

I have about 15 minutes to fill.

I'm supposed to put frosting on the cake. We all feel good. Don't spoil it Jim. Just put some more sweetness on the top so we can leave feeling good.

Instead, if you'll bear with me for these moments, I'll share some quotes from a book I've been reading this week. Credit where credit is due. The book is by Paul Washer. These are his ideas. The title of the book is *The Gospel's Power and Message*.

He says; "What could ever bring a Gentile, completely unaware of Old Testament scriptures and rooted in either greek philosophy, or pagan superstitions, to believe such a message about a man named Jesus?"

- He was born under questionable circumstances to a poor family in one of the most despised regions of the Roman Empire, *and yet*, the gospel claims that He was the eternal Son of God, conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of a Jewish virgin.
- He was a carpenter by trade and an itinerant religious teacher with no official training, *and yet*, the gospel claims that He surpassed the combined wisdom of every greek philosopher and roman sage of antiquity.
- He was poor and had no place to lay His head, *and yet* the gospel claims that for three years He fed thousands by a word, healed every manner of illness among men, and even raised the dead.
- He was crucified outside of Jerusalem as a blasphemer and an enemy of the state, *and yet* the gospel claims that His death was the pivotal event in all of human history and the only means of salvation from sin and reconciliation with God.
- He was placed in a borrowed tomb, *and yet* the gospel claims that on the third day He rose from the dead and presented Himself to many of His followers. Forty days later, He ascended into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God.

- Thus, the gospel claims that a poor Jewish carpenter, who was rejected as a lunatic and a blasphemer by His own people and crucified by the state, is now the Savior of the world, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. At His name, every knee, including Ceasar's will bow.

Paul Washer's point is that our gospel, the good news about Jesus, is so radically unbelievable that it is a miracle of God, any time it is accepted.

Why? Why did it require something so radical as God crushing the life out of and abandoning His own Son in order to redeem us?

Are we really that bad? Do the charges against us really require this much fuss? God must crush His own Son, because of what I did? Really??

Moses wrote down something that God said about mankind at the time of Noah. In Genesis 6:5 - 6

5Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. 6The LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart....

We put up a pretty good facade. Jesus called it whitewashing. We put up a fence with nice white paint, high enough that folks can't see what's inside.

Jesus said we're like a whitewashed tomb, full of dead mens bones. Perhaps you can't see inside my fence. But God can.

5Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

How long do you think I'd be parading in this pulpit if God made my thoughts and the intents of my heart into a video that you all could see?

God is not impressed with our whitewash job. He sees every thought from the depths of our souls. They play out before Him like a video of open sewage.

Psalms 5 is one we skip over. A bit harsh for our liking.

*4For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness; No evil dwells with You. 5The boastful shall not stand before Your eyes; You **hate** all who do iniquity. 6You destroy those who speak falsehood; The LORD **abhors** the man of bloodshed and deceit....*

This is the God with whom we have to do. He hates people who sin. He abhors people who . . . tell lies. That's strong language. I didn't write it. Don't blame me, it's in the book.

Was the cross really necessary? Were we really so evil that God had to go through that much fuss? Really?

Another obscure verse; Proverbs 17:15

*15He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous, Both of them alike are an **abomination** to the LORD.*

More strong words from scripture. When God says something is abominable, just how bad is that. What does that mean? In the original tongue, the word depicts something like this. Wash your clothes in sewage. Put them on. Stand before God. Abomination.

Here, God declares that justifying the wicked, or condemning the righteous, is just such.

Terms in the english language fall out of use. They become obsolete. One such term that is not in regular use now is the idea of being shut up. No, I'm not talking about what your kids say to each other. Shut up.

It used to mean pressed into a corner where there was no way out. Trapped, as it were.

We are shut up in sin. God is shut up by His own words. He is righteous. We are sinners, vile, abominable. To let us into heaven in our sinful state would be to open the sewage dikes up and let heaven fill up with; abomination.

Is there a solution? Yes there is. We've been singing about it this morning!

Romans 3:23 - 25a for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; 25whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith.

Propitiation. There's a word! Preachers are supposed to limit words to 2 syllables. Occasionally a big word with maybe 3. Propitiation. 5 syllables! Yikes!

Basically, it means payment. It's a word that means the satisfaction of a debt.

I owed a debt of a lifetime of thoughts and actions that were more offensive to God than the constant flow of an open sewer. Filth. Continual abomination that flows out of my broken sinful heart.

Propitiation is the satisfaction, once for all time, of that debt that I could never pay. Someone has paid it for me. Propitiation.

Listen to the legal language set to poetry by Isaiah the prophet;

*4Surely our griefs He Himself bore,
And our sorrows He carried;
Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten of God, and afflicted.*

*5But He was pierced through for our transgressions,
He was crushed for our iniquities;
The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him,
And by His scourging we are healed.*

*6All of us like sheep have gone astray,
Each of us has turned to his own way;
But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all
To fall on Him.*

You say, those are lofty thoughts Jim. Certainly above the minds of mere men to have come up with such a possibility. How can we believe it? Is there any proof?

We've been singing about the proof this morning. We're celebrating the proof this Easter morning. He rose up from the dead. That's the proof that the gospel is real.

Listen to Paul; 1 Cor. 15

1Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, 2by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.

3For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. 6After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; 7then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; 8and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.

God, sent His Son, Jesus, to receive the lashes I was due, to be crushed in my place, to bear my sin away, and be the abomination for me so that I might be the righteousness of God, in Him.

Like Danny DiVito says in the movie; flip flop. We trade places. I receive His righteousness. He bears my sin.

As the ancient verse says; Hallelujah! What a Savior!

There's only one thing left to be said. I could trundle some words together and try to say it, but why would I do that when Paul has already said it with the power and authority of the Word of God. So again, I quote; 2 Cor. 5:20

20Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. 21He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

We beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

Listen to those words. reconciliation is a word picture that demands something.

Two opposing kingdoms are at war with each other. Satan is ruler of this world. Lost sinners are duped into fighting against God. They are abominable to God.

God loved them. He paid the price to purchase them at the cross. Reconciliation is a word that means you come out of this sinful world, and join God in His world. His kingdom. His authority. His rule.

All of the fuss, all of the cost, all of the devastation that God paid for at the cross in order to purchase you is meaningless unless you come out of this world. Reconciliation. Be reconciled to God. Set apart from this world.

Lord, we look at all of the beauty and devastation of the cross, the cost of redemption, you loved us so much that you paid for us with the death of your own Son, but none of it means anything if we aren't ultimately reconciled through those realities, out of this world, back to you.

Knowing those truths doesn't reconcile us. We corporately and individually bow the knee to You as Lord of everything and ask that you would, for Christ sake, take us out of this world, and make us wholly yours.