Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Principles for Life from the Death of Christ
Scripture: 1 Peter 2:21-24
Code: 80-357

What a privilege it is all these many years to come around to the celebration of the Lord's resurrection and be able to preach messages that relate to it. Having been here now over forty years, many, many Easters have come and gone and every one is a new and fresh challenge to take a look at the resurrection, perhaps, in a very special way.

I want to do that this morning from a text that may surprise you a little bit, but I think you'll understand as we take a look at it in detail.

Open your Bible to 1 Peter chapter 2...1 Peter chapter 2. For those that are visiting with us, I have one very simple role here at Grace Church, I tell people what the Bible means by what it says. The underlying commitment that we have is to the authority of the Word of God, that the Word of God is exactly what it claims to be...the Word of God, that it is without error, that is inspired, that it is authoritative, that it is life transforming and powerful. In a word, it is true in everything that it affirms. And so, from week to week and service to service, we open the Bible and we endeavor to understand the message that God has communicated to us in it, and for this morning, it's 1 Peter chapter 2 and I want to read verses 21 to 24...1 Peter chapter 2 verses 21 to 24.

Peter writes, "For you have been called for this purpose." Now I stop there for a moment and say, you know something important is coming. If this is our purpose, if this is our calling, we need to listen carefully to what is about to be said. "You have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps."

Now that is a very interesting statement because there are theories of the atonement of Jesus Christ that fall under the category of exemplary atonement. That is to say that Jesus simply died as an example and nothing else. He gives us an example of a man who was willing to die for what He believed in. These are people who would say He's not God, He didn't bear our sins on the cross, He didn't suffer in our place, there is no real atonement there, there's no satisfaction of God, there is no just explosion of divine wrath upon His head, covering the sins of all who would ever believe, He just died as an example of a man who was a good man and a noble man and died an exemplary death, sacrificing His own life for things that He believed in. Is that what it means when it says that Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps? No, and the rest of the text makes it clear.

“Who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth.”

Now listen, what it’s telling us here is that this exemplary dying of Jesus was a sinless dying. That in His dying there was no sin, not any sin committed by Him. You say, “Well how could He commit a sin if He was nailed to a cross?” Well that does restrain you to some degree but that’s why the text says, “Nor was any deceit found in His mouth.” Because if a person is going to sin in their dying, it’s very likely that that sin will come out of their mouth. He did no sin and there was no deceit in His mouth. And it was the worst kind of circumstances, His dying, He was being reviled, but He didn’t revile in return. He was suffering, but He uttered no threats. He just kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously.

So we see an exemplary attitude expressed in the death of Christ, an example for us to follow. No sin, no sinful words, no anger, no hostility, no threats, complete trust in the face of a horrendous death.

And the next word is very important. The next word is “And...” And this is the only place in the New Testament where the substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ is an and. We understand verse 24, “He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness, for by His wounds you are healed.” That is the great core of the Christian gospel. We understand it. He bore our sins in His body. We understand it. He bore our sins in His body on the cross. He was punished for our iniquities...all the way back to Isaiah 53, “Bruised for our iniquities, punished for our sins, dying in our place in order that we might die to sin and live to righteousness and by His wounds we were healed...in the spiritual sense.” So we understand verse 24, that’s the heart of the gospel that He was made sin for us who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. That He was made a curse for us that we might escape the curse. That’s the substitutionary death of Christ. He dies in our place.

But that’s an “and” here. That’s an and. That’s an addition. That’s an addendum to the main point and the main point is not His dying as a substitute but His dying as an example. What in the realm of theology could this be? Does this diminish the value of His atonement? Not at all, of course, because that atonement is a completed atonement. The New Testament is filled with instruction as to the value, the significance, the singular meaning of the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

But what does it mean that He’s an example? In what way is He an example in His dying? We know He’s an example in His living. We know in 1 John 2:6 that if you say you abide in Christ, you ought to walk the way He walked. If you say you belonged to Christ, you ought to do things that He did. If you’re going to follow Him, then there have to be evidences in your life that He is indeed the pattern for the way you live. We definitely see Him as the example in His living, but how is He an example to us in His dying?

Well the context will help us. If you go back to chapter 1 and verse 1, Peter is writing here and he's writing to Jewish believers who are scattered. They're not in the homeland of Israel, they're in places like: Pontus and Galatia and Asia and Bithynia, Cappadocia. But he says to them, "To those who reside as aliens," they are in foreign places. They're in places where Jewish people are not going to be nearly as comfortable as they would be in their own land. Worst than that, they're not just Jews who were not the most popular people in Gentile countries, they are Christians which added to their unpopularity. And as a result, they were going through some very, very difficult times.

Verse 6 says that, "For a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials." Verse 7 even describes it as being tested by fire. What this tells us is they were suffering...they were suffering for their confession of Christ, they were suffering for the gospel.

In chapter 3 and verse 13 it says, "Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good?" Usually you just do what is good in a social sense, in a civil sense, nobody is going to bother you. But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you're blessed. They were...Christians tended to be good citizens. They didn't suffer for some kind of insurrection or rebellion against the governments. But they did suffer for the sake of righteousness. This assumes that that's going to happen and it says if it does happen, you are blessed. Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts. Be ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account of the hope that is in you. Be able to defend your faith and your belief. Verse 17, "It is better if God should will it so that you suffer for doing what is right, rather than for doing what is wrong." It is better to be a Christian, is what that is saying, and be persecuted for righteousness sake than be a non-Christian and suffer for sin at the hands of God.

In chapter 4, we're reminded again in verse 1, "That since Christ suffered in the flesh, that is physically, arm yourselves also with the same purpose."

In other words, Jesus had said, you remember, in the upper room, "They're going to treat you the way they treated Me. If they hated you(meant to say Me), they're going to hate you, if they've done this to Me, they're going to do this to you. They're going to run you out of the synagogues, going to drag you into the courts, they're going to take your life. Don't be surprised." Part of being a Christian in a non-Christian world.

Down in verse 12 of chapter 4, "Do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you which comes upon you for your testing as though some strange thing were happening to you, to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing." There's that same idea. They...they hated Him and they treated Him badly and they'll do the same to you, you share in that sense His sufferings.

Verse 16 says, “If anyone suffers as a Christian, he’s not to be ashamed but is to glorify God in this name,” that’s the name of Christ. “So if you suffer...verse 19 says... according to the will of God, just entrust your soul to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.”

Then the last reference to this suffering is in chapter 5 verse 10, kind of the summary statement. “After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace who called you to His eternal glory in Christ will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.”

Now what’s the context here? These believers are aliens and they are in a situation that is hostile to the Christian faith. As a result of that, they are suffering....they are suffering. Who do they look to as the example of suffering? Where do they go to see how a righteous man suffers?

Well the answer to that, Peter says, is Christ. Yes we understand that the major element of His suffering is not repeatable. You can’t follow it because you can’t die in someone else’s place. But there’s another element of His suffering that you must follow and it is how He suffered without sinning. It is how He suffered without anything coming out of His mouth that was in any sense wrong. His vicarious death is not an example that we should follow in dying vicariously because we can’t do that. We can’t die, we can’t live in any way that saves people, but we can live and even live in the face of death in a way that brings honor to the gospel. And that’s exactly what he’s talking about. How should a Christian learn to live by watching Christ die?

Well the answer to that has to be...we have to see how He died...we have to see how He died. And we can’t see any behaviors because there were no voluntary behaviors. He was taken. He was beaten. He was crucified, nailed to the cross, slammed in the ground. If righteousness manifest itself, exemplary righteousness manifests itself, it’s going to come out of His mouth and that is why it says there that there was nothing in His mouth that was sinful. And if ever there would be a time for a man to sin with His mouth, it would be when He was in the position Jesus was in unjustly. Crucified without warrant, falsely accused, falsely witnessed against, falsely adjudicated, falsely condemned, falsely executed. If ever there was a situation in which the extreme misbehavior of the people around Him warranted some kind of verbal abuse, that would be it. It doesn’t happen. There are no behaviors on the cross but there are words on the cross and it is those words on the cross, those seven sayings that we know so familiarly as the seven last words of Christ, those are the words that reveal the heart of Jesus in His dying and they become our lessons. They are the instructive insights into His heart and they are sinless, therefore they are an example to us as to how to live right up until we face death. We need to live the way Jesus lived and we need to live the way Jesus died, right up to His death. We learn from His living, we learn from His dying.

Back to chapter 2, for a moment, and verse 21. You see the word “example” there, hupogrammon, grammon from the English word would be grammar, elementary, hupogrammon means a kind of

elementary instruction, in the most elementary instruction fits this English word “example.” I’ll give you a simple illustration of it.

When I was a little kid I learned how to write, like all of you did. I don’t know how they do it now, it’s been a long time since I was in the first grade. But when I was in the first grade, it was pretty simple. The teacher had papers with the alphabet and the alphabet was very large letters, upper case capital letters and bold, bold print and we were given a thinner piece of paper and we were told to place the thin piece of paper over the bold alphabet and to trace the letters. And that’s how we learned to write. And then we did it with lower case letters, and then we did it with words and little by little, using that as the copy, we began to learn how to write. That is exactly what this word means, it’s a word about grammar school, it’s a word about copying. And Jesus is our pattern, Jesus is our model. We trace our lives over His life. This is how we are to live. We are to live following His living and we are to live following His dying.

So, we go back then to look at the dying of Jesus. The only insights we have into how He died are given by Him in the words that He said and they give us major principles for living. And they’re critically important principles because they are the last things He ever said. That makes them extremely important. The final things that were said needed to be said in the final hour and He said them. They’re great lessons for life and they are profound lessons for facing death which we all face. So we return to the cross and the crucifixion and the dying of Christ for the seven lessons that He taught.

Lesson number one, the first thing He said is recorded in Luke 23:34. “Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing. Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.”

He died desiring forgiveness for those who sinned against Him. He died with a forgiving heart. This is th worst act ever perpetrated in the history of the world. The most innocent man dying the most cruel death. This is the worst that men could ever perpetrate on anyone, but particularly on one who was without sin, without iniquity, without transgression who was absolutely perfect and He rose above it all. There’s no anger. There’s no hatred. There’s no spewing out of divine vengeance. There is only a plea for forgiveness. This is what we see in the heart of Christ.

How instructive is that for the people that Peter’s writing to who are being persecuted, who are being falsely accused, who are suffering literally physical persecution as well as social alienation and who knows what else? To keep the perspective that your response to that is to pray for your enemies. The principle to learn here is to desire the forgiveness of the people who treat you the worst. Stephen learned the lesson, didn’t he, remember when he was being stoned to death in Acts chapter 7? He says, “Do not hold this sin against them, Lord.” That’s simply the reverse of “Father, forgive them.” He learned his lesson. Lesson number one is to live and die with a forgiving heart, is to be

magnanimous, gracious, merciful, even to the people who have done absolutely the worst to you, the One to whom the world had literally been made by, had come into the world that He made but the world did not know Him. The Lord of glory had tabernacled among men but He was not wanted. The eyes which sin had blinded saw no beauty in Him that they would desire Him. At birth there was no room in the inn which foreshadowed how it would be throughout His life when He had nowhere to lay His head.

Shortly after His birth, Herod sought to slay Him and this was simply the beginning of the animosity that He would experience all the way to the cross. Again and again His enemies tried to bring about His destruction. Finally their vile desires have come to fruition. The Son of God has yielded up into their hands. A mock trial has been held. And though the judges admittedly found no fault in Him, nevertheless they yield to the insisting clamor of the crowd to, “Crucify Him, Crucify Him.” Ordinary death is not enough for His implacable foes, a death of intense suffering and shame is decided upon. And what is His response? Is He crying for pity? What is the first thing that comes out of His mouth when He’s hanging there on the cross, feeling the horrendous pain of those nails through His hands like railroad spikes and through His feet and a back already lacerated down to the tissue underneath the skin, rubbing up and down on the wooden cross as He pushes up by the wounds on His feet in order to catch the next breath.

Is it anger? Is it hostility? Is it bitterness? Is it a desire for pity? Does He cry out for malediction on His crucifiers? No. “Father, forgive them, they don’t know what they do.” That’s just a stunning thing.

He understands the blackness of the human heart. He understands the darkness of the human soul. He understands that the natural man doesn’t understand the things of God. He understands that they don’t get it, they don’t know who He is and He desires for them forgiveness. He understands the sinfulness and blindness of the depraved human soul, ignorant of the identity of the victim, they scream out to have Him executed. But it is all an act of ignorance which is understanding...it is understanding to the one who understands the human heart. Forgiveness is man’s greatest need. It is unforgiveness that catapults people into hell. And here is the Lord Jesus Christ concerned, not about what they’re doing to Him, but what they’re doing to themselves by rejecting Him. That’s what’s in His heart. It’s forgiveness.

He knows Hebrews 9:22, the principle, “Without the shedding of blood, there’s no forgiveness of sin.” He knows that there must be death to provide that forgiveness. He is willing to die that death and prays for that forgiveness.

In His Great Commission, at the end, in Luke 24 He says, “Go everywhere and preach the forgiveness of sins.” In Acts 13:38 and 39, the Apostles go and what do they preach? They proclaim the forgiveness of sins. He’s dying there to make that forgiveness possible and He’s praying for that

forgiveness to be a reality.

A few weeks ago we talked about the importance of forgiveness here and we said that never are you more like the Lord than when you forgive. Be ye kind hearted, forgiving one another, Ephesians 4:32, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you. We talked about the parable of the man who was forgiven a massive debt and then went out and choked someone for a small debt. You can't do that. You who have been forgiven much are to be characterized by much forgiveness. The first lesson we learn from the Lord then on how to live is to live with a forgiving heart and to pray for divine forgiveness to be given to your worst enemy, those who have harmed you the most.

The second thing that came out of His mouth is recorded in Luke 23:43, "Truly I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise. Truly I say to you, you will be with Me in Paradise." This again is a mark of the perfection of the Lord Jesus Christ that He never sinned with His mouth, quite the contrary. He died focusing on His evangelistic mission. He lived that way and He died that way. To the very end He was consumed with the responsibility of gospel ministry. He literally brings a soul into heaven from the cross.

He said that, you remember, to one of the two thieves who were crucified on either side. They were in the same situation Jesus was in. There's no reason to assume that they didn't suffer the very same things Jesus suffered, the scourging and the nailing to the cross and the hanging there. And they, of course, suffered the same agonies that Jesus would have suffered from the physical side. One of them, however, ended up in heaven. One of them, however, ended up in Paradise.

What was going on there? Well, Jesus never lost His sense of mission, down to the very last breath He knew why He had come...to seek and to save the lost. It might be helpful to look at Luke 23 where this incident is recorded in brief words. "One of the criminals," verse 39, "who were hanged there was hurling abuse at Him, saying, 'Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us.'"

Now what is clear about that is that is the most obvious thing to say. Is it mockery? Yes. Is it sarcasm? Yes. Is it scorn? Yes. That's exactly what it is. It's making a joke out of Jesus. "You are supposed to be the Savior, You're supposed to be the Messiah." These are Jewish criminals, by the way. "Save Yourself and us...Ha." Point being, Jesus looks helpless. He has never looked this weak. He has never looked this helpless. He has never been in a position where His enemies have triumphed. They tried to kill Him in Nazareth, couldn't do it. They tried to kill Him along the way, Herod wanted to kill Him, couldn't do it. Others wanted Him dead, they couldn't ever pull it off. He always had a way of looking triumphant, but not now...not now. He's a joke and that is a fair, human assessment. "You claim to be the Messiah, You claim to be the Creator God, You claim to be the Redeemer of Israel, You claim to be the Savior of the world, You claim that You're a King and You have a Kingdom, this is a joke, look at You."

That would have been the most reasonable interpretation. But the other answered, and this is amazing, this is the other thief on the other side looking at the same thing, experiencing the very same thing. He rebukes the thief number one. “Do you not even fear God since you’re under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed are suffering justly for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.” And he was saying, “Jesus, remember me when You come in Your Kingdom.” And He said to him, “Truly I say to you today you will be with Me in Paradise.”

What in the world? How could you have two such extreme responses from two people in the same situation on either side of Jesus? The human response is, “You’re a joke.” That one we understand. But how do you all of a sudden come off saying, “I recognize Your sinlessness, You’ve done no wrong? I recognize Your sovereignty, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom. I recognize Your Saviorhood, remember me...meaning I want to be a part of Your Kingdom and You have the power to make it happen. I even recognize Your Second Coming, when You come in Your Kingdom.” There is a lot of theology in that.

What’s the difference? The difference, dear friends, is a divine miracle called regeneration. The difference is, God moved in on the heart of that thief. His conversion occurs at a time when to all out outward appearances Christ had no power to save Himself, nor anybody else. This thief had marched in the same parade that Jesus was in through the streets of Jerusalem out to the hill of Golgotha. He had seen Jesus sinking beneath the weight of the cross He was carrying. This was a thief. This was a robber who was very aware of his own guilt and very aware that there was no guilt in the case of Jesus. And yet His enemies were triumphing over Him. Jesus looked defeated. Jesus was, from a human viewpoint defeated. The Jewish leaders had won. They had accomplished everything. His friends weren’t around, where were they? They had to conscript a man, Simon of Cyrene, to help Him carry the cross. Where were His friends? Where were His followers? Where were His disciples? His very crucifixion was inconsistent with Him being the Messiah, being a King. Over His head were the words, “This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews,” that placarded the mockery. His lowly condition was a stumbling block to the Jews. The cross is always a stumbling block to the Jews. A crucified Messiah, crucified at the hands of Romans unthinkable.

Adding it all up, you would say that at this particular time the gospel or the hope that was in Christ was at its lowest level, at its lowest level. Jesus was powerless. Jesus was victim. The Romans were oppressors. The Jews were the ones who motivated the whole thing. There was no human way to account for the faith of that thief...none. When Jesus was at His weakest and His Kingdom most invisible, that man believed.

What is this saying to the people that Peter’s writing to? That the gospel is not diminished because

your strength is weak. Some people think, “Well maybe this was said after the darkness and the earthquake and the rocks split and the graves opened, people raised from the dead and the veil split.” No. This happened before any of that. There was no supernatural phenomena to affirm that this was the execution of the Son of God. In other words, in the most unfavorable, unconvincing circumstances with the Savior at His weakest point, God saved that thief. Mark it, dear friends, God always does the saving and His saving power is not at all diminished because we’re at our weakest point.

Paul learned that, didn’t he? “When I am weak, then I am strong.” Isaiah 53:12 says, “He was numbered with the transgressors.” That’s right. But there was more than that. He took one of those transgressors to heaven with Him that very day.

What an example He is to us, that in our living and in our dying we never lose sight of the evangelistic mission. We never lose sight of the responsibility we have to gather sinners into the Kingdom, to be the instruments by which God does that. You may think it depends on your power, your strength. It may think...depends upon your persona, somehow your attitude. It doesn’t. It is a miracle of God and He can do that miracle and does it often at the point at which we are the weakest. And even when we think somebody may not have very much information, when the Lord draws someone, He makes sure that that information has reached that person.

The third thing that came out of the mouth of Jesus on the cross is recorded in John 19:26 and 27. “Woman, behold your Son,” and then the words, “Behold your mother.” “Woman, behold your Son, behold your mother.”

What is that telling us? Well, that Jesus died not only with a forgiving heart toward the people who treated Him so terribly so, so horrendously, that He died never having lost sight of His evangelistic mission, and thirdly, He died caught up in selfless love. Standing at the foot of the cross is a little group. Among the little group, two people that Jesus is concerned about...one in particular, Mary His mother and the other, John to care for Mary. And that’s what these words indicate. When He says, “Woman, behold your Son,” He’s not calling attention to Himself. They would have been able to hear His voice near the cross. He’s referring to John. John is your new son, I’m leaving.

You say, “Well why didn’t He just commit her into the care of His half brothers, the children of Joseph and Mary?” Because John 7 verse 5 says, “They didn’t believe in Him.” His family didn’t believe in Him and there were girls in the family, they didn’t believe either, apparently. Who was going to care for Mary? So He commits Mary to John and John to Mary. Mary who, by now, realizing the full force of the prophecy she heard when she took Jesus to the temple and ran into Simeon, remember? And Simeon said, “This child is going to be for the rising and the falling of many and a sword will pierce your heart.” Get ready, Mary, there is a devastating pain coming to you through this child.

It might be hard to believe for the thirty years that you have lived with Jesus. From the time of His birth He lived in Nazareth as a child 24/7 in the presence of Mary, His mother. She would be most intimately acquainted with all His ways and He was a perfect child, never sinned with an action that He did, never sinned with a thought that He had, never sinned with a word that He spoke. How endearing would a child like that be? Hummm. How much could you love that child when you love the ones you get who aren't like that? She loved Him with a love that would be beyond anything any other woman in the world's history would experience because everything that came out of His mouth was the right thing....peace for all the tranquility, love for all the hostility, wisdom for all the doubts, living with God in human flesh. She adored Him. She even worshiped Him.

She stands there, all that love filling up in her heart, welling out, no doubt, in tears. She is hurt. She is paralyzed, yet she is bound by love to the cross. She cannot leave. She stands there without strength, no hysteria, no wailing, no fainting, suffering in silence. The crowds are mocking, soldiers gambling for His clothes. He is agonizing, bleeding and He knows all that. And He commits her into the care of beloved John and John will become her son in caring for her.

He's dying, but His mother is on His heart. This is how to live, selflessly. Peter's message to the struggling, persecuted believers is, "Don't get caught up in your own pain. Don't lose sight of the fact that you need to be caught up in the lives of other people. You need to comfort other people with the comfort with which the Lord comforts you."

Oh the magnificence of selfless love. Here He is occupied with the weight of the world's sin in the most stupendous agony ever known, as He faces His own death and the engulfing blackness of sin gathering around Him under the judgment of His Father. Yet He thinks only of the needs of His mother...not the spiritual needs, but the physical needs of His own mother and that she needs a spiritual friend and has none in the family. She needs John cause John was one of His most intimate disciples...Peter, James and John...and appears to be the one who...once the son of thunder, became known as the beloved one, the one who liked to call himself the one who leaned on Jesus' chest, the one who always found the closest place, the one to whom Jesus loved.

That's a lesson for life, isn't it? Never get so much caught up in your own pain, your own suffering, the issues of your own life that you stop losing yourself in selfless love for others. How are we to live? We're to live praying for the forgiveness of those who sin against us. We're to live with full, clear understanding of our evangelistic mission to bring the gospel to the lost. And even when we look the weakest, that does not diminish the power of God and His ability to save? We're to live expressing compassionate selfless love to others, no matter what our own pain might be.

A fourth thing that came out of our Lord's mouth, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Matthew 27:46. "Why have You forsaken Me?"

This is not sinful, this is sinless...this is sinless. This is inevitable. He couldn't help but say this because there is no sin, He can say, "Why...why have You forsaken Me?"

What lesson is this? He fully understood the seriousness of sin. He fully understood the seriousness of sin. The word "forsaken" is really a terrible word. It's a terrible word in English. If you just saw a book and the title was "Forsaken," you'd feel pain, you'd know it's a sad, sad story. Forsaken assumes a relationship violated. When you read, "My God, My God," you feel the pathos of that forsakenness, severed intimacy from one's own, "My God, My God."

Oh, He understood the seriousness of sin from a distance. That's why when He came to the grave of Lazarus He broke into tears. Was He sad because Lazarus was dead? Well to a degree but He was about to raise him from the dead. He was sad because He was caught up in the vortex of a family that had lost a beloved brother and they were heartbroken and there were tears everywhere. And He understood not only what that did in that family, but what it does in every family through human history, and He felt the pain of sin producing death in a much broader way then just the one incident of Lazarus. And He had the same reaction when He entered into Jerusalem and He wept because He saw the devastation of unbelief and the power of sin to destroy a nation and to catapult them into eternal hell. He stopped funerals in their tracks by raising dead people. Oh He had seen the power of sin, He had seen the seriousness of sin in His incarnation.

But now He feels the seriousness of sin. He feels it. He can feel it coming. He felt it in the garden and it broke up the capillaries so he began to sweat, as it were, drops of blood. His body literally began to feel the pain of coming divine judgment. Now it's nearer than ever. The darkness will soon be upon Him. He is feeling the curse of God, cursed as everyone who hangs on a tree, Galatians 3 says, and He became a curse for us. He was experiencing the wages of sin is death, the soul that sins, it shall die, James 1:15, sin brings forth death. He was experiencing all of that. He was experiencing the alienation, sin debilitates, sin destroys, sin kills, but mostly it alienates. He was feeling the seriousness of sin and He...everything in His being wanted to run from it. It's a great lesson to learn.

There's no sin in His mouth. There's no deceit in His mouth. But there is the evidence of just the opposite. He ran from sin. He had a hatred for sin in any form, in every form, even a vicarious atonement was more than He wanted to bear.

A fifth thing that came out of His mouth on the cross is in John 19:28, "I'm thirsty," He said, "I'm thirsty."

What is the lesson there? He experienced the same suffering we do. In His humanity, He was thirsty. There were a lot of things about His humanity that become evident in the gospels, as we study His

life. He was weary and hungry and sleepy and sad. And He was grieved and even groaning in the agony of things that He had endured or saw others enduring. He is a true human being, fully human. And now He's thirsty. Somebody might think that's not the issue that should have been on His mind because He's got pain in His hands, He's got pain in His feet, He's got horrendous pain on His back. He's got a pain in His head where the crown of thorns crushed into His brow. Why does He focus on being thirsty? Why doesn't He say, "I hurt?" Why does He say, "I'm thirsty"? Because water is more important than anything else. Every piece of fiber in His body was screaming for liquid. He craved it.

What a lesson this is about His humanity. Our Lord experiencing life at its most basic level and that is its most basic level, water. He is acquainted with hunger. He's acquainted with sleeplessness. He's acquainted with weariness and pain. And He's acquainted with thirst. He knows us at our deepest level, even physically. That's why Hebrews tells us He's a merciful and faithful High Priest who has suffered in all things what we have suffered. He's the one you can go to in your thirst and know that He's been there and understands that. This gives Him sympathy. This gives Him sympathy. He knows what it is to be human and He knows that the supply comes at the discretion of someone else. He knows there are times when what we desperately need, we can't give ourselves. He understands our dependence.

It's an amazing series of lessons we learn from Him. We learn how to live forgiving those that have done the worst to us. We learn how to live evangelizing, even at our weakest point. We learn how to love selflessly and compassionately. We learn how to have a hatred for sin and what it does to us. We learn how dependent we are, how needy we are, and how dependent we are on others.

The sixth thing that came out of His mouth are the words, "It is finished...It is finished."

What does that teach us? He died completing the work God gave Him to do. He died completing the work God gave Him to do. This is a cry of triumph, folks. It's not "I'm finished," like I'm caving in, you guys win. It is finished...it being the work of redemption on the cross. He's not saying, "My life is over." He's not saying, "The crucifixion is over." He is saying, "My work is done." There's a huge difference.

From the start He was on the course to complete the work that God had given Him...John 5:36, "He came to do the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish," He said. He came, in particular, 1 John 3 says, "To take away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." He has done it! He finished perfectly what God gave Him to do. And the lesson here is pretty simple, "Finish the work God gives you to do?"

We have to live that way. We want to be like the Apostle Paul and say, "I've run the race, I've finished the course, I've kept the faith, I'm done, over and out, take me to heaven."

What an example to endure to the end, to finish the work that you are given to do. So these suffering believers need to hear this. Look, you...you...you just need to keep doing what you're doing. You need to stay on the path God has put you on no matter how difficult it might be, no matter how you might suffer, no matter how dependent you might be on other people, no matter how hard it might be to forgive your enemies and remember your gospel evangelistic mission. Don't lose your focus, stay on target, stay on purpose, forgiving, evangelizing, loving fleeing from sin, dependent right to the very end, finish the work.

And then a last statement from our Lord is in Luke 23:46, it says, "Father, into Your hands I commit My Spirit."

Here we learn He died trusting Himself to the promise of God. He died trusting Himself to the promise of God. This was His last act, a cup of wrath was drained, the storm of divine fury was now over, the darkness was past, fellowship with the Father was waiting after death.

How did He know? Because the Father had promised that. He trusted in a faithful Creator. That's what Peter reminds us. He kept trusting not only in a faithful Creator, but verse 23, "Kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously." Wow!

He was innocent, He was sinless. And God knew that and He could trust Himself to God that once the judgment was over, God would not allow His Holy One to see corruption, but would show Him the path of life. He had even said that confidently, "Destroy this body, in three days I'll raise it." He believed that. He knew that. He had prayed, "Father, restore to Me the joy I had with thee before the world began. I have finished the work You gave Me to do," He said in that High Priestly prayer just hours before. He knew that. He knew the promise of God to raise Him from the dead. He knew the power of God to raise Him from the dead and He entrusted Himself to God. And that's what Peter is saying to these believers, "Look, you can trust God for the promise of resurrection because God judges righteously."

Well now wait a minute. In His case God judges righteously, He's perfect, He lived a perfect life. He died a perfect death. Naturally God is going to raise Him from the dead and take Him to heaven because He's perfect. He's sinless.

But what about us? Well that's the "and" part in verse 24. "While there were no sins of His own, He bore our sins in His body on the cross so that we might die to sin AND live to righteousness." That is the message of the gospel. God raised Him from the dead to honor, glory and exaltation because He was perfect. But God credited His death to our account, covered us in His righteousness, making us therefore perfect and so when God raised Him, God raised us. Because He lives, we shall live also. Buried with Him...Paul says...in baptism so that as Christ was raised from the dead, even so, may we

walk in newness of life. He also said, “God raised the Lord and He will also raise us.

That’s the gospel, that the perfect one would be raised from the dead, not surprising, but that the imperfect ones would be raised from the dead to live forever in heaven...that’s the surprise of the gospel. How can it happen? He paid the price for our sins. He receives our sins, we receive His righteousness. Our sins are credited to Him and He pays the price in full. His righteousness credited to us and we live forever in glory.

You have every reason to commit your living and your dying to the promise of God because of the perfect person and work of Christ. This is the greatness of the gospel.

Why do we celebrate the Resurrection? Because it is not only His Resurrection, it is our Resurrection as well.

Father, thank You for the time we’ve had this morning to focus on this great truth. Thank You for the wonderful music and worship and praise that’s been offered to You. We pray that our hearts and minds would be in this rapturous understanding that You would capture us to a higher level of worship and a greater dimension of obedience as we think about these glorious truths. We thank You that the perfect one could commit His Spirit to You and know it was in good care and He would come out the other side of death. We thank You that we have been given His perfection as a gift, and so we too shall rise to walk in newness of life, and one day leave this life and enter into eternal glory. What a gift to us. We rejoice in it and we offer You our thanks. In Christ’s name, Amen.

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