(continued from Part 1)

There are three things, three major things about the moment He became sin-bearer. One was this: if you think you're somebody, if you think there's one bit of worth in you, then look at what Jesus Christ had to do to save you. When you see what He went through, you see how terrible your condition is. It took nothing less than God's death to save you. It took nothing less than the most ignominious, suffering, hellish, forsaken death ever recorded just to get you redeemable. Your condition is incalculably poor…but He loved you. I want you to know love got Him through that.

Now what are you griping about, when the Lord puts things on you to make you conform to his image? My dear brother and sister, He's already saved you. You were bought with a price. You're not your own. What are you fussing about? You take the biggest problem you've ever had; would you go to the Lord and say, "Lord, here's my salvation. You take my salvation, and I'll take getting out of this mess I'm in." Would you make him that kind of a deal? You're mad if you do.

Lord, keep your mighty hand on me. Please, it is worth it, for you have redeemed me with your blood. He saved you by such a death, by such suffering, but even the death is not as impressive; even the suffering is not as impressive as the fact that He was the pure One. He was not just a Lamb, but a pure Lamb.

There was something greater than the suffering or the death for sin; not the death, but the death for sin, and that was that such a holy, pure One took upon Himself that sin. It was reckoned that Jesus Christ committed every sin you did. He has been blamed and found guilty of everything you ever did. And He did it willingly; He didn't mind because there was a chance He might have you. He took your sin for the chance He might have you.

In the mind of God, Jesus Christ committed all those sins. This is why He had to die - forgive me - He was such a great sinner. How great a sinner was He? He was the only sinner in the universe. He even took the consequences of the fall of both men and angels. He was the only rebel and the only sinner in the universe for your sake; for your sake, God dredged the sin of the universe and put it on Him that not one would be left unforgiven. That nothing could be reckoned against you. You have been made righteous, and you are righteous by the blood of Jesus Christ, who became sin for you. That you might know no sin. Praise the Lord, He took the sin away. That did not become part of His permanent nature; He triumphed over it with death. He used death to put it to death, and death, having served its purpose, He also killed it, but that was not the only point we made concerning the salvation that we have in Jesus Christ.

The other point was that if there's anything you and I need to know, it's what we just heard a second ago. We need to walk in the light of that. Now, that's not an ache all-over pain; that's a glory: that Jesus loved you and died for you, as wretched as you were, and took away your sin. You have been made captive by Him to walk in the humility of that action; to never raise your head in one boastful word about what you are, knowing what you really are. And yet, He loved you. That works humility, not pride. But in fact, we don't even have the strength for that. Jesus Christ was humiliated; Jesus Christ was humiliated by the sin.

Do you realize that while He hung on the cross, He knew the humiliation of being the greatest sinner? He knew the humiliation of being incarnate sin. He was, in fact, *sin*. The spotless Holy One who had never known it knew it all, and it humbled Him. That spirit altered you also. In the new

creation, He will be the only thing in all that new creation that is damaged. You're going to be perfect; He will not be perfect. He will bear a scar right there; an eternal scar will be the only thing left in the new creation. That scar is what will have made Him King of kings and Lord of lords.

Through no fault of his own, He became sin, He who knew no sin. By that scar you are redeemed, and that has made Him different from anything else. By that act of redemption, He became chief potentate of all creation, but in it He was so humiliated; the sin did not become a permanent part of His nature, but the humiliation did.

There is a humility in Jesus Christ from having touched sin, and it is woven into His nature. Hallelujah, Lord Jesus, you've done everything for us. He has even provided for us humility for being sinners. Does that make sense? We cannot even know how to be humble for being so sinful, but by the power of His life, which knew it before we did - oh, what a Lord, oh, such a Lord - that He loved me and gave Himself for me. Paul walked around saying, "I am the poorest of all the apostles." Then he said, "I am the least of all the sinners." Then he said, "I am the chief of sinners."

I want you to know, he did not do that; even that was not done in his own strength. The more he fellowshipped in the life of Christ, and the more that life was woven into him, the more Paul became aware of his low estate. It was by the life of his Lord that this thing was done.

Now each of us has got to come to the Lord as our Lord did; as your Lord did, and to agree to this work in your life, to consent to this work in your life. He needs your permission. But Gene, I gave my life to the Lord three years ago. You gave your life to the Lord three years ago, based on what you knew then. We must give our lives to the Lord.

Lord Jesus, I must say to you: you know there's no strength in my brothers or in me. Lord, I already know a little bit about you, and there are things of you I don't like. There are things I'm terrified of. Lord, if you're going to finish the vessel, you have no alternative but your own tools. You must apply them. Lord, with bodies clenched and heads turned the other way, with terror in our hearts, bring every brother and sister in this room to divine permission to continue your work in us, to perfect it and finish it. Let all that God has in His armory fall on us for the perfecting of the saints. Only remember grace, we pray. That is our only plea. The life of a victorious Lord, clothed in grace in that hour.

Lord, wound my brothers and sisters in this room. Permanently damage them with the sight of what you did. We must cooperate with this.

The Lord Jesus could not have made it, brothers and sisters, and now it is too difficult. Only one thing will see the Lord through the rest of His time on the cross, and that is grace. Jesus Christ knows what it means not to be able to make it. Your Lord knows what it means to be enfolded in the Father's hands and have Him say, "Son, I'll do the rest." He is also a child of grace. Jesus Christ came full of grace. He knows how to give you grace because He received it. He was overrun with it, and He dispenses it. He is not stingy with His grace; He is sometimes hidden, but He is not stingy. He can give you grace. He is full of grace, and He has it because it was given to Him. He got through the cross by it.

Did the sin fall upon the Lord, and that was finished, and the Father took Him deeper? And the sin-bearer aspect was over, and He won the victory of being Savior? I don't know. I cannot tell you

where the next thing fits in. I only want you to know that human life is broken at great cost. That now God still, even by sin, had not brought His Son to full death; that the full death of the person had not yet come. That God had to wield a greater blow than sin, greater than suffering, greater than shame, greater than ridicule, greater than His desire back there in Caiaphas' home to resent. He was long past resentment and personal feeling. Greater than the pain He knew after that or any other last fear of resentment toward those who crucified Him. Greater than those hours on the cross; greater than the pain and greater than the sin.

I want to talk to you about something more horrible than crucifixion. I have talked to you about crucifixion and the cross since our very first weekend together. I have not shied away from telling you about the cross. No brother in this room can accuse me of holding back the truth of the cross, and yet I have withheld it until this hour.

There is something greater than the cross, and there is something greater, more ignominious, more horrible, at least if not ignominious; maybe not shameful, but more terrible than the cross. God did something to His Son that He did not expect. There's no way on earth that human lips or clay tongues can form an explanation for that experience. There's nobody in this room, except possibly one sister and maybe one or two others, who has ever even sniffed the aroma of that suffering.

May God save everybody in this room from it, and yet, according to Colossians 1:24, there must be those in the church who fill up the suffering of the body. I am telling you that there will be those who will suffer this for you, and you will not touch it, and there may be some of you who are called to suffer it for the body's sake. You will probably be destroyed unless His grace is greater than I can imagine.

I've tried to figure out a way to explain this so you won't misunderstand. There isn't any way. Every brother and sister in this room will walk in here thinking, "I understand." In fact, you will *not* understand. There are things that no saint in this room has known; you never even experienced them when you were lost. There is suffering beyond suffering. There is suffering beyond human endurance. There is suffering that kills, and yet there is suffering that must be experienced for the church to enter into vicariously. And praise the Lord - also for the one who suffers it.

I ask the Lord for grace because I literally don't know the next sentence to say. Every brother and sister in this room has been down at one time or another. Some of you have been discouraged to the point of giving up the faith. There are others of you for whom this whole summer has been wretched. That's true. Where is our happy time? It's all gone away. A few of you in this room have been so despondent you have been almost out of your mind.

I remember the first time I ever knew despondency deeper than I ever dreamed a man could go through. Once in New York City at the YMCA in 1963, I believe, soon after I touched the church…by the way, I used to tell brothers, soon after they touched the church, you are about to have a terrible experience spiritually, greater than you've ever had. Because when you touch the church and give yourself to the body of Christ, you will begin to see God drill deeper in your life than He ever could have without the church. Touch the church, get in trouble; I used to say that a lot more than I do now. Maybe it bears repeating: touch the church, get in trouble.

In 1963, I touched the first aromatic smell of deeper things, and I can't explain what that thing was, and I'm not even going to mention it, but something happened. In 1964, I had another experience,

not like that one. The first time I ever knew, and I'm switching subjects, despair was one day when I had gone to doctor after doctor after doctor after doctor. I suddenly realized that medical science had done all it could, and there wasn't anything else. And unless something happened that I could not see, that bedroom was my home…and I knew despair; not a helplessness but a hopelessness, deeper than anything I ever touched in my life…and that is not what I am talking about this morning.

It is beyond words. There is physical pain, but I am not discussing that. There is confusion over knowing God's will. There is sin in your life; there is temptation before you. One of the great agonies is a choice in front of you, an immediate decision, and you've got to decide right now: this way or that. You want so much to go this way, but you're wondering if you shouldn't go that way…and all of your rationale says that way. You've got 30 seconds to make up your mind. Hell itself can't get hotter, or destitution worse than that moment. You would much rather be dead…and that is not what I am discussing.

There is the suffering for the church…in black, black hours; I don't think the brothers and sisters in this room have gotten that far. For one thing, you have not yet been made a minister of the house of God, but if you expect to be made a minister, there will be black hours in which all hope is gone. There isn't one shred of hope left in you, and all faith is dissipated. You know that you can no longer perform.

You know the true condition of the house of God, and you know there is no more new hope for her. Yet she does not respond, and you're utterly defeated. You come to the Lord and wish ten thousand times you'd never been born, and ask for something as sweet as death to overtake you; to deliver you. You know you're going to have to turn around and face the Lord's people and minister life while you carry about death hooked to your very being. Despair beyond despair…and that is not what I am talking about.

There is something more grisly, ten thousand times more grisly than I can describe in words.

"My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?

In eternity He was God. In time He was sinless and in perfect fellowship with the Father, and *the Father's life withdrew from the Son.* I'm going to make a startling statement: even a lost man doesn't know that experience. There's a verse of scripture that says He came into the world, and He is the light that lighteth all men. There is light even in the lost. There is comfort of a light in the lost. The Lord covers this; there is something of some connection with God even in the lost…but there is a withdrawal of the divine spirit. Something so immeasurable happens that cannot be described. There is resounding nothingness; the totality of emptiness.

There is something in the Bible called "outer darkness." I heard an evangelist describe it one night, and I'll never forget his words of pathos. He sees a winged being in a starless night with eyes of eye sockets, eternally blind, in a night without light, winging his way through eternal darkness. Year after year, eternity after eternity, hoping for the sound of one voice, the hope of one small ray of light, one beam, one thing to touch or feel.

Divinity disconnected itself from Jesus Christ, and there came over Him the experience of being a lost, damned soul, but worse than that: the absolute, total, indescribable withdrawal of Divine Spirit.

There came a moment when Jesus Christ was no longer God, nor was He a Christian, nor did He even have the privilege of the lost on this earth who have a constant awareness of God. There was in Him something that cannot be described: the total withdrawal of all divine consciousness, or ethereal awareness; something in the mind was uncorked and came out. Something in the man's internal being was loosed and gone, and it was as though everything in it were a hollow gong that would not sound...emptiness that cannot be described.

Jesus Christ was lost...and more than lost. He had lost all connection with heaven and earth. He was a being apart, without hope, without touch, without any sense of anything of a sensitive nature. Utter, total, absolute forsakenness, when God walks off and leaves His child. The Divine Spirit is gone, and the human spirit is dead, disconnected, and removed. The man is left stunned, overwhelmed, yet He even discovers He cannot feel overwhelmed, for there is no divine response to being overwhelmed.

In that moment, that man discovers that everything He ever knew, the deepest moment of being despondent and in despair He ever had, was, in fact, the divine encounter; it was in His Spirit that was even that experience of solace and comfort of the existence of God's nature in it. In the blackest hour He ever lived, there was at least the consciousness of God. God no longer exists, and in the shock of something Jesus Christ never even knew could happen, He cried out two words of faith, and all the rest was beyond despair: *My God, my God, Lord, why have you forsaken me?*

I want you to know it's been two thousand years, and nobody's answered that question right yet. It stands there like a monument of granite, towering into the very skies. *God, why have you forsaken me?* The very drums of heaven are silent; there is no answer. God walked away from His Son utterly. Why? Because of sin? Because of disobedience? Because of obedience? For suffering? Nobody knows; I can only tell you that within your Lord, there is an experience beyond experiences.

No matter what you touch, or what you go through, as long as you live, you may know that your Lord has gone further and tasted more; gone deeper than anything you ever dreamed. There are men who have known this experience, and its only remedy, the only hope, the only possible glimmer of hope, is self-destruction. Death would be invited as a friend within a moment, one small moment. The cry for death would come so quickly, so fast, so easily, and be welcomed with joy.

The man is left like that, and God walks away. There is no intuition. There is no understanding. There is no insight. There is no longer any knowing. He leaves without explanation. He leaves without one word of direction. He leaves without a hint. He leaves without even an insinuation. He leaves, and the man is left there not knowing what to do, crying for death.

For I would not have you ignorant, brethren, of what I suffered, for I was pressed out of measure and despaired of life. Paul tasted the fellowship of His suffering for the body of Christ. The man is left hanging there, and he hangs. He has all of the symptoms. He would gladly die. He wishes to give up the faith. God has left him, and he knows that God has left him, and he doesn't know why, and he can't find any explanation, nor any human to identify, nor help, nor strength one whit anywhere. There is no counsel, no guidance, no help, and he is left there.

Jesus Christ was totally and utterly and absolutely forsaken by his Father, and don't ever forget it.

I want to tell you something about the God you don't know. In 2 Corinthians, Paul was given a promise by the Lord Jesus: *My grace is sufficient*. That, in fact, is not true. The grace of Jesus Christ is not sufficient, and He will leave you helpless, hopeless, and alone without hope, giving you not one word of direction, nor one ounce or atom of strength. He will, in fact, forsake you and leave you, and He will not return.

To the Lord Jesus, it was one eternal moment that had no end. I can't tell you much more except I want you to know how hard it is to break the human nature. That even as the sin-bearer, there was one last blow that had to be struck, even to Jesus Christ. The Father reached into His arsenal and brought out - by far - His greatest weapon: a thousandfold greater than any other. Worse than the cross; worse than the worst crucifixion. And you know something? Only then…only then was He weak enough to die. Only then was death within the realm of His capacity. Well, that life of His would have lived except for one final, horrible, vicious blow; the death knell had sounded. God forsook His Son.

Paul said that we might be brought to death by Him that raises the dead. Who raises the dead? Jesus now raises the dead.

So little more to say; for Jesus Christ, it was one long, black, eternal, indescribable moment. For His servants, sometimes it lasts a week, a month, a year; sometimes it goes on for what seems to be an eternity. A man as hollow as a stainless steel cylinder without divine perception, walking upon this earth, not even knowing if he still loves the Lord, in ever-conscious, unrelenting agony of the soul. Not one moment does he walk or breathe or live, but he feels the very flames of hell leaping at his feet. In sleep, awake, and even in his dreams, he is left without God, and there is no hope. There is no help. Hell itself would be a respite.

It is on such suffering that the church of Jesus Christ is founded. It is on such an experience that resurrection is born. It is on such an experience that Jesus Christ stepped out of that tomb, knowing that there was nothing that could be thrown at Him over which He could not triumph, for He had swallowed hell itself. There was nothing left in the universe. There would be no crisis in church history. There would be no problem in man. No power would be unleashed in the universe. There would be no suffering that any child of God would ever know, but when He burst from that tomb, He knew, and knew He knew, that the worst was behind Him. There wasn't anything worse than this.

To this I was called as a minister, to fill up in my body, for the body's sake, the sufferings of Jesus Christ for His church, that were not completed on the cross. For this I was made a minister. Praise God for such a romance. Praise God for such a saga. Praise God for such an exclusive band of people. Praise God for His church that drinks the fullness of His cup.

When Jesus Christ knew this experience, He was finally, at last, brought to the final, ultimate humiliation. The Father who had loved so much forsook Him, would no longer have anything to do with Him, and didn't even bother to explain why. *He is not my beloved Son; in Him I am not pleased.* The Lord did not know what was going on. You have heard me say: at that moment, He did not even know if He would rise from the grave.

I want you to know your Lord knows what it's like not to know if He's going to make it. He didn't know whether or not He would make it. That is one of the most astounding facts in universal

history. He did not know if He would make it. His last, final moment was a step of total uncertainty, and blind, unfeeling, naked faith. Your Lord knows what it's like to step out there and walk in blind, unknowing, unfeeling, unknowledgeable faith, that there might be one slight hope in the counsel of God that He didn't know. Such an experience falls to the Lord's children.

The one question they ask is, *My God, why?* They turn around to find their disobedience. They cry out to heavens now made of bronze and hear nothing but the echo of their own voice. They look everywhere for God, and there is no God. They look within them for anything and find only a still, empty cylinder of brass. There is nothing. And he doesn't know it, but the divine spark of faith is still there, and if he chooses to go in madness, blindness, deafness, dumbness, stupidity, and agony, he'll walk without question. He may cry, he may moan, he may groan, but he dare not turn back. He got that grace from Jesus, who, in the final moments on the cross, walked the last steps alone in blind faith, without even a divine registration of strength or life.

I want you to know His grace is not sufficient, and you better take me at my word and believe it, brothers and sisters. His grace is not sufficient. The debate is over; the argument is sealed. His grace is not sufficient. He has forsaken his child.

One day, He rattles the tomb and cries, "Come forth!" And hallelujah, *His grace IS sufficient!*

My Lord went through this. Your Lord went through this. It is now written into His divine nature. There are those He will forsake as His Father forsook Him. It is written in His nature to forsake some. It is also written in His nature, but they will never know that till it's far, far too late and all hope is gone...it is also in His nature to never leave them nor forsake them.

One day, he rattles the tomb, and the Spirit comes back, and praise the Lord, Jesus Christ was eternally altered by that experience. He never recovered from it. In that moment He became the gentlest of all creatures, the most humble of all created beings…or uncreated. The Lord touched His "Lambship" and won. He acquiesced to the Father's treatment of Him. He dared to say, "I will… your will.

Brothers and sisters, it is written in His nature to do this to some of His children, for He experienced Himself. I am not going to encourage you by saying, "Praise the Lord" for a glorious resurrection, because those three days were the darkest days in all of eternal history: when God forsook His Son. But I want you to know that, by that act, God brought, out of one man, death to self, and He is well able to do this again…even to you.

The last blow was struck, and the nature of man died. Jesus Christ was nothing, and God was All.

I have one last sentence. I would like for you to listen carefully. When you received Jesus Christ as your Savior, you thought you had really done a smart thing. You did, in fact, make the most foolish decision of your life. You tasted His joy and His love, and you felt that heaven had come to earth. You knew that He was wonderful, and it would be like that forever. You did not know that He would not let you make "joy" into your God, and that He had higher things to do with you than you ever dreamed.

Now, let me tell you this. If you go on with Jesus Christ, mark my words today: much of your spiritual growth will be found on the edge of insanity. Much of your growth in Christ will be found at the edge of madness. You've never heard such a term. I want you to know that the Lord will

drive you to the edge to break your nature. He doesn't do that with all His children, but He will with some. The God that saved you is a serious God. Your Lord Jesus is after your life to bring it to perfection, and there is nothing He will not do to bring you to naught that He can become All.

You all know that I have not spoken to the church about this before, and now you have light you never had before. I don't know what the Lord might do. I want you to know that following Jesus Christ is a lot more serious than most of us realize.

Gather up every man, every woman who has ever tasted that cup, and bring them here before you to testify; without exception, they will say, "It was worth it."

That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection…

Brothers and sisters, I want to tell you something: It's worth it all to know Him and the passion of His love.