

Communion

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[0 : 00] Okay, let's pray together. Gracious God and loving Father, we gather once again that we might make ourselves available to you and what you have for us.

We are so appreciative of the revelation that you've been pleased to give, and we ask now that as we consider but just a small portion of it, and a very important theme of it, that you will use the truth to penetrate each heart and mind, and that you will find them open and eager, and willing to receive the truth and then act upon it.

Thank you once again for this wonderful season of the year when hearts and minds are attuned, perhaps more than any other time, to the theme of that for which we have to be so thankful.

We bless you for it all. And we ask now that as we contemplate this great subject, you will use it to stir our hearts and increase our gratitude and our thanksgiving to you for who you are and what you have accomplished for us through our Lord Jesus Christ.

We ask it in his name. Amen. If you would open your Bibles, please, first of all, to Romans chapter 3.

[1 : 20] We are going to engage a subject that we have entitled, The Matching Magnitude of It All.

And I suppose if I were to change the title, it might be, The More Than Matching Magnitude of It All.

And what this has to do with consists of a few propositions that I want to leave you with at the outset, with the hope that they will be in your minds germinating as we move through the message.

And the first proposition is this. The extent to which God had to go to secure our redemption reveals the great extent of our sin and offense against righteousness.

Do you understand what I'm saying? I'm talking about the more than matching magnitude of it all.

[2 : 32] And this deals with the concept that where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. And to repeat that first proposition, The extent to which God had to go to secure our redemption reveals the great extent of our sin and offense against God's righteousness.

And this is of necessity. A negative kind of subject because we are talking about sin and we don't want to think negatively.

It is an unpleasantry to say the least, yet it is very necessary. And the reason that we don't like to talk about sin is because it makes us uncomfortable and feel just somewhat guilty.

And some of us it makes feel more guilty than others. But don't be put out by that because guilt is a very good thing.

Guilt awakens us to the reality that something is wrong and that something needs to be changed. Unless you discover that something is wrong, you will not seek to effect any kind of a change.

[3 : 54] So, the discussion about sin tends to produce guilt. And guilt can be an impetus to doing something about it.

And really that's the whole dynamic of the gospel. Because when the gospel of the grace of God is preached, you cannot preach an adequate gospel of the grace of God and God's forgiveness without dealing with the need for that to be there.

And what it is that prompts the need. And it always comes back to this sin issue, which nobody, I think, in their right mind relishes discussing.

Because you're talking about human foibles and failures and difficulties and rebellion and everything that goes along with it. Anything and everything that has to do with sin does not make us look good.

It just doesn't. And there are those who would rather just ignore this subject altogether and just deal with the pleasantries. You know, talk about love, love, love, love.

[5 : 04] Forget all about that sin business. But do you understand that it is sin that gives love its real value? It's that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

It is God's love is demonstrated in that way. The negativity and the unpleasantness that we prefer to avoid or at least ignore is the extent to which we are in denial about our sin.

And I don't know if you are aware of it or not. You probably are. If you are a believer that the entire nation is in denial about sin and has been for a long, long time.

I'd like you to go to, instead of Romans chapter 3, let's start with Romans chapter 7. And in it, Paul is talking about the exceeding sinfulness of sin.

It is quite a passage. I'm just going to have to jump in here with this concept in verse 12.

[6 : 25] Romans chapter 7 and verse 12. The apostle says, Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.

Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good, that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.

Think of that. The exceeding sinfulness of sin. That's a curious expression, isn't it? But it's almost because there is no other word to define this moral failure like the word sin.

Paul uses it as the exceeding sinfulness of sin. Very curious expression, to be sure. And our sin was such, in its kind and in its depth, that nothing less than the death of God who created us could atone for it.

Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. Now, let's go back to Romans chapter 3. This is going to be an abbreviated message, but it is going to, I trust, provide the spiritual backdrop for the serving of the Lord's table that will be realized in just a few moments.

[8 : 03] And in Romans chapter 3, and beginning with verse 19. Now we know that what thing soever the law says, it says to them who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

And of course, the basis and the reason for the guilt is sin. It is personal sin, mine and yours, and the corporate sin of all of humanity.

So what does man have to say in defense of himself and his sin? Nothing. Absolutely nothing.

And this is what Paul means when he says that every mouth may be stopped. Man has nothing to say in his defense.

He would present one if he could. If he thought it could do any good or ameliorate the situation, he would present a defense. But he knows that he has nothing to say.

[9 : 23] He just stands there mute before the judgment bar of God with nothing to say in his defense. That every mouth may be stopped.

And all the world may become guilty before God. Because all of the world is made up of individuals, each of whom operates and lives in their own personal sin pattern and rebellion and displeasure to the Almighty.

That's the human condition. We are born into it. And we live it out on a daily basis to different degrees, ranging everywhere from the so-called little white lie to serial murders.

And even worse, the extermination of whole populations and societies and genocides and everything that goes with it.

That's our guilt. Therefore, by the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe.

[10 : 42] For there is no difference. For all have sinned. For all have sinned. For all within many others. For all have sinned. And come short of the glory of God. The glory of God is reflected in the person of Jesus Christ.

God has a standard for what he demands that you and I be. and as long as you measure up to this standard that God has predetermined and established you have nothing to worry about with God you don't have to worry at all about standing before the Almighty on the judgment day as long as you meet this standard and God's standard is God's Son Jesus Christ if you measure up to Him you've got nothing to worry about I measured myself alongside Jesus Christ some time ago I didn't come up to His ankles I don't know where you come but that's God's standard and I fall far, far short of it but if you are convinced that you measure up and that you are in the righteousness of Christ you have nothing to worry about and you know, this is the basis of security and peace and assurance for the believer because if you are in Christ you do measure up because Jesus Christ gives you

His undeserved righteousness and He places it to your account free of charge can't buy it you can't earn it and you certainly don't deserve it but He gives it to you free of charge that's called the good news and it is, isn't it?

that's the gospel and in Christ is the only place where you will find it because He is the only one in whom this eternal life resides so He can impute it to whomever He chooses and those He chooses to impute it to are those who have put their faith and their trust in Him rather than in themselves it is marvelous, marvelous thing our sin is of such magnitude and such depth and such scope and such great immorality personally and corporately that it took God Himself to resolve it and that's exactly what He did so and one other passage I'd like to give you before we go on and that is in Romans 5 these are all in Romans and this is just marvelous, marvelous material Romans 5 verses 1 through 8

Paul says therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ now what it's suggesting of course is that there is a state of enmity existing between ourselves and God that is a warlike state man and God are on the outs but because of what Jesus Christ did we have justification that means we have we are declared righteous before God on the basis of what Christ did not on the basis of what you did and we are in Him and we have that coveted position and He goes on to say by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand and rejoice in hope of the glory of God and not only so but we glory in tribulation also knowing that tribulation works patience and patience experience and experience hope and hope makes not ashamed because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us for when we were yet without strength had no ability in due time

[15 : 08] Christ died for the ungodly that's a marvelous statement in itself he didn't die for the godly because there weren't any the only ones he could die for was the ungodly and we all qualify for that scarcely for a righteous man will one die yet per adventure for a good man some would even dare to die but God demonstrated his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us amazing consequently there is but one valid spiritual belief and faith that is truly legitimate now I recognize in saying that would set off a whole lot of mental alarm bells given the venue in which you would express a position like that because these in a day and time of religious diversity political correctness and all that goes with it these would be fighting words we would be labeled bigots intolerant narrow-minded and a whole host of other things nonetheless there is but one valid spiritual belief and faith that is truly legitimate just one it is not contrived by man it is originated and ordained of God himself the belief system required and set forth by God himself is exclusively that which is found in God's word which he himself authored and inspired men to write as they were enabled by the

Holy Spirit this is referred to throughout scripture as justification by faith justification by faith is in stark contrast to all man-made faiths and belief systems there is only one faith only one belief that operates on this principle justification by faith all others base human justification upon something entirely different usually having to do with the merits or the obedience of one to a certain system or a certain religion but biblical Christianity operates on the principle of justification by faith and it is the only belief system in all of the world that does and do you realize that there are twenty five hundred major and minor belief systems in the world some are huge numbering in the millions and some are so small that they perhaps have only a few hundred and they are all in contrast to biblical

Christianity because this is the only faith this is the only faith that has validity it is the only faith that is not only endorsed by but originated by the God who made us now you can easily get into a real heated debate with a lot of people in a lot of places about this issue and they see it as extreme narrowness and arrogance on our part and they say maybe there is just one mountain but there are many roads up the mountain and you can go any road you want and you reach the top you can go the road of the Hindu or the Muslim the Buddhist the Shintoist the Mormon the Baptist the Presbyterian the Catholic or whatever but you all get to the top eventually well brethren it is just not so the only one that is valid is not mine because it's mine and it isn't yours because it's yours it is God's is there something wrong tell me is there something wrong with the creator and sustainer of the universe the one who brought all things into existence is there something wrong with him establishing a way whereby you can come to him is there something wrong with him doing that or in order for him to be right and just and fair does he have to say doesn't make any difference how you come come any way you want to it doesn't matter or if you don't want to come at all that's okay too is that what he's supposed to do we are talking about ownership here the creator he has the right he has the power to deem whatever he sees fit as the way to approach himself and he determined that and he established that get with it that's what the gospel is saying this is the way walking in it and rather than be profoundly grateful to

God that he in his grace and mercy saw fit to provide any way at all there are so many who bad mouth that because he didn't provide more ways than one I am just profoundly grateful that he provided one we didn't have that coming but he did and the one he provided is through Christ biblical Christianity alone ordained of God is the only belief system predicated upon the gracious activity of God on behalf of his creation all man-made systems of belief and religion are built upon the obedience and compliance of its adherence with the hopeful intent of satisfying whatever deity they are trying to please Christianity alone is built upon the obedience of

Jesus Christ God's Son in the sacrificial death he died on Calvary God the Son propitiated or satisfied God the Father when he was offered through God the Holy Spirit in the death that he died to demonstrate to demonstrate the Father's satisfaction with the work of his Son he raised him from the dead the case for biblical Christianity far outstrips all other systems in the uniqueness that characterizes it it is by far and away the most extraordinary of all faith and belief systems it distances itself from any plan or scheme that man might devise it alone places all the burden for the salvation of mankind not upon man but upon

[23 : 01] God himself the creator of man and why should this be why should this be it should not be and it would not be and it could not be were it not for the incredible and divine mechanism called throughout the Bible the grace of God his grace was displayed thusly we have a message to convey and I'd be the first to admit it that on the surface and especially upon the first hearing it's really hard to buy this message really is sounds too otherworldly I should hope to tell you it is otherworldly it is otherworldly it began with God in that other world and our message consists of this the infinite creator

God himself endowed himself with human flesh he became one of us yet apart from our sin which sin was the very thing he came to address Jesus came because you are a sinner that's why he came I am a sinner that's why he came this is what Bethlehem is all about he came not to condemn the world but that the world through him might be saved and apart from the reality and the presence of human sin this is no place for Jesus to be and no place for him to come to but he came because of this desperate desperate need it was him or nothing that's why he came our sin and rebellion was of such a nature and of such catastrophic immorality that only

God and God alone was capable of overcoming it and he did this in the person of his son the Lord Jesus and because Jesus paid it all and all to him we owe we respond to what Christ accomplished on the cross by simply and willfully accepting and embracing his death on our behalf and when we do that we are then justified or declared righteous by a satisfied God the Father this is justification by faith and it is all predicated upon who Jesus Christ is and what he did and why it matters isn't that amazing think of that think of that in a way we have a story to tell people that we almost expect them not to believe it upon their first hearing

I'm not sure that I did that's been so long ago I can't remember but here's what we're saying and this is what the Bible is saying that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth he made everything and he did it in six days and we have the account given there in the Genesis record that he made everything including this lump of clay standing here before you called human man made in the image and likeness of God so we mere mortals we homo sapiens we have something about us that is God like now please don't think that I'm saying we're God that's nonsense but we have something about our being that is God like and enables us to connect with God and I suspect that it has a great deal to do with that immaterial entity that dwells within each of us called the human spirit it is

God's spirit that bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God and we have this capability and our first parents have this capability and they also were endowed with the thing called human volition that is the power to make a choice the power to decide between a and b and the freedom to do so not the freedom to avoid the consequences that come from your choice we don't have that ability someone has said you may do anything you please you can do whatever you want but you cannot choose to avoid the consequences that come from what you do so our first parents exercised this thing called volition and they simply told God take a walk they rebelled against him and they went their own way and the whole world came crashing down and we today see the consequences of that we've got death disease human misery deprivation war crime you name it all of this comes from man behaving in an ungodly fashion our activities are anything but godlike we hurt each other we murder and maim each other and this goes on all around us we see it every day and nobody escapes it it's a pretty sad plight and into a mess like this this creator god in order to resolve our problem became one of us this creator god was incarnated enfleshed in a body just like ours yet without sin and it was a body that was capable of dying that's why he came that's what he came to do was die because our sin in its scope in its magnitude just damned the whole of the human race and

[30 : 17] Jesus Christ in the payment that he made was more than adequate and more than sufficient to atone for or expiate or cover or take away the sin of the world that's what Christianity is all about that is the only thing that Christianity is all about and Paul summed it up when he wrote to the Corinthians for I delivered unto you that which first of all I received how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures that he was buried and rose again the third day according to the scriptures that's it there you have it that's the whole gospel in a nutshell this creator God this infinite omnipotent omniscient omnipresent God who possesses all wisdom and all power stooped to our level to become one of us so he could do for us what he did but he wasn't just a man dying he was the

God man dying God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself incredible and this work that Christ accomplished this satisfaction that Christ earned on the cross that expiated human sin what Jesus did when he died on the cross was he balanced the scale scale was very lopsided because of man's sin corporate and personal and when Christ died for our sin he balanced the scale and that allows God to fully freely forgive us because Jesus paid for your sin so you wouldn't have to that's the gospel it's very profound it's very simple and it's very difficult to believe and absorb upon the first hearing anyway but you know as we hear it and as we start connecting the dots and as we start dealing with our own sin and stop being in denial with all of this nonsense well

I'm better than most people and I'm not as bad as I could be and all the rest of that nonsense and just see ourselves for what we really are we are just messed up people people for whom Christ died and I don't understand to this day I never will understand probably throughout heaven never will understand why he could love the likes of me because I'll tell you something if I were God I wouldn't love me and yet God knows everything about me and he still loves me that is amazing and the songwriter called it amazing grace and that's exactly what it is and we are here today rejoicing in this salvation rejoicing in the more than matching magnitude of it all our sin was so great and so heinous and so distasteful and so displeasing to

God that God was the only one himself who could remedy it and fix it and why should he do that just because he loves us just because his grace is such that cannot be because of what he found in us because he found nothing in us that was desirable and he did he did and that means you don't get any credit at all you don't deserve any credit God gets all the credit but who gets the benefit we do we do we get eternal life we get sins forgiven we get the righteousness of Christ none of which is deserved all of this is freely poured out on us because of who Jesus is and what he did that is amazing that is incredible if this were not in the

Bible you'd never get me to believe it it's just too good to be true but that's the gospel so where do you stand with it have you done business with God on this grounds on this basis do you see yourself as I see myself unrighteous sinful lacking longing no hope without God without Christ and then as a simple act of your will you embrace Jesus Christ as your Savior you put your trust in him rather than in yourself or your goodness or your good intentions so that everything about you is staked on Christ that's what it means to trust him as your Savior and if you've done that then he gives to you his very righteousness and you stand before

[35 : 43] God clothed in the righteousness of Christ that is absolutely wonderful beyond words and we gather here this morning to partake of these elements because in doing so we remember the death of Christ that body that was wounded and scarred for us and the blood that was shed for us and this is just a feeble effort that we have of reminding ourselves of that unimaginable price that Jesus Christ paid so that we could be with him for all eternity that's just I'll never get over that I guess I never will get over that and don't want to get over that it just amazes me every time I think of it now we're going to ask you to stand and we're going to sing a hymn number 310 lead me to

Calvary King of my life I crown thee now Thine shall the glory be lest I forget my thorn crown thou lead me to Calvary lest I forget Gethsemane lest I forget thine agony lest I forget thy love for me lead me to Calvary thank you be seated please it was the very night before the crucifixion our lord Jesus was gathered in the upper room with the apostles and he took a common piece of bread we would probably call it something almost like a pita bread kind of like a pancake that they used it was about that thick and they would fold it over and dip it in the sop and he's going to do that and they asked who it would be that would betray him and Jesus said he it is to whom

I give the sop when I have dipped it and he would take that small pancake like piece of bread fold it in half and use it as a scoop and dip it down into the stew it was like a stew broth soup and in it you would collect vegetables and chunks of meat and then use that as a fork or a spoon and put it to your mouth and when Jesus did that acting the part of the host he would give it to the one that he chose to honor and he gave it to Judas isn't that something one wonders humanly speaking and of course our Lord was going to experience no surprises he knew exactly what was coming but one wonders if it did not somehow add to the culpability of

Judas that which he was about to do and later this same Judas would betray Jesus by pointing him out to those who came to arrest him and he says the one that I walk up to and kiss he will be the one and Judas did that and of course in the darkness of the night they could hardly tell one man from another but Judas fingered him when he kissed him they knew who to arrest then Jesus looked at Judas and said betrayest thou the son of man with a kiss a kiss was the ultimate act of friendship and acceptance and with Judas he reversed it and made it an act of betrayal remarkable what happened on that last night Jesus took the bread and broke a piece from it and said this is my body which is given for you and

Jesus gave thanks he said to his disciples this is my body which is given for you take your hymnal again please number 310 we'll just sing the second stanza number 310 show me the tomb where thou wast laid tenderly born and wept angels and robes of light array and wept and wept last I forgive yes am he lest I forget thine ebony thy love for me lead me to calvary need to make it clear that one partaking of these elements does not make him or her a

[42 : 16] Christian we partake of these elements because we are Christians and we do so in remembrance of him so it needs to be understood and I think it is certainly by most grace people that this is not a sacrament this is not a vehicle through which God's grace is imparted God's grace is imparted by faith not through any physical elements you receive Christ as your savior as an act of your will and a decision of your mind you do not receive Christ by mouth neither the bread nor the cup this is a time of reflection and it's also a time of great celebration a time of thanks giving because Jesus said that we are to do this until he comes and that of course says he's coming again and we do it until he comes again and then in the same manner when he had given thanks he took the cup our

Lord took a common cup a chalice and drank from it and then passed it to them and said drink this all of you and then he said this cup is the new covenant in my blood and as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup you do show forth the Lord's death until he comes father we are grateful to the extent that we are able but we know that our gratitude is so lacking because our understanding is so lacking and we are confident that when we are in your presence our understanding and appreciation will be so embellished and so full that we will be able to tirelessly spend our time in thanking and praising you without boredom and without repetition we can only imagine what that will be like but even now with the lack of understanding we have we know enough to develop a value system and to live a life that is pleasing to you and that is the cry of our hearts that we might do that thank you for making it within the realm of the possibility for each of us thank you for that incredible journey that you made from heaven to earth become one of us and to die in our place throughout all eternity we'll never get used to that and we thank you that we won't accept our thanks now for the presence of each one here thank you for generosity that that may be their portion as we have opportunity to provide some sustenance to those who are unfortunate and in greater need than ourselves thank you for the benevolent offering and for the opportunity to reach out to others and we give with a joyful heart in

Christ's name amen hymn number three please 310 and let's sing the third stanza let me like Mary through the gloom come with a gift to thee let me like Mary through the gloom come with a gift to thee show to me now the empty tomb lead me to Calvary lest I forget Gethsemane lest I forget thine agony my love for me lead me to Calvary me you're going to be given an opportunity now to help sustain the elders benevolent fund and it's entirely possible that some of you may not have come prepared to do that this morning because you either forgotten about it or weren't aware of it and it's quite all right we just want you to know that it isn't just that these occasions that the elders benevolent fund can receive funds anytime anytime you would like to make a gift to the benevolent fund all you have to do is put a check or money in the envelope designate the envelope for the benevolent fund and just drop it in the box outside the door there and we will see to it that it is channeled to that fund and you may do that anytime throughout the year it doesn't have to be in conjunction with communion but communion is always a time of real thanksgiving for us and we want to give out of a grateful heart so as it should be with all of our giving you are to give in accordance with your desire if you don't desire to give don't give don't give give only if you have the desire and the ability and each of us is responsible before the

Lord to assess what our own abilities are you know them and God knows them and it's nobody else's business to determine your ability that's between you and him so thank you for whatever you are able to share I know it will be much appreciated gentlemen we will wait upon you you are are you you Thank you.

Thank you.

[50 : 14] Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. God bless you.

[51 : 45] You're dismissed.