to look at the Son and when he's being beaten, "he says, satisfied. There it is. There it is." The score is settled. The payment has been paid. "And by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous." Why? Because "he shall bear their iniquities." You need to understand the demands of justice.

And you and I, unfortunately, are on the wrong end of God's holiness, we don't measure up. You and I need to see that when Christ was beaten in this passage and mocked he was acting as the rejected one, as the sinner being punished as though he were the bad person. That is the justice of a holy and righteous God. Moderns want to write books and say, "Oh, you know what? I just want God to forgive the way we're supposed to forgive. I don't need to get even. Why is God getting even?"

He's satisfying the justice of his own perfection. Think about the cross. It is the judge AND the criminal. All in one scene in the triune God saying, "You know what? I can be just and I can be the justifier. I can say, here is a demand and I can meet that demand, so that I can look at you as a guilty person and now consider you innocent." This is an amazing transaction but that's what justice demands. The Father's justice satisfied. It's called in theology and it's in the Bible, propitiation. It is a satisfaction of God's justice. God is satisfied. Jesus on the cross knew it was over and he said, "telelestai," telelestai. What does that mean? Paid In Full. "Finished. I just fulfilled it all."

And here it was starting in its proper sense by a beating after being tied up with his hands behind his back and brought under the custody of these thugs who beat him. Do we see an innocent man being unjustly treated? Absolutely we do. We see that. Is that the point of all this? It's not the point of all

this. The point of all this is that he stood there as my stand-in and he received something that I really deserved. Christ suffered. Here's the verse we make him memorize in our discipleship program, our Partners Program. "Christ suffered for sin, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God." "Christ suffered," he incurred the penalty, "for sins, the righteous one standing in," substitute, "for the unrighteous," that's me, "so he might bring us to God," atonement, sins forgiven. Now I made right before God.

If you consider the demands of justice you're on your way to understanding the love of God. And when you see this passage, especially in verse 64, look back on our passage, Luke 22:64, I hope you see the love of God, because it's one thing for people to incur penalties for other people's sins that they don't want to incur. And matter of fact, some of you sit here today and you don't like the fact that someone else's sin is spilling over into your life. You don't like that at all. You may have grown up in a home, a divorced home, let's just talk about that, the pain of a broken home. You grew up in a home, maybe four, five, six, seven-years-old, your parents divorced and you go, "Here are my parents, can't get along, can't get their act together, they get split, now I'm over here Dad's house, over here Mom's house, I don't like the fact that this iniquity that they've committed here is now part of the penalty, I'm paying part of the penalty, I'm bearing that sin.

Well, that's not what's going on here. Jesus is willingly doing it and I know that the problem again of a person looking at this passage, they not only see the injustice and the cruelty toward an innocent person, what they see in verse 64, particularly when you put a bag over his head, you start seeing a victim. Right? They blindfolded him and then they made fun of him. "Well you can't see. Tell us who hit you. Prophecy." He's not a victim though, you know that. Right? I've already quoted, at least I've summarized Luke 18, Luke 18 says, "I'm going to the cross. I'm turning my focus to Jerusalem and I'm going to go, I'm going to be beaten, spat upon, I'm going to be maligned and flogged and I'm going to be killed. I'm going there for this purpose." He said in the Garden when Peter pulled out his sword and cut off Malchus' ear, he said, "Put it back away. Am I not to drink the cup that the Father has given me to drink? I'm going to this terrible experience, it's going to start with a beating after this trial before Annas and Caiaphas, and I'm going to be beaten. And that's the cup I'm willing to drink." He's not a victim in this passage.

Number two, you need to "Value Christ's Willingness to Pay" this price. He has, pardon the pun, both eyes open. He's walking into this with both eyes open. He knows exactly what he's doing. Not to mention, you want to mock him? "Hey prophet. Tell us who hit you." You don't think Christ with a blindfold on doesn't know who just hit him? When you go back in your mind to Luke 11 when he looks at people and the Bible says, "Knowing their thoughts he said..." He knows their thoughts. You can put a bunch of thugs around Christ, you put his hands tied behind his back, you put a bag over his head and you say, "Who hit you, Antonio? Who hit you, Rufus? Who hit you?" You don't think he knew exactly who hit him? Not only that he designed the knuckles that are now being blown into his face, that are putting his cheekbones out of place. Those fists, he was the maker of all things. Not only that, he's God, he knows all thoughts, he's the Lord of all, he's the Lord of every person, he's a Lord of every thought. Speak of the triune God, the Lord, "His eyes are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good," he sees it all. He is completely, both eyes open, walking in to pay the penalty for sin right here. And he did it willingly.

You may be bearing the sins in a secondary sense of other people's problems. Here's someone walking into this saying, "I'm bearing it, not in some metaphorical sense, I'm not bearing it as a spillover of some consequences of someone else's sins, I'm walking in to be the target of justice from the Father so that I can pay for your sins because," here it is "I love you." That's the point.

Someone willingly... Man, you say, "That guy loves us."

Someone had to have said that about Moses. I mean someone had to be not fully bought in when he came down the mountain and they put up the golden calf, and Aaron is leading this whole thing, and they had to think, "You know what? I know we're doing the wrong thing and here comes Moses off the mountain." Remember that in Exodus 32? And he gets mad at them. And then he has this deal with God as he tries to fix things and grind up the idol and all that, and he makes them drink it, it was a terrible scene and then he says this, "God," I'll just quote it for you in Exodus Chapter 32 verse 31, "Moses said, 'Alas, these people have sinned greatly and they've made for themselves a god of gold. But now, if you'll forgive their sin, please forgive their sin, and if not,' if you're going to destroy them here's what he says, "then please blot me out of your book that you've written." In other words, kill me as well. There's got to be someone on the sidelines going, "You know what, I wasn't really fully behind this anyway and Moses just came down and basically said God is mad at us while you've been up on the mountain and now you're saying, 'I'm willing to step into the penalty that I didn't earn. I'm up fellowshiping with God. My face is glowing, I've come off as mountain, but I am willing to suffer all the consequences of them.'" Now that's reminiscent, is it not, of Paul in Romans 9 when he's caring about all of his fellow Jewish people and he says, "Listen, I have an unceasing anguish in my heart. I'm in pain over their rejection of Christ." And here's what he says in Romans Chapter 9, he says, "I wish that I myself could be accursed, cut off from Christ, for the sake of my brothers." If they could be saved and I could be lost, I would trade it right now, at least theoretically, rhetorically, that's what he says. And you got to stand back and say, "Wow, Paul really loves us. Paul really cares about us."

Of course there are many historical examples of that kind of selfless love. There's that story of Max Kolbe at Auschwitz, the concentration camp, when those prisoners, maybe you've heard this story, were selected for execution, this group, and someone shouted from the crowd, "I'm married, I have children." And because he heard this, this clergyman, Kolbe, stepped up and said, "Let me take his place." And strangely enough the officers there accepted and he was placed in a cell and that man was allowed not to die, at least that day, and this clergyman went to an isolation cell and they starved him to death and he died to let that father and that husband go free. That's a picture where you say, "Wow, look at that. Why would he do that?"

Or closer to home, at least in terms of time, the story I've read recently of Sayed Basam Pacha, a Kabul police officer in Afghanistan. A security cop, he was on a security detail. Three brothers, one sister, two degrees, two bachelor's degrees, from Turkey, he's there working in Kabul. He's here to protect this hall, a lot of dignitaries there and, of course, they have all the things cordoned off and the gate, everyone's getting checked through and here's this guy, walks up to the gate, he sees him, he's trained, he knows, he loves to workout, he's a big guy, strapping guy. And he sees this guy and he recognizes his overcoat, temperatures wrong for that, he is probably a suicide bomber. When he catches eyes with him, he sees him, he calls out to him, he yells to him, suicide bomber realizes he's caught. So he rushes to the crowd where this security guard is. Sayed ran toward him and the story, you can read about this in the news, he wrapped his arms around, this big guy, he is all muscularly, wraps his arms around the suicide bomber and just basically gives him a bear hug, when sure enough that bomb went off under the guy's overcoat.

And the news said that, yeah, there were several people who were killed there in that bombing, but had Sayed not come and wrapped his body around that suicide bomber, it would have killed way more people. His father was interviewed in the news story that I read. This lieutenant's father tearfully said, "My son sacrificed himself to save others." Now, that's an understatement, isn't it? He

ran to it, he wrapped himself in it, so that other people could be saved. Now, those are interesting stories of incredible love but I'm just telling you when you look at this, this is more than just someone saying, "You know what, I'm going to try to mitigate the damage of this thing," or "I really associate with you so much that if I could take the penalty with you I would," here's someone who actually does it.

What you deserve and what I deserve, it really involves emotional pain, a punitive punishment physically, the pain of separation, the pain of punishment, and all of that, Christ said let me experience that for you. Some days I'm sure you feel like, "Well, if God really loved me I'd have my life going a lot better than it is." God could not demonstrate his love for you in any greater way than he already has. You deserve a beating, literally, and Christ said, "I'll take that for you." "God made him he knew no sin to be sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." He suffered for sin once for all, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.

As Peter put it, "He bore our sins in his body on a tree that we might die to sin and live to righteousness." "By his wounds," quoting Isaiah 53, "we are healed." He did it, it says both in First Peter 2 and in Isaiah 53, "like a lamb led to the slaughter," not kicking, not screaming. He had a moment the Garden of saying, "Yeah, if this cup..." Sure he did, but he said, "Not my will but yours be done." What's his will? "My will is to finish this thing, to do what you want." And that is to pay the penalty for your sin and mine, the triune God loved us enough to do that.

Don't ever tell me God doesn't love you. Don't ever start to toy around with satanic thoughts that he wasn't willing to pay the ultimate price to demonstrate his love for you. That's what Romans 5 is all about. It goes on to say, by the way, the days you think, "Well, I could believe that last week but this week I've done some things I can't believe I did." It's like last week's message, like Peter, "I've fallen on my face, I've denied Christ. Maybe I've gone too far." Remember this, "Where sin abounds, grace abounds all the more." It's a great compound word. It's the word "abounds" or "fullness" and it uses the prefix on the front of that little word, "hyper." He hyper abounds the Grace. Why? How can he do that?

He can do that because of a little word in verse 65, "blasphemy." What? Look at verse 65. Let me explain this to you. When you feel beyond the reach of God's love or you think, you know, he might have forgiven me but I've reached my quota. You haven't reached your quota. Is it a license to sin? No. But you must understand the foundation of the Gospel. And that is that you can't out sin the grace that is involved in Christ saying, "I'll pay your penalty," and he paid it fully. Even though it was just one afternoon. In this case it's an overnight beating, a morning trial, a whipping and a beating by the Romans and an afternoon crucifixion. But that, the Bible says, when he said, "It is finished," it was enough to deal with all your sins. Grace that is greater than all of your sins.

Blasphemy? How does that work? Look at this. Verse 65 is not a comment from them. A lot of people get this wrong when they quickly read this because they think this again is that Christ is being crucified because they think he's blaspheming. That's not what's going on here. It's the same word. Matter of fact, you'll find over and Mark's account of the crucifixion when Caiaphas hears him talk about coming on the clouds in his second coming, he tears his robes, Caiaphas, the high priest, and it says, "You've heard the blasphemy for yourself. What other witnesses do we need?" Blasphemy. What does that word mean? Blasphemy.

Blasphemy is a word when you take something as sacred as it can be, which is God, and you somehow append to God, speak of God, somehow try to put God who should be on the top shelf,

you start putting him down on the shelf somewhere, really down on the shelf. Let's just say you're putting him on the bottom shelf, you are blaspheming. Something holy and sacred now is derided as something common, that's blasphemy. Now they've been saying about Christ from the beginning, once the Pharisees and scribes started to hate him, they said, "We think you're blaspheming." They picked up rocks to stone him one day. Remember that? And he asked sarcastically, "What good work are you stoning me for?" And they said, "We're not stoning you for a good work. We're stoning you for blasphemy because you, a mere man, make yourself out to be God."

Now they accused him of blasphemy, which means God is up here, you're down here, you're making yourself equal with God. That's blasphemy. You're trying to pull God down to your level. Blasphemy. That's what Caiaphas crucified him for. He couldn't get any other charge to stick. "We're charging you with blasphemy because you, a mere man, are making yourself out to be like God." They said that back in Luke. Remember when Luke said to the guy your sins are forgiven? And they said you're blaspheming. They used that word. "Can you, a mere man, forgive sins? Only God can forgive sins. That's a God thing. And you are attributing yourself with God." Now this flips it on its head, because this is the divine commentary from Luke's pen. What he says is that when they were doing this to him and speaking these things to him they were blaspheming HIM. What...? Blaspheming a person.

Let's turn this on its head. When they were accusing him of blasphemy, they were blaspheming Jesus. Follow this. Right? When they were accusing him of putting God down on his level, when they were saying, "You can't do that, you're a mere man," they were blaspheming Jesus. Why? Because he is actually God. This is a subtle passage, I understand, for the deity of Christ, but it is certainly there. The spotless lamb, the perfect one. They were saying to him things as though he wasn't God. They were treating him like a mere sinner, like a mere man. He wasn't a man, and that's the point. He was suffering with eternal value of the God-man. Think that through for just a second. That is an incredible thing, which makes me think that when he's getting pummeled in his face for sins he didn't commit, and the Bible says that's for my sin, it's the lutron, the payment for my sin, I need to recognize that's good enough for every sin I've ever committed, that payment right there, because he was of such infinite value.

I put it this way if you're taking notes you need to "Appreciate a Sufficient Payment." You should never doubt the sufficiency of the payment, the sufficient payment. Let me quote the Canons of Dort of all things. You Dutch Reformed people will appreciate this. The Council of Dort, the Canons of Dort they call them, from the Council. It speaks in Article 3 about the death of Christ and it's a good quote in this regard. It says, "The death of the Son of God is the only and most perfect sacrifice and satisfaction for sin." And God goes, yeah it's done. "And it is of infinite worth and value, abundantly sufficient to expiate the sins of the whole world." It is of infinite worth and value and it wouldn't be if it were just a person. It wouldn't be if it was just a person.

In Micah 6 in the Old Testament, there's that statement when they realize their sin and they say, "What can a man do to atone for his sins. What can a person give as a ransom for his sins," it says, "Anything. Can I get my first born son?" That's not going to do it. It's just like the psalm that says, you can't possibly give enough for your sins to God. Well, let's just say there was a perfect man. I guess you could have a one-to-one trade. But even in this room, think for a second of every sin represented by every person in this room right now. How in the world can one person's beating, one person's torture, one person's crucifixion ever pay for all of our sin? Well, Council of Dort, Canon of Dort, really got it right. "It is of infinite worth and value and is abundantly sufficient to expiate the sins," to remove the sins, to take it off of every single person, because it's a perfect satisfaction

and sacrifice because it was so valuable. Why? "Because in him the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form," to quote Colossians or to quote Hebrews 1.

He's the exact imprint of the nature of the Father. The radiance of God's glory, he upholds everything by the power of his own word. And he sat down after making purifications for sin with, to quote the Canons of Dort, "The infinite worth and value to abundantly, sufficiently expiate for the sins...", not just of you and me, but everyone in this room. And not only that, every other generation of every other Christian who has ever named the name of Christ in every place on the planet. It is a sufficient payment for sin.

If you came to me and said, "Well, I'm going to pay off your mortgage, Pastor Mike." And I think, "Well, I don't know. You don't know what my mortgage is." If you now said, "I'm going to pay the mortgage off of every person in the room." Well, I'll need to know how much money you have. What's the treasury of your bank account? I'd need to know because I'd think to myself, "Well, maybe you don't have enough to pay mine off, you're paying theirs off, paying his off, paying hers off." He's paying it all. Why? Because it is of infinite worth and value. Why? Because he's God. You can't blaspheme Christ unless he's God. That's the point. You blaspheme him if he is God and you don't treat him like God, and he's not being treated like God right here. Which reminds us in the drama of his beating of the stripes that are supposed to heal us, that those stripes are being given to one who is paying a price with infinite value and infinite worth, abundantly sufficient to expiate the sins of the whole world.

Romans 5, I quoted the beginning of that. I even quoted verse 20 but that word is used over and over again. "Perisseuo" the word "abundantly." Free Grace, verse 15, and the gift of God "abounded to many." Verse 17, "We've received this abundance of grace," same word. And where sin abounds, grace, it abounded even more. Why? It's because of infinite value and worth. The days you think, "Well, God doesn't love me," remember the cross. The days you think, "Well, I can't believe he'd still love me this week, next week, next month," remember that there was a sufficient payment on the cross for your sins. That is an amazing concept in Scripture and it's one that's very important for us to catch. Christ was blasphemed. You can only do that if you're God.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is very hard, it's a stumbling block for people, and I understand that people want a kind of Gospel that doesn't deal with the things we've been talking about this morning. But I hope you share the Gospel with two clearly presented attributes. If I can group them together, the concept of God's holiness and justice, along with his love and compassion. Those two things are on full display on the cross. Because if you just want his love and compassion, which many people do, and they'll even rewrite and try to understand the crucifixion without God's justice and holiness, you don't have the Gospel, you've got something else. But if you understand both of those, then you're ready, you got it. You can't really understand his perfect love for his people unless you first understand his perfect hatred for sin, which needs what? A payment. That's the whole point of his beating.

We've got several doctors who attend here in the church, surgeons, a lot of nurses in the health care profession. We love our doctors and nurses. Especially because some of you we know, not only personally and spiritually here as a fellowship, but we know you professionally. My doctor attends here and it's great. Whenever I have a problem, you know, I've got a guy I know who cares for me, he's gifted, he's trained, he's able to help me, but I know this: I'm not going to go to him unless I know there's a problem. I've got to sense there's a problem. I've got to run to my doctor when I realize there is an issue. Usually the pain helps me understand that and that's a good thing.

There was a man who had no doubt about his pain. Doug Bergeson was on his ladder out in the country working on his house, framing in a chimney. He had a nail gun in his hand with three-inch nails in it, a pneumatic nail gun. And he's up on his ladder and he slips and that nail gun twisted around and went off and shot him right in the chest. Three-inch nails. It went right into his heart. He went on to tell his story that, "I knew it was in my heart because every time my heart beat, I saw the end of that nail that was sticking out twitching.

He was 12 miles from the nearest hospital. He was smart enough to realize that, "If I call an ambulance or paramedic right now, it may take too long to get here and then take me back. I just need to get there." So he's by himself. He got in his car and I love this quote from the story. He said it's starting to really get painful around the eighth mile. While feeling the pain of a three-inch nails sticking out of his chest, he scurries in through the doors of the emergency room. They give him a quick tetanus shot and they wheeled him into surgery. They knew how precarious it was because it was right there in his chest. I've already assigned two gruesome videos now, if you're into looking at all this. They put him into surgery and they recognize... takes them an hour and a half to carefully try and get that nail out. Had he tried to pull it out himself the doctor said he would have died, no doubt about it.

The apostle Peter was preaching in Acts 2 and as he preached it said the "people were cut to the heart." He was like the preaching of the justice and holiness of God, because Peter had just talked about the fact, "you pinned him to the cross." You and your sins put him there. And it nailed them right in the heart. Right? And they felt that.

We're never going to rush to the Great Physician to have the healing that we need from the penalty of our sin unless you feel that conviction. Here's the problem with the Gospel that doesn't have that. You don't preach holiness, you don't preach justice, you don't preach the fact that our sins deserve punishment, you're just going to make Christ nothing but just a victim and it's a story about injustice. But if you understand the Bible, from the very beginning, you know this: that that pain of conviction that you feel, and I hope every real Christian this room, they can think clearly about when that pain, that conviction, penetrated their heart. And poetically it was a set of nails that solved the problem for us, wasn't it? The nails, the whip, the cat-o-nine tails, a beating. A bunch of burly fists that went into the face of Christ that took that and extracted that from our lives.

Doug recovered, he's doing well, he's healthy. And the funny part of the story, if you read some of the reports, they'll say Doug kept the nail. I don't know, he put it on his desk or something at work, in a jar, I'm not sure where he kept it but I'm thinking it was just a reminder to him how close he came to dying. We talk about the death of Christ, we envision the cross, we celebrate the fact that that was the payment for our sin that removed the penalty from us. It allows us to have that sense when in Micah 6, they thought, "What can I give for a ransom for my life. I can't. Can anyone atone for their sin?" Chapter 7 though, Micah 7 verse 18, God, we know you, something about you. You are a pardoning God, a God who "pardons iniquity, you pass over our transgressions for the remnant of your inheritance," for your people. "You don't retain your anger forever because you delight in steadfast love. You have compassion on us. And you tread our iniquities underfoot," you crush them, "and you will cast all of our sins into the depths of the sea."

"You show faithfulness to your people Jacob, your steadfast love to your people from Abraham, you've sworn this to our fathers from the days of old." In Abraham, all the families of the Earth will be blessed. I hope you sit here today blessed by the love of God, "God so loved the world he gave



his only son" and you appreciate that willing sacrifice. And it's not meaning anything to you, at least not biblically, unless you know the pain of the conviction of the fact that I'm a sinner and I deserve God's punishment. If you do, we're in a good place.

Because if even tomorrow you fall on your face, you recognize this: "that where sin abounds grace abounds even more." So that's a license to go out and do whatever we want? Of course not. How can you say you love God and then want to inflict more punishment on that cross. You don't want that. But we know we leave secure in Christ.

I hope this is the kind of sermon that you don't just say, "Well, I'm going to think about that for a week." When I talk about considering the demands of justice this is a nonstop reminder for the rest of our Christian life. When we say we want to value the willingness of Christ to pay the penalty, that's the whole point of rejoicing and giving thanks every time we worship God. And I hope you appreciate the sufficient payment, that you know that what Christ did was sufficient not only for you but for me and for every person in this room, and for the hordes of people in heaven from every tongue, tribe and nation who will worship in thanksgiving that they are forgiven, not on their own merits, but because of the life, torture, beating, whipping, humiliation and mockery of Christ. It's been paid in full, that's good news and it's worth thanking God for. Let's do that now.

God, we want to say thanks, perhaps in a way right now that's more profound and deep than we have earlier in the week. We want to be thankful in a way that would reflect our knowledge of justice, our knowledge of holiness, our awareness that we fall far short of what we ought to be. Knowing that we don't just deserve a mediocre eternity, we deserve, really, a payment that is going to last for eternity, a continual reminder of our sin and, God, all of that has been expiated, to use the words of Dort, that idea of it being removed from our lives completely. As it's put in the words of Micah 7, it's been tread underfoot, it's been cast into the deepest sea because of a payment, as Isaiah 53 put it, because you were willing to crush him and lay on him the iniquity of us all.

God, that doesn't happen without us acknowledging our sins. So I pray for some this morning, maybe they've never really come to grips with the fact that the death of Christ is much more than an execution, but a real payment of pain and suffering that our sins deserve. May we embrace the love and the mercy and the grace and forgiveness of the Gospel this morning with a full appreciation for what it means to be forgiven people.

Thank you for Christ and his willingness to do what he did. May we live in light of that. Even as Paul wrote to the Ephesians that we would know "the breadth, the height the length, and the depth of the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge." That we would be rooted and grounded in that love. Don't let us be like so many in our day who are driven and tossed by every wind of doctrine, but getting back to the foundational bedrock of what it means to be a Christian, that Christ came to pay for our sins. "God made him who knew no sin to be sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of Christ," we could be forgiven. Thank you for that punishment that was borne by our substitute that resulted in our atonement. Make that the cry of our hearts, the affirmation of our creed this morning.

In Jesus name. Amen.