



The Garden of Gethsemane Matthew 26:36-46

If you have a Bible, let me invite you to turn with me to Matthew 26. What we're going to do is we're going to take three more steps in the Passion narrative. We've started with the Last Supper, and now we're going to go to the garden. Then, we'll go to the cross and see two glimpses of the cross. The cry of dereliction, *"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"* Followed by the declaration of triumph, *"It is finished."*

So, Matthew 26:36. I want us to read this one together. Sinclair Ferguson said, "The Garden of Gethsemane is one of the most sacred and solemn scenes in the entire Bible." One of the most sacred and solemn scenes in the entire Bible. Matthew 26:36:

Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me." Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will." Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Couldn't you men keep watch with me for one hour?" he asked Peter. "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." He went away a second time and prayed, "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done." When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. So he left them and went away once more and prayed the third time, saying the same thing. Then he returned to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour has come, and the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners. Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!"

The key theme I want us to see tonight in the Garden of Gethsemane is a two dollar theological word called propitiation. If you look a little farther down in your notes, you can see how to spell propitiation. This is a word every follower of Christ needs to know. Not many of us know it; we need to know propitiation. The truth here is that Jesus endured our condemnation. What I have listed as the key texts are four texts in the New Testament where we see the New Testament word, here, that pictures propitiation.

Propitiation: Jesus endured our condemnation

We're going to show you how the Garden of Gethsemane sums up this truth that Jesus endured condemnation for us, and what propitiation means. Propitiation: Jesus endured our condemnation. You remember, remember Romans 3:25 when Paul writes, *"God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement."* In fact, just go there real quick. Go in your Bible to Romans 3 and look with me at verse 25. *"God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement."* Now, I'm guessing amidst the many translations that there probably are across the room

that there are different translations of this verse, and if you've got an NIV translation, the words are, "*God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement,*" and you probably have a note that takes you to the bottom and gives you an additional description of what this term is in the New Testament. The note at the bottom in my Bible says, "sacrifice of atonement – or as the one who would turn aside his wrath, taking away sin." That's the phrase here that I want you to lock into your mind. "God presented Christ as the one who would turn aside wrath, taking away sin."

Here's the truth, and this is in your notes, sin arouses the fury, anger, and wrath of God. Paul's been talking about it, ever since Romans 1:18, all the way to Romans 3:19 – the sinfulness of man and the wrath of God due to sin. Sin arouses the fury, anger, and wrath of God.

As sinners, that means that we deserve to bear God's wrath against sin. Sin evokes fury, anger, wrath in God. We are sinners, so we deserve to bear that wrath. So, Jesus as our substitute. Again, we're taking this diamond – satisfaction through substitution – and we're just kind of turning it a little bit more. As our substitute, Jesus became the object of God's fury anger and wrath so that we might not experience it. This is what's going on, in the cross and, specifically, in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus on the cross is turning away God's wrath, taking away our sin.

Now, there are actually two theological terms here. One is expiation, which means, our sin is removed, taking away our sin. The second part of that phrase means Jesus takes away our sin. To have sin expiated means it's taken away, it's removed. Propitiation means God's wrath is satisfied. Earlier we sang *In Christ Alone*, "On that cross as Jesus died, the wrath of God was satisfied." We were singing about propitiation there. It just doesn't fit well into contemporary worship songs. What do you rhyme with propitiation? It just doesn't work. So, instead, we'll go with this – God's wrath is satisfied.

In the Garden

So, what does this mean and how does it relate to the garden? When we see Jesus going to the garden, and three times he is praying, "Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me," it begs the question – what is this cup that Jesus is talking about? The answer may surprise us a little bit. The cup of the cross is not primarily physical suffering. When we see Jesus sweating blood from His pores in intense agony, it's not because He is thinking about the physical pain associated with crucifixion. The cup of the cross is predominately spiritual suffering. There is a spiritual reality expressed in the prayer, "Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me."

This is important. Ladies and gentlemen, Jesus is not a coward about to face Roman soldiers. If He is cowering in the garden about what the Roman soldiers are about to do Him, then what are we to say of the countless martyrs since that day who have gone to their deaths singing? The man in India who was skinned alive, who looked at his tormentor and said, "Take my outer garment off today. Today I clothe myself in a new garment." Christopher Love, as he is being lead to the gallows, and his wife is applauding him saying, "Today they will sever you from your physical head, but they cannot sever you from your spiritual head," and he goes singing to the gallows. Were they more brave than Jesus their Savior Himself? Absolutely not. What is causing this anguish is not the fact that Jesus is a coward about to face Roman soldiers. It's the fact that Jesus is the Savior about to endure divine wrath.

I want you to hear with me the Old Testament description of the cup. Psalm 75:8, *"In the hand of the Lord is a cup full of foaming wine mixed with spices; he pours it out, and all the wicked of the earth drink it down to its very dregs."* Listen to the intensity in Isaiah 51,

Awake, awake! Rise up, O Jerusalem, you who have drunk from the hand of the Lord the cup of his, [What?] his wrath. You who have drained to its dregs the goblet that makes men stagger. Of all the sons she bore there was none to guide her; of all the sons she reared there was none to take her by the hand. These double calamities have come upon you – who can comfort you? – ruin and destruction, famine, and sword – who can console you? Your sons have fainted; they lie at the head of every street, like antelope caught in a net. They are filled with the wrath of the Lord and the rebuke of your God. Therefore hear this, you afflicted one, made drunk, but not with wine. This is what your Sovereign Lord says, your God who defends his people: "See, I have taken out of your hand the cup that made you stagger; from that cup, the goblet of my wrath you will never drink again."

It's the goblet of wrath.

Jeremiah 25, *"Take from my hand this cup filled with the wine of my wrath,"* God speaking here, *"and make all the nations to whom I send you drink it. When they drink it, they will stagger and go mad because of the sword I will send among them."* These are uncomfortable words when we think about God. Ezekiel 23, *"You will drink your sister's cup, a cup large and deep; it will bring scorn and derision, for it holds so much. You will be filled with drunkenness and sorrow, the cup of ruin and desolation, the cup of your sister Samaria."* Habakkuk 2, *"You will be filled with shame instead of glory. Now it is your turn! Drink and be exposed! The cup from the Lord's right hand is coming around to you, and disgrace will cover your glory."*

Revelation 14, some of the most humbling distinctions of the wrath of God. Revelation 14. *"He, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb."* Revelation 18, *"Give back to her as she has given; pay her back double for what she had done. Mix her a double portion from her own cup."* This is the picture over and over and over again, Old Testament, New Testament, a cup filled with the wine of the wrath of God.

In the Old Testament

Old Testament. This is where we're just going to fly through, but get a picture of the seriousness of the wrath of God. Remember, we diminish the wrath, we dilute the wrath of God. We diminish the holiness of God. We don't want to diminish His holiness. In the Old Testament, God's wrath is real. There are more than 20 different words that describe God's wrath in the Old Testament. More than 20 different words. More than 580 different references to God's wrath. Over 580 different references to the wrath of God, and I've listed some of the pictures there, and they are staggering.

"Let his own eyes see his destruction; let him drink of the wrath of the Almighty." (Job 21:20) *"See, the Name of the Lord comes from afar, with burning anger and dense clouds of smoke; his lips are full of wrath, and his tongue is a consuming fire. His breath is like a rushing torrent, rising up to the neck."* (Isaiah 30:27-30) Ezekiel 7, *"I am about to pour out my wrath on you and spend my anger against you."* Ezekiel 22 – get to the middle –

I will gather you into Jerusalem. As men gather silver, copper, iron, lead and tin into a furnace to melt it with a fiery blast, so will I gather you in my anger and my wrath and put you inside the city and melt you. I will gather you and I will blow on you with my fiery wrath, and you will be melted inside her. As silver is melted in a furnace, so you will be melted inside her, and you will know that I the Lord have poured out my wrath upon you.

This is real. God's wrath is personal. It's God speaking to His people. Look at Exodus 32, at the end, "Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them." Deuteronomy 6, "For the Lord your God, who is among you, is a jealous God and his anger will burn against you, and he will destroy you from the face of the land." This is God amongst people. God's wrath is personal. It's intense. It's intense, as though what we've seen is not intense enough, listen to this picture in Isaiah 13:

The Lord Almighty is mustering an army for war. They come from far away lands, from the ends of the heavens – the Lord and the weapons of his wrath – to destroy the whole country. Wail, for the day of the Lord is near; it will come like destruction from the Almighty. Because of this, all hands will go limp, every man's heart will melt. Terror will seize them, pain and anguish will grip them; they will writhe like a woman in labor. They will look aghast at each other, their faces aflame. See, the day of the Lord is coming – a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger – to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it.

Ezekiel 5 the same. God's wrath is intense.

God intensely hates sin. "Do not do this detestable thing that I hate!" God says. He intensely hates sin, and as we've talked about, God in His holy wrath, intensely hates sinners. It's what the Bible says. We cannot soften this. Do not soften this. "You hate all who do wrong." "The Lord examines the righteous, but the wicked and those who love violence his soul hates." His wrath is intense; it's sovereign. It's authoritative. "When disaster comes to the city, has not the Lord caused it?" God's wrath is steady. God's wrath is not irrational, ladies and gentlemen. It is steady. It is consistent. It is predictable. Evil always provokes the wrath of God. "God is a righteous judge, a God who expresses his wrath every day." God's wrath is steady; it's pure. "Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong." His wrath flows from His purity.

God's wrath is loving. What do you mean a loving wrath? Think about those whom you love. Think about your children, or your wife, or your husband, or your mom or dad, or whoever – think about someone you love. Anything that would threaten them, threaten to harm them, is going to be met by you with major resistance. I love my wife. I love my boys, and as a result, that which threatens to harm them, or that which is not good for them, evokes a response from me. There are so many things in this culture towards which we should have – I hope in my heart – a holy anger for. Things that I do not want my family to be pulled away by. This is a picture of God's wrath. It's loving. So, that's Old Testament.

In the New Testament

New Testament, God's wrath is continual. "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him." (John 3:36) "The wrath of God is being revealed," (Romans 1:18-19) continually revealed. God's wrath is coming. John the Baptist said, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?" (Matthew 3:7) In Romans, Paul says, "You are storing up wrath against

yourself for the day of God's wrath." It's coming. God's wrath is deserved. It talks about condemnation in Romans 3. It's deserved. We deserve condemnation from God.

God's wrath is eternal. Why does Jesus say such serious things about sin? *"If your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and thrown into eternal fire."* (Matthew 18:8) Pluck out your eyes and throw them away if they are causing you to sin, because there's a place called hell *"where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched."* (Mark 9:47-48) It's eternal. God's wrath is final. *"He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and the majesty of his power."* (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9)

God's wrath is dreadful. Revelation 6, *"They called to the mountains and the rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?'"* Finally, God's wrath, ladies and gentlemen, is irreversible. In the middle of Revelation 14:9-11, it talks about the smoke of their torment rising forever and ever. It's the New Testament language. You can't get any longer than that, forever and ever. Revelation 20 talks about judgment, *"If anyone whose name was not found in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire."* Irreversible. So, this is the picture we have in the Old Testament and New Testament. A real, intense, personal, coming, continual, dreadful, irreversible, eternal wrath.

On the Cross

On the cross, we discover the one who turns aside the wrath of God. Propitiation is dependent on the initiative of God – this is key right here. That God presented Him as one who would turn away His wrath.

There are pagan religions where there is a concept of propitiation – where a god, the gods, are angry, and so we need to do these things in order to placate, in order to satisfy the wrath of the gods. That's not what's being taught here in the New Testament because the reality is, we are the objects of wrath and there is nothing we can do to satisfy it. No matter of religious works, no matter of good deeds can cover over the sin which provokes the wrath and fury and anger of a holy God toward our sin and us in our sin. So, it's God who is initiating propitiation, not us trying to figure out, "What can we do to propitiate an angry God?" It is God Himself saying, "I'm going to initiate propitiation." Propitiation is dependent on the initiative of God.

It is accomplished by the Son of God. It is one of those words that we see in Romans 3, Jesus Christ the Righteous One, He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins. That's the picture – the atoning sacrifice. We don't have time to look at John 3 and Numbers 21, but it's a picture of a sinful people who deserve the wrath of God. We're just going to fly over that. We just don't have time to do it. I'm sorry.

Propitiation is a demonstration. So, it's accomplished by the Son of God, initiated by the Father, and it's a demonstration of the love of God. Now, this is where we really see this whole picture come together. 1 John 4:9, *"This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins."* What we need to see is – you've got God in the Trinity: Father, Son, Holy Spirit. Three distinct persons, all God. One God; three persons.

What we need to see in the Father and the Son is the Father and Son working in unison here. The picture in propitiation is not a loving Son who is trying to placate an angry Father. We've got a loving Father in this picture. We don't have the Son and the Father at odds in any way. They are in unison in this picture. God's Son was sent; Jesus was sent by the Father's love. The Father sent His Son, by His love. So, it's the Father's love that makes propitiation possible. Forty times in the Gospel of John, you've got John mentioning that the Father sent the Son. Jesus talked about how the Father sent Him. It's, obviously, summed up in John 3:16. "*He gave his one and only Son.*" (John 3:16) What we've got is the Son sent by the Father's love, not just for us, but the Father loved the Son. "*The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands.*" (John 3:35)

So, what we've got is the love of the Father who sends the Son. Then, God's wrath is endured by the Son's love. God's Son is sent by the Father's love. God's wrath is endured by the Son's love. You don't have the Son, an unwilling participant in this thing, saying, "Well, if I have to." It's just not an accident, brothers and sisters. It's not the picture.

The story is told so often of the train operator, bridge operator and the train is coming. Some of you may have heard this story. The father and his son are there at the bridge, and the train is coming, and the son has wandered off to play. He's with his dad at work for the day, and he's caught, and the train is coming, and the father has to release the lever so the bridge is put down so that the people on the train don't die. He's faced with this decision: do I save my son and let all these other people die, or do I kill my son by letting this lever down and let all the people on the train live?

This is a story, an illustration that's used to describe the cross. That is absolutely not what is going on at the cross. This is not a son who's wandered off from the father and gotten into something he shouldn't have, and now he's in a predicament, and the father has to figure out something to do. Absolutely not. The Father sent the Son, and the Son is being obedient to the Father. That's why He's going to the cross.

God's wrath is being endured by the Son's love because Christ is being obedient to the Father. This is where we need to realize, on this Good Friday, that we are not saved from our sins because a bunch of Roman soldiers arrested Jesus and beat Him and mocked Him and nailed Him to a cross. We are not saved from our sins because of what these Roman persecutors did to Jesus. We are saved from our sins because the Father and the Son, in complete unison, willingly went to the cross, and Christ took the cup filled with the fury of the wrath of God.

One preacher said, "It is like you and I are standing in front of a dam 10,000 miles high and 10,000 miles wide filled to the brim with water, and in one instant, that dam is let loose and all of that water comes rushing towards us. In the same way, the torrent of the wrath of God came rushing towards us. Now, imagine as that water comes towards you, right before that water hits you, the ground in front of you opens up and swallows every single drop. In the same way, Christ went to the cross. He took the full cup of a wrathful God, and He drank down every single drop, turned it over and cried out, "It is finished."

That's what happened at the cross. He endured our condemnation. He experienced the wrath that was due us.

Man of Sorrows! What a name for the Son of God, who came ruined sinners to reclaim. Hallelujah! What a Savior! Bearing shame and scoffing rude, in my place condemned he stood; sealed my pardon with his blood. Hallelujah! What a Savior! Guilty, vile, and helpless we; spotless Lamb of God was he;

full atonement can it be? Hallelujah! What a Savior! Lifted up was he to die;
'It is finished!' was his cry; now in heaven exalted high. Hallelujah! What a
Savior! When he comes, our glorious King, all his ransomed home to bring,
then anew this song we'll sing: Hallelujah! What a Savior!

All right, let's move on. So, when we picture the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus is not a coward. He's a Savior, about to endure divine wrath.

The Cry of Dereliction Matthew 27:45-46

Third scene – turn the diamond – the cry of dereliction. *"From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land. About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?' which means, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'"* Can you imagine that scene? In the middle of the day, darkness sweeps over the entire land, and for three hours, it's dark. Even to borrow from the picture we just saw, Jesus is not enduring wrath for a moment, but for hours. Darkness comes over, and Jesus cries out, *"My God, my God why have you forsaken me?"* What does that mean?

Reconciliation: Jesus suffered our separation.

The key theme: reconciliation. The truth here is that Jesus suffered our separation. Here's the substitute – He suffered separation for us, instead of us.

Reconciliation – in our sin, we are separated from God as His enemies. Enmity toward God, friends of the world, James 4 says. So whose side is the enmity on? Is it on our side or on God's side? The answer that seems to be in Scripture is both. Man is hostile to God. Romans 1, at the end, says we are God-haters. *"The sinful mind,"* sinful man, *"is hostile to God,"* Romans 8.

At the same time, God is hostile to man. As we've seen, His wrath rests on sinners. So, in our sin, we're separated from God as enemies. Through our substitute, because of our substitute, we are reconciled to God as His friends. Two key texts, 2 Corinthians 5 and Romans 5. *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them."* Later it says, *"Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."*

Then, Romans 5:8, really all the way through verse 11. *"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!"* That's Romans 5:8-10.

Separation on the Cross

So, the picture here is a substitute who reconciles us to God as friends of God—once enemies, now friends, the difference being a substitute. How does that work, and how does that relate to this cry, *"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"* Well, think about

what's happening on the cross there, when He says that. What is the meaning of those words?

First, what it's not. When Jesus cries out, *"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"* it is not a cry of unbelief. Some have said, much like we saw Jesus pictured almost as a coward in the Garden of Gethsemane, that somehow in this moment of supreme self-sacrifice, Jesus lacks faith or trust in the Father. That's not at all what's going on here. Jesus has said He knows where He is going. *"I am going away and I am coming back to you."* (John 14:28) He's confident; it's not a cry of unbelief. It's also not a cry of confusion. Jesus is not wondering, "Why am I dying? Why is this happening?" He had said this was going to happen. Not a cry of confusion. Not a cry of despair either. What does Hebrews 12:2 say? *"Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the..."* what set before him? *"...joy set before him, endured the cross."*

He said to His disciples where He's going, what He's doing. In Matthew 27 there, *"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me,"* He's quoting from Psalms 22:1. We see, and we're going to look at that Psalm, the psalmist who has cried out, *"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"* comes to the conclusion that God has not despised or disdained him. Not hidden his face from him, but has listened to his cry for help. So it's not a cry of unbelief, confusion, or despair. What is it a cry of then?

I would encourage us to look at this cry from the cross through three different lenses. One, a cry of spiritual anguish. He quotes from the Old Testament, Psalm 22:1, you see it listed there. In light of what we just saw, Christ is experiencing the depth of God's wrath. If you think about it, He was sweating blood at the anticipation of it. What must it have been like for the holy God of the universe, in the flesh, to experience the full weight of wrath – infinite wrath – toward sin? So, there is spiritual anguish, overwhelmed by the judgment of sin poured out on Him in that moment.

Second, a cry of relational alienation. There was a real separation from the Father, in a sense, which we are going to talk about in a second. We are going to come back to that, and it's depicted in the darkness, this three hours of darkness – and don't misunderstand this picture. Some preachers have said, "Well, God looked down and could not bear to see what the soldiers were doing to His Son, so He turned away." Absolutely not. God looked down and could not bear to see your sin and my sin on His Son, and because of our sin He turned away. Our sin thrust on His Son, a cry of relational alienation.

Alienated by the Father and alienated by men. There are parallels here between Psalm 22 and the Gospel account of Jesus' death. You look in Psalm 22:6, *"I am a worm and not a man, scorned by men and despised by the people. All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads: 'He trusts in the LORD; let the LORD rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him.'"*

Then, you see the picture in Matthew 27, *"Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, 'You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!'"* You see these parallels. You can go back through and look at them. What we've got are the Gospel accounts of Jesus dying on the cross reflecting the cries of the psalmist in Psalm 22. Alienated by those He loved. Peter, disciples, picture of alienation from the Father and men in a very real way.

Spiritual anguish, relational alienation, and third, physical agony. We're talking about the theological mysteries here and the truths, but we cannot overlook the physical picture. I

think we have a tendency, a dangerous tendency, to glamorize the physical picture. That's what we talk about all the time when we talk about the cross. We talk about all the physical facets of suffering, and I think we can over-glamorize some of those things, but they are still realities. He was nailed – His feet, His hands – to a cross, with a crown of thorns thrust through His head.

Death by crucifixion was, basically, death by brutal suffocation. In order to breathe, you would have to press up on feet that had nails run into them and press out on hands that had nails thrust into them, and you would lift up to try to gasp for breath. In the process, your back scourged by what had been done before, would scrape along that cross – that was to breathe, and that's what our Savior was experiencing. So, it was all spiritual anguish – an ultimate spiritual anguish – but relational alienation and physical agony; that was the separation on the cross.

Salvation from the Curse

Now, how does that provide salvation? Salvation from the curse? Here's the picture of reconciliation – God is the author of reconciliation. "*All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ...*" (2 Corinthians 5:18) I love what William Temple said. He said, "All is of God; the only thing of my very own which I contribute to my redemption is the sin from which I need to be redeemed." God is the giver of the gospel. He's the one doing the reconciling. Whenever you see this word "reconciled" in the New Testament, it's either talking about God as the subject, God as reconciling, or, if it's talking about us, it's used in the passive form: "We are being reconciled. We have been reconciled." God is the subject. We're not reconciling ourselves to God. You don't see that in Scripture. You see us being reconciled by God. He is the giver of the gospel.

Second, He's the gift of the gospel. He is reconciling us to Himself. This is why, when we talk about evangelism of the gospel, we can't say, "Well, believe in Christ and you get forgiveness of your sins, and you get eternal life, and you get your best life, and you get all of these things." No, you come to Christ, and you get God. All of these things flow from God, but we have taken God Himself out of how we preach the cross and the gospel and offer His gifts instead. He's reconciling us to Himself, and He's the supreme treasure, not His gifts. God is the treasure that is bought for us. We are being reconciled to a person – to God.

He's the gift of the gospel, and He's the goal of the gospel. God's designed it this whole way so that the one who gives the grace gets the glory. If we add anything to this picture other than that, it's credited to us, and that is not the design of the cross, and it's not the design of the gospel. God is the author of reconciliation.

Christ is the agent of reconciliation. He's the one who makes it possible, who reconciles man to God, and this is where Galatians 3 comes in. Key text. Galatians 3:10 tells us that we were under the curse of God's law. Galatians 3:10, "*Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.*" That's a quotation directly from Deuteronomy 27:26. The picture is, all who do not obey the law of God fully are under a curse, fully. God's law is not a religious cafeteria where you pick this and this and this and this, and you leave out this and this and this, and you decide what works best for you. It's not the way God's law works.

You disobey at one point, then you disobey the whole deal, and you are under a curse because of that. That's why, when you go back to Deuteronomy 27-28, you see blessings and curses. "Cursed is the man who does this." "Cursed is the man who does this." "Cursed is the man who does that." "Blessed is the man who does this or that." That's what

Deuteronomy 27-28 is all about. Now, when you think about this picture of blessing and curse, follow with me here. Blessing – to be blessed is to experience the favorable presence of God. Numbers 6:24-26 is a great picture of that, *"The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you...the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace."* To have the face of God turn toward you – this is blessing. This is the beautiful vision of the face of God. That's the picture, blessing. What great imagery there, and blessing all throughout the Old Testament was the reward for obedience. Deuteronomy 28, *"If you fully obey the Lord your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. All these blessings will come upon you and accompany you if,"* key word, *"if you obey the Lord your God."* Blessing, to experience the favorable presence of God – this is the reward for obedience, because you're walking with God.

On the other hand, a curse is to be cut off from the favorable presence of God. The curse is the opposite of blessing. So, what it means to be cursed: instead of God turning His face toward you, it's God turning His back toward you and His face away from you. Cut off from the light of His favorable presence. This is what God said in Exodus 33. To a people in sin He said, "If I go with you, I might destroy you on the way. You will not have my favorable presence with you." It's the picture we see in 2 Kings 23-24. Now, the reason I'm saying "favorable presence of God" here is because I think, sometimes, we have a misunderstanding there.

The reality is, most of the time when we see in Scripture the presence of God, it is a picture of the blessing of God. It is the picture of the favor of His presence. So, when we talk about the presence of God, we talk about it in a favorable sense. We just associate the two together. However, we need to realize – God is omnipresent, right? So, when we talk about being cast out of His presence, how is that really possible? It's not; He's present everywhere. So, when we say that somebody is cast out of His presence, then what we're talking about is how they are experiencing, not the favorable presence of God, but it's a picture of curse, unfavorable presence, and that's the picture God gave to His people in Exodus 33, "If my presence is with you, I might destroy you on the way." God with us is not always a good thing.

Now, think about eternal damnation, think about hell – is God present? If we answer no, then He is not omnipresent. Hell is a demonstration of the divine wrath of God and judgment of God. There is a very real sense of His presence. Now, it's being cast out of His presence in the sense that has been cursed, but not completely, that's why we're talking about favorable presence. The picture here is to be cursed. It's to mean, not that God's presence is completely gone, but that His back is turned on you, and His curse is upon you. His curse is upon you, and that is the recompense for disobedience. *"If you do not obey the Lord your God,"* Deuteronomy 28, *"and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come upon you and overtake you."*

In other words, you will see His presence revealed in darkness, and now we are getting to the heart of what's going on at the cross. We are under the curse of God's law. We deserve the darkness of His presence – His curse toward us – cast out from the favor of His presence. What happened at the cross is that Christ came under the cross of God's judgment. *"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.'"* (Galatians 3:13) Quoting there from the Old Testament, Deuteronomy 21. Catch this – it just so happened that Christ died at a time when the Jewish people were under Roman authority. Romans, who had devised crucifixion. Jesus was not stoned to death, He died on a tree for a reason: to give us a picture of the curse of God.

I've got verses from Hebrews 13 listed there because Jesus was cut off from God's favorable presence. Hebrews 13 talks about how He died outside the camp, and you look in Leviticus, and you see that "outside the camp" represents the sins of the people and the uncleanness of the people. If you had an infectious disease, you went outside the camp. If you were going to be stoned for blaspheming, Leviticus 24, you went outside the camp, and this is where Jesus went. It's a picture of Him experiencing the curse, cut off from God's favorable presence, and Jesus being given the full recompense of our disobedience.

Now, feel the weight of 2 Corinthians 5, *"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us."* The curse, due our sin put on His Son. I love what Martin Luther said,

Our most merciful Father, seeing us to be oppressed and overwhelmed with the curse of the law (so that) we could never be delivered from it by our own power...

Listen to this,

...sent his only Son in the world and laid upon him all the sins of all men, saying: Be thou Peter that denier; Paul that persecutor, blasphemer, and cruel oppressor; David that adulterer; that sinner which did eat the apple in Paradise; that thief which hanged upon the cross; and briefly, be thou the person which hath committed the sins of all men; see therefore that thou pay and satisfy for them (all).

This is the picture. He took the curse completely for us so that we would become – now be careful, because this is where we have to guard in our thinking about salvation, of thinking of what we do in order to be saved. The reality is that salvation is based completely on what Christ has done, and we are simply the acceptors of reconciliation. *"He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit."*

Here's the reality: we cannot remove the curse. We cannot remove the curse. There is no box we can check, no aisle we can walk, no things we can do, no routine we can keep in order to remove the curse from us. We can only receive the cross. We've got three options here, every single one of us in this room, three options. Number one, we could ignore the curse. We can pretend like it's not there. We can pretend that we are not cursed before God, and we can live in a fantasy world that denies the penalty due our sin. Second – and this is where so many of us fall, and I'm convinced that there are probably many around this room that find themselves here.

Second, we can work to overcome the curse. We can go to church, and we can do our best, and we can pray, and we can read the Bible, and we can try to check off all the boxes that we know we are supposed to check off. We can find ourselves falling over and over and over again, but trying harder the next time, and trying harder the next time and feeling condemned, and feeling like we just can't get it done, but trying harder and harder and harder. We can work to overcome the curse. If you find yourself there, or the first one, my exhortation to you is to take the third option.

The third option is not to ignore the curse or to work to overcome the curse. The third option, embrace the curse. Embrace it. Say, "Yes, I stand condemned before God and there is nothing I can do." Embrace the curse and run to the cross. Find that He has taken the curse for you, and therefore, you don't need to try harder next time because He has already

taken the curse. *"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because the law of the Spirit of life set (you) free from the law of sin and death."* He suffered separation, so that you can simply receive the cross. Be reconciled to God. Be reconciled to God. That's the picture. God takes darkness, curse, recompense for disobedience put on Him instead of us, in order that we might be reconciled to God. We who were once enemies, now friends.

The Declaration of Triumph John 19:30

Last picture of the cross. *"When he had received the drink, Jesus said, 'It is finished.'"* One word in the Gospel text to tell us, *"It is finished."* Here's the question. Jesus had died; He hadn't even risen from the grave. Was it really finished? Absolutely, it was finished. We'll see the significance, particularly on Easter Sunday here, about the resurrection.

The key theme here is redemption. Redemption. Jesus paid our debt. When Jesus shouted, *"It is finished,"* He was declaring that He had paid the full penalty for sin. No debt, no penalty left to be paid. The payment for sin was fully rendered. I love what Anselm said. He said, *"The debt was so great, that while man alone owed it, only God could pay it."*

Redemption: Jesus paid our debt.

So, what do we mean when we talk about redemption? What does that word mean? I've got "sacrifice," "propitiation," "reconciliation," "redemption." What does this word mean? It means that Jesus paid our debt. Because of our sin, we live in a state of bondage. We are slaves to sin. We are slaves to ourselves. Slaves to sin, slaves to ourselves, to the sinful nature, to the flesh, we are slaves to Satan. We have to be careful here – we'll talk about this – not to go to that whole ransom theory, where Satan is able to make demands of God, but the reality is that we're blinded by Satan, following the ways of this world and the ruler of the kingdom of the air. Slaves to the law. *"Held prisoners by the law,"* Paul says in Galatians 3, and slaves to death. *"...And free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death."* (Hebrews 2:15) So, we were in a state of bondage in our sin.

However, because of the price that our substitute has paid, we are liberated from bondage to live in freedom. From slavery to freedom. From bondage to liberty. This is what Mark 10:45 is all about. It's about the fact that we are slaves, and we need a Savior. A divine rescue is necessary. *"The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."* The same word that's used in 1 Timothy 2:5-6, *"a ransom for many."* This is a great word here, *lutron*, ransom. When you take intro to Greek class, the first word you learn is *luo* – to loose, to loosen something, and this is the picture – to set free, to unbind. This is what the cross is about. It's about being loosed. It's about being set free.

Because of the cross, we are free from sin. *"Anyone who has died has been freed from sin."* You have been set free from sin. We are free from ourselves. Christ has conquered the flesh, the sinful nature. We are free from Satan. Again, not in the sense that a ransom price was paid – there is not a price paid to Satan inferring that he was making demands of God. This is where the imagery here breaks down some. So, don't go there, but the reality is, in salvation, we are set from slavery to spiritual forces of evil. Set free from Satan.

We are free from the law. Even here we have to be careful because, when we talk about being free from the law, it means being free from the curse of the law. The law is holy, righteous and good, Romans 7, and especially when it comes to the law of Christ. We're free for the first time to obey the law of Christ. That's what they've prophesied in Jeremiah 31, and Hebrews 10 says it's been fulfilled. So, we're free from the law in the sense of the curse of the law. We're free from death. Ladies and gentlemen, death is a defeated enemy, and we do not fear it anymore. Free from death.

The Old Testament: Redemption Anticipated

Now, in order to see this picture in the cross, we've got to get the set-up of redemptive history. Old Testament: redemption anticipated. Isaiah 43, "*Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine.*"

We've got all kinds of patterns in the Old Testament. Men paid a price in order to buy property. You see, I'm just going to give you some pictures of redemption in the Old Testament – to buy property, to free a relative. You could free a relative from some sort of bondage that they were in by paying a redemption price. To free a slave. You could free a slave by paying a redemption price. You could free exiles. This was the picture, God freeing His people from exile. Notice in all of these cases of redemption, there was a decisive, costly price that was paid.

So, redemption involves paying a price, redeeming is paying a price. God paid a price in order to deliver His people from slavery in Egypt. When He talks about bringing them out of slavery, which we looked at in the Passover, Exodus 6 talks about how God redeemed them with an outstretched arm. He paid a price to deliver His people, free His people from Babylonian captivity. To rescue His people from the consequences of their sin, and the dominant image that we have of God in the Old Testament when it comes to redemption: God as Redeemer. It's really His power and His grace wrapped up together here in this picture.

God demonstrates His power as Redeemer. You look at these verses, go through and look at 2 Samuel 7, Psalm 77 and so on, and you will see God displaying His power in redeeming His people. It's about God splitting the Red Sea in Exodus 14, redeeming His people. "And they will know that I am the Lord when I show my power in this way." Then, God's people illustrate His grace as the ones who are redeemed. So, we've got power and grace in this picture of redemption. God has power to redeem and grace that causes Him to redeem.

Two Old Testament stories – we'll run through them. For those of you who are looking at Secret Church as date night tonight, these two stories are for you. Okay, this is the romantic part of our evening together, so cuddle up to the person next to you. Two stories, Old Testament, Boaz, the Kinsman Redeemer. This is about Ruth. Ruth was a Moabite. Moabites were hated by Israelites. Ruth is brought to Israel after her husband dies. She is a barren woman for 10 years, has not had a child. No heir to carry on her husband's line. She's barren, an outcast in the land of Israel, Bethlehem. So, what happens is in Ruth 2, she goes and just happens to find herself working in the field of Boaz, and Boaz is a kinsman redeemer.

You go back to Leviticus 25, and you see the provision that God has made for someone if something happens like this kind of situation. Someone who is close, a kinsman-redeemer, can purchase that person and pay a redemption price to bring that person into his family. So, she finds herself in Boaz's field, and here's the portrait we have of the kinsman-redeemer, this is where it gets romantic. What does he do? Well, first, he seeks the outcast as his family. He seeks the outcast. Boaz said to Ruth, "*My daughter, listen to me. Don't go*

and glean in another field and don't go away from here. Stay here with my servant girls. Watch the field where the men are harvesting, and follow along after the girls. I have told the men not to touch you. And whenever you are thirsty, go and get a drink from the water jars the men have filled." (Ruth 2:8-9)

Boaz is taking initiative here. He's using a term of endearment assuring her that she can stay in his field. He saves the outcast from harm. "As she got up to glean, Boaz gave orders to his men, 'Even if she gathers among the sheaves, don't embarrass her. Rather, pull out some stalks for her from the bundles and leave them for her to pick up, and don't rebuke her.'" (Ruth 2:15-16) Women in Ruth's position were often insulted or treated harshly in that kind of condition, and Boaz is making sure that's not happening to Ruth.

Finally, he serves the outcast at his table. He gives her the right to take water with his men whenever she needs it. Then, she gets invited to the meal table. "At mealtime Boaz said to her, 'Come over here. Have some bread and dip it in the wine vinegar.'" Now it's getting real romantic. "When she sat down with the harvesters, he offered her some roasted grain. She ate all she wanted and had some leftover." So, this is the picture: Boaz inviting her to his table. Then, we get to Ruth 3, and we find that there is someone closer in line, kinsman line, to Ruth's family, and as a result, Boaz is going to need to have a conversation with this dude.

So, that's what happens in Ruth 4, and you get to this price of the kinsman-redeemer. Basically, in order to redeem someone, you have to have a few different things. Number one, you have to have the right to redeem. That's why Boaz had to address this other person. Second, he must have the resources to redeem. You have to have a price to pay to purchase the forfeited inheritance. Then, you have to have the resolve to redeem, and that's exactly what we see in Boaz. This is the picture in the Old Testament of a kinsman-redeemer paying the price to bring this woman into his line, and the whole picture in Ruth 4 gives us a picture of how this would all lead to Christ in Matthew 1.

That's the first picture. Second, Hosea, the faithful husband. I'm going to run through this real quick. Hosea, this story is told on two lines. It's an individual story and a national story. The faithful husband, God tells Hosea to go and marry Gomer. Now, there are two problems with that. Number one, her name is Gomer, that's problem number one, right? "David, go and marry, Heather." Ah, yes. "David, go and marry Gomer." Hmm. Okay, so we've got Gomer, and the second problem was that Gomer was a prostitute. We don't know if Gomer was a prostitute before, but after for sure. There is some debate amongst scholars on that, but the reality is the picture that's being set up here is a picture of an unfaithful wife, and that's what God's people are displayed as – an unfaithful bride.

As the story is told, what we see are two elements. The story of an unfaithful people. "Rebuke your mother, rebuke her, for she is not my wife, and I am not her husband." We're going to fly through this. She was adulterous. The Bible talks about sin in terms of spiritual adultery. When you and I go and find our satisfaction from the stuff of this world instead of the greatness of our God, then we are committing spiritual adultery. This is the seriousness of sin. Adulterous, idolatrous – worshiping the Canaanite rain god, Baal. Hypocritical because she was still participating in religious feasts, Israel was. This is a picture, the individual story, Hosea and Gomer, that's representing the national story. Hypocritical, and she was forgetful. "I will punish her," this is the climax here, Hosea 2:13, "I will punish her for the days she burned incense to the Baals; she decked herself with rings and jewelry, and went after her lovers, but me she forgot," declares the Lord."

Now, look up here after you read Hosea 2:13, look up here, don't look back down yet. Okay, everybody looking here. The indictment here is what God says about His people – adulterous, idolatrous, hypocritical, and forgetful; “turned back on me completely.”

Now, I'll go and let you know, don't look down, but the very next word, Hosea 2:14, the very next word is, “*therefore*.” I want you to think about what's about to come. “My bride has been adulterous, idolatrous, hypocritical. She has turned her back and willfully forgotten me. Ran after other men instead of me.” This is God talking about His people. Therefore, what do we expect? In light of all we've seen – therefore judgment, therefore wrath, therefore judgment.

Instead, Hosea 2:14, some of the most beautiful words in all the Old Testament, “*Therefore, I am now going to allure her.*” Wow. “*I will lead her into the desert and speak tenderly to her.*” Unfaithful people and a story of an unreasonable God. He said, “*I will allure her.*” The word is intentionally romantic. It's a word that we would use to describe how a middle schooler wants a girl to look at him. This is a picture of God saying, “*I'm going to allure her to myself. I will lead her. I will speak tenderly to her. I will give to her. I will restore her. You will not just call me Lord. You will call me husband. I will protect and betroth and respond to her, and I will establish her.*”

Then, you get to one of the most beautiful chapters in the Old Testament, Hosea 3, “*I will pay the price for her.*” When God says to Hosea, “You go and pay the price to bring Gomer back to yourself. You go pay a slaves price to bring her back to yourself.”

The New Testament: Redemption Achieved

So, that's the Old Testament; redemption anticipated. New Testament: redemption achieved. Here's the deal, Christ is our Redeemer. He's the one that pays the price. His payment was celebrated. You see Zechariah here, the prophetess Anna, the picture of when Christ came on the scene. This is the redemption of God, what we have waited for. His payment was costly. The word that is used over and over again in the New Testament to describe the payment of Christ is not, “He gave His life” or “He gave Himself,” but “He gave His blood.” Blood is the price that was paid.

His payment was costly, and His payment was complete. Jesus doesn't have to keep making payments. Payment is complete; it is paid for. Christ is our Redeemer, and Christ is our Victor. Yes, He is the Conqueror. It is victory promised. Genesis 3, the very beginning, entrance of sin into the world. God said, “I'm going to send one who is going to crush your head.” Victory promised to the very beginning.

Victory begun. Matthew 12. As Jesus comes on the scene, we see His power over demons. We see His power over nature. His authority over all things. Victory accomplished. Listen to this in Colossians 2, “*When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us.*” Listen to this, “*He took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.*”

Check this out, sinful people are forgiven at the cross, and spiritual powers are overthrown. Christ has disarmed them. He has embarrassed them. He had defeated them. Sinful people forgiven. Spiritual powers overthrown, and spiritual powers defeated. He has defeated them. Our Redeemer, Christ, owns us forever.

Victory accomplished; victory announced. This is where the resurrection comes in. The resurrection is the stamp, the vindication. Yes, the payment is complete. We'll dive into that on Sunday here, but the picture is of Jesus on the cross saying, "*It is finished.*" What He means is, it is finished. It's finished; the price has been paid. The debt has been covered, completely covered, and the resurrection is God's announcement that "Yes, yes, the payment has been made. You have nothing to pay. Don't work. You have nothing to pay." Victory awaited. This is not to say that redemption is complete. We're not home yet. We're not home yet, but it's guaranteed. We're going home, and the redemption of our bodies is going to happen.

Permissions: You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material provided that you do not alter it in any way, use the material in its entirety, and do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction. For web posting, a link to the media on our website is preferred. Any exceptions to the above must be approved by Radical.

Please include the following statement on any distributed copy: By David Platt. © David Platt & Radical. Website: Radical.net