

Christ died for the ungodly

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[0 : 00] Romans chapter 5, on the words of our text, you'll find in verse 6. Let us read verse 6, where the apostle writes, When we were yet without strength in due time, Christ died for the ungodly.

And we'll send our attention and our meditation by God's help around these words. In verse 6, Christ died for the ungodly.

Much is being made today through our land, and perhaps in other places too, about those who gave themselves even to death, in order that their fellow countrymen might know civil liberty and civil freedom.

No doubt it's correct, right and proper that we should remember those who made what is the greatest sacrifice man can make, giving his life.

One is saddened, I think, that through all the ceremony of such a day as this, so very little is made of the real sacrificial death.

[1 : 41] The death of God's own Son. And the death above all deaths, that is worthy of constant remembrance.

And while we too remember with thankfulness and in prayerfulness, those who gave their lives that we might know freedom, while we do that, let us also look through that to the greater sacrifice, the sacrifice of God's own Son for us as sinners.

That is where I want us to centre our thoughts this morning. Through chapters 3 and 4 of Romans, the Apostle Paul has been declaring, enunciating, what is surely the greatest of all biblical doctrines, the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ alone.

He has been posing the question, how can a sinner ever be just with God? And a closely related one, how can God be just and the justifier of the ungodly?

And he has spent the latter part of Romans 3 giving the answer to these questions and then elaborating and illustrating all through Romans chapter 4, showing and proving that in all times, in the Old Testament, as well as in the New, God's people have been justified by faith in the work of another.

[3 : 34] Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Then in chapter 5, he goes on to tell us what underlies the whole of the doctrine.

He tells us that underlying it is the free, sovereign grace and love. Can I put it like this?

The divine pity of God for lost men. The first 11 verses of chapter 5 are taken up with elaborating and illustrating and demonstrating and demonstrating that love.

Then he goes on through chapter 6 to show that when the ungodly trust in Jesus they're brought into a new relationship with him.

They too die to sin on the rising newness of life because the whole work of Christ is for them.

[4 : 44] not merely his death but his resurrection life. He lives as he puts it in Hebrews he lives in the power of an endless life and because he lives to make continual intercession for us we shall and must be saved.

But that intercession roots and grounds in the love that yes I'll use the word strong the word is the love that compelled the death of the son.

And all that is brought to sharp focus for us in the words of our text. Christ died the fact the fact very bluntly stated Christ died for the ungodly the fact interpreted for us by the Holy Ghost the death explained those shown to us for whom Christ died.

This is one of the deepest doctrines one of the most profound theological questions in the realm of the doctrine of the atonement for whom did Christ die and there are various levels at which that can be answered and I want us to concentrate on the one level this morning for whom was the death of the cross.

Paul puts it very bluntly the death of the cross was for the ungodly. There would be other ways in which at other times and on other occasions we would wish to define those for whom Christ died but this morning we'll define them in terms of the apostolic statement the Holy Spirit interpretation of the death it was a death it was the death for the ungodly.

[6 : 58] I wonder if you noticed how closely parallel to the whole theme of justification by faith and free love to sinners was that portion we read in the prophecy of Ezekiel an illustration used by God there again a very very rugged illustration the Holy Spirit doesn't refuse to use rugged illustrations the illustration of a child at its very birth abandoned in a field without any of the tender unnecessary things have been done to it left unwashed and uncared for abandoned and abandoned surely to death take a child newly born refuse even to wash it or dress it throw it in a field what are you doing you're when you were as you are according to nature and according to your birth into this world but my passing by you was the time of your love unlovely unwashed and cared for that's a picture of the sinner and his sin then comes a love that's almost incomprehensible to us a love that cares and that pities and that passes by and there are people in the church this morning and remember when God passed them by in the time of his love and I took you and I washed you and I anointed you and I cared for you and I clothed you and I didn't just wash you and clothed you

I girded you with ornaments and fed you and you grew up and became mature and you became beautiful and you were beautiful because I beautified you that's the Christian life and a very vivid brief picture this is the grace of God at work with real people like you and like me and we have it here what happens when God comes to us the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost who is given to us and then he he demonstrates and illustrates and proves again as he's doing continually through these verses that it all goes back to the work of

Christ on the cross for our sins the death of the cross for the ungodly God let's just look at the fact that's stated to us and then from the interpretation of the fact let's draw some inferences for our own heart's need and for our practical living before God and before men the fact that Paul is stating proving the love of God that's what he's doing Christ died for the ungodly I want you just to stop and pause for a moment and to think about that

Christ died we're sure used to the idea and we're sure used to the idea that his death was related to sin so my friend let's go a little deeper this morning may God impress it upon your heart and your mind that God Christ died for the ungodly we can take this word the original Greek word and translate it in an even more radical sense because we're beginning to lose the thrust and the power of what ungodly really means Christ died we can say for the impious Christ died for the man who had no time for God

Christ died for the one who had no knowledge of God Christ died for those who had no desire for God Christ died for those who give God no room in their thoughts and no room in their hearts Christ died for those who were totally unworthy of the love that provided his death he died for the ungodly and all that the ungodly means one could spend the whole of the sermon defining and broadening out what ungodliness means and what it encloses Christ the anointed one the one sent forth the one specially commissioned see what our text says he was specially commissioned to do he was specially commissioned to die for the ungodly so if he was specially anointed and specially commissioned to die for the ungodly that tells us the real source of this death doesn't it it tells us that

[13 : 47] Christ's death roots back to the father's purpose for him but it goes back to the father sending him forth in order to die where is the foot of the cross really planted in the loving redemptive purpose of God he anointed Christ and sent him forth that he might die for the ungodly we find that idea presently to us in many different ways in scripture that it is Jehovah who is behind the death of Christ I have laid help upon one that is mighty he says through his prophet Isaiah I have exalted one out of the people I have given him as a covenant to the people

I will send my servant and my servant shall bear the sin of many so often evangelical preaching distorts the real doctrine of the atonement and tells us tells us that Christ died in order to bring the father's love down to sinners to really theologically they preach and teach that it was the atonement that constrained the love of God no my friend they've got it all back to front do you see it was the love of God that constrained the atonement it's a caricature of the atonement to say that Christ was dying in order to make a God who hated or a God who was wrathful in order to make him love people that's not the gospel of the old and new testament the gospel is the other way around altogether it is that God loved and because

God loved fully and freely and pityingly and wonderfully that Christ died for God so loved the world if they would only read John 3 and 16 and if they would only stop and think of the ways put there God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life and the text enforces this fact too that his death was the crowning the crisis act of Christ's ministry and again modern preaching and modern teaching will tell us that it's his life that's important more important than his death we would make us bold as to say this that on the basis of the scripture teaching about all the facts his life without his death to crown it would have been of no avail to save sinners no avail whatsoever his death was related to sin for death always is the wages of sin is death and they did not cease to be the wages of sin even in the death of Christ his death was a penal death it was a death inflicted as a punishment for guilt it was a death that came directly because of sin it was death not because of his own sin for he had none it was penal not in relation to his own guilt for he had no guilt either where there's no sin there's no guilt but it was a penal death because he stood as a substitute in the place of others in whose place he stood in the place of the ungodly that's what the word for means

Christ died in the place of the ungodly now you and I will agree that the ungodly are worthy of the punishment of a holy and a just God and in order to be worthy of that punishment Jesus Christ had to take the place of the ungodly if he had not stood where the ungodly stand right in their room in their place as their substitute death could have had no claim upon him he became flesh why in order that he might be made sin for he who knew no sin was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in him there's the doctrine of substitutionary atonement it lies at the very heart of Christ's work he in the place of the ungodly he bearing the punishment that was the ungodly's due he giving himself a sacrifice in order that the ungodly might come away out free from the punishment that he bore for them he died for the ungodly now I want to stress this and stress it as strongly as I can because there's so much misunderstanding about it even among those of us who come and hear the gospel continually there's a misunderstanding about what

God was doing I know that the misunderstanding is there in part because we can see the gospel way of salvation only when the Holy Spirit opens our minds and our eyes and our hearts to it I know that but nevertheless I have to explain it or attempt to explain it let me elaborate just a moment he died for the ungodly he did not die for the righteous he did not die for one of the elect because he saw that the elect would one day be righteous he died for them as ungodly he did not die seeing and foreknowing with his omniscience that one day they would repent and accept the gospel he died for them when they were ungodly he passed by them when they were in their blood when they were abandoned when they were on a road on the road to hell he died for them we were says the apostle

[21 : 32] Paul we were as the others even as the gentiles we were without God and we were without hope that's what it is before your conversion whether you're elect or not you're one of the ungodly on whom the wrath of God dwells not the righteous and even Christian people get round to the wrong idea if he's done all this for me there must have been something really worthwhile in me no why and the ultimate answer is only this one even so father for so it seemed good in thy sign before God we all stand on the same level it's not that some are better than others all are ungodly all have sinned and come short of the glory of

God all are under the wrath and curse of God because of sin Christ died not for the good not for the righteous not for those who were worthy of his death not for those who would repent and be saved through his death not even for that but he died for the ungodly he saw us as we really were he saw us as we really are and seeing us as we really were and as we really are his love saw that God's justice demanded and must have nothing less than his death if we were to be saved what constituted the need of his death well there was two things one of them

I've hinted out already there was the love of God that constrained it and provided it the love of God need not have done that it was just because the love of God is a redemptive love that the death the sacrifice the substitution was provided and wonderfully provided in God's own son but there was something else God Father Son and Holy Spirit saw that the death was necessary what constituted the need of this death the very ungodliness the very sinfulness the wickedness the lostness of the people for whom he died why did he go to the cross because of your need my friend because if he hadn't gone to the cross there would have been no good news and no gospel and no salvation and no redemption and no hope of heaven he gave his life a ransom for many he died for the ungodly that's the true view and it's not just the true view it's a wonderfully kind view if I can put it like that it's the view the kind view of Christ's love to us he saw the state that we were really in and his love and his pity and his compassion accepted the truth of that and brought him to the place of death let me illustrate what I mean by that he died for people who were dishonest if he hadn't died for dishonest people there wouldn't have been much hope would there for the thief on the cross he died for people who are immoral and if he hadn't died for people who are immoral there wouldn't have been much hope for the woman taken in adultery nor the woman at the well nor the one who loved much because she had been forgiven much he died for those who lack courage to witness and stand out for

God against ungodliness otherwise there wouldn't have been much hope for the disciples who all forsook him and fled he died for those who have denied him to his face otherwise there wouldn't be much hope for Peter or for thousands of other Peters wouldn't there that's the kind of people he died for for the ungodly he died for the kind of passion you are and I am at the deepest level of our being kind of people we are when we're born into this world godless with all that that unfolds and entails the remedy was a drastic one wasn't it it demanded his death and the very drastic nature of the remedy speaks of the drastic nature of the disease a surgeon today we know will not operate unless he has to much more

Christ would not have died unless his death was an absolute necessity for salvation salvation if men are good enough and that's the thinking in the minds of many today if men are good enough to be saved apart from the cross and the new birth and the regeneration of the Holy Spirit if men are good enough then why the cross at all if men can be saved and if men can be get to heaven why the cross if they're good enough why is there a ministry of reconciliation if they're not too bad according to nature and this is the teaching the whole thrust of modernistic teaching in Christian in the Christian religion today well if that's true why the death of the cross do you know what they're saying these people who say that well you're good enough as you are and all this talk about Christ having to die for your sins and pouring out his blood on the cross it's all unnecessary and it belongs to an evangelical fuddy evangelicalism of a gone age ask these people just one question why did the just one die they are teaching us that the just died in the room and place of the just and I would suggest to you that in the terms of New

[29 : 22] Testament teaching that's absolute nonsense isn't it the just dying in the room and the place of the just you know that that's nonsense God is not the God of nonsense he's the God of wisdom and it rings a bell in your heart doesn't it when you read in the scripture not that the just one died in the place of the just but that the just died for the unjust to bring them to God that's why he died for them to bring them to God God's not opposed to goodness and God's not opposed to holiness and if you're good enough and if you're holy enough as you are without the death of Christ being applied to you why was the death necessary at all it means that there was no real enmity between you and God well that's not the

New Testament teaching it's not the teaching of this epistle Paul says that by nature we are enmity with him we are against him and he is against us he died the just for the unjust and he rose again for our justification he died for our sins he died to pay the price of their guilt and then he rose from the dead and it was in his rising that all his work was seen to be absolutely a sufficient basis on which God could justify us and still be the just and holy God because an infinite price had been paid and had been accepted one or two inferences from the fact as it's interpreted to us what do we learn what can we infer or draw from this truth that Christ died for the ungodly what practical bearing should that have in your life and in mine well one inference we can draw is this that if

Christ had to die for the ungodly then the ungodly are in a dangerous position aren't they apart from the death of Christ and apart from conversion and being in Christ the ungodly are in a dangerous situation what is the cross it's a warning signal to sinners at the lowest level it's that it speaks to the ungodly and it tells them that God spared not his own son it tells them that when the son became sin or was made sin when he stood in the place of the ungodly it tells us that God didn't spare him but he poured out the vials of his wrath on him my friend if God spared not his own son he will spare not you nor me either us sinners

Jesus taught on his death affirms that the wrath of God rests upon sinners it teaches us that the danger that every sinner is in according to nature and it teaches us this too or we can justly infer it from our text the sinner is in a place of danger and only Christ and only Christ in his death can rescue the sinner from that place of danger there is no other savior there is no other sacrifice there is no other atonement there is no other hope of salvation apart from Christ and his death on the cross and it teaches us this too we've been centering in on this already and it's a central truth

I want to be driven home to our hearts this morning it teaches us that if Christ died for the ungodly then his death was the result of a very free and a very gracious and a very compassionate love to sinners on the part of God tells us that the death was not for the worthy but for the unworthy and I think we can draw this inference from it too because Christ has died for the ungodly the ungodly are now without excuse as far as salvation is concerned you know when the Christian talks to the non-Christian or the unconverted about their need of Christ and about the way of salvation you know what they they so often say if they're not saying well I'm good enough as I am they're saying this

[35 : 20] I'm so bad I couldn't possibly I'll have to wait till I'm better before I come to Christ I'll have to wait till I reform and reshape my whole life and some will even tell us that although Christ can save sinners he can't save sinners like them so great as their sin unfortunately today there's not many people that see the sin like that most people are blind to it but every sinner no matter what kind of sinner he or she may be is without excuse here you see the kind of word this word is the ungodly you draw a circle around it and you can put all sorts of things inside it and you can put all sorts of sinners inside it can't you you can put adulterers and whoremongers and liars and murderers and thieves right inside that circle they're all ungodly every one of them aren't they and then you can take this kind of sinner the self righteous and the the man who's pious and who is working his own way to heaven he's ungodly too and then you know what you can do you can just take yourself by the by the soles of your shoes and everything you are and dump yourself inside that world too because you're ungodly also so am I and when we put ourselves into such a terrible category the category of the ungodly oh my friend do you see where we've put ourselves at the same time we've put ourselves into another category as well into the category of those for whom

Christ died now there are men and women in their church this morning amongst us and they were ungodly and Christ died for them and then God opened their minds and their hearts and showed them what he had done for them in Christ and they believed on him what did they do when they believed on him they just committed themselves to the power of that day and they were transformed and renewed they became Christians and there are other men and women in the church this morning and they too are ungodly but one thing they have never done is this they have never brought their ungodliness or come in their ungodliness to the

Christ who died for the ungodly and my friend if you're one of them why do you go on why don't you come even this morning to Jesus why don't you make it the best remembrance day your life would ever know by remembering the purpose the reason the motivation behind the death of Christ by remembering what that death was for that it was for men and women like you who are ungodly under his wrath and curse death of God because the whole of the gospel tells us that this is what you're called to believe to believe that Christ died for the ungodly and to commit your way to him who enables

God to be just and the justifier of the ungodly that believe on Jesus that's the gospel as I know it as I understand it and I wanted this morning to bring to you the very heart and essence of the gospel I wanted to leave you once again this morning without excuse before the throne of God I'm noticing I'm sure many others are noticing it too that many of our people are coming only to the morning services and it has tended to be as it has been traditionally in our church over the years it has tended to be that in the morning the preacher speaks to the Lord's people for their help and their comfort comfort well I want to make it quite clear that if you're unconverted and out of Christ and you're only coming to the morning services you have no right to take any of the comfort that's been ministered to the Lord's people because it doesn't belong to you and if you won't come out in the evening to hear the evangelistic thrust of the sermons then there's only one thing the preacher can do and that is from time to time give an evangelistic thrust at the morning service too and set before you your lostness if you're out of

Christ man and woman let me tell you this morning again with all the power that I can bring to bear from this pulpit in the name of God and by the power of the Holy Ghost may you come to believe it you are lost and you are going to hell if you're not converted and born again and in Christ can I be straighter or fairer or blunder than that once you think I'm being hard then if I'm being hard my friend I'm being hard because I love your soul and I want you to be saved and I want you to know Christ and I want you to be godly rather than ungodly and I want you to walk with god that's why I'm saying it I am not saying it because it's easy to say I am not saying it because it's the only message to preach but I am saying it because it's the basic message to preach and I'm saying it because all the other messages I preach will mean nothing to you they'll push you further down into a lost hell if you don't get Christ what can I do more than

[42 : 07] I have done I don't know may God make the wonder of the love of the gospel clear to you this morning I can't may God show you the marvel that you're treading under your feet if you go out of this church without Christ and may God show you the danger of what you're doing if you go out without Christ because there's no other hope for the ungodly than this one and may God make you truly uncomfortable in your soul and in your mind until you come to last on the Christ who died for the ungodly every Christian in here at this moment is thanking God that Christ died for the ungodly oh my friend you begin to do it too come to grips with reality come to grips with

God in Christ the grave on the only Savior may he grant it for his name's glory and for your salvation