

CREDO

8. THE CROSS

I can't believe that I have the privilege to talk to you tonight about the subject matter before us tonight. I am simply overwhelmed by the magnitude and the majesty of it.

In our last time together we studied the INCARNATION — the amazing and radical truth that God became man in Jesus Christ. This evening we are going to study the REASON for the Incarnation — We are going to study THE CROSS of Jesus Christ. Preparing for tonight has been one of the most humbling times in my life — and yet at the very same time it has been one of the most wonderful times! Humbling because in the death of Jesus on the cross there is something of the glory of God that is not revealed anywhere — something of the glory of God that we cannot see in creation, that we cannot see even in His miraculous healing power. It is only in the suffering of Jesus on the cross that we revealed to us the glory of God's condescending love, the glory of God's sacrificial love, the glory of God's matchless grace, the glory of God's victorious power over sin and death. The Lord willing, tonight we're going to work through five things

- 1.) The History of Crucifixion
- 2.) What Jesus suffered and How He died
- 3.) Why Jesus died
- 4.) What Jesus accomplished by His death on the cross
- 5.) How we can reconcile the brutal death of the innocent Son of God with the Love of God

I'd like to begin tonight by referencing a guy named Evan Roberts

The great Welsh Revival of 1904-05 had its beginnings in a rather obscure prayer meeting on October 31, 1904. A visiting evangelist by the name of Seth Joshua prayed publicly, 'O God, bend us.' A 26 year old Welshman

named Evan Roberts went forward and prayed with tremendous agony, 'O God, bend me.' He was overwhelmed by **Romans 5:8**. He wrote in his journal of that moment — "*I felt ablaze with a desire to go through the length and breadth of Wales to tell of the Savior; and had that been possible, I was willing to pay God for doing so.*"

What followed from that young man and that obscure prayer meeting in Wales on October 31, 1904 touched all of Wales and jumped the Atlantic Ocean and made an impact in America. The passage in **Romans 5** that so moved the heart of Evan Roberts is all about what we're looking at tonight.

***Romans 5:8**⁸but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

A 26 year old man was BENT and SENT by THE CROSS. It is the desire of my heart that the Holy Spirit would reveal the CROSS of Jesus Christ to each of us tonight in a way that would bend US — in a way that would send US into the mission of God.

I. A HISTORY OF CRUCIFIXION

Crucifixion was invented in its primitive form by the Persians, 500 years before the birth of Jesus Christ. Ashurbanipal used crucifixion in its primitive form as a means of expanding the Persian Empire. PRIMITIVE = Impalement on the end of a sharp stake. He conquered entire cities by taking the leading figure of the city and impaling him on the end of the stake in front of everybody — the entire city would surrender.

Crucifixion was later perfected by the Romans (they did with crucifixion what they did with so many things. When they would conquer a people, they would take the best parts of that conquered culture and perfect it. They did the same with crucifixion). Crucifixion was prominent as a form of capital punishment within the Roman Empire until it was banned by the Roman Emperor Constantine circa 300 AD.

Crucifixion was the most barbarous, shameful torture ever devised by man. The ancient Jewish historian, Josephus called it "the most wretched of

deaths". The Roman philosopher Cicero said that – *decent Roman citizens shouldn't speak of the cross because it was unfit for them to even ponder that kind of murderous death*. This was a voice of Rome; Rome that was used to the colosseum, gladiators, violence and bloodshed. Crucifixion was **so** horrific that it was beyond Roman citizens (who were familiar with all of that stuff) to even ponder this form of execution.

Crucifixion was such a shameful, horrific and brutal mode of execution that it was against Roman law for any of its citizens to be executed by way of the cross. Only foreigners and those guilty of high treason and the most heinous of crimes were to face capital punishment by way of crucifixion.

Death by crucifixion was so horrific and painful that a word was invented to describe the pain of crucifixion — EXCRUCIATING. Excruciating literally means – from (ex) the cross (cruciate). Those who were crucified died painfully slow, excruciating deaths by way of asphyxiation.

Crucifixion was common practice within the Roman Empire. Tens of thousands were crucified. Following the failed rebellion of Spartacus 6,000 of his followers were crucified in one day along the shoulder of 120 miles of highway.

To try grasp this let's drop this into our world. Imagine getting in your car around Auburn and driving Interstate 80 to San Francisco. And along the way you saw 6,000 people nailed to crosses (about 50 every mile) baking in the heat of the noon day sun. Family and friends lining the highways mourning for them. 120 miles of bleeding, suffering, dying, weeping.

Because crucifixion was such a prolonged form of execution birds would be picking away at their flesh. And by the way, when we think of the cross we think of the victim as being suspended from the cross high off the ground — distant from onlookers — people having to look up at the victims. But those who were crucified were actually nailed to the cross at about eyelevel — often times naked. That was so people could look the victim in the eyes, spit at them and insult them — all to add shame to the protracted agony of death by crucifixion (In Hebrews: Jesus despised the shame of the cross). Because death by crucifixion was so slow (sometimes days) and

because the victim hung on the cross so close to ground level, wild beasts would come and start eating them from the feet up while they were still alive.

I. A HISTORY OF CRUCIFIXION

II. WHAT JESUS SUFFERED AND HOW HE DIED

We need to understand that Jesus suffered **multiple** forms of physical trauma **prior** to His crucifixion.

The first of which was HEMATIDROSIS

HEMATIDROSIS is the excretion of blood or blood products through the skin. It occurs as a result of extreme emotional duress in which the capillaries near the surface of the skin begin to burst and the blood oozing through the pores of the skin.

Luke is the only Gospel author to record this. Luke was a physician. Only Dr. Luke records this.

Luke 22:44 (ESV) ⁴⁴And being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

Jesus was in tremendous agony — such agony that His anatomy started to fall apart — His physiology began to run rampant — His capillaries began to burst and ooze through His pores and mix with His sweat. In a bit we're going to see what it was that weighed so heavily on Jesus that His body failed to bear up under it.

AFTER Jesus experienced Hematidrosis He was arrested. Judas identified Him by way of that traitorous kiss. They bound Jesus and forced Him to walk Him a mile to the South and West side of Jerusalem to the house of Caiaphas, the high priest where the next trauma is inflicted upon Him

BLINDFOLDED AND BEATEN — The Bible says that we are fearfully and wonderfully made. God designed a magnificent mechanism for protection:

peripheral vision. Peripheral vision sends information to the brain that prompts involuntary blinks or flinching. Peripheral vision enables a Quarterback to see an oncoming defensive lineman and recoil thus diminishing the full force of the collision. But when that defensive lineman comes at the quarterback from the “blindside” the quarterback is hit with the devastating force of 300 pound man colliding with him at full speed.

Jesus was blindfolded. Without the built-in protection of peripheral vision Jesus can't flinch or recoil. He endured the full force of every single blow.

By this time Jesus has gone 24+ hours without sleep. He has suffered Hematidrosis in the Garden. He's walked across the city where He was brutally beaten and traumatized at the house of Caiaphas.

After beating Him they walk Jesus from the South West section of Jerusalem to the extreme North and East end of the city to the Antonia Fortress where the Roman procurator, Pilate was staying during the week of Passover. Pilate immediately picks up on the fact that Jesus is Galilean. Pilate wants nothing to do with this Jesus so he sends Jesus back to the extreme western part of the city to Herod the Tetrarch (who ruled over the region of Galilee). He was staying in palace built by Herod the Great. Herod the Tetrarch wants Jesus to put on magic show. Jesus stood silently and did nothing. Herod and his soldiers put a scarlet robe on Jesus and in Luke 23:11 we're told that they “set Jesus at nought”! They looked at Jesus, God become man, and said “*You're nothing!*” They send Jesus back to Pilate (again, all the way across the city to the Antonia Fortress) where Jesus experienced the next trauma.

ROMAN SCOURAGE —

Dr. William Edwards – in an article in The Journal of the American Medical Association, Feb. 21, 1986 titled “*On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ*”

"Scourging was a legal preliminary to every Roman execution, and only women and Roman senators or soldiers (except in cases of desertion) were exempt."¹

The Roman scourge was essentially a form of interrogation. They would elicit a confession by way of a beating you with a whip they called the FLAGRUM. The flagrum was a series of long leather straps. At the end of some of the straps were heavy balls made of metal — these were intended to tenderize the human body. Some of the straps had hooks made of either metal or bone. These were intended to tear deeply into the shoulders, back, buttocks, and legs of the victim.

Jesus would have been stripped naked. His hands would have been chained above his head around a vertical post in order to expose the greatest surface area of his back and legs to the flagrum. A soldier known as the LICTOR would oversee the beating — and he would give the command for the beating to begin. IF the victim began to confess his crimes the intensity and force of the blows would be lightened. But if no confession was forthcoming the blows intensified.

PROBLEM — Jesus had NO CRIME to confess. 700 years before His scourging

Isaiah 53:7** He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he **opened not his mouth**; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is **silent, so he opened not his mouth.

In the case of Jesus — every blow was met with silence! I believe that the scourging Jesus was more violent than any scourging in the Roman empire because He had no crime to confess.

The first blows caused bleeding from the capillaries and veins. The blood would ooze. But as the blows continued in frequency and intensity the back was torn to shreds and there would be arterial bleeding.

¹ Dr. William Edwards – The Journal of the American Medical Association, Feb. 21, 1986 titled "On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ"

Victims would shake violently and bleed profusely. As flesh and muscle was torn away you could actually see internal organs! History records that upon occasion the hooks would go so deep that a rib would literally come flying off the body of a living man.

Eyewitness accounts tell us that by the end of the Roman scourging the victim's back was a mass of hanging, unidentifiable flesh. The victim was no longer recognizable as human.

700 years before this night the prophet Isaiah said

Isaiah 52:14 many were astonished at you—his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind.”

Imagine the most horrible, gruesome thing you could ever see. THAT was Jesus because of the trauma He experienced. Blindfolded and bludgeoned at the house of Caiaphas; then torn to shreds by the Roman scourge.

At a point the Lictor would say, *We're done*. They would untie the hands of the victim and he would collapse in a pool of his own blood and flesh

That leads to the next trauma Jesus experienced.

CROWN OF THORNS — Jesus was taken to the Praetorium. Matthew's Gospel tells us that an entire cohort of Roman soldiers gathered to mock Jesus (600 men). A crown was fashioned from local thorns (they are massive – like nails) and they pressed it into his head. The scalp is one of the most vascular parts of the human body — as a result blood began to flow down Jesus' face, causing his hair and beard to be a bloodied and matted mess. Besides the facial damage from the beating at the house of Caiaphas, Jesus would have had to strain to see through his own sweat and blood. When Jesus was in that state they began to mock him as the “King of the Jews” ([Matt. 27:29](#)). These guys were in a frenzy! 700 years before this night Isaiah wrote

Isaiah 50:6 I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard; I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting.

It was most likely in the Praetorium that they plucked out His beard.

Pilate ordered Jesus to be brought before the crowd at a spot called “Gabatha” — *the pavement*. One of the most moving places I have even been is about one floor below ground level in modern day Jerusalem. There you stand on the very pavement Jesus stood on. Jesus is no longer recognizable as a human being! How brutal must the beatings and scourging of Jesus have been for Jesus to no longer even resemble a human being? It was right there where Pilate stood Jesus before those who desperately wanted Jesus to be crucified — and Pilate said: *Ecce Homo* — *BEHOLD THE MAN*. Was there ever a man like Jesus? Jesus is the greatest man who ever lived.

Pilate had hoped that the scourging of Jesus would satisfy their desire to see Jesus put to death. The crowd would not be satisfied. They cried for Jesus to be crucified. So, Pilate sent Jesus to be crucified.

What is striking is that none of the gospels give a description of crucifixion. At that moment there would have been men hanging on crosses at the place of the skull. No need to explain.

That brings us to the next form of trauma.

CARRYING THE CROSS BEAM —

A lot of art leaves us with an incorrect understanding of the Roman Cross. In most paintings the cross looks like a lower case “t”. But in reality it looked like an upper case “T” — called the Tau. The Horizontal beam of the cross was called the Patibulum (a rough-cut piece of wood that weighed upwards of 110 pounds). The vertical beam was called the Stipes.

Often times a patibulum that was used in the execution of one man was re-used to execute another. It would have saturated and covered with human sweat, tears and blood.

So they would have taken this 110 pound, rough cut piece of wood, and laid it across the **shredded** and **traumatized** shoulders and back of Jesus — wrapped His arms around it and tied His hands to it. Jesus was then forced to carry his own cross bar out of the Antonia fortress — out the Damascus gate — some 650 yards to the “Place of the Skull.”

Up until these hours Jesus was in the prime of health. But Jesus is now experiencing utter physical exhaustion. AGAIN — He has **been awake** for over 24 hours. He has suffered Hematidrosis. Through the course of this night Jesus has walked miles criss-crossing the city of Jerusalem; from the upper room of the last supper all the way across the Kidron Valley to the Garden of Gethsememe — from there to the house of high priest where He was beaten beyond recognition — to the Antonia Fortress — to Herod’s palace — back to the Antonia Fortress where He was scourged and crowned with thorns.

Now He is forced to carry a 110 pound piece of wood strapped to His shoulders. Traumatized — massive loss of blood — Jesus collapsed under the weight of the cross. A man named Simon of Cyrene was forced to carry Jesus’ cross to the Place of the Skull where they will crucify Him.

CRUCIFIED — Upon arriving at his place of crucifixion, they tore the clothes off the back of Jesus and threw Him in the dirt.

REMEMBER — His back has been absolutely shredded; massive amounts of bleeding; exposed flesh! By this time ALL of that would have started to coagulate causing His garments to adhere to His wounds! They just **STRIPPED** them from Him tearing open what is left of His back. They throw Jesus **on His back** — **in the dirt** — His back that is shredded and bare.

REMEMBER — Last week: The doctrine of Incarnation. **IN – CARNARE** — into flesh. God came into human flesh **knowing** that men would

BEAT his human flesh with their fists — Shred His human flesh with the scourge — Pound thorns into His human flesh — and then drive five to seven-inch rough metal spikes into his hands and feet — two of the most sensitive nerve centers on the human body.

KNOWING all of this — He came IN CARNANRE.

As Jesus is laying on His shredded back in the dirt a Roman soldier would have matter of factly taken the hand of Jesus — laid it on the Patibulum — felt for the space between the radius and ulna and drove a wrought iron nail through His wrist fastening Jesus to the cross beam. Then they would have coldly done the same to the other wrist. Remember — this is what these men did day after day when they were assigned to this duty. Then they would have lifted Jesus up from the ground. The weight of His entire body born by His hands nailed to the Patibulum. They would then drop the patibulum into a notch in the vertical piece of wood — known as the stipes. They would then turn His feet sideways and with one nail fasten both of them to the Stipes.

THIS IS AMAZING! It is AT THAT VERY MOMENT that Luke records

Luke 23:34 THEN said Jesus — Father forgive them!

THAT ONE WORD is — I believe — the most radical time stamp in the Bible. WHEN did Jesus utter those words? Right after they had driven wrought iron nails through His hands and feet! THEN Jesus looked at them and said — Father Forgive Them!

DON'T MISS THIS — Jesus looked at them — but He was looking at YOU and ME. These Roman soldiers were our proxies. The force that drove the nails through His hands and feet was not merely the biceps, triceps, and deltoids of a Roman soldier. It was YOUR sin and MY sin

Isaiah 53 He was wounded for OUR transgression!

At this point Jesus was in unbearable agony. EXCRUCIATING pain shooting up his arms as the nails pressed upon the radial nerves. EXCRUCIATING

headaches from the tremendous loss of body fluids. Then Jesus experience what all victims of crucifixion did —

PARTIAL SUFFICATION — Contrary to what one would naturally think — Death by crucifixion was not by way of exsanguinations — extreme loss of blood. Crucifixion killed its victims by way of asphyxiation. The posture of the body on the cross made it extremely difficult to breathe. Coupled with that posture — the incomprehensible pain sapped the strength of the victim.

The victim would suffer fits of partial suffocation because the only way he could take the **next breath** that would **keep him alive** — was to **inflict upon himself** EXCRUCIATING PAIN by pressing down on his feet that had a wrought iron NAIL in them — in order to **stand erect** and **gulp** in a breath. This could — and often did — go one for days.

The trauma of THE CROSS was so EXCRUCIATING that often times, at **the foot of the cross** would be a **pool of feces and urine** — because the victim would become incontinent — all of that mixed with sweat, tears and blood.

I'm not giving these details for just for shock value. I'm giving these details because there is so often LESS than a full understanding; LESS than a full appreciation for what God who became man endured for us. Especially in light of the fact that this is not just any guy that died on a Roman cross — THIS is God, who become a man.

REMEMBER our studies on TRINITY and CREATION and INCARNATION. Remember —

***Gen 1:1** In the beginning God created.*

***Colossians 1:17** And he is before all things, and (this is so radical) in him all things hold together.*

***Hebrews 1:3** He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.*

I want us to think about this: Jesus held together the atomic structure of the fists that beat Him in the house of Caiaphas. Not one molecule of the flagrum that tore His back to shreds could have existed, except for Jesus holding it together. Jesus held together the atomic structure of the crown of thorns that was pressed into His scalp. He held together the atomic structure of the spit that hit His face. He held together the atomic structure of the patibulum and stipes and the nails that they drove through His hands and feet! **Jesus endures all of it!**

I'm also giving these details so that we can see the OBSCENITY of making the cross an empty icon or a cliché.

There is Jesus — nailed to a cross. Remember — Jesus hung on the cross at eye level. Those who have falsely accused him and hated Him would have been at eye level — hurling insults, spitting into His face. He hears false accusations — he hears mockery. *What kind of God are you? You cannot even save yourself.* Guys , if Jesus had saved Himself we could never be saved — we would be forever lost!

Nails did not hold Jesus to the cross. His love for you and me held Him there! If you have never noticed before — ALL of his words from the cross are words of love and grace and mercy.

We need to see that Jesus endured all of this for you and for me.

THE CAUSE OF DEATH for Jesus was NOT suffocation!

***John 19:34** ³⁴But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water.*

In 1986 two physicians wrote an article in the Journal of the American Medical Association titled “On the Physical Death of Jesus.”² In their article they explained that such an issue of blood and water from the pericardium tells us that Jesus died of a **Ruptured heart!**

² **On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ** [William D. Edwards](#), MD; [Wesley J. Gabel](#), MDiv; [Floyd E. Hosmer](#), MS, AMI — March 21, 1986—Vol 255, No. 11.

THAT'S HOW Jesus died.

Now we're going to see WHY Jesus died

III. The Reason for the Cross

A lot of people wonder how in the world Christians can call the crucifixion of Jesus good news? How can you set aside a day every year (Good Friday) to make much of the crucifixion of Jesus? Why would you want to remember it every Sunday where you repeatedly say that the bread represents the broken body of Jesus and the cup represents the shed blood of Jesus?

***Isaiah 53:5** "But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed."*

***Isaiah 53:12** ". . . he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors."*

***Romans 4:25** "[He] was delivered up for our trespasses . . ."*

***Romans 5:8** "But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."*

***1 Corinthians 15:3** "Christ died for our sins . . ."*

***Galatians 3:13** "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us . . ."*

***1 Peter 3:18** "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God . . ."*

***1 John 2:2** "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world."*

1 John 4:10 In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Here's why the crucifixion of Jesus is good news.
The cross of Jesus is **FOR** us.

In theological terms, it means that Jesus' death was substitutionary (or, as some used to call it, vicarious). His death was in **our** place. His death was solely **for our** benefit and without benefit for Himself. Jesus took the **penalty for our** sins in **our place** so **we** do not have to suffer the just penalty ourselves. **The wrath of God** that should have fallen **on us** — and **the death** that **our sins merit** — fell on Jesus.

As incomprehensible as the physical suffering of THE CROSS seems to us — THAT was NOT the greatest suffering Jesus endured. The physical suffering of THE CROSS is not why Jesus sweat great drops of blood in the Garden of Gethsemene.

We read in *Hebrews 2:9* — *because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.*

In *Mark 15:34* — *“Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?” which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”* At that moment Jesus tasted *the WAGES OF SIN FOR us*

This is the reason for the Incarnation! This is **why** Jesus willingly became man; **why** Jesus willingly went to the cross ([John 10:18](#); [Philippians 2:8](#); [Hebrews 12:2](#)).

The theological term is **penal substitutionary atonement**.

THIS IS HUGE — Apart from **penal substitutionary atonement** there is no right understanding of Jesus; there is no true gospel; there is no forgiveness of sin and salvation

Let's break down the phrase word by word.

Penal — There is a penalty for sin. In **Genesis**, God told our first parents, *if you sin, you will die*. That's the penalty. Paul says that — *the wage for sin is death*. So, the penalty for sin is death. Spiritual death, separation from God. Physical death, sensation of biological life. When Jesus went to the cross, he did so to pay our penalty. He suffered and died in our place for our sins to pay our penalty.

Substitution — Jesus went as our substitute, Jesus went in our place. Jesus endured what we should endure, Jesus suffered what I should suffer. He's my substitute. I love Jesus so much because he took my place. Some will say — *no, no, no, the cross is not about substitution, it's about the fact that Jesus is a great example of how to suffer well and how to love our enemies*. All of which is true. **But, the big idea of the cross is substitution.** Those other things are simply implications of the substitutionary death of Jesus.

Atonement — Penal substitutionary atonement. Atonement is a word that you will start hearing early on in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament God's people were to observe once a year Yom Kippur, the day of atonement. The point of atonement is that sin has separated us from God and that sin must be taken away so that we can be forgiven and reconciled to God. The day of atonement was the day that God's people would come together to individually and collectively confess their sins and deal with them in the way God prescribed (**Leviticus 23**). The whole of the Old Testament sacrificial system was a foreshadowing of Jesus, Who would come and lay down His life as the sacrifice for our sins. **Atonement means at-one-ment.** Through sin we are separated from God; but on the cross Jesus takes away our sin; we're forgiven and reconciled with God; and we can be AT-ONE with God again through Jesus Christ.

You need to know that at Metro penal substitutionary atonement is at the core of everything we believe. In keeping with the subject of the cross — it is at the crux of what we believe. We **do not** believe that Jesus was merely an enlightened religious teacher or moral example. We believe that Jesus is God come into flesh, who lived the life we have not, and died the death we should — and who gives the gift we cannot earn. We believe that Jesus is our penal substitutionary atonement. Jesus died in our place for our sins

— that’s why we love Jesus so much. No one has done for us, or could ever do for us, what Jesus, God become a man, has accomplished at the cross.

IV. The Outcome of the Cross

1.) On THE CROSS Jesus became our JUSTIFICATION.

What does JUSTIFICATION mean? Justification is a word in the Bible, just as Atonement is. Because we love the Bible — because we trust the Bible — because Jesus said that **every word** of the Bible would come to pass — because Paul says that **all** scripture is God breathed — we pay close attention, not to just the ideas of scripture but the very words.

This word **JUSTIFICATION** appears repeatedly in your Bible, particularly in the New Testament. One particular example:

Galatians 2:16 “a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.”

What’s Paul talking about?

The word Justification implies that you and I, one day, will stand before God and give an account of our life. It implies that God is a just judge. And, because God is just — He cannot (apart from Jesu) declare us **just** in His sight. We are all by nature and choice guilty sinners (Doctrine of Sin). We sin by omission, not doing what we ought. We sin by commission, doing what we ought not do. We have sins of thought, word and deed — and because of that — we can not stand before God and be declared righteous.

THINK ABOUT THIS — Let’s say for example that there was a judge — and before him was someone who was accused of a heinous crime. The judge asked the question — *how do you plead?* The accused declared – *Guilty*. How would you respond if the judge then said – *I find you not guilty, you are free?* You would call it a gross miscarriage of **justice** and a violation of

the judge's responsibility to administer justice and render judgment in accordance with the law!

You and I are guilty as sinners, and God is just. God is not evil; He is good. God cannot look at us and say – *Not Guilty — I declare you to be justified*. The person who says they can't believe in a God who judges is essentially saying that they want a God who is not good. God must judge sin BECAUSE He is good.

The question then is – how can we be justified in the sight of God? Paul says that it is in the heart of sinful, fallen, mankind to justify one's self through what he calls works of the law. It is natural to fallen man to try to make himself good enough for God. That's the basic definition of **works of the law**. **Works of the law** come in two forms. There's a religious form and a moral relativism form.

The religious form is that you try to be a devout and religious person so that God will love you. The **underlying false assumption** is that the only way to be justified in the sight of God is to earn it — by doing your best and obeying the rules. So, religious people make lists of things they will and will not do. They seek very hard to do what they should do, and to not do things they shouldn't do. Working forward from that they anticipate that on the day of judgment they will stand before God and share with him their religious resume— *God, here's my life. I did a good job, please justify me. Declare me to be righteous and allow me into your presence forever.*

The moral relativism form assumes that your behavior and lifestyle, relative to the world around you — makes you good enough for God. This was my basic position before I met Jesus at the age of 22. I thought — *I'm sure I'm in the good guy list. I'm a pretty good guy, I'm sure that all will be fine when I stand before God.*

PROBLEM — God doesn't grade on a curve. The Scriptures say that we are to *be perfect as God is perfect — holy, as God is holy*. God sees people as perfect or imperfect. I can assure you, that on God's scale I am most certainly imperfect.

The problem with religion is this — it never leads to hope, confidence, joy and peace. Because the assumption is — you need to do something that will cause God to love you.

Moral relativism carries the assumption that you *are* good enough — which is pure pride. It assumes an absolute sense of self-righteousness — in that you look at all the people around yourself and assume that you are better than most. That is the epitome of arrogance.

Now, in the Bible, God does speak of these things using some very stark terminology — He uses these terms in order to dissuade us and discourage us from being *religious* or *moral relativists*.

The first comes from **Isaiah 64:6** — There God says that your righteousness — your human attempts at being a good person apart of relationship with him through Jesus — *are as filthy menstrual rags* — bloody tampons.

HERE'S THE PICTURE — At the end of time you stand before God and say — *I think I've got a few things that you'll really appreciate — and I just know that when you see what I've brought to You that you will justify me — and we will be even.* He opens the box — and there they are — your righteousness — filthy menstrual rags — bloody tampons.

THERE IS MORE STARK IMAGERY. **Philippians 3:8** — Paul is talking about his religious life before meeting Jesus and Paul declares that all of his religious efforts to be righteous were as *dung*. It's very stark word in the Greek. I have a dog. She doesn't leave much when she poops. But our daughter and son-in-law are living with us and they have a dog named Gus! In the winter Gus leaves some huge, steaming piles! If you have a dog like that — or ever come by one of those huge steaming piles let remind you of the false spirituality of the cults and every moral relativist. Paul says — in the sight of God — it's a huge steaming pile.

HERE'S THE POINT — When you stand before God — and we all will stand before Him — and if you come with a handful of bloody tampons and a warm, steaming pile — you will not be declared justified in his sight. You see — Religion is disgusting before God. Moral Relativism is disgusting

before God. Trying to earn or merit God's favor is disgusting. Assuming that you are good enough for a holy, righteous, perfect good God, is disgusting. **That's why** the Bible uses disgusting imagery.

HERE'S THE POINT — The ONLY alternative to RELIGION and Moral Relativism is Jesus. That righteousness that God demands — we do not possess. BUT — the righteousness that God demands, and we don't possess — He will provide for us in Jesus. In **2 Corinthians 5:21**, Paul says it this way

²¹For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Martin Luther rightly called this the great exchange. My sin was imputed or reckoned to Jesus. *God made him who knew no sin to become sin.* All of my sin, past, present and future, is put on Jesus. God did this to Jesus on THE CROSS so that *we might become the righteousness of God.* By faith in what Jesus did on THE CROSS the perfect righteousness of the sinless Lord Jesus is then imputed or reckoned to my account. My sin goes to Jesus — His righteousness comes to me. It's the great exchange.

This is pure GRACE. We don't merit it, we don't earn it, we don't deserve it. It's a gift.

QUOTE: W. Hendericksen — *God's grace is his active favor bestowing the greatest gift upon those who've deserved the greatest punishment.*

Grace doesn't lead to the kind of despair that religion produces or the pride of Moral Relativism. Grace always **leads to humility** — I did nothing, Jesus did everything. Grace always **leads to joy** — Everything Jesus did is sufficient — there is nothing more to be done — *It is finished!*

The only way that God can maintain His Divine justice and declare us to be justified is if we have faith in — and grace from — Jesus Christ alone.

At Metro we believe to that in order for any man or woman to be justified they must trust in the promise of the Gospel that your sin was dealt with at the cross of Jesus and that because of that the righteousness of Jesus can

be given to you so that you can stand before God justified, declared righteousness in his sight.

2.) On THE CROSS Jesus became our PROPTITIATION.

Another big word.

1 John 4:10 says it this way – *in this is love*. HUGE CONCEPT HERE! We cannot begin with a false concept of love and then try to define God and His love by that definition. Instead, we start with God — who is love — and then we interpret the rest of life in light of the character of God. *In this is love. Not that we have loved God.* Not that we are seeking God, pursuing God, crying out to God, yearning for God, *but that he loved us and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

This word *propitiation* appears four times in the New Testament. Some translations will not give you the full understanding of the word. They will use the word — *sacrifice* or *atonement*. A handful will use an even less accurate translation and use the word *expiation*.

The Bible uses this very important word — *propitiation*. Let's walk through it.

David says in *Psalms 51:4. God, against you only have I sinned*. When you and I sin — our sin is against one another to be sure. But, ultimately, our sin is against God. **The question then is – How does God feel about our sin?** The Bible says, repeatedly, that God is angry because of sin. The Bible says that though He loves us, God hates sin. All of that is summed up in the term — *the wrath of God*. MANY churches and pastors will NOT speak or do not ever address the reality of *the wrath of God*. We must; because the Bible does!

In speaking of *the wrath of God* some of you will say – *God's not a God of wrath. God's a God of love. God doesn't get angry, God's the God of love.*

REALITY — God is both loving AND filled with wrath. Wrath does not mean God erupts in outbursts of rage like a man losing His temper. It is a reference to His *settled indignation against sin*.

According to conventional wisdom — No pastor in his right mind is supposed to talk about the *wrath of God* anymore. In fact — in a growing church it is tantamount to suicide. It takes a lot of overhead and money to run a church that is growing. The pressure is to pull back from declaring truths that are unpopular or uncomfortable to potential givers. Don't talk about sin, don't talk about hell, don't talk about wrath, don't talk about blood, don't talk about the cross — make a little list of things that people don't like and conveniently ignore them.

The **DOCTRINE OF PROPITIATION** tells us that God is very angry with sinners and their sin — and that His wrath burns against them.

There have been and will be people who will leave churches when they hear that. At the end of the day I'm not concerned about your opinion! I speak to please God.

*1 Thes. 2:2-4 we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict. ³For our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive, ⁴but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, **so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts.***

I want you to know the truth — and the truth is — You and I are far worse than we think — and God is far better than we think.

God's wrath against sinners is not some impetuous, emotional tirade. It is the outworking of His just, righteous, and holy indignation.

God has to be angry at sin, because he's good. **God has to do something with sinners because he's just.** That's the doctrine of propitiation.

Now some would say — I'm sinning all the time and God hasn't poured out his wrath on me.

God's wrath is exercised in two ways. There is the **active** and the **passive** wrath of God. The **active** wrath of God is where God strikes you. When we think of the active wrath of God, we think of a lightening bolt out of heaven, right? You're sinning — a lightening bolt comes out of heaven — you get fried — and everyone comes out of their houses and says: *THAT was the wrath of God!* The active wrath of God is seen in the Great Tribulation (*Hide us from the wrath of the Lamb*). The active wrath of God is also seen at the Great White throne when He condemns those whose names are not written in the book of life are sent to the Lake of Fire forever.

There is also the **passive** wrath of God. **Romans 1** says that the passive wrath of God is when God simply gives you over to your unbridled desires. God lets you go do whatever it is that you want to do. If God hasn't shown up and stopped you, you are experiencing the passive wrath of God. And please know this — you won't get away with anything. You say — well, God didn't throw a rock at me. No, he didn't, but he put it on the pile. The Bible says that those that are unrepentant of their sin are storing up for themselves judgment on the day of wrath.

***Romans 2:4-8** Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? ⁵But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are **storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath** when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. ⁶He will render to each one according to his works: ⁷to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; ⁸but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.*

That means every time you sin, God might not in active wrath throw a rock, but that rock goes on a pile and at the end, that mountain falls on you. There is complete and total justice for all people in the end.

THE DOCTRINE OF PROPITIATION declares that there on THE CROSS of Jesus — the wrath of God **that I deserve** is poured out on the son of God.

And by the death of Jesus on THE CROSS the wrath of God is propitiated, diverted, taken away from me.

AGAIN — The suffering of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemene is tied to this

Matthew 26:38-44 Then he said to them, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me.” ³⁹And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.” ⁴⁰And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, “So, could you not watch with me one hour? ⁴¹Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” ⁴²Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed, “My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.” ⁴³And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. ⁴⁴So, leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words again.

WHAT is this cup Jesus is talking about?

Rev. 14:9-11 ⁹And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, ¹⁰he also will drink the wine of God’s wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. ¹¹And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name.”

THAT is this cup that Jesus was talking about! Paul wrote in the New testament that Jesus *delivers us from the wrath to come (1 Thes. 2:10)*.

It **was NOT possible** for us to be *delivered from the wrath to come* UNLESS He endured it! **IF it were possible** — Jesus would not have died on THE CROSS.

THIS IS HUGE! People ask — Why does this matter? Here's why it matters.

IN JESUS — God is not angry with me. Jesus has propitiated the wrath of God.

In Jesus — I know God is not punishing me when I sin. Some sincere believers believe that if you suffer, it is God punishing you — He's making you pay Him back.

We need to put away our religious efforts and **humbly and joyfully embrace the doctrine of propitiation**. Jesus has propitiated the wrath of God. Because Jesus has become the propitiation for my sin I can KNOW that when I suffer, I do not have to assume that God is punishing me. He already punished Jesus in my place.

Though we are saved from wrath — we will be disciplined / corrected by our Heavenly father. **Hebrews and Proverbs** do say — *God is a father and he disciplines his kids, but he doesn't punish them. He's not angry at them. Their sin is now His opportunity to correct them — grow them in holiness.*

The propitiation of Jesus is beautifully summed up in the final words of Jesus from **THE CROSS** — ***IT IS FINISHED***.

This was foreshadowed every year on Yom Kippur — *the day of atonement*. On that day a sacrificial goat was brought forward. The High Priest would then confess the sins of the people over the animal — and slaughter it. Its blood would be shed and it would die as a substitute for the sins of the people. This was all foreshadowing and anticipating the coming of Jesus and the **PROPITIATION of THE CROSS**.

THIS IS HUGE — On Yom Kippur there was an additional goat — **The Scapegoat**. The Scapegoat was not slaughtered — but rather sent away from the people — showing how God alone **removes** our sin. The Scapegoat was significant because it foreshadowed the expiation of Jesus.

3.) On THE CROSS Jesus became our EXPIATION.

Again, this is a word that is important. Expiation.

When we **sin** and are **sinned against** — the Bible says (particularly in many Old Testament ceremonies, cleansings, and metaphors) that we are defiled, dirty, filthy, polluted and unclean. But on the cross Jesus took away our sin so that we could be cleansed from the presence and power of defiling sin.

1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son — there's the cross — cleanses us from all sin.

In that passage sin is depicted in its defiling effects.

Isaiah says this — in **Isaiah 6** — *I'm a man of unclean lips, I come from a people of unclean lips.* That's a clear articulation of the defiling effects of sin. This defilement happens whether you have sinned or been sinned against.

THIS IS HUGE — Without an understanding of **expiation** — we have a partial understanding of the Gospel. We fully grasp and embrace the part of the Gospel that declares — *Jesus died for all our sins. If you confess your sins to him, you will be forgiven.* We totally believe that.

But — what about those who have been sinned against? What about the person who was abused as a child, or raped as an adult, or beaten, or betrayed, or abandoned, stolen from, lied to, cheated on? Their lives have been polluted — made filthy — defiled. What are they to do?

Even though they are not the person who has sinned — they are the victim of sin. And, whether you sin or are sinned against, you are still defiled. Our identity is polluted / defiled — by either what we have done or what has been done against us.

On the cross Jesus not only endured the wrath of God in our place (PROPITIATION) — slaughtered like the first goat of Yom Kippur. Jesus EXPIATED our sin — He REMOVED the polluting and defiling power of our

sin — like the second goat on Yom Kippur that had the sins of Israel confessed over it and was sent away.

As a pastor it is devastating to hear people who see themselves as defiled. The truth is – only Jesus gets down to the level of the soul.

Zechariah 13:1 so beautifully promised this provision — *“On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness.*

In Jesus a cleansing fountain is opened up. It is imagery of cleansing. It’s the same imagery we use in baptism as well. Cleansing. Expiation.

IF some of you have been defiled by sexual sin you need to grasp the reality of PROPITIATION and EXPIATION

Last point

V. How do we reconcile the Cross of Jesus with the love of God

There have been some incredibly erroneous — ignorant — heretical and blasphemous things said about this.

Steve Chalke and Alan Mann, *The Lost Message of Jesus* use the term “cosmic child abuse” to describe the idea of penal substitutionary atonement.

QUOTE: “The fact is that the cross isn’t a form of cosmic child abuse—a vengeful Father, punishing his Son for an offense he has not even committed. Understandably, both people inside and outside of the Church have found this twisted version of events morally dubious and a huge barrier to faith. Deeper than that, however, is that such a concept stands in total contradiction to the statement: ‘God is love’. If the cross is a personal act of violence perpetrated by God towards humankind but

borne by his Son, then it makes a mockery of Jesus' own teaching to love your enemies and to refuse to repay evil with evil."³

Chalke mocks the God of Jonathan Edwards (*Lost Message of Jesus*, page 56) and argues that the Bible "never defines him [God] as anything other than love" (*Lost Message of Jesus*, page 63).

1 John 1:5 ("God is light") and **Isaiah 6** and **Revelation 4** ("God is holy") prove him to be false.

Here are the arguments —

1.) A loving God could not possibly pour out his wrath on Jesus.

Yet this is precisely what Scripture says: **Isaiah 53:10** *Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him; he has put him to grief.*"

2.) A loving God would never sanction the bloody, brutal, unjust murder of Jesus.

But again, they argue in the face of the plain teaching of Scripture. Jesus himself said in no uncertain terms that THE CROSS is where the love of God for us is most clearly seen.

John 15:12-13¹² *"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends.*

So when people ask or even argue — How will people see the love of God at the cross of Jesus? The answer is — THE CROSS **IS** the love of God.

The world outside of Jesus defines love in terms of sentiment and emotion. Love is seen in general as a feeling. A feeling that you fall into and fall out of. THAT is NOT the meaning of LOVE. It is a tragic perversion of love to think that love is just words and feelings and not actions and devotions.

³ Steve Chalke and Alan Mann, *The Lost Message of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), pp. 182-183.)

We can ONLY understand love in the light of God, who is love! **God does not** love in the realm of mere sentiment. **God does not** love in the realm of mere emotion. The Bible speaks of God's love as being **efficacious** — successful in producing a desired or intended result. **In other words** — God doesn't just *feel* loving — He **does** love. He acts. God doesn't just send a greeting card — He goes to a cross and dies. He does something!

Some of you may come in here wondering — does God love me?

Look at THE CROSS!

It is ONLY at THE CROSS that you discover how sinful you are — and how sinful sin is

It is ONLY at THE CROSS that you discover how loving He is!

I'll give you a few other Scriptures that define God's love for you by way of THE CROSS

***John 3:16** "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."*

***Romans 5:8** "but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."*

***1 John 4:9-10** "In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."*

***Rev. 1:5b KJV** Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,*

LISTEN TO ME HERE — THE CROSS of Jesus is the clearest demonstration of the love of God in the history of the world.

God's love for each of us is so GREAT — so PERFECT — so STRONG — that He

Came as a human being to identify with us.

Lived a life without sin.

Died the death in our place for our sins.

Rose to forgive us, transform us — and He lives to intercede us — and He's preparing a place for us.

And because of what Jesus did for us on THE CROSS He is going to come again to claim us and we'll enter into His presence — that we might share in His Kingdom — Where sin is no more and Jesus is everything.

CLOSING — Have you come to the place where you understand that either your religion — your morality — your “spirituality” is insufficient to stand before the God of the Bible?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Jesus is our Victor

Colossians 2:13–15 “And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.”

Jesus is our Redemption —

Titus 2:13- 14“. . . our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.”

Jesus is our Reconciliation —

Ephesians 4:31-5:2 – “Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”

Jesus is our Example —

1 Peter 2:21 - “Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.”