

The Gospel

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This is for everyone here today. I was going to preach on one thing and when I walked in, I kind of just realized I needed to preach on something else, something that's very dear to me. We may be here for a while, but this is so necessary. If you want to know what this congregation is about, this is what you're going to learn today. It's about the Gospel of Jesus Christ and you say: "Oh, I know that!" No, you don't and neither do I. I know something about it; you know something about it, but you do not know all that is to know. Today in America, we're basically told that the Gospel is kind of the first thing you learn and then you go on to something much greater. No. As I said the other night, the moment Jesus returns, you'll know all about the second coming but you'll be an eternity of eternities in heaven and you still will not comprehend all the glory of God revealed in His Gospel.

I'm going to talk about the Gospel and I'm going to share some things that maybe you have never heard before. I want us to begin actually in 2nd Corinthians. Let's go there, 2nd Corinthians, chapter 5, verse 20 and 21. "Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." That's my plea to you today, to be reconciled to God, to be Christian, to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved. Now, here's the problem: there's so many people who say that today but then they begin to lead you maybe through a little program, a few questions, and if you say yes to every one of those questions, in the end they'll ask you if you want to repeat a prayer after them. And if you do that, they'll say: "You're saved! Welcome to the family of God!" And, I'm sorry, I'm not going to do that. I will tell you about the Gospel and I will plead with you to turn from your sin and to believe in Jesus Christ. I will tell you how a person may have assurance; how they may know that they are saved, but I cannot tell you: "you are saved", it is the work of the Holy Spirit. And I will warn you with many Gospel warnings that no matter how often you cry out to God to be saved or how much faith you think you have, if your life does not begin to change, there is little evidence that you have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ unto salvation. This is the old way and as an ambassador I have to make that clear. But also I have to make clear to you what is the Gospel and we're going to do that today.

Now, in verse 21 Paul is writing, speaking of God in Christ, it says that "He made Him," God made Jesus, "who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." I know that you've heard this verse before, but do you understand it? Let's look at the first part: He, God, made Him, Jesus, who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf. You know, there are many things that Jesus did, that were quite amazing, weren't they? I mean absolutely astounding: He cast out demons, He walked across the water, He calmed the seas, He the raised the dead. He did so many things, but, you know, what I believe is the most astounding thing about Christ: He was without sin. I want you to think about that. You say, oh yes, He never violated the law of God. That is true, but let's go deeper than that, I want you to think. In all your life, in all your entire life and mind, there has never been one moment, one moment --> that you loved God as God deserves to be loved. Do you realize that? There's not one moment in your entire life that you have loved God as God deserves to be loved. And yet, Christ loved the Father every moment of every day of His life exactly as the Father deserved to be loved. There's never been one moment in your life or mine, when we have done what we've done perfectly for the glory of God. Not one time, but every action, every word, every thought

that Christ ever did, that He ever had, every one of those, He did them perfectly for the glory of God. Do you want to be saved by your own good works? Then this is what you have to do: you have to replicate, imitate Jesus Christ in every way from the moment of birth to the moment of death. I think you can see: you failed. Think about that. Someone asked me one time: "brother Paul, what's the greatest sin?" and just kind of joking around with them, I said: "well, I suppose the greatest sin would be to break the greatest command." The greatest command is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. You've never done that, and neither have I. But Christ always did that, think about that. What a person He was, what a magnificent person that walked upon this earth. But it says here: "He made Him, who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf." Now, what does that mean? If you know anything about theology, you know this: we're getting into a very dangerous place right now. What does it mean that the Father made Him to be sin on our behalf? Some of the greatest theologians in the world have said: "be very, very careful what you say now, don't say too much, don't say too little. This is a very difficult text." See, you've read it many times but have you ever sat down and said: "what is He saying?" Does it mean that when Jesus Christ was on the cross, somehow His perfect nature became defiled and corrupted, became sinful? That He somehow devolved from this magnificent being that He was into something morally grotesque and defiled, like sin? Is that what it means? Absolutely not! There was never a moment on that cross when He was anything other than the spotless Lamb of God. Absolutely perfect. Then what does it mean that He was made sin? Well, the answer is in the second part of this verse. It says: "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Now, all we have to do is ask ourselves: How does a believer become righteous? What does it mean that a believer becomes righteous? Well, this is what it means: the moment that a person believes in Jesus Christ, it does not mean that at that moment they become perfectly righteous and never sin again, it doesn't mean they become a perfectly righteous creature incapable of sinning. The term is a legal term, a forensic term. It means this: that the moment you believe in Jesus Christ, before the Throne of God you are legally declared to be right with Him. And not only are you legally declared to be right with God now, but God treats you as one who is right with Him. Isn't that a magnificent truth? He's declared you right with Him legally, because of what Christ did for you. And then He treats you as someone right with Him not based on how you lived that particular day, but based upon the perfect finished work of Christ. Let's take that over to what it means that God "made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf." It does not mean that on the cross Christ became corrupted or defiled in any way as to His person or His nature. It means this: that the sin of God's people was imputed to Christ. Our sin was put on Him. When a believer believes in Jesus, not only are they pardoned, but the righteousness of Christ is given to them. It's as though they're dressed in Christ's righteousness. On that tree our sin was put upon Christ.

Do you see that? It was imputed to Him, considered to be His. Even though He was the spotless, undefiled, impeccable Lamb of God, our sin was placed upon Him, our guilt was placed upon Him and the Father treated Him as He should have treated us. Do you see that? How should He have treated us? The wrath of God, the righteous anger of God should have been poured out on all humanity because of our crimes, but our guilt was placed upon Christ and what we deserved was placed upon Him. The guilt He bore was our guilt, it was an imputed guilt, but that does not lessen the pain of it. It was real guilt. Imagine a man who is born in sin, who lives in sin all of his life. He is a man of unclean lips and he dwells among the people of unclean lips. He's accustomed to sin and he's accustomed to judgment. He's accustomed to God's frown and yet the bible says: when he dies and stands before God, it will be horrifying for that sinful creature to

stand before a holy God. The shame! Even though this man's heart is as heart as stone, he will bear an unbelievable shame because of his sin. Now imagine this: the holy undefiled Son of God who knew nothing of sin, had never offended His Father, only knew His Father smile and that is all. On that tree in one moment He bore all your sin and all your guilt and He felt the Father's frown. There's no way to describe what that is like. Imagine for a moment that some of you ladies, who have never, never even hardly touched your toe to the pavement, you've lived a sheltered life of all cleanliness and goodness. And you go up, let's say to Chicago and you're witnessing on the streets and you come amongst a group of prostitutes, hardened and defiled, corrupted. And you begin to witness to them and all of a sudden the police show up and grab all of you and throw you in the paddy wagon. Now, the prostitutes have been through this a million times haven't they? They're laughing, joking and cussing at the policemen but you, you can hardly breath. Your shame is so great, you feel so soiled. You've never experienced anything like that in your life. And then they take you down to the precinct and they handle you roughly and they fingerprint you and they make fun of you and they take your picture and then throw you in jail. And while you're sitting there in that cell, all the other prostitutes are just talking about who's going to come and bail them out and they're filing their nails and telling jokes and having a good time and it doesn't bother them at all. But you, you are eaten up inside, the shame of it... Do you see? You're not accustomed to such things and you feel soiled. Now, imagine the Christ, who knew no sin and yet on that tree your guilt, your sin was imputed to Him and the Father treated the Son as He should have treated you. Now that's an amazing, an amazing thing. There's a text of Scripture, in the book of Galatians, chapter 3, that says this, verse 10: "cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them." Now I want to talk about you and I prior to Christ and I'm going to say some very very hard things but the reason I'm going to say them is, so that in the end you get an idea of what Jesus did for you. "Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all the things written in the book of the law, so as to perform them." That's you and I under a curse. One who has broken one commandment of the Law is guilty as though he has broken all of them. And indeed we have broken all of the Law. There isn't a commandment you can find that you and I have not violated in some way. And the Bible says that because of that we are under a curse. Prior to Christ we are under a curse. Now, to be under a curse is to be under the band, it's to be cut off from God and cut off from His people. But I like to... I feel most effective when I describe it in this way: to be under a curse means that before all of the holy heavens, all those blessed creatures that dwell in the presence of God, you and I, were so defiled, so dark, so disgusting, so twisted, so loathsome before all of them, that the last thing we would have heard when we took our first step into hell, would have been all of Creation standing to its feet and applauding and praising God because He has rid the earth of us. That's how bad man is. And if you don't like that then you can't like the Gospel. This is the reality of our sin. You say: "brother Paul, why do you say this?" Because I want you to love God, I want you to appreciate the Gospel. You see, a rich man would care nothing if I offered him a baloney sandwich. A starving man would kiss my hand if I gave him such a meal. You see, the more we realize how truly dark and twisted and bent and dislocated and defiled and loathsome that we were prior to coming to Christ, then we can rejoice in what Jesus has done for us, especially because we know that He had to bear that in our place. Christ bore the curse, He bore the curse. He suffered the curse that was mine, He suffered the curse that was yours, do you see that? What a price He paid! Once you understand that, then you never question again whether or not He loves you. If you'll do that, He'll do anything. Now, in order to give you an idea of what it's like, what it was like for Christ to suffer under our curse, I want us just to turn for a moment

to Matthew 5 and the Beatitudes. Let's take the Beatitudes and turn them around. Because the Beatitudes are all about God's blessings. Let's turn them around a bit and see what we can learn about the cross from the Beatitudes. It says the blessed are granted the kingdom of heaven. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." The blessed are granted the kingdom of heaven, but the cursed are refused entrance. You see, yours is the kingdom of heaven because Christ bore the curse and was refused entrance when He cried out: "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?" You see, every time someone asks you: "How are you doing?" and you go: "I'm blessed", just realize this: the only reason you're blessed is because He was cursed. It adds all new meaning to it, doesn't it? It cuts out all the superficiality. The blessed are recipients of divine comfort; the cursed are objects of divine wrath. Paul talks about the comfort that is given to him and with that comfort he can comfort others. The book of Psalms chapter 103 tells us about God's comfort to the believer. The only reason there is that comfort to the believer is because Christ was cursed on that tree. The blessed are satisfied, the cursed are miserable and wretched. The blessed receive mercy, the cursed are condemned without pity. Just today, between getting up and coming to the church, I sinned enough to die. The mercy that I received! And it's only because He was cut off on that tree. The blessed shall see God; the cursed are cut off from His presence. The blessed are sons and daughters of God; the cursed are disowned in disgrace. "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" Because on that tree the holy Son of God bore our sin and bore our curse. He was treated by his Father as you and I should be treated before God. Now, let's go on. I want to give you a little bit of just a kind of Old Testament lesson, just a history lesson for just a moment. In the twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth chapters of the book of Deuteronomy God divided the nation of Israel into two groups. One group was on Mount Gerizim and the other was on Mount Ebal. Now, the ones that were on Mount Ebal had the obligation to pronounce the curses, to vocalize the curses that were to be placed upon anyone who broke God's commandments and violated His covenant. And then on Gerizim all the blessings were to be pronounced, vocalized. From that mountain screamed forth in a loud voice, all the blessings that were to fall upon the head of the one who kept God's covenant and obeyed all His commands. Just so you see what we have here: two mountains, Mount Ebal and the proclamation of curses falling on anyone who's disobedient to the Law and Mount Gerizim and the proclamation of blessing pronounced upon anyone who was obedient, who was a covenant keeper.

Here's what I want you to see: your mountain, my mountain is Mount Ebal. We have broken God's covenant, we have disobeyed every command, all of us, everyone of us. There's only one group of men, there's only one race of men, there aren't many races of men. We all come from Adam, we are all sons of our father Adam and everyone of us, like our father, has been disobedient, has broken God's commandment. Do you see that? We've broken His covenant, everyone of us. We are united in rebellion against God, we are family. So Mount Ebal is ours, Mount Gerizim belonged to Christ, the only One who was the covenant keeper. He kept every commandment of His Father. He honored the covenant every second of His life, He did, He did, He did. But on the cross it was switched: the Christ who was the only covenant keeper who ever walked on this planet, is placed on the tree and all the curses of Mount Ebal are placed upon His head. And I want to read those curses but I want you to think about them as they fall upon Christ. Quoting here something that R.C. Sproul said a few years ago: "When Christ, bearing the guilt of His people looked up into heaven and cried out 'My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?', the Father looked back at the Son with a frown full of wrath and said 'your God damns you'". Now think about that. You should be damned, I should be damned forever. In order for us to be

saved someone had to be damned, to be cursed, to be punished in our place. Here are the covenant curses from the Law, I'm just going to read them and will apply them to Christ. It's though when the Son looked up at the Father, the Father said this back to Him: "The Lord sends upon you curses, confusion and rebuke ... until you are destroyed and until you perish quickly." (Dt 28:20) "The Lord smite you with madness and with blindness and with bewilderment of heart; and you will grope at noon, as the blind man gropes in darkness ... with none to save you." (Dt 28:28-29) "The Lord delights over you to make you perish and destroy you; and you will be torn from the land." (Dt 28:63) "The Lord curses you in the city and cursed shall you be in the field." (Dt 28:16) "Cursed shall you be when you come in and cursed shall you be when you go out." (Dt 28:19) "The heavens which are over your head shall be bronze, and the earth which is under you, iron." (Dt 28:23) "You shall be... a proverb, and a taunt of terror among all the people." (Dt 28:37) "Let all these curses come on you and pursue you and overtake you until you are destroyed, because you would not obey the Lord your God by keeping His commandments and His statutes which He commanded you." (Dt 28:45) He was cursed on that tree as a man who makes an idol and sets it up in secret. He was cursed as one who dishonors his father or mother, who moves his neighbors' boundary mark or misleads a blind person on the road. He was cursed as one who distorts the justice to an alien, orphan and widow. He was cursed as one who is guilty of every manner of immorality and perversion, who wounds his neighbor in secret or accepts a bribe to strike down the innocent. He was cursed as one who does not conform or confirm the words of the Law by doing them. All of the curses that should have fallen upon your head, and fallen upon mine, fell upon Christ, the holy, precious Son of God. God is holy and He is just. He cannot simply ignore your sin, He can't pass over it. He cannot just forgive you; payment must be made. The righteousness of God must be satisfied before there can be peace. The only way to satisfy that justice is for wrath to be poured out on the head of the sinner. But Christ took the place of the sinner and suffered what the sinner deserves. There's an amazing passage in Proverbs that says this: "Like a sparrow in its flitting, like a sparrow in its flying, so a curse without cause does not alight." (Prov 26:2) No curse could alight upon Christ. He was holy, He was blameless. Then how did the curse alight upon One, the only covenant keeper? How did it happen? Because on that tree that Covenant Keeper bore your sin. He bore every violation that you have committed against the righteousness of God. The Psalmist, David, cried out this: "How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered! How blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit." (Ps 32:1-2) Now, look at this: "blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered" God can not cover sin, He can't just cover it as though it never happened. That would make Him just as unjust as us. He can't cover it, He has to take it away, it has to be paid for. That's what happened on that tree. Do You see? Maybe you really never have understood the Gospel. You see, you can't contain this in four spiritual laws or a tract that's about five things God wants you to know. This is the Gospel! You think there's no power in the Gospel? It's because no one is preaching it. There is power in the Gospel, but this Gospel is scandalous. Men hate it, they're offended by it, they grit their teeth. They've refused to hear because it tells man what he is and he doesn't want to hear it. But he must hear it in order to be saved. Now, "how blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. How blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity." Now I've written here: yet on the cross the sin imputed to Christ was exposed before God and the Host of Heaven. He was placarded before men and made a spectacle to angels and devils alike. The transgressions He bore were not forgiven Him and the sins He carried were not covered. If a man is counted blessed because iniquity is not imputed to him, then Christ was

cursed beyond measure because the iniquity of us all fell upon Him. Christ was treated as the covenant breaker in the description in the renewal of the covenant in Moab. Now, listen very carefully! In the renewal of the covenant in Moab God says something very important about the one who breaks His covenant. And listen to the language because in this language I hear something that's telling me to look farther on down the line in history to someone who would come and put an end to this matter. This is what it says against the covenant breaker: "the anger of the Lord and His jealousy will burn against that man, and every curse which is written in this book will rest on him." (Dt 29:20) You see, He's talking about you! And me! "and the Lord will blot out his name from under heaven." Your name should be blotted out and so should mine. "Then the Lord will single him out for adversity" (Dt 29:21) He should call you and me out of the group for one purpose, to punish us. "from all the tribes of Israel, according to all of the curses of the covenant which are written in the book of the law." Don't you see? You and I are that man. But Christ became that man who was singled out from all the tribes of Israel. The one covenant keeper, who obeyed everything God ever said is singled out, is sent to the tree, goes willingly and on that cross He bore our sin, He bore our guilt, He carried our curse and He was treated as such before a holy God. Do you know? Let's just go there for a moment, go to Numbers chapter 6. Look at verse 24: we have what is called Aaron's benediction. This was the blessing that was to be spoken to the people of God. Verse 24: "The Lord bless you, and keep you; the Lord make His face shine on you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance on you, and give you peace." That's the heritage of God's people, that's what has been given to you. But now you ask the very important question: "How could such a blessing be given to such a sinner as I?" It is because this blessing was turned on its head and poured out on Christ: "The Lord curse you, the Lord give you over to destruction; the Lord take His light of His presence from you and condemn you; the Lord turn his face from you and fill you with misery so that you cry out 'My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?'" I want us to think about something for a moment. When you hear preaching, especially at Easter, about the cross of Christ, you hear about nails in His hands and whips and what the Romans did to him. And that's very important to proclaim, but if that's all you hear about the cross, that He was beaten, that He was nailed to a tree, that a crown of thorns was on His head, that a spear went into His side, then you have not heard the cross preached; you have not heard the cross preached. I remember when Mel Gibson came out with the movie "The Passion", which I've never seen, but I remember getting so many emails from pastors all around the country saying: "What do you think about that movie? Do you accept it? Do you have problems with it?" and I wrote every one of them back: "I have more problems with the way pastors preach the gospel than I do with Mel Gibson's movie." Mel Gibson's movie apparently, from what I'm told, attempted to show the grotesque physical torture that Christ underwent on behalf of man. And I assure you, it was far worse than what anybody could portray, because it says that He was so disfigured as a human being that you could no longer tell He was a man. So that is important, but that is not even the beginning of what happened. Do you remember when Jesus was in the garden and he cried out "Let this cup pass from me, let this cup pass from me, let this cup pass from me"? Everyone always asks the question "What was in the cup? What was in the cup? What is it that Christ agonized over in the cup?" And I heard people say "Well you know, Christ could foresee the cat of nine tails coming across His back and Christ could foresee the crown of thorns and Christ could foresee the nails in His hands and what the Romans would do to Him. No! Do you think Christ was afraid of a Roman cross? Let me prove you wrong here just by history: after Christ died, at least for the next 300 years thousands upon tens of thousands possibly of Christians were crucified and we have

the testimony that most of them, many of them went to the cross singing hymns, counting it a joy to die for their Master. Now, are you going to tell me that the followers of Jesus Christ joyfully accepted the cross, being nailed to a tree, while the Captain of their Salvation was terrorized in the garden? Do you honestly think the Captain of our Salvation, the Mighty Christ, the One True Israel was trembling over what the Romans could do to Him? The cup, although it contained a Roman cross, was not filled with a Roman cross. That cup was filled with the wrath of Almighty God. The judgment, the fierce, holy hatred of God against our sin! That is what Christ wished to detour, but being obedient to His Father, He said "Not my will, but Yours." Let me share with you first of all from Psalm 75 and then Jeremiah 25. Psalms

75:8 "For a cup is in the hand of the Lord and the wine foams; it is well mixed and He pours out of this; surely all of the wicked of the earth must drain and drink down its dregs." It's a cup for the wicked of the earth, it is the judgment of God for the wicked of the earth. And then Jeremiah 25 says this: (from verse 15) "For thus the Lord, the God of Israel says to me 'Take this cup of the wine of wrath from My hand and cause all the nations to whom I send you to drink it. They will drink and stagger and go mad because of the sword that I will send among them.'" Can't you see? The cup that was dreaded by Christ was the wrath of God that you and I should suffer, but that He suffered in our place. This is the Gospel, this is what happened on that tree. Let's go on. Just two illustrations quickly: imagine a dam filled to the brim, a thousand miles high and a thousand miles wide. And at the bottom of that dam is your tiny village, an eighth of a mile away, in the ravine. And all of a sudden, you wake up one morning and you hear one mighty crack. And the wall of that dam has totally disintegrated and within a matter of a second or two you will perish to be disintegrated, to never be seen again on the face of the earth. And as you look in horror as that mighty deluge comes towards you, you recognize that there is no one swift enough on foot to escape, no one strong enough to swim against the torrent, everyone will perish. And right before the water strikes your village, the ground opens up and swallows the mass of it down. And not one drop, not one drop of that wave touches even the pant of your leg. That's what Christ did on that tree for you. Imagine one millstone weighing ten thousand pounds, sat upon another of the same weight. You take a tiny piece of grain, tiny grain of wheat and you shove it in between the two. In a fraction of a second the pressure against the hole explodes the thing and it's ground to nothing. You see, it gives meaning to when Christ says, "unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it abideth alone, but if it dies, it bringeth forth much fruit." Someone had to die. Someone. I want to read you one of my favorite authors and one of the most favorite things that's ever been written outside of Scripture. It's from John Flavel, the old Puritan. If you have a chance to read his first volume of his works, I would recommend you to do so. He is describing here what I call the 'dialogue between the Father and the Son' or 'The Father's Bargain', as Flavel calls it. It's a discussion that could have happened in eternity about the sacrifice that Christ would give for His people. Here's what Flavel says: Here you may suppose the Father to say, when driving His bargain with Christ for you. The Father is talking to the Son about 'how will this wicked people be saved?' And the Father speaks: "My Son, here is a company of poor, miserable souls that have utterly undone themselves and now lie open to my justice. Justice demands satisfaction for them or will satisfy itself in the eternal ruin of them." Don't you see? It's not that there's some principle of justice hanging over the head of God that He has to submit to, and therefore He cannot simply pardon, but a payment must be made. No, God is just. He is consistent and perfect in all His attributes. He cannot love and save at the expense of His justice. I've heard preachers say this before: "instead of being just with you, God was loving." Well, if you study logic, you realize that means that God's love is unjust. No, my friend.

God has to be just and loving at the same time. In His justice He condemned you, in His love He became a man and stood in your place and paid the crime, your crime. And then the Father asked the Son "What shall be done for these souls?" and thus Christ returns, this is the Son speaking: "Oh, my Father! Such is my love to and pity for them." Now think about this. I don't want you as a group, but as individuals to think about this. He looks at you. And he says this: Father, such is my love to this one person and my pity for them." After they've broken every command, He still says "Such is my love, and such is my pity." Proud men say "I don't want your pity." You need his pity. You need his pity. We are pitiful. He says "Such is my love to and pity for them that rather than they shall perish eternally I will be responsible for them as their guarantee. Bring in all Thy bills, Father, that I may see what they owe Thee." Sometimes a young man will get married. And after he gets married, he'll start getting a little shaky on his commitment. He said "I had no idea that marriage was this tough." "I don't know if this is really what I'm made to do." You see, he was boasting about how much he would love this girl. He had no idea the commitment he was going to have to make, but that is not true with Christ. Here He says to the Father "Father, bring in everything they owe Thee, let me see it." Imagine this: He sees everything that you owe justice. He doesn't go to that cross blindly; He doesn't get on the cross and say "No Father, I don't want to do this, I didn't know it would cost so much." He knew from eternity how much it would cost Him and yet He still did it. But listen to this: "Bring in all Thy bills that I may see what they owe Thee." "Lord, bring them all in." Now listen. Believers, if this doesn't make you so happy you weep or cry out for joy, you're not understanding what I'm saying. "He says bring in all the bills. Bring them all in that there may be no after reckonings with them." Do you see what He's saying? Bring in every one of their bills from the time they were born till the time they die, everything they owe Thee, Father bring them all in." I want to see them all, and on that tree I want to pay for them all there so that You never have to deal with them again with regard to their sin. Do you see that believer? He never has to deal with you again! It's over! All your crimes are paid for! Your crimes in the past, your crimes in the present, your crimes you're going to commit in the future. All of them paid for. And some people say "Well if you tell that to people they'll just sin." No, they won't, not true believers. Carnal, wicked, lost church members will hear that and go on sinning. But believers will say "If His love is like that, if He has set me free completely, I'm His! I don't want to sin anymore!" "I don't want to sin anymore!" You see, brothers, that's what leads to holiness, that's why the Gospel is called "The Mystery of Godliness". (1Timothy 3:16) You see that? It's the thing that produces godliness in the believer. Yes, there are commands and there are rules, but that's not what makes us godly. What makes us godly is knowing that Jesus died and that He died for me. And when He died, He paid for every sin, past, present and future. And God will never again, never call me into His judgment hall to judge me. Never again! I'm free! I'm free! Oh, thank God, I'm free! And you say "But brother Paul, it says that there's going to be a judgment for a believer." (2Cor 5:10) Ya, but listen to this. In that judgment, when you look up into the judge's face... it will be your Father. It will be your brother. The One who judges you is the One who died for you. Don't you see that? You're free. You're free! No guilt! Always come to Him! Always go back to Him! Always run to Him! You're free! You finally walked through a door that no one in this world knows anything about, it's unconditional love. You're just loved and it can't be changed now! Because of that perfect work of Christ on that tree, on your behalf. He says "At my hand shall Thou require it, Father. I will rather choose to suffer the wrath they deserve, then they should suffer it. Upon me, my Father, upon me place all their debt." This is amazing! Now listen to what the Father says:

"But my Son, if Thou undertake for them," if you stand in their place, Son, "Thou must reckon to pay the last mite." You must pay every penny.

Now listen to this: "Expect no abatements." He's saying "Son, don't expect the punishment to fall on you to be anything less than what would fall upon them." And this is what the Father says: "If I spare them, I will not spare you." Imagine that. And then the Son says "Content, Father, let it be so. Charge it all upon me, I am able to discharge it." That right there, that's deity. No one can say that. Angels can't say that, no one can say that, only the Mighty Christ, only the Son of God can discharge it, He alone and no one else. "And though it prove a kind of undoing to me, though it impoverished all my riches, empty all my treasures, yet I am content to undertake it. Father, I am content, I'll do it. I want this." Do you know, in Philippians, where it talks about "He did not consider equality with God a thing to be grasped. He set that aside and He became a man. And not only a man, but a servant." (Phil 2:6-7) Under the law of Israel, if a man was a servant to another man and yet, in that house that he served, he gained for himself a wife and children, when it came time for that man to be set free, if he passionately loved the woman that was his and the children that belonged to him, he would go to his master and say "I do not want to be set free, I'm content to stay here with my wife and my children." And the master would take him over to a doorway and take a sharp object like an ore or a knife or a nail and would pierce his ear. Christ so loved you, so loved His bride, that He, who was ruler of all things, the Heir of the Universe and beyond, He became a servant. Because of His love for His bride, because of His love for you as individuals. Now I want to end by just giving you another story from the Old Testament that's very important. It's one of the most epic narratives in all the Bible. This is what God says to an old man: "Abraham, take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains, of which I will tell you." Guys, listen to the language here. The Bible is inspired, it is the Word of God and there are little things left here and there, they tell us more than what you would think at first. God could have said this in a different way, but listen to how He speaks to Abraham: "Now take your son, your only son, whom you love." Do you think that He's talking about something greater than the sacrifice of a boy named Isaac? And He says "And go to the land of Moriah and offer him there as a burnt offering." We all know the story, the old man gathers up what he needs and he goes, makes the journey. He leaves his servants behind at the foot of the mountain and he goes up, and he is going to offer his son in obedience to God. The old man grabs possibly even the old flint knife he used to circumcise, and he rears back his hand and his will gives in to the will of God. And right before he comes down with the blade upon the breast of his son, his only son whom he loved, he hears this: "Abraham, Abraham, do not stretch out your hand against the lad and do nothing to him for now I know that you fear God since you have not withheld, not withheld your son, your only son from me." And at that, Abraham raised his head and looked over and there was a ram in the thicket caught by its horns. And he called the place Jehovah Jireh, the Lord will provide. Now let me just stop here for second. The prosperity preachers and such on television, that use this name, Jehovah Jireh, and say "because of this He will give you a Mercedes", they have blasphemed, and they have shown the real intention of their heart, that they are unconverted and they know not God. Because they would rather have the things of this world than what God is really promising here: His Son, His only Son, whom He loves. Now, He will provide for His people, but, oh my dear friend, if you have the Christ, what else do you need, what else do you need? We hear this story come to an end and we think "wow, thank the Lord, the boy was spared, what a great ending to the story." The only problem is, it wasn't the ending. It was the intermission. And when the curtain opens back up, there you see Him, a dark

stage, a dim light, a cruel cross and God's Son, His only Son, whom he loved, hanging on a cross. And in order for God to be able to say to Abraham "Abraham, Abraham, stay your hand from the boy", well, when Christ was on the tree, it's as though the Father took the knife out of Abraham's hand and when Christ cried out "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?", He drove the knife straight into the heart of His own Child. You see, someone had to die under having suffered the wrath of God. And you know we... Have you never read in Isaiah 53:10 "it pleased the Lord, it pleased Yahweh to crush Him"? To crush Him, what do you think that means, to crush Him? You see, to be honest with you, I really don't care whether you're self-fulfilled or you experience self-realization, I really don't care if your checkbook is balanced. This church is not designed for you to get your best life in this world, this church and the preaching in this pulpit has one purpose, that you will be reconciled to God and that you will love Him enough to throw away this world as though it were dung, and to follow Christ with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. And the motivation for it, for such a following, is not a preacher throwing guilt upon you or manipulating you with the text. No, the motivation is here: He shared His own blood for your soul. You are completely and perfectly loved in the state you are in right now. If you know Christ, you do not have to move a quarter of an inch to the left or the right to be loved any more then you will be loved in eternity. You are loved, it is that motivation. You are free now from guilt, it is that motivation. Christ has paid it all, now walk in that, walk in that freedom. No longer be afraid, rejoice! Be empowered by that, that He would pay such a price. I am sure that none of you, even all of you combined, I am sure that you were not, in your unconverted state, half as vile and wicked as me. But if knowledge that you were such a filthy man will drive you to want only Christ, then so be it. Christ, Christ, Jesus Christ! He's all, He's everything, there's nothing else! No, no! "What will we get here, brother Paul, if we come to this church?" You will get Christ. If that is not enough, well, there are many other groups who will offer you all sorts of things. It's Christ, Christ that you need! And if you have Him, you have everything, absolutely everything. Turn to Christ. I tell the young children: some of you've heard more Gospel than you could ever... then nations have heard. Children, repent, turn from your sin and believe in Christ. Adults, you may be sitting there saying "I've never, never had the love of God shed abroad in my heart, my religion is in my head, it means nothing. Repent and turn to Christ. What shall I do? Seek Him. And He will let Himself be found by you. Seek Him. But I don't know how! We will stay here all day and all night opening up the Scriptures to you. But we will not treat you with five minutes and then turn you away, making you think you're saved and claiming you as one of our own. Trust in Christ. I plead with you, trust in Christ. And those of you students and others, who have all kinds of plans for your life, it may be that God wants you to do exactly what you're doing, I do not know, but I know this: you are to do it for His glory. For what He has done on that tree. Everything you do, realize this, students. If you have a passion for Christ, it does not mean that you're to go into some ministry. What you need to understand is that if you truly believe in Christ, there is nothing secular in your life that no matter what you become, it is holy unto the Lord and it's to be used for Him. Only for Him, everything for Him. If you need to talk about the condition of your soul today, then know this, I will be here, other men will be here. Just talk to us, we would love to just share with you anything. If you're saying "I don't even know if I'm saved", we'll open up the Scriptures and help you. Help you to know what the Scriptures say about salvation. And if you say "well, I'd just... my heart is growing dull. I know everything I need to know but my heart's just growing dull. Then seek Him. Seek Him. Seek Him. You don't need the council of men, you need to seek Him alone. Seek Him alone. Let's go to the Lord in prayer. Father, I come before you today and I pray,

oh God. Lord, we thank you for Jesus Christ. We thank you, Lord, that the greatest poet, the greatest mind in the world could not even begin to comprehend or express the greatness of Christ or the beauty therein. Father, I pray for your people. I pray for those who are here today that you would strengthen them in a love for Christ. And that that love for Christ would drive them on. But Lord, not so much that we love You but that You love us. Lord, our love is not constant, but Your love is constant and a constant motivation. Oh, God, work in our lives and in our hearts. Change us, transform us to simply love and walk with Your Son. In Jesus' name. Amen.