

# Outside the Camp

A sermon delivered Sunday Morning, April 20, 2014  
at Oak Grove Baptist Church, Paducah, Ky.  
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Hebrews 13:11-12

*For the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate.*

How does one understand the events surrounding the holidays of Good Friday and Easter? These two days honor the two greatest events of human history—the death and resurrection of the greatest human being—Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

I hope you do not object that I call Jesus a human being. I take nothing from His deity, and becoming a man did not either. Becoming a human being did not strip Him of His Godness. He was God and man. Why would God see fit first to become a man and then die? And why such a ghastly death?

All men die, but He chose to die the worst kind of physical death as well as the worse kind of spiritual death. He did not die an easy death. He did not die the death of old age, or pass in His sleep. No, He purposely died a violent death. He came to be a sacrifice for our sins. This meant a bloody death in order that His blood could atone for our sin. He had to suffer under the hand of God and receive His condemnation and due penalty for our guilt if we could have hope of being released from it.

Our text is referring to the shameful and substitutionary death of our Lord. It was horrific and terrible. The writer of this book called Hebrews is giving us an Old Testament lesson as to why Jesus had to not just die, but die specifically “outside the gate” of Jerusalem.

## **I. The Bible’s Methodology**

The Bible is the Word of God, given to us by Him. Some, of course, doubt that and we’ll talk about that in a few moments, but God has written His message to the human race in the form of a book, and in this book He reveals three things.

God reveals Himself to us. He is the transcendent God, which simply means He is above everything He has made and yet He reveals Himself to His creation.

God has revealed man to man. The Bible is the greatest expose on human nature there has ever been because, as this book says, we are not so honest with ourselves. We are the worst deceivers

that have ever been. We lie to ourselves constantly, and that doesn't even bring in to the discussion the deception we have one with another. The greatest deception is within our own hearts. We refuse to see ourselves as we really are, so God in His mercy gives us the proper diagnosis we need. He shares it with us through the Bible. The news is that man is lost and separated from His Creator.

God reveals His redemption of man. God is not leaving us in this sad condition. He has a purpose for us and He has rescued us through the person of Jesus Christ. That's what this Book is about and God has a methodology in which He shares that message. If most people were asked today, "How would you describe the Bible?" most would say, "Oh, it's an old fashioned book of moral code that tells you what you can and cannot do." They see the Bible as a book of teaching, doctrines, moral codes by which you live, there are things you are to avoid and things you are to do. Well, there is certain truth to that is there not? The Bible is very doctrinal. The Bible all the way from Romans to Revelation is mainly doctrinal instruction. In fact, the Bible says of its own self in 2 Timothy 3:16 that the Bible is "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."

However, doctrinal teaching is very abstract. It's concepts you cannot see or hear, you cannot taste or touch or smell. You can't gain understanding of the doctrinal truths through the senses. For example,  $2 + 2 = 4$ . That's not a debatable statement. It's a fact, a proposition of truth. However, it's an abstract concept. You can't understand it through just through the senses. But if I were to give you two apples and someone else gave you two apples, you would have four apples. Now the abstract has become concrete.

The Bible does this very thing. It teaches true abstract concepts and gives us concrete pictures and illustrations. Again, let me illustrate. If I say to you, "Jesus saves!" Well, that's a truth and you may have some idea of what I mean but it's not concrete. You can't gain understanding by looking at that truth or touching or smelling it. But if I begin to describe how Jesus died on the cross then it becomes concrete. When you begin to hear the screams and agony of our Lord as they drove the nails through His hands and His feet, that's concrete. So the Lord has given us teachings, commands, and instructions on how to live life at its best. But in order to see that, to get it, and to grasp it, God has given us stories, types, and illustrations that really give us the ability to grasp these concepts.

### **A. The Use of Stories, Types, and Illustrations.**

Our text is an example of this. The author goes back to the Old Testament and in the Old Testament he singles out the sacrifice of a bull. I don't know if you've ever seen an animal slaughtered and seen its life taken, but it's a gruesome, ghastly scene. I used to hunt and have taken quarry providing food for the table many times through the years, but I'll never forget when I watched the video recording of a lamb being killed for its blood in order to offer it as a sacrifice. Several years ago in Jerusalem for the very first time in centuries, an animal sacrifice took place. It was

just a few years ago when they began to reinstate the Old Testament sacrifices and they video-taped the killing of this lamb. When I saw it, I sunk to my knees and began to weep. I saw the torment and torture of this animal and I thought of Christ. Not even an animal sacrifice can tell you the sufferings that He went through as He died on that cross, but it made it more concrete for me. It was no longer just an abstract concept for me. Through it I gained some idea of an innocent victim dying for the guilty.

This is what He is showing us here in our text. He talks about this animal whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the High Priest for sin but the carcass was burned outside of the camp. They would kill the animal, take the blood, and sprinkle it on the altar for a sin offering. It was a sacrifice to appease and atone for their sins so they would be able to draw near and worship God. Then they would take the carcass of the slain animal and burn it outside of the city because the carcass was considered unclean; the guilt of the sin was upon that animal and it could no longer be in the holy place where God's presence was, because God is holy. He cannot be associated with sin.

So the Bible uses these stories, types, and illustrations. In fact, the Old Testament is nothing but one story after another illustrating what Christ would come and do. The stories of Abraham and Isaac and Moses and all the prophets, are stories that unpack and reveal what Christ would later come to do for us.

## **B. The Bible's Reliability.**

I think it's safe to say we are living in a post-Christian America. We are living after a nation turned away from the Christian faith and has totally embraced secularism. With the rise of secularism has been the rise of doubting the reliability of Scripture as God's Word. The Bible is seen by many today, even in prominent places, as not the Word of God, but rather a book having no authority or application to our life whatsoever. Secularists hold to the idea that the Bible is all make believe and simply the product of men's minds.

A young skeptic once believed that himself. If he did believe in God it was a deistic god, a god who made everything but then stepped away from all of his creation and let it do whatever it wanted. He did not believe in the Savior Jesus Christ whatsoever and disputed most of the authority of God's Word, its infallibility and inspiration. But one day in 1864, some former slaves in Maryland presented the then President, Abraham Lincoln, who was that young skeptic, with a Bible. Lincoln replied:

In regard to this great book, I have but to say, it is the best gift God has given to man. All the good the Saviour gave to the world was communicated through this book. But for it we could not know right from wrong. All things most desirable for man's welfare, here and hereafter, are to be found portrayed in it.

Here is a very intelligent man who had disputed the reality of the Scriptures. If you read the writings of Lincoln, you'll read someone who is on the level of Shakespeare in his elocution and his

way with the English language. This intelligent man came to realize he was wrong about the Bible and that it was the authoritative Word of God.

Some say the Bible is only mythology, just like Greek and Roman mythology. I beg to differ. Unlike Greek or Roman mythology, the Bible is an historical document. It actually uses real places, real events, and real humans. Now and again Greek and Roman mythology would do so by isolating and mentioning stories about real people, but mainly it didn't do so. The Bible is certainly told in a historical, chronological fashion, with not just the names of religious icons like Abraham, Jesus, David, and Paul, but you also have the names and recordings of the events of great secularists like Nebuchadnezzar, Sennacherib, and the Medo-Persian kings. You have a history of mankind and the evolution of present civilizations.

Before the great Alexander conquered most of the known world, the Bible foretold of this great Prince of Greece and that he would die young and his kingdom would be divided between four generals, exactly as history proves it to be.

Unlike mythology, the Bible has fulfilled prophecies. Let me give you just one example: the first coming of Jesus Christ. There are three hundred prophecies, predictions that Jesus would come and what He would do in fine detail. For example, it told us He would be born of a virgin. Who ever heard of that happening? Some of the reasons why secularists discount the Bible's reliability today is because they discount the supernatural. But friends, there is no explanation plausible for the creation of the universe, the world as we know it, except by the supernatural.

We argue about how old the world is and that's a silly argument unless you were there when it was created. *Were the six days of creation six literal 24 hour days or was it as geologists tell us fifteen million years old?* Well, I don't think that's the right question. If you believe in the probability of this all happening as cosmic forces came together in some big bang, then I ask you this question—from where did the mass of elements come that created the big bang? That question doesn't solve your problem with the origins of the world, not at all. Nor does evolution solve the issue.

Let's just say this earth is fifteen million years old and you believe in this biological chance. I'm not making fun of it; I'm just getting you to reason with me. If you believe that, you should be able to sustain my challenges, should you not? Let's say you took a million monkeys and put them all together and you gave them pen and paper and gave them the assignment to write the opening line of the Gettysburg Address, "Four score and seven years ago..." did you know that scientists have calculated that for those monkeys to put that collection of letters in the right sequence to duplicate that statement would take not fifteen million years, but a hundred million years. It would take a hundred million years for the random chance of these monkeys to put the letters in the right order. The random chance argument is quite ridiculous. It takes more to believe that than it does the supernatural. But if there is a God, and I believe there is, He would have to be supernatural. He would have to have powers and abilities that go beyond the dimensions we have thus discovered at this moment.

Unlike mythology, the Bible speaks accurately on subjects such as politics, science, anthropology, and archeology. The Bible is not a science book or political science book or a textbook on archeology, but when it deals with these facts it does so in agreement with verifiable and empirical science. I'm not against empirical science, but I have discovered over my many years that the Bible is often ahead of empirical science. Go back two thousand years before Jesus Christ and the Bible was already saying the earth was round, not flat.

The Bible gives us 300 prophecies of Jesus' first coming, with detailed descriptions. For example, it told what kind of death He would have in Psalm 22. It foretold that at His execution they would gamble for His clothing and it happened just exactly as it was told. The Old Testament said He would be betrayed for thirty pieces of silver and it happened just like that. How could this one Man fulfill all of these prophecies at one time in history? Scientists said you would have to have a calculation of 1 in  $1.5 \times 10^{239}$  for that to happen. That is one chance in 1.5 with hundreds of pages of zeroes following for one man to fulfill all those promises. And yet Christ did and He is a historical figure. Secular history verifies His existence and that He did die on the cross and it's reported that He did rise from the dead. Mythology doesn't do that.

Some might say the Bible is a bunch of fairy tales but it's obvious to the reader of the Bible that it does not read like a fairy tale. It doesn't begin with, "Once upon a time," and conclude with, "And everyone lived happily ever after." It doesn't read like a fairy tale. And unlike fairy tales, the message of the Bible has transformed millions of lives.

How do you explain that? I mean, I like Little Red Riding Hood and Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, but I don't know any lives that have been radically changed by those stories. But the message of the Bible has changed countless millions including those of us here today who have chosen to believe its truth and veracity. We've been changed by this message. That's why we're happy today, that's why we have hope for the future. When all of mankind is pessimistic saying it's the end of civilization as we know it, and the doomsday sayers continue to multiply, we have hope. Why? Because we've been transformed by the message of the Bible.

One of the great stories of transformation is Simon Greenleaf, one of the principle founders of the Harvard Law School, who did not believe in the Bible, God, or any kind of organized religion. He was basically an atheist and some of His law students challenged him to study the resurrection and discover if it could be disproven in a court of law. So Greenleaf set out to disprove the biblical testimony of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He was sure that a careful examination of the internal witnesses in the gospels would be faulty and verify that at the heart of Christianity was nothing but a myth. But this legal scholar came to the conclusion that the witnesses were reliable and the resurrection did in fact happen, and he was saved and became an ardent evangelist of the Gospel. Fairy tales don't do that.

Unlike fairy tales, the moral teachings of the Bible have shaped the governing principles of many nations and peoples. Do you know what most people mean when they compare the Bible to mythology and fairy tales? They simply mean they don't believe God to be trustworthy. They do

not believe the Bible to be the Word of God. And for good reason. In their minds, they reject the divine origin of the Bible. If God is real and the miracles of the Bible happened, including the greatest miracle of all, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, then they are guilty of ignoring, if not openly rebelling against, God. That's why they reject it. If Jesus rose from the dead, then He has to be who He claimed to be, the Son of God. If He rose from the dead, then His death had to be for the reason the Bible states it—the only sacrifice for our sins.

God in His mercy has revealed the truth to us in this book we call the Bible. I want to submit for your examination today that the Bible is reliable. This is the Word of God and you can stake not just this life but your eternal life on it.

## **II. The Meaning of Outside the Camp**

Now what does this term, “outside the camp” mean? He's stating something that every good Hebrew would have known. To be outside the camp was a term of derision, meaning it was to be under the curse of God. It was to be an outcast. It was to no longer be allowed in the society of one's own people. To be outside the camp meant you were rejected and despised by the community, scorned under the judgment of God. That's what it means to be outside the camp. There is no better story or illustration than Leviticus 13:45-46. It's the procedure of dealing with the leper. Some of us are reading through Leviticus and when I came to this a week or so ago my heart leapt within me because I could concretely see what it means for Jesus to go outside the gate for me.

*“Now the leper on whom the sore is, his clothes shall be torn and his head bare; and he shall cover his mustache, and cry, ‘Unclean! Unclean!’ He shall be unclean. All the days he has the sore he shall be unclean. He is unclean, and he shall dwell alone; his dwelling shall be outside the camp.”*

Leprosy was the most dreaded disease of Bible times. It was the cancer of its day. It was incurable. Medicine of any sort was unsuccessful. That doesn't mean that some people didn't get cured of it, but not very often. It was basically a death sentence to have leprosy. What is leprosy? Nowadays we call it Hansen's Disease and it's pretty much under control. Antibiotics can change its course and you can be healed if you contract it. It's a disease of the skin that actually deadens and destroys the nerve endings so that eventually you don't feel your feet, fingers, face, anymore. You don't have any sensation of pain whatsoever and those members begin to rot. You'll bump a body part or suffer a cut and you won't even know it, then gangrene sets in. It's a slow death.

### **A. Leprosy is a Type of Sin.**

In the Bible God uses this one disease to paint us a grotesque picture of sin. I say He uses this because leprosy is really not contagious. You had to almost purposefully contract the disease from a leper. The only way you can contract it is by participating in the saliva or bodily fluids of one who has it. You have to almost work at getting it. So the leper isn't ostracized outside the camp because it's greatly contagious; God wanted to show us something here. This is a picture of something far worse than a physical abnormality or disease. It's the picture of sin.

Leprosy is like sin. It spreads. Leprosy usually began with a small spot somewhere on the body. You didn't wake up one morning with your body covered; it was a small spot that could not be explained other than leprosy. The spot wasn't because you bumped yourself or scratched your face or had some sort of injury. You had no explanation for it and at that point you would have to go to the high priest, the only person who was trained to be able to diagnose it. Then, if you were diagnosed with leprosy, you were ostracized outside the camp and there you would stay until you died. From that one spot, your whole body would be infected and it would eventually cover you.

That's exactly like sin. God made man perfect without sin in a perfect environment, and He simply said, "All I ask you not to do is to eat of the fruit of this one tree." But Adam and Eve ate the fruit and the result from eating that fruit was sin began to take its course through the human bloodline and race. The first couple was expelled from the Garden, and men had to now work by the sweat of their brow and women had to experience pain in childbirth. The next thing we see in the book of Genesis is brother rising up against brother as Cain murders Abel. Since then, the rest of human history has spiraled down until this very moment, all because somebody ate a piece of fruit that God told them not to. Sin spreads. You cannot contain it. And any man that says I can control myself and all of my inclinations, whether good or bad, is a man who might as well take fire into his chest, says the Bible, because he will be burned even though he thinks he won't.

Like leprosy, sin corrupts. Everything it touches, it taints and destroys. God made this perfect world and put a perfect couple in the midst of a beautiful, perfect Garden but after sin whatever they touched became polluted. We're living in the 21st century and we boast about some of the greatest marvels of humankind. The technology is advancing so rapidly that when your favorite computer or cellphone company releases a product and it's already out of date. It's out of date before you can even buy it in the store. Man is rapidly evolving and we boast today of being the greatest era in human history. The greatest strides for power and comfort and pleasure have been made by this generation and yet there is something still wrong.

With all the advances of comfort and pleasure there is something gnawing at our conscience that says something is not right. It tells us something is not perfect, there is something corrupting even our pursuit of pleasure. I saw something yesterday on television news about a car show in New York City where they had a car that cost you one hundred and fifty thousand dollars. In this car, the driver can get a massage while driving and aromatherapy at the same time. Talk about sitting in the lap of luxury. You can get a massage and aromatherapy all at the same time while you're going to get groceries. The concern of the news reporter was, "What if I fall asleep in this car?" "Don't worry," said the man. "We've got that under control. This car knows your driving habits and it knows you so well that if you fall asleep it will wake you up." That is a modern marvel. But even when luxury is all around us, there is still this gnawing at our heart that says something isn't right.

A man says to himself, *If I can just get that promotion and make more money I can be happy.* But then he gets the promotion and all of the sudden he's having to work more hours and be away from the family longer, which causes stress in the home and he realizes he is not quite as happy as he had hoped.

A woman says, *If I can just be loved...* and she gives herself away to a man and finds out sooner or later that her happiness is not guaranteed and now she is suffering the disruption of the relationship and the continued emptiness of her soul.

Just the moment you think you're happy something comes in and shows you it's not lasting happiness and I'm telling you what it is. It's the effect and consequences of our sin. We live in a polluted world. Sin has corrupted everything about our environment and us.

Look at what's going on politically nowadays. We decide the republicans have the answer so we vote republicans into office. Then after a few years we say, "Well, we've had enough of this. This is not working." So we vote for the democrats and put them in office and after just a few years of hope and change we've decided this isn't working either. The problem is neither democrats nor republicans, the problem is not political party. The problem is sin. That's the issue.

At the end of the 1800s, Karl Marx said the solution is Marxism, communism. Two major world powers have tried it, Russia and China, and a whole host of smaller countries, who thought that was the solution to the ills of mankind. We thought making everyone equal would solve all problems, but we found out that communism only bred totalitarianism. And millions of people died by the hands of communist leaders. "Ah," we said, "democracy is the solution and we can live in happiness then." But that hasn't helped the situation either, has it? We thought when the Cold War ended and the U.S.S.R broke up that democracy would have its day. It flourished for a couple of decades but look at us now. We're on the brink of another world war. There are problems in the Middle East, there are problems in Eastern Europe, and there are problems in the Asian Peninsula and North Korea. We are living on a powder keg and democracy has not helped. What's the solution? Not another political system. The answer is Jesus Christ and the Gospel. The problem is not political the problem is spiritual.

A man believes if he can gather more things in his life he can be happy, so he gathers those things and he has no happiness or he doesn't gather them and lives in this misery. Why? Sin is like leprosy, leprosy is like sin—it corrupts and taints everything it touches. I think of Naaman the leper, one of those stories that gives concrete understanding to the Gospel. Here he is, a Syrian General in the Old Testament, who made great leaps militarily, he climbed the military ladder, he is the greatest general the Syrian King has. And one day he contracts leprosy. He has all this success and everything is going his way, until one day he becomes a leper. That's exactly the state of man. Man thinks he achieves and overcomes and then all of the sudden there it is, staring him in the face, the problem that's been there all along—his own heart. Sin.

Sin disfigures. Leprosy disfigures. As I mentioned earlier, with leprosy your body would begin to rot and your face and members would become disfigured. Sin disfigures everything beautiful.

Do you think God made us to look like we look? Do you think God made us to suffer the illnesses we suffer? Do you think God meant for men to have leprosy? Do you think God meant for men to have AIDs? Do you think God intended for men to die of Alzheimer's disease? Do you



think God intended for war and plagues? Not at all. He made man beautifully perfect and when He had made all of His creation, culminating with man, He said, "It is very good."

But sin disfigures. And it deadens. The most dangerous thing that happens to the human heart is that it dies to any message that God would give about his or her condition. To be totally dead to God, not to be in relationship with God, is the most dangerous place to be.

I know I sound sometimes like a raving lunatic; I'm sure to some people it must sound crazy, but I would do anything if I could to make you understand our hearts, including mine. I may be a Christian and preacher but that doesn't save me. Being a preacher doesn't save me. I have the same problem you have—a sin problem. I'm not better than anybody in this room. If anything, I'm the most needy person in this room. I don't speak condemningly, saying, "Envy us, you sinner." No, I'm right there with you. I've contracted the same disease you contracted. I was born with it. It's called sin. It doesn't escape a generation or two, it doesn't pass anybody, we're all plagued with it.

I want you to hear me. God did not intend for us to be the way we are right now. He intended you to know Him and find out that He is the source of the greatest joy and pleasure one could possibly entertain. He has made you to be successful. He has made you to be happy. He has made you to be righteous. And more important, He's made you to be like Him—holy. And if you will be holy you will be happy. If you will be holy you will be righteous. If you will be holy you will be successful. This is how God defines it. But we say, "No. I'll be successful my way. I want life according to my own schedule and plan and will." That is the nature of all sin. The nature of all sin, including this preacher's, is I, I, I. The nature of sin is the epitome of pride and therefore we rebel. The most dangerous place to be is to be in that condition and dead to it, unaware of it.

I want to testify to that. I labored for years under the belief that if I did well, God would be happy with me and if God was happy with me He would forgive me. I labored that way. I tried to do the best I could. I started preaching when I was 15, I went to Bible college, got my education, started pastoring, and discovered the harder I tried the further away from the goal I was. But I refused to see it. I didn't want to believe it. I couldn't believe it about me. I was the young man that everybody in my church said would be a great preacher. But sin said something different about me. I couldn't believe what sin said about me and I wouldn't believe it. I ignored the truth year after year after year.

The only answer that I have today is that God was merciful to me and would not allow me to ignore Him any longer. He confronted me in ways that I could not escape. You know what He did? He was gracious to finally let me see myself as I really was, broken, imperfect, flawed, and wicked. It was the greatest thing to happen to me but it was the most horrific thing to ever happen to me. To look into my own heart and see what God saw all along was horrible. Sin is like that.

Sin isolates. Here is the leper, he's outside the gate without his family. Family can't even come and visit him. He can't go back home and visit them for a few hours. He is isolated from his family, but even worse he's isolated from his Maker. That's what sin does. It sets us outside the camp where

we are outside the presence of God because we are away from the presence of God. We're not where God is because we rejected Him for our own wisdom.

## **B. The Leper is an Outcast.**

*"He is unclean, and he shall dwell alone; his dwelling shall be outside the camp." (Leviticus 13:46)*

Sin makes us all outcasts from God. When commanding the lepers be taken outside the gate, God was not just protecting the healthy, but telling the story of sin's devastation. The worst devastation is not to be separated from God. The worst devastation is to be separated from God and not know it. The leper was shut out from the only place in the entire world where God's presence was and His blessings were enjoyed. But then, back to Hebrews, the text says, "Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate." Christ identifies with the outcast. God, holy God, sinless God, identifies with we spiritual lepers. How is this possible? This is to me the most amazing thing of the Gospel, that God would even want me or want to be associated with me. But Jesus comes as God in the flesh and He identifies with us.

## **III. Christ Identifies With the Outcast**

### **A. Jesus Identifies With Sinners.**

Do you remember when John the Baptist baptizes Jesus in Jordan's muddy waters? John the Baptist argued, "No, I should be baptized by You," and Jesus says, "No, this has to be done to fulfill all righteousness." What did Jesus mean? He was saying, "I need to identify with sinners, so plunge me in the very waters that is polluted with the sins of those whom you've baptized before Me. Immerse Me into their sins, baptize me into their sins because I've come to identify with their sin and be their sacrifice and substitute."

He came to identify with us. That's why He wasn't born in a palace. That's why He wasn't heralded as the Messiah. He was a carpenter and the only thing He owned was the clothes on His back. He came to identify with the very lowliest of us so that when He went to the cross He went for you. He goes for the sinner. He goes for the outcast. He goes for the man and woman who have finally been diagnosed and their heart has been exposed, they know they're incurable and He says, "Ah, I'll die for you." And in our place He died.

You know the story. I can't say it any way you have not already heard it. Christ has died for you, the outcast. He became cast out for you. He wasn't just cast out of the city. Why was He not crucified on the highest point of Jerusalem so all Jerusalem could see Him? The reason is He was fulfilling prophecy. He was showing that outside the city gates He was considered an outcast like all us other sinners and not just considered an outcast, He was by God cast out.

### **B. Jesus Becomes the Outcast.**

Do you realize Jesus was cast out of the presence of God the Father? Did you not hear the words this morning? “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?” “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” The final and worse judgment of all of Jesus’ agonies was to be considered cast out of the presence of holy God because now He is completely identified with your sin and now He bleeds under your penalty. And He suffers the worse curse—the curse of God, to be separated from Him.

Friends, if it were possible, and it occasionally happened, for a leper to be healed, he would have to go through a procedure to be pronounced clean and part of that procedure was that a sacrifice had to be made. A blood sacrifice, and the animal’s blood had to be sprinkled on that leper as the high priest pronounced him clean. Again, God the Father is giving His people a storyline so they could see all of this before it happened to Jesus, so when it did happen they would understand what was really going on at Calvary’s cross.

### **C. If the Sinner Will Identify With Jesus He Will Be Healed.**

Jesus has identified with you and now if you’ll be identified with Him and embrace His identity and be joined with Him, the Bible says you will be healed.

*“Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.” (Romans 4:23-25)*

What does that mean? It means that Abraham was considered right with God, acceptable to God, not a spiritual leper, but clean in the presence of God because He obeyed God by believing God. You must see that obedience is not doing something to gain God’s favor. Obedience is doing things because you trust God, and you trust Him because you love Him. Abraham did that and God said, “That’s all I need. I declare you righteous. When you die, you’ll be in my presence.” And the Bible said that wasn’t just written for Abraham, but it was for us who believe. God will literally give to you today perfect acceptance, righteousness, and admittance. There is no second or third class parts of heaven. You get to go into the very presence of God, into the very throne room of heaven. You can call it your Father’s house and dwell there. Jesus said, “You believe in God? Believe also in Me. In My Father’s house there are many rooms, and I’m going to prepare a place for you in My Father’s house.” This is perfect righteousness.

This is what salvation is. It’s not to be a Christian with your name on the roll so everyone thinks you’re okay, no. Christianity is to be declared right with God. Christianity is God accepting you and loving you as if you were Jesus Himself. This is remarkable. The Bible says in I Peter that Jesus came and died to justify the ungodly. He suffered for the ungodly’s sake so that if you will as the lepers cry out, “Unclean! Unclean!” God will say of you, “Ungodly—just the person I died for.” Your state of ungodliness qualifies you for all of His saving benefits if you’ll only identify with Him.

The problem we have in most religious circles is this, we tell men what they must do to be saved, but Jesus says, I’ve already done it. You’ve just got to embrace Me. This is not a religious exercise

of rules and an unspoken system of behavior so if you perform according to the system, then you're okay and you can be assured that when you die you go to heaven. That's not Christianity.

Christianity is to have a real relationship with Jesus Christ. So much so that two people have embraced each other and identified with each other. The most perfect example God has given to us so we can understand this relationship with Christ is the relationship of marriage. Two people reaching out and grabbing each other and saying, "For better or worse, I'm yours, and I'll never turn my back on you." That's Christianity. If you will believe that, then you will have in Christ somebody who will always be there. He has already done everything you need to be right before God, and a righteous standing before God is given to you as a gift if you will trust Him.

I'll never ever forget that moment on December 1, 1986. I had made a wreck out of my life. I had hurt many people. I destroyed many things and I couldn't live. I had come to the conclusion that there was no hope for me; I was going to die, go to hell, and suffer all that God rightly demanded from me. I'll never forget that moment when I'm arguing with God, telling Him all the reasons He can't save me, I was too wicked, too evil, and I had done too many bad things. I was a hypocrite, I misled so many people, I had destroyed so many lives. *God you can't be merciful like that. Your righteousness can't suffer somebody like me.*

I understood how unclean I was. I understood that my uncleanness kept me from God. What I didn't understand was that regardless of how unclean I was Jesus would come and touch me. Time and time again in His life, He would walk up to the leper. He wouldn't just pronounce him clean, He would touch him, the most unspeakable thing to do in that religion and society. So why did He do it? He wanted sinners to know that no matter how unclean, no matter how much of an outcast, and no matter how much you can't believe He can do it, He does it. *Watch Me. I'll do it in your life, Michael.* And He touched me that day. I can't explain it. I can't give you words to make you know what I've experienced. All I know is that I'm not the same. He received me. He took me in and He has not cast me out. I'm not outside the camp anymore. I've been brought in to the Father's house. I've been given the best robes. He's put shoes on my feet. He's given me His signet ring and He's bestowed on me His Father's blessing. I've been blessed.

Isn't that a marvel? He wants to bless you. Will you let Him? Amen.