

The Gospel of Christ Powerfully Saves

Paul Washer | Excerpt from “Who Do You Say Jesus Is?”

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I’m going to give you the hardest, greatest, problem in all of Scripture. This is it. If you’ve been here in this church you’ve heard it a million times but some of you haven’t, so the people in this church are going to hear it a million and one times now.

This is the greatest problem in the Bible: If God is good He can’t forgive you. If God is righteous and Holy, He cannot forgive you. And you say “What?!” That’s it, really. The greatest problem in all of Scripture... we see it in Exodus, we see it in Psalms. We even see it in the book of Proverbs. We see Paul dealing with it in Romans Chapter 3.

And it is this problem: If God is just how can He, just simply, as He says, turn His back to your sin. How can He cover your sin? How can He cast your sin away from you as far as the east is from the west? Literally, in the book of Psalms, and again in Romans Chapter 4. It is He “covers it!” What do we think about a judge who sweeps crimes under the rug? Do we call Him righteous? No we don’t, do we. We call him corrupt. Is he maintaining righteousness? Absolutely not! He is defaming righteousness. You see there in lies the great problem in the Bible. God is righteous! And because He is righteous, and because He is holy. And guess what? Because He is love, He hates. He hates evil. Some people say, “Well God is love therefore He doesn’t hate.” No God is love, and therefore He must hate. He hates evil. He can’t just turn His back on evil. And He can’t just turn His back on your evil. Or my evil or on anyone else’s evil. God is a righteous judge. And shall not the judge of all of the earth do right?

So the great question in the Bible is: How can God be just and yet simply forgive wicked men? How can He do it? The answer is in the person of Jesus Christ. And this is what so many people do not understand about the Cross. God in His righteousness condemns man. Every man, everyone here, everyone who has ever walked the planet since Adam. Condemned, in our sin. And all of the religion, all of the church going, everything else that you might want to add to it. It’s not going to help you one bit. Your condemned. To be in heaven you must be perfect. Have perfect righteousness, and none of us have that! And God cannot do it any other way because He is righteous! He cannot sweep your sin in a basket or under a rug.

So God in His righteousness condemns you and me and all have humanity. And then God in His love becomes a man and He lives the life you could not live. The life that I could not live. Not only is He avoiding sin. But at the same time He is living a life of perfect righteousness. Not only avoiding the negative, but always doing the positive. A perfect righteous life. And then that Son of God, He goes to Calvary. And on Calvary He dies!

But now here is the problem. When you hear all of those Easter sermons and everything else, mainly what do you hear? You hear about the Romans nailing Him to a tree and beating Him and stabbing Him with a lance. And you hear about all of the things that the Romans did to Jesus and it killed Him. And when you hear that kind of preaching, that kind of preaching is totally missing the point! We are not saved from our sins because the Romans beat up Jesus and killed Him! We are saved from our sins because when He was on the tree all of your sin

was imputed to Him, and than God in heaven turned away from His only Son - not because He lacked the moral fortitude to see Him suffer - No! He turned away from His only Son because His only Son became sin! And the separation from God, that you should experience that I should experience throughout all of eternity. The Son of God experienced on that tree! And then there was not just the negative withdraw of God's presence from Christ so that He cried out "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" My God, my God why have you forsaken me? But then all the full force of God's wrath of His holy hatred against you. And your crimes. And me, and my crimes. That as a Holy God He must pour out. He poured out on His own Son! As the prophet in Isaiah 53 verse 10 says: And it pleased the Lord to crush the Messiah! To crush Him under the full force of His wrath! You know, many of you have read the Bible. He is in the garden and He cries out "Let this cup pass from me, let this cup pass from me, let this cup pass from me." Three times. Do you honestly think that our Savior was afraid of a Roman lance? So many people think that when Jesus is looking at this cup He is thinking about the Cross, and the beatings and everything else. And it causes Him to sweat drops of blood. Really? How is it than that all of the apostles but John, and countless of martyrs, went to the Cross and church history tells us they were singing hymns. They were full of joy at being crucified like their Lord. So how is it that they had more boldness than their Savior? Jesus was not sweating drops of blood in the garden simply because of a roman cross. It was because He had always dwelt in the bosom of the Father perfect delight between one another. He had always been the beloved Son in whom the Father was well pleased. And on that tree the Father withdrew His presence from His Son, as He should from us. And His Father crushed His Son! That's what was in the cup. The wrath of almighty God against every sin that we've committed. And He drank it down. And when He cried out "It is finished!" He turned the cup over and not one drop came out. He drank it all. Paid in full. And He died. And on the third day He was raised. By His own power, by the Spirit's power. By the power of the Father, He was raised. And Romans tells us that that is God's sign, that it is God's vindication of His Son and proof that the death He died on Calvary was sufficient to pay for all your sins.

So what does it mean to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. It's not just "I love His teachings and I follow Him." It is this: I have nothing, I have no righteousness, I have no hope, expect what God did for me on Calvary. And in the resurrection of Christ from the dead. That is my hope.

If I stood in the midst of the most horribly wicked people in a massive den of iniquity. And I stood there, and I was translated there right now, to that place. The only place that separates from me, in the eyes of God, from them, is the Cross of Calvary. Where Jesus Christ died for my sins.

And I want to tell you something: If you add any your supposed virtue to that, you do not believe in the Son of God. I hear so many people "Ya, I'm a Christian." You are believing in Jesus? "Yes I am." Well, if you died right now where would you go? "Well I think I would go to heaven." Why? "Well, I've been good." "I've been a good person." Do you see the disconnect? What!?!?! What!?!? You've been a good person? Really? Really? Good enough to take any one of those thoughts and stand before God and risk all of eternity on it?

Some people will say, and they said this in Romans 5 and in Romans 6. That is what Paul was answering to. "If your saying it is just faith in Jesus and not our works than people will just believe in Jesus and live like the devil and they're going to heaven." Absolutely not!

You see there are two doctrines in the Bible that you need to understand. The first one is justification. What is justification? It is a legal declaration. The person who believes in Jesus Christ is legally justified before God. God

looks at this person as right with Him not on the basis of their virtue but on the basis of what Christ did for them. God declares them righteous. That's the believer's standing.

But then there is another doctrine called the doctrine of regeneration. If you've read the Bible you've heard it in 2 Corinthians 5:17 If any man be in Christ he is a new creation old things pass away behold all things are new. What does that mean? It means that those who truly believe in Jesus Christ have also been born again, or what we call regenerated by the Holy Spirit. They've been made alive. So that it is not them believing in Jesus and then doing a bunch of righteous things that they hate. But it's their believing in Jesus and their saved and because of that salvation and because of the power of God to transform a life they now begin to walk in newness of life But never is their standing before God based upon what they do it's based upon the Cross of Calvary. Christ and Christ alone.

Now I'm going to finish with an illustration. Hopefully it doesn't apply to you but it may give you some insight into what I'm talking about. I first heard this from a dear friend of mine Charles Leiter. It's a wonderful illustration. Let's say that we own a bunch of sheep. And we've got a problem, there are a bunch of coyotes. Now how do we solve the problem? Well, there are a few ways we can solve the problem. One is: we can get a gun and shoot the coyotes. Now that solves the sheep's problem solves our problem, but it doesn't solve the coyotes problem.

What else can we do? Well, we can get a cage and we can trap the coyote. We can trap him. So we've solved the sheep's problem, we've solved our problem. But we really haven't solved the coyotes problem. You say, "Well he is reformed!" No he is isn't. He is just caged. He is not reformed. He walks back and forth in that cage back and forth like this and just wanting to get out. You let that door open and he is coming out of there. So we haven't solved his problem. Do you know what I just described? Religion. And a lot of Christian religion. "I go to church, I hate it, but I'm going because it's the right thing to do." "I do this because it's the right thing to do and because I gotta do it."

There is no really love for God. There is no genuine desire to serve Him. "I've just got to do these things!" That's legalism. That's religion. That's church. "Why do we have to go?" It's the same way as the coyote saying "Why can't I just eat sheep?" And every time someone is not looking and every time that door is open your going to eat sheep. Your going to sin because that is what you love.

Now what is Christianity? God changes the coyote into a sheep. That's Christianity. From the inside He changes their heart He takes out their heart of stone and He gives them a heart of flesh. And that's how you know you've become a Christian. Not just because you give some empty profession that "Ya I believe Jesus is the son of God." But because something, as it happened to Peter, something more than flesh and blood happened to you. God showed you, this is His Son and He put an overwhelming, new desire in you to follow Him and to please Him. Do you see that?

I'll give you a lecture right now in ontology. And it's this. I have a nature. I have a will. And I have activity, things I do. If my heart loves evil, my desire is for evil. Things of this world, the immoralities, the sensuality's, the money, everything that is in this world. If that is what my heart loves, then those desires, they influence my will, and my will pushes my activities. I'm driven, I'm driven by my will. That is driven by my evil desires. And I do evil. But if someone can change this heart of mine so that the things I once loved I now hate. And the things I once hated, like righteousness, I now love. There's not much to worry about after that because my new desires push my life in a completely different direction. And when I do sin it breaks my heart because my heart has been made new.