

# **GOD'S LOVE COMPELS US**

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**NOTES FROM THE GOSPEL COALITION'S  
2013 WORLD MISSIONS PRECONFERENCE**

# What is this eBook?

This book is a collection of notes from the Gospel Coalition's 2013 World Missions Pre-Conference, "God's Love Compels Us," held April 6-7, 2013 in Orlando, Florida. The conference featured the following speakers:

**Don Carson**

**Andy Davis**

**David Platt**

**John Piper**

**Michael Oh**

**Stephen Um**

**Mack Stiles**

All notes are paraphrased.



# **The Biblical Basis for Missions**

**Don Carson**

*Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*

*But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you.*

– 2 Corinthians 4:1-12–

## **What is the biblical basis for mission?**

How might we go about answering the question. We might do so by teasing out the story of redemption from the beginning of Scripture... we could assert the biblical basis for missions is anchored in the entire Bible with God graciously and continually going after sinners for his glory. Or we could consider Jesus Himself—we could think of Jesus as the Good Shepherd, or the obedience of Christ in the Garden of Gethsemene, or His actions... but another way of getting to the biblical basis of missions is by focusing on a particular passage. And we will do so today by focusing on 2 Corinthians 4:1-12.

So how does this passage contribute to our grasp of the biblical basis of mission?

**These verses do not so much define mission so much as describe it.**

## **Gospel ministry demands unqualified integrity. (1-2)**

Verses one through three begin with the clause “therefore.” And

this “therefore” connects our text with the previous three chapters. There, Paul is telling us that apostolic ministry has many superior privileges to the ministry of Moses. Or to put it another way, the new covenant covered sealed by the blood of Christ is superior to the old covenant (see 2 Cor. 3:1-3, 7-11, 18)

Do these references to “this ministry” refer only to apostolic ministry? If so, then we must be careful in how we apply them today. Although 2 Cor. 3 describes the superiority of apostolic ministry, his use of “we all” reminds us this is for all of us.

What is the nature of Paul’s misery? Many are uncomfortable with the plain teaching of Scripture (2 Cor 4:2). Why would you use shady language?

Because the language of Scripture isn’t too popular. Further, others are going to be blinded to it. Devout muslims may understand what you’re saying, but not why it matters. Secular hedonists may not see its relevance. There’s even a new tolerance that isn’t tolerant at all, which says that proclaiming an exclusive Jesus makes you a bigot.

The “god” of this age has blinded them to the truth.

In other words, sometimes it is the truth itself that is offensive. Jesus knew this Himself, as he told some onlookers in his day, “Because I tell you the truth, you do not believe.” It would be bad enough if he said “although...” But he uses a causal—”because.” So what do you do? Tell untruths? But then what are they believing? Something that isn’t true.

**...because this ministry  
comes from God, we do  
not lose heart.**

If you read the pagan literature of the first three centuries, the most common complaint about Christianity is it’s too narrow. Sound familiar?

So it’s easy to be disheartened. But because this ministry comes from God, we do not lose heart. We use clear words, we do not use cunning and underhanded ways... and “even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing.”

There are ways to change the message to increase income. There are some who change the message looking for a “strong” man who will tell them where to step off. What is required of us, though? Backbone. Gospel ministry demands unqualified integrity.

## **The gospel itself displays the glory of Christ (v. 3-6).**

Our task is to herald the gospel even to those who can't see it's light. I knew a graduate student at the university of Cambridge who was given John Stott's Basic Christianity. She read through the book, even looked up the references... and when she was done, she said, "I've decided Christianity is for good people like you and Carol [her Christian roommate], but not for me." How does a graduate student at Cambridge decide this through John Stott's limpid prose? Because she couldn't see it. She was blind to the truth.

Now, if you want to see how do we see the glory of Christ? By looking at Jesus Himself. Jesus isn't a cypher for the glory of God. His Lordship is predicated upon His death and resurrection on the cross. This is the news we proclaim.

We can't forget that the gospel is news—it's new about Jesus, who He is and what He has done to purchase men and women from every tongue and tribe and every nation, until the Kingdom comes in the new creation.

**The good news is not "believe."**

**The good news is not "turn over a new leaf."**

**What we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord.**

If we have come to see the light of the gospel, it is because God has shone that light in our hearts. It is not because we're brighter, or because we are Western, but because God has somehow illuminated our hearts—the language is specifically evocative of creation. God said "let there be light" and there was light, and John's gospel says that the darkness couldn't stop it.

Until God says let there be light, darkness abides.


And so my confidence is not in myself, but in the God who says "let there be light." The gospel itself displays the glory of Christ.

## **Gospel ministry is characterized by paradoxical death to self and overflowing life in Christ. (7-12)**

We have this treasure—this treasure of Christ, of the gospel—in jars of clay so that this all surpassing power is known to be from God and not ourselves. If you read on in the book, you'll see that he's been shipwrecked three times already, he'd been beaten multiple times, whipped five times—and they kept going until you died or

they got tired—on top of dangers on every side... perplexed, but not despairing. I wonder if this isn't Paul's articulation of Christ's command to take up our cross and follow. Paul has faced so many occasions he wouldn't have chosen on his own—and then he says “so that.” The “so that” is the power of the gospel at work in us...

When I was a boy, there was a lot of emphasis in missionary meetings, there was a large emphasis on sacrifice. Lord knows we need to be reminded of this nowadays. Although Paul says he's been crushed and persecuted and struck down, he also says His life will be manifested in our bodies... these two emphases necessarily hang together. We are crucified with Him. We see glory with Him. We die to self and we experience more of His life. You can't have one without the other. They hang together. God is no one's debtor. But as Christ picked up His cross and went to calvary, so we pick up ours and follow Him. Gospel ministry is characterized by paradoxical death to self and overflowing life in Christ.

A man with short brown hair, wearing a dark blue blazer over a light blue button-down shirt, stands at a dark wood podium. He is gesturing with his right hand raised. The background is dark with a large, glowing green '30' visible. The text 'Are People Without Christ Really Lost?' is overlaid in white on the right side of the image.

# **Are People Without Christ Really Lost?**

**Andy Davis**



# **Are those without Christ really lost? And are those who die without hearing of Christ without hope?**

We have almost 17,000 people groups, with perhaps 2.78 billion people living within those people groups... how are we to understand the character of God in all this? How are we to understand and embrace our role in all of this?

I come to you from the position of exclusivism—that which says that only those who possess conscious faith in the Jesus of the Bible. This stands in contrast to universalism, pluralism, inclusivism, accessiblism... We are accused of arrogance by the universalists and pluralists. Others argue that there are “secret” or unknowing converts—Hindus or Muslims who may die and find out they really find out they were Christians after all. Others bring up Melchizedek and OT examples... others ask questions about those who die as infants... Some suggest there’s an idea of a “second hearing” after death... There are some who are theological allies of ours who would suggest we hold to an agnosticism on this.

I think Scripture is sufficient to answer all these questions and if you get nothing else from this message, it’s this:

Those who are without Christ are lost, and we need to tell them.

## **1. Those without Christ are lost.**

Scripture gives clear testimony to the fact that those who are without Christ are lost (Rom. 1:18-25). Everywhere God has given clear evidence of his existence, and so all are without excuse. All have sinned by not acknowledging Him... All are condemned, both Jew and Gentile says Paul (Rom. 3:10-14). As soon as men and women become aware of God, they turn away from Him and they need a Savior.

## **2. There is no way for sinners to be saved apart from the shed blood of Christ.**

In the cultural air we breathe... people come from all over the world and see the generosity and selflessness and hospitality of people from other religions and some Christians want to back away from the exclusivity of Christ. But Scripture is a two-edged sword and it cuts clearly through this issue—there is no way for sinners to be saved apart from the shed blood of Christ.

For some of us, we may have an academic interest in this, or an apologetic one or a missiological one... there is no one else who asked this question with greater intensity than Jesus in the garden on the eve of the crucifixion. He prays, and I can scarcely imagine the anguish, when he asks, "Is there any other way? May this cup pass from me if it be your will?"

The strongest exclusivist verse in the Bible is Acts 4:10-12: ... by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth... there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

Paul says that if righteousness could be had by the law, Christ died for nothing. But there is no other name given by which we must be saved.

### **3. There is no salvation apart from conscious salvation in Christ**

Just as the blood of the lamb had to be applied to the door posts in the passover, so the work of Christ must be applied by the Holy

Spirit. God presented Jesus as a propitiation, a sacrifice turning away the wrath of God, applied by faith in Christ. Gal. 2, when Paul rebukes Peter, Paul says, "a man is not justified by the law, but by faith in Christ...we seek to be justified in Christ." Four times in Galatians 2 he tells us we must be justified by faith in Jesus Christ. The idea of an unwitting convert is unbiblical.

How what of the OT saints? All we can say is that whatever that era entailed, that era is over. With Christ having entered redemptive history, that old era is over.

### **Those who are without Christ are lost, and we need to tell them.**

### **4. The gospel must be proclaimed to the ends of the earth**

Here we come to the logic of Romans 10:13-15. Paul's rhetorical questions all assume the answer of no. His assumption here is that it is impossible for anyone to be saved without faith in Christ. And he assumes that no one can come to faith without believing. And no one can believe without hearing. And it is impossible for anyone to hear the message of Christ without someone being sent. And so sunrises and sunsets and newborn

babies, however marvelously they testify of our creator God, they do not proclaim the crucified and risen Lord Christ.

## **5. We believers are responsible for that proclamation of the gospel.**

It has been committed to us. At the end of each gospel there is a version of the great commission. Matt 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, John 20... Acts 1:8 promises it again saying God will give us power to do the task.

How should we respond to this responsibility? We should respond with passion for the lost. We should respond with prayer—we should pray that people would hear and believe. We should respond with planning. We should use means to reach the unconverted. And then comes the hard part, we need to be willing to lay down our lives and sacrifice ourselves in suffering to see this happen. It's easy to talk about this in a hotel in Orlando, but it's true. It's going to take suffering to make it happen.

Are you passionate about this? Are you praying for the lost, for unreached people groups? Are you making plans, involved in strategizing to reach them? Are you in the process of laying down your life, sacrificially living of your time, of your body, of your

money, to see the lost reached? Are you willing to suffer and make sacrifices?

We cannot count on angels to do it—they'd do a bang up job, wouldn't they? They wouldn't need to look like angels... they announced the birth of Christ and the resurrection of Christ, but I'm given pause to wonder whether or not angels are permitted to preach the gospel. In Acts, we see an angel tell Phillip to preach to the Ethiopian, and we see an angel appear to Cornelius, telling him he needed to hear the gospel from Peter... we cannot count on angels to tell the good news. It is our responsibility.

## **6. God is sovereign over the entire missionary enterprise, guaranteeing its success.**

The appeal surrounding those vast numbers who die every day, I want to put that appeal on a solid foundation. Remember Romans 8, those who predestined, he also called. Every single predestined person receives the call, Paul says.

**So the missionary enterprise is really a hunt for the elect.** The promise is we don't know who they are. They don't walk around with an "E" on their forehead. The only way we can know who the

elect are is by their response to the gospel.

God is sovereign over the response to the gospel—He doesn't owe the gospel to anyone—and he is also sovereign over getting the gospel to the nations. God is able to get the gospel anywhere anytime he wants. He doesn't need angels. He has human messengers and he is able to keep the elect alive until they get there.

And God is also sovereign over the raising up of laborers to go and do the work, compelled to preach the gospel. There's a constraining force on the heart of those who desire to reach the lost—it accuses and convicts. And God also tells where to go. Paul and Silas are blocked from Asia, and were sent instead to Macedonia. God is working on both sides of the equation (Cornelius and Peter). God is preparing people to hear you right now, and God will keep them alive until you get there. God is sovereign over the gospel reaching every single elect person to keep them alive until they hear it.

**Not a single elect person will be lost.**

So how about it? How about having the kind of confidence we see in Scripture? We're on the winning side—we know we're going to win! If you go out as a missionary and even if you are martyred, you will give God all the glory. This gospel will be preached to all the nations and then the end will come.

So what about those who haven't heard the gospel now? They are lost right now. And the plight of the lost should move the church to prayer and planning and sacrificial service to bring the gospel to them.

# Why the Great Commission is Great

David Platt



*Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, “I believed, and so I spoke,” we also believe, and so we also speak, knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence. For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.*

*So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.*

– 2 Corinthians 4:13-18 –

[In this message] I am not trying to propose a particular utopian vision nor a particular eschatological vision. I’m not saying we in this room or in the western world can pull up our spiritual bootstraps, nor am I saying we are sovereign over this task... but as we are coalescing around the gospel, I want to urge us not to be content with the daintiness of talk and prettiness of words, but to let’s... go after the most dangerous people groups of the world... and do it with all joy. This, I am convinced is the heart of the apostle Paul in these words in 2 Cor 4.

I want to exhort us in a definite attempt to render the world evangelized under the sovereign grace of God... for that is what the gospel compels us to do.

**As we believe the gospel with deep seated conviction in our lives, let’s proclaim the gospel with death-defying confidence in the world.**

In 2 Cor. 4:1-12, we heard Paul describe the power fo the gospel and the weakness of the messenger, and now he reaches back into the Psalms, in Psalm 116:10, where we see a clear connection between believing and speaking. Suffering cannot silence the spirit of faith,

the psalmist says. And this, Paul says, is the same spirit at work in us. So believing automatically leads to speaking. Possession of faith automatically leads to proclaiming the faith. According to Paul, when you believe in the resurrection, you proclaim the resurrection—there’s no such thing as a privatized faith according to Paul. If you believe the gospel, you will proclaim the gospel no matter what it costs.

A privatized faith is a profound curse in the Western church. A faith that says, “It works for me, but who am I to tell my neighbor what they are to believe—even more who am I to tell the nations what they are to believe? And even more, who am I to tell them that if they don’t believe what I believe, they’re going to be condemned to hell?”

We can all relate to that.

When telling the people of my church about visiting Northern India, where approximately 99.5 per cent of the population is non-Christian, thinking “who am I to tell them that all they believe isn’t true—that all their gods are false and if they don’t turn to Christ they will spend an eternity in Hell... that’s extremely arrogant, isn’t

it?” And it would be the height of arrogance—if it were untrue. But we know this gospel is true—and it is the height of arrogance not to speak. It is the most evil thing you can do to know the truth and keep it from others.

But if you believe the gospel, in the resurrection from the dead, you can’t not proclaim it.

So do you believe the gospel? Do we really believe this—because if we really do then we can’t sit idly by in our churches while 2.8 billion people have never even heard the news of the resurrection. We believe and so we are compelled to proclaim the gospel to unreached people groups, knowing that we will face suffering and affliction while doing so.

And we know this because they’re unreached—it’s going to be hard. All the easy groups are gone. These people don’t want to be reached.

As I continue to study this text the more convinced I become you cannot rightly understand it outside the context of gospel proclamation in dangerous situations. We see this in all of his

## **A privatized faith is a profound curse in the Western church.**

examples of his suffering—it's all the result of proclaiming the gospel in Asia. The principle here: persecution follows proclamation.

Think about our brothers and sisters in Saudi Arabia, North Korea or Somalia right now... if they don't speak, they don't have a problem. But as one woman I spoke to in the horn of Africa said, "If I share the gospel with the wrong person, I will have my throat cut."

Now we all won't face the same situations as in Saudi Arabia or North Korea or Somalia, but we have to remember that persecution follows proclamation. We don't do this because we have sick desire to be dangerous. It's just the reality of what we're going to face—resistance. So why go? Because of the gospel—as we believe this gospel in our lives, let's proclaim it with death defying confidence in the world.

## **As we live to extend God's grace among more people, let's long to exalt God's glory among all peoples.**

Don't you love the two-fold goal Paul has in ministry? Verse 15 sums up the purpose of all Christian missions. "All suffering is for your sake so that more and more and more of you can experience

God's grace." Isn't that what all our ministries are to be about? To extend the gospel to more and more and more people so that more and more and more people would know the resurrected Christ.

In Northern India, in one of the most physically and spiritually impoverished areas in the world, an area about the size of Tennessee—100 million people—where the population is about 0.1 per cent Christians. And there approximately 50000 people die daily, which means approximately 49999 people plunge into an eternal hell, most of whom have never heard the gospel.

So we've partnered with brothers in ministry, training Christians to reach the people. Two brothers go to some training where they're told to go into villages and say to the first person they see and say, "we come in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, can we pray for your village?" They did this in a village with no Christians. They got as far as Jesus and the man they spoke to brought his whole family and 20 people came to Christ. And they trained these same believers to go and do the same. And now three years later, their are churches that are started—real churches, not just "where two or three are gathered" churches—and they're worshiping Christ. One villager shared his testimony and said, "Our village was like hell until we heard the gospel."



This is what we live for. We want more and more people to know the gospel.

But, that's not all.

Listen to Paul, "It's all for sake so that it may increase thanksgiving to God." The proper end of missions is not the saving of souls, it's the glory of God. More specifically thanksgiving to God.

More and more people who are happy in God!

That's the cry of the psalmist, and the angel in heaven and of the Apostle Paul himself!

And that's the problem itself isn't it? Apart from the gospel, they're not giving thanks to God. That's what we know from Romans 1—they didn't give thanks to God. Their foolish hearts became darkened, thinking they were wise they became fools... they exchanged the true God for images of created things.

There are scores of people who are not worshiping the true God, giving thanks to Him, and this drives missions—not because we feel guilty, not because we have all this stuff, it's glory for our God.

**...as we live to extend God's  
grace among more people,  
let's long to exalt God's glory  
among all peoples.**

We must sacrifice our lives and shepherd our churches to penetrate unpeople groups because our God doesn't deserve the praise of just a few thousand people groups, but of all 16,000 people groups!

That's why we're going to go to the 200+ million Americans who aren't giving thanks to God... to Laos and Japan where there are over 350 million people following Buddhist rules and regulations

instead of giving thanks to the true God... and people who believe the gospel, who believe Jesus is worthy of worship will be driven to go and reach them.

It's the supreme purpose of missions—it's what makes the great commission great—as we live to extend God's grace

among more people, let's long to exalt God's glory among all peoples.

**As we continually envision  
eternal glory with God, let's  
joyfully embrace earthly suffering  
from God.**

So it all makes sense what Paul says at the end of this chapter. As long as we believe this gospel, as long as we proclaim this gospel, our outer selves will be wasting away. We will face affliction.

Pushing back darkness is never going to be easy. Ministry, missions will never be easy so long as we're pushing back darkness. We follow a Savior who sent out His disciples as sheep among wolves. It's not a good place to be, among wolves. Our danger in this world increases to the degree we're committed to the Lord. So those who want a comfortable easy life in this world, stay away from Jesus.

So we're told, don't be surprised by what is about to happen to you. This is the unavoidable takeaway. The more passionate and committed we are to taking the gospel to the nations, the more we will face affliction.

We have made safety a "god" not just in our world but in our churches—we have equated safety with wisdom. And I'm not saying we should be reckless...but God will pass us by so long as we embrace safety over obedience.

But this is the crux of the text. Suffering may be inevitable, but God's purpose is inevitable. Suffering will come, affliction will come, Paul says, but all of these sufferings are from our God for our good. It's granted to us—given to us—by God so that we would know God.

As we share in Christ's afflictions, we share in His comfort, too. Suffering may be inevitable, but God's purpose is unstoppable.

I love how Satan acts not only under God's permission, but to fulfill God's purposes. In Acts 8, we see Stephen persecuted and the church is scattered and proclaims the gospel out wherever they go. And we see that Paul is there approving of Stephen's death, and in doing so winds up founding the church that would later send HIM out on mission. The gospel going to more and more and more people will involve suffering, but it will be worth the price.

As we coalesce around this gospel, let us coalesce around the accomplishment of this gospel. As we believe the gospel with deep seated conviction in our lives, let's proclaim the gospel with death-defying confidence in the world. As we live to extend God's grace among more people, let's long to exalt God's glory among all peoples. As we continually envision eternal glory with God, let's joyfully embrace earthly suffering from God—knowing that if God is for us no one can be against us.

A large church service is taking place in a grand, dimly lit sanctuary. A speaker stands at a podium on the right side of the stage, gesturing with his hands as he addresses the congregation. The audience, consisting of many people, is seated in rows of pews that fill the lower two-thirds of the frame. The ceiling is high and features a complex arrangement of stage lights, including a long row of warm-toned spotlights that create a soft glow. The overall atmosphere is solemn and focused.

# **The heart of God in the call to proclaim**

**John Piper**

*For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.*

*So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.*

– 2 Corinthians 5:1-10 –

## **Missions is not the same as local evangelism.**

Missions is the specialized calling of the church to plant the church and make disciples in areas where the church has yet to go.

There are approximately 3100 unengaged people groups in the world. There are 98,000 evangelicals for each of the unengaged people groups of the world.

**3100 people groups is small. We can do this if we will. The world, the devil, war against the will of the church to do this.**

If this will is to be sustained, it will be by faith—and hearing by the word of Christ.

My job today is to strengthen your faith and your will and perhaps strengthen your call to this task.

Verses one through ten of chapter five are additional reasons for by you should not lose heart in this ministry of the word and in the cause of missions.

You should have a joyfully serious courage in the cause of world missions. And this text gives four reasons for that—four foundations for real joyful courage.

# Realism

Few things are discouraging than shattered expectations—based on unrealistic expectations. And so Paul gives us clay pot expectations.

Four evidences of realism:

We live in a tent not a building. He calls the body a tent, not a castle or a building. The point of calling it a tent is that tents aren't very good against harsh weather. Therefore since this is where you live, you should be free of the expectation of escaping transience. We do missions in our bodies—they are frail and temporary.

This tent may be destroyed. Not just shattered or wasting away but destroyed.

Destroys the subjective grounding of the tent. We groan. Be burdened. All the time. While you live in the tent it's going to groan. It has nerve endings and limits.

Calls the Holy Spirit a down payment. It's a guarantee. This word is right but only half right. It only gets half the meaning of the word. The point is it really is a down payment and only a down payment.

We will someday have the rest of the down payment. But not now. Get used to it.

# Resurrection

Same five verses. Paul is proclaiming a redirection body—a building, not a tent. He ponders in these verses that he might die before the redirection and he doesn't want that to happen. Unclothed refers to dying before the resurrection. The point is not release but resurrection.

What will it be like?

It will be a building not a tent. We have a building from God. A God-built building.

It's like a house not made with hands. That's very strange. Why would he say

that? Not made with hands? It doesn't come out of nowhere, it comes from Jesus. The word destroy and the word not made with hands is used in Mark 14:58—"I will destroy this temple made with hands and in three days make another not made with hands." I think Jesus is saying Jesus built a temple when he was raised from the dead and Jesus will build us new bodies.

It's eternal in the heavens. An eternal body, you'll never ever be

**If the will [of the Church]  
is to be sustained, it will be  
faith—and by hearing the  
Word of Christ.**

without a body when you get your resurrection body. It's risky being a missionary in a tent. This is such a wonderful promise for us because if you have to watch people being thrown to the lions in the Colosseum or if you're a missionary who watches her husband's head cut from his head... We have a resurrection hope!

## Reunion

If we must die before the resurrection, we will be reunited with Christ. He was here in the flesh, we will be there with him in the flesh, though naked and unclothed and not in our final destination—but that, Paul says, is better than death. “We would rather be away from the body and be at home with the Lord.” Without verse eight we would almost certainly misunderstand verse four.

In verse eight, Paul says we don't want to be unclothed. You might get the impression in the first five verses that bodiless existence is preferred to living within the body. But verse eight prevents us from going there. It's only preferable as a step toward the final goal of being within the resurrection body.

You do not have to labor under the sadness that the dead are in an inferior position. Paul, choosing between three options—live in the tent, live bodiless with Jesus, live in the resurrection body—

chooses “B” when he can't have “C.” His choices are C, B, A. And they should be ours as well.

## Reward

We've seen Paul trying to help us with joyfully serious courage with realism, resurrection and reunion and now finally reward. The reason I've put the word “serious” is because of these verses (2 Cor. 5:9-10). I'm saying that makes a person serious in his joy. Really serious. Paul draws the inference from these verses from 5:11 of fear—I'm saying “serious.” He's saying “fear.”

Knowing the fear of the Lord we persuade men. We get about our mission and ministry—with a trembling in our hearts—joyfully and seriously. This fear is fully compatible with the joyful confidence we have in the rest of the chapter. It in no way prevents Paul from saying “we would prefer to be away from the body with the Lord.”

The judgment of believers awakens a kind of fear in Paul, one that doesn't push him away from Jesus but toward him. He embraces it—because it's the path to Jesus.

If you right now are feeling “that doesn't make sense to me—it sounds like double-talk, nonsense—confident, don't lose heart, fear of Jesus”—you need to change.

At 67, I feel these immature emotions as I read the Bible because I'm not where I ought to be. Too many people feel like this, feel like there are these things that don't fit with our emotional structures and so they drop them. Don't do that! Assume you're the problem. You've got to change, not the Bible. I come to the Bible a broken sinner, an emotional wreck. I come to be fixed, not to tell the Bible what it can tell me how to feel.

Peter described this fear in the same connection as perfectly compatible with calling God "Father." I have a Father who is going to judge me according to my life—and I'm going to walk before Him in confidence.

Could it be that part of our problem is that we have only known the comfort of the Holy Spirit—and we don't understand the fear of the Lord? Paul calls it the fear of Christ, a sobering exception of judgment and it's embraced as good and empowering. Missionaries know how to embrace the fear of God and have a confidence—missionaries who get the job done have roots in a sovereign God who doesn't let us fall and doesn't let us lose heart.

What is it about the judgment that is so serious or produces this

fear in verse 11 that makes it so motivating for holiness in a right, godly, not legalistic kind of way?

What is it that makes it so serious? Verse 10 tells us—that each will receive what is his due, whether for good or evil. That deserves a sermon, but it's going to get another three minutes then we'll be done. The best commentary on this verse is in 1 Cor. 3, referring

to Paul himself and Apollos. There he says that there's labor that's built on the foundation that's good and labor built on the foundation that's bad—foul, perishing, evil. Here's his explanation 1 Cor 3:12-15:

"...If anyone's work is burned up, he will experience loss, but he himself will be

saved, but only as one escaping the fire."

Each one will receive what is due, whether good (reward) or evil (loss). From this awesome scene, Paul says we make it our aim to make it our aim to please him. Without faith it is impossible to please God—and what is done in faith will be rewarded, and what relies on self will be lost.

**...come to the Bible be fixed,  
not to tell the Bible what it  
can tell [you] how to feel.**

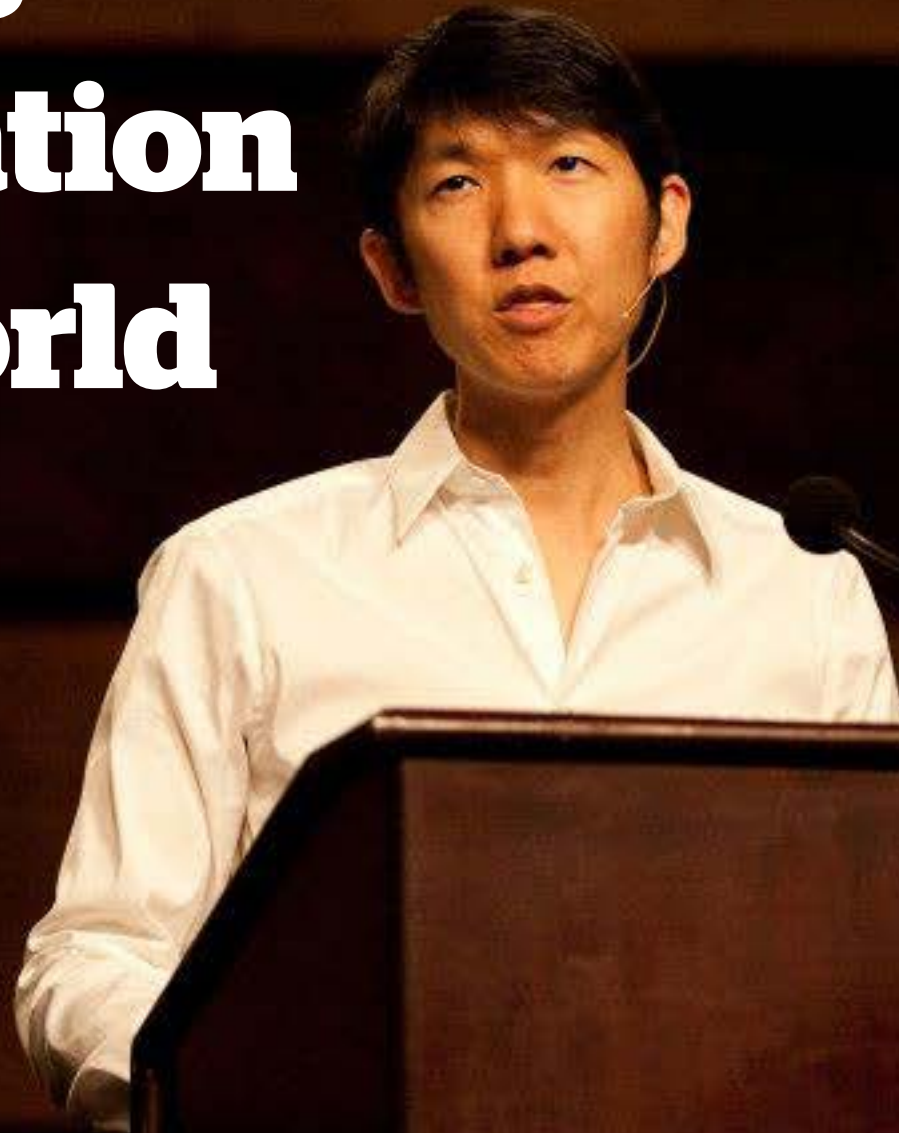
# Conclusion

What Paul is doing in this passage is undergirded in chapter four—that we do not lose heart. He gives us four reasons for why we can be joyfully and seriously courageous in our mission. We are realistic about our mission and our situation. Resurrection, whether eaten by lions or worms, we will have a resurrection body that will shine like the sun. And if you die before the resurrection, you will be reunited with Jesus, which is still far better than dwelling in the tent. And there will be a great deal of trembling before Jesus, and justification will be at play there, and you will be rewarded for all that you do—and you will experience loss for everything that is not done in faith. And that loss will fuel our joy for spending our eternity with Jesus, who we will enjoy forever and ever.



**The individual's  
suffering and  
the salvation  
of the world**

**Michael Oh**



*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest.*

*Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel. In you our fathers trusted; they trusted, and you delivered them. To you they cried and were rescued; in you they trusted and were not put to shame.*

*But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by mankind and despised by the people. All who see me mock me; they make mouths at me; they wag their heads;*

*“He trusts in the Lord; let him deliver him; let him rescue him, for he delights in him!”*

*Yet you are he who took me from the womb; you made me trust you at my mother’s breasts. On you was I cast from my birth, and from my mother’s womb you have been my God.*

*Be not far from me, for trouble is near, and there is none to help.*

*—Psalm 22:1-11 —*

## **It seems that no matter how much we want to or how hard we try, we can’t avoid suffering.**

When we suffer we ask questions, “God are you really good? God do you really love me?” Today’s psalm, Psalm 22, shows us that God really does love us and he really is good. Today’s thesis is this:

## **God has been, is and will be faithful to his people both corporately and individually in suffering—and the nations will come to worship the Lord through their suffering.**

In verses one and two David is complaining about the perceived distance between his circumstances and his God. In verse one we hear pain in David’s voice, “my God, my God” he says. His prayer and honest complaint is “When Israel cried to you, you saved them—when I cry to you, you don’t!” There’s this painful reality that God has acted but doesn’t seem to be acting in David’s life.

David's enemies are so near and God seems so far away. Long before there were lions, tigers and bear (oh my), there were bulls, oxen and dogs. They "encompass" him.

And then in Psalm 22:22, we see a shift, where David goes from his lament to praising God, it looks like we're missing the second act of a three act play.

But before we get to the second half of the psalm, we need to see three things when it comes to suffering:

**God is in control of everything.**

This is usually the first temptation when suffering comes. Nowhere does David see himself as a victim of faith. Biblical reality is that God is working out all that he has sovereignly ordained, in this world and in this live, including your salvation.

**Salvation is a part of God's good design.**

This is the second temptation we see when suffering comes—it may be part of God's plan, but maybe God's plan isn't good. So how is it good?

First, suffering is for non-Christians. Suffering functions to teach you of your need for Jesus Christ. Pain is a God-given indicator that something is wrong—and the most significant thing that is wrong is your relationship with God is broken. In Japan, supposedly the

most advanced society on the planet, why would four percent of middle school girls sell their bodies to dirty old men? It's not because they need money. They get their \$300 and spend it the next day on a Gucci wallet. It's because of their spiritual emptiness.

Money and wealth are not something to be lauded and sought after. But poverty and pain are not good in and of themselves—they exist to point us to the solution to these things, which is in Jesus Christ. And Christians need to be present with those who are in pain, so we can share with them the lessons of pain, and point them to the solution to pain.

But suffering is also for Christians. We seek after emotional, spiritual, financial comfort—but if this were Jesus' goal, his ministry

**God is working out  
all that he has  
sovereignly ordained**

would have been very different. Suffering and pain are part of our discipleship.

## **Not all suffering is the same.**

There are at least three types of suffering found in Scripture:

### **Suffering as the consequence of sin.**

**Common suffering.** This is suffering that effects people whether or not they're Christians. It includes illness, typhoons, financial struggles, poverty, death itself.

**Christ's suffering.** This is suffering for the sole reason of standing up for Christ. It also includes common suffering that is compounded for the sake of Christ—financial struggles due to generosity. Many Christians have never experienced such suffering. Our lives are so innocuous that they don't bother Satan much at all.

### **What kind of suffering have you experienced—do you know anything of suffering for Jesus Christ?**

Tabulating what kind of suffering you have is not the point. The point is following Jesus. Christ and accepting the often difficult and always wonderful consequences of doing so.

David learns these lessons and in the second half of the psalm we see the fruit:

## **We see David exhort believers to give praise to God—and we see David exalt the world to join in giving praise to God.**

Why do we praise Him? Because he has not despised the afflicted. The poor will be fed. The wealthy will be fed.

Now, can I say something about money here? Many pastors think we value money too much. But we might value money too little because we don't seem to understand the value it holds for furthering the gospel. It's value is redeemed when it's invested in eternal, gospel purposes. When we don't believe God's promises, we spend frivolously or hoard fearfully. When we believe, we release ourselves from the need to build an earthly inheritance.

Jesus said the field is ripe for harvest, but the laborers are few. I used to think the problem was there were too few willing to be sent, but I think the problem actually is there are too few senders.

William Carey once said, "I'll go into the mine if you hold the rope."

But the message being sent to missionaries today is “Buy your own damn rope.”

When we sit on our money, our hearts become clogged, and the whole health of our lives is in jeopardy when we don't give sacrificially and joyfully. Giving that is joyful, sacrificial and displays the glory of God in the gospel is the goal.

In this psalm, David says that he will share these blessings—that he will lay out a feast in celebration.

## **What would it look like if we really believed that?**

Every spiritual blessing. Without qualification, without hesitation. In verse 27, we can see the extent of God's blessings in salvation. The ultimate celebration is the sharing of these blessings with others—this is a missional intent. A personal doxology is not enough.

Let me be clear, missions is not the primary purpose. Worship is—but we have been given a primary mission that flows from the primary purpose. And that primary purpose is lost if the mission is neglected. David exhorts Christians to worship and calls the world to join in that exaltation.

We live in a world with more than two billion people who have not and will not hear unless someone will go and suffer. If Jesus Christ being proclaimed among all the nations matters to you, won't you get involved?

Our suffering is not merely for our own sanctification. It is to prepare us for proclamation. Proclamation of the difficulty of life in a fallen world, but also of God's grace that sustains us in the midst of suffering and will ultimately free us from that suffering in the end. Suffering has missional purpose with missional implication. Where you have suffering at work, you have gospel fruit.

This psalm echoes Jesus' suffering on the cross. We hear his cries to God, his enemies surrounding Him. And like David, we have full confidence that God will not leave us nor forsake us. But for Jesus, God turned his face away and poured out his wrath upon Him.

We ask questions like, “Why does suffering exist,” and the ultimate reason is so that Jesus would suffer for US. In a meaningful purpose-filled suffering so that God would be worshipped throughout the world and through eternity.

We suffer so we might take the gospel to the ends of the earth, that the worthy name of Jesus might be worshiped, that our God might become their God.

# Jesus and Justice

Stephen Um



# **C.S. Lewis said, every human being has an innate sense for justice. We all have this innate sense of what is right and what is wrong.**

On the right you have those who say that justice is a personal responsibility; on the left you have those who say it's in the domain of the state. And within the Christian church, we have a number of attitudes toward justice and the church—some focus solely on preaching, while others focus almost on the gospel as demonstrated in acts of service. Churches can get divided, theologians are divided... although there's controversy, we cannot avoid the discussion for two reasons:

Practially, there's too much injustice going on in the world to do nothing. And secondly, more importantly, the Bible shows that justice is extremely close to the heart of God.

## **Justice defined**

How does the Bible define justice? What do we see in Scripture?

**Justice is grounded in God's character.** The community when

it looks at the character of God, should have a desire to reflect the character of God. There are structural provisions throughout the Old Testament to respond to justice, to respond to the needs of the quartet of the marginalized.

DeYoung and Gilbert have noticed carefully that some things are different from OT times. We're no longer an agrarian society, our land is not given directly by God, etc. But we also would be wise to note that although many of the outer trappings have changed, the call to reflect the character of God has not.

Jesus doesn't rescind the OT commands of justice—He draws all the OT law under the great commandment, that we are to love the Lord our God with all our hearts, minds and souls, and we are to love our neighbors like ourselves. The Great Commandment and the Great Commission ought not be in tension.

**Justice is grace-fueled.** Grace fuels a desire toward justice. If we are not those who are middle-class, but poor in spirit, then certainly the gospel will grab our hearts and move us toward meeting justice.

**Justice is holistic.** Jesus didn't just meet spiritual needs—he fed people, he cared for them, he exercised demons...

**Justice is radical.** When you are engaged with the marginalized with one-way giving of your time, money and intent—then you know

you're connected God's sense of justice.

**Justice is universal.** The concept of justice is expanded beyond our families and communities and churches, but even to our enemies who are in need.

**Justice is eternally significant.** Proclamation of the gospel is essential, but demonstrating the gospel is also essential. Demonstration is not the same as proclamation, but it is the evidence of salvation.

## **How justice is denied**

**We deny justice by focusing on the external instead of the internal.** We focus on legalism, instead of grace. We perform acts appearing to be good on the outside.

In Matthew 7, Jesus describes two similar types of people—and both bear fruit, but one bears good fruit and the other bears bad fruit. He characterized people not by being good or bad, but humble or proud. One does his deeds to exalt himself, the other does his deeds to please God.

## **We are called to respond not only to the great commission, but also the great commandment.**

**We deny justice by moving way from being radical to doable.**

We don't recognize how radical the demands of the Law really are—we begin to think they're doable. That we can actually do them ourselves.

In Matt. 5, Jesus says, "You have heard it said, 'you shall not murder, and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.'" Now that second half isn't anywhere in Scripture. He also says, "You

have heard it said, 'you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy'"—which is the opposite of what the Bible says elsewhere.

So why would anyone want to add to the Law? To make the radical command doable. And if you can make it doable, you can justify yourself. The Law was

not given to show us these are doable, or manageable but to point us to a Savior? What's easier to do—to tithe or to give sacrificially?

The impulse of the human heart is the narrow down the commands of God so we can justify ourselves.

**We deny justice by moving away from the universal to the narrow. It's all about self-absorption.** We are to be concerned with



the needs of others, to think of others more and think of ourselves less, as someone has said. When we become self-centered we think only of ourselves and our needs and our desires—and we are prevented from walking humbly and seeking justice before our God.

It's deadly to deny justice in this way. Where do we get the hope to reflect God's character and justice?

## **Justice delivered**

Justice demands judgment. Let's break this down: Grace is getting we don't deserve. Mercy is not getting what we deserve. Justice is getting what we deserve either for punishment or protection. Because of our sins, we are accountable to a holy God and there needs to be punishment, there needs to be penal justice. But all those who are marginalized, those who are in need, need to receive protective justice. So this is going to lead to three things:

**It's going to lead to a change from focusing on the external to focusing on the internal.** We deserve judgment, but he gives us justice in Jesus. When we come before judgment, we're going to want to plead justice. And God won't demand for a payment for something that's already been paid. God doesn't double-dip.

We need to recognize that we've received grace. That we received mercy. We can pursue radical grace-fueled justice because we have received grace.

**Secondly, we have the capital to be radically self-giving, rather than settling for what's doable.**

**Lastly, we have the ability to be radically self-giving universally, instead of self-focused, on account of another.** We have the ability to show generous justice to because what we've received in the gospel.

Friends, we have received the gospel, which says we've received love and compassion—counter-relational love that we don't deserve. That we've received mercy that we don't deserve because Jesus has absorbed the judgment that we did deserve. And this should move us to disadvantaged on account of the needy. We are called to respond not only to the great commission, but also the great commandment which calls us to love our neighbors as ourselves.

# **The Ministry of Reconciliation**

**Mack Stiles**



*Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others. But what we are is known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience. We are not commending ourselves to you again but giving you cause to boast about us, so that you may be able to answer those who boast about outward appearance and not about what is in the heart. For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.*

*From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

– 2 Corinthians 5:11-21 –

## **Second Corinthians 5:11-21 is best known for its ambassadorship, but I'm amazed at how gospel-centered it is.**

I have five marks of the ambassador that I'd like to highlight as we look at the text:

### **1. Our motivation for ambassadorship.**

Paul is saying here that when we understand what's at stake, we fear God and therefore we persuade people. We understand what's coming—and so we persuade people. We lay out facts, we answer questions, we teach.

Our motivation is different from what people may see—we're not proud, and we're not crazy, though it may look like both. And though we fear God, we have concluded something—that sin can be forgiven and that reconciliation with God is possible.

And that conclusion leads us to an understanding that we don't live for ourselves—and this conviction makes us look crazy to unbelievers, even to some other believers.

You listened to David Platt last night—don't you think he's a little crazy? And it's true. He's filled with a tender-hearted crazy love for the lost.

Verses 14-15 are sometimes used as a proof text for universalism, which is a heresy that you can't defend with this passage—but our concerns about definite or universal atonement sometimes mask the point of these verses: They're about our motivation. We're motivated by our fear of the Lord, in confidence in the truth that moves us to speak the truth to others.

## **2. How we view people.**

Once we're motivated correctly we view people correctly. Our natural tendency is to view people through worldly eyes—people even do that to Jesus, seeing him as a good moral teacher. Paul's point here is that if people did that to Jesus, how much more are they to do that to others.

C.S. Lewis reminds us that there's no such thing as a mere mortal, so ambassadors check their hearts and slay a tendency to hate

others in their heart.

But at the same time, we remember that people are also sinners. So we have a correct view that prevents us from glorifying people.

We also view the possibility of people—that they can become renewed, redeemed, restored new creations in Christ. And is there any more joy in ministry than that? To see people become new creations in Christ, to grow in Christ and see them begin to share with others...

Do you have people in your life who you don't believe will come to Christ, who might be too sinful or too hard-hearted, who perhaps look like they have everything they need? You're tempted to believe they don't need God. Don't believe that. People the world around

need God—they need to become new creations.

## **3. How we view the world.**

God is reconciling the world, it goes out to all the world—there's a tendency to think the message is just for small parts of the world. Now many Muslims will honor Jesus more than much of the western

**[our] conviction makes  
us look crazy to  
unbelievers, even to  
some other believers.**

world. But to deny the deity of Christ is to cut the heart out of the gospel.

But there are no barriers to God. This gospel is going out through the world. And it's our hope you'll see with joy how God is moving out among the people of the world. There are no barriers to God—take heart! Do you see people from other faith backgrounds and think you can't get to them? Do you see people who seem to have it all together and think you can't get to them? Don't!

## **4. Our role as Christians in the world.**

We are Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. That's an amazing thought. He didn't come up with this image by himself—he did to make sure we understand our role.

Ambassadors exist to deliver a message. That's what they do. So when you are sitting down with a family member, or a friend or a neighbor and a spiritual topic comes up—when that happens, when you screw up your courage and engage, think about this brothers and sisters that there from the very throne of God stretches a cable that somehow comes to that person through you.

You represent the foreign power of the Kingdom of God. It doesn't always feel that way, but it's true. And we need to get the message right. We don't change the message, we give it as taught.

Listen, we don't leave the message undelivered and ambassadors don't live at home, living as wanderers in the world. It means they don't make the world their home. They're always a bit uneasy living here. The message we shout out to the world: We implore you, on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.

Now this isn't something we only say, but it's also what we do. We mostly say, but the gospel should come out in everything we do. We want to live and eat and breathe the gospel so that when it comes out it feels natural. The gospel is the in-and-out of life, it's the hub of life. Whether it's an elder's meeting, or meeting with children in the neighborhood... it all should flow out of the gospel.

Listen—it needs to come out of us. Some of you here tonight may not know about this reconciliation with God. This is a message for you: You are divinely created, but cut off from God. The Bible says that because of your sin, you're in rebellion to God. Understand your potential: You can be reconciled to God through the shed blood of Jesus Christ, who died for your sins. What's required of you is not to claw your way into good standing, but to accept what has been done for you.

That's the message we shout.

## **5. Our understanding of God's work in the message of the gospel.**

Much ink has been spilled on 2 Cor 5:21. It contains two huge ideas: imputed righteousness and substitutionary atonement in 24 words. Imputed righteousness means a righteousness that doesn't come from inside you—it comes to you.

It's a God-given righteousness, who took our sin and put it on His Son, who "became" sin. Jesus wasn't a sinner, but he took sin upon himself. And he clothes us in Jesus' righteousness so we may stand before God.

Just as imputed righteousness is a righteousness that comes from outside of us, substitutionary atonement comes from outside of us too. Atonement means to pay for our sin, and most of the world thinks this is something we do. Substitutionary atonement means that God pays for your sin for you.

In our ministry, I love being able to show people the gospel in all of

Scripture—the gospel in Jonah, who was a sacrifice for the sailors. The gospel in Joseph, who was sold by his brothers for a few pieces of silver and when they stand before him, he forgives them. And Abraham who sees the ram, who is the sacrifice in place of Isaac, which becomes so clear a picture of the gospel that John the Baptist could say on the sight of Jesus, "Behold the Lamb of God!"

**...make sure your understanding of the gospel motivates you to give yourself up for the gospel.**

Do you love the gospel? When I'm describing imputed righteousness or substitutionary atonement, are you like, "yes!" or "...dinner." I suspect many of you do—I suspect many of you are giving your lives for the gospel. Are you willing to call others to die for the gospel?

Brothers, make sure your understanding of the gospel motivates you to give yourself up for the gospel—and call others to give themselves up for the gospel, too.

Remember five marks of Christ's ambassadors: We're motivated; we view people through God's eyes. We understand his work is for all the world. We understand our role and we have a firm grasp on the message of the gospel. Amen.



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