Sermon Series: What Does It Mean to Be Saved?
Sermon Title: Covered By the Blood

Text: **Romans 3:21-26 -- But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— 22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. 26 It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.**

Introduction: **A photo in a Canadian newspaper once revealed the steps that one man, riddled with guilt over past sins, was willing to take, at least in his mind, to appease God's wrath**. ***The picture showed him lying on his back on a dirt road. Attached to his ankle was a chain several feet long. The other end of the chain was wrapped around a rock. The caption beneath the photo explained that the bearded man was INCH BY INCH pulling the rock on a pilgrimage to a sanctuary dedicated to St. Lazarus***. Why did HE take such drastic action? Well, I suspect it was done for the same reason that others have beaten themselves with whips or cut themselves with knives or taken some other action that has brought physical pain and suffering to their lives. **These are misguided attempts that some people take to make amends for their sins**. Then there are those who seek a similar result by doing the opposite – by doing something good at great sacrifice to themselves, like joining the Peace Corps or even entering into the ministry. THERE IS WITHIN ALL HUMAN BEINGS AN INNATE DESIRE TO FEEL CLEAN, TO KNOW THAT THE STAIN AND GUILT OF SIN HAS BEEN ERASED. **It is a primal need that is as common to humanity as the universal need to be loved**.

As we continue in our series, "***What Does It Mean to Be Saved?***" this morning, I **want to cover another very important aspect of salvation that strikes at the core of this universal desire to be relieved of our guilt**. It is called the ATONEMENT. By way of a definition, **THE ATONEMENT IS THE WORK CHRIST DID IN HIS LIFE AND DEATH TO EARN OUR SALVATION – TO MOVE US FROM BEING OBJECTS OF GOD'S WRATH TO OBJECTS OF HIS GRACE AND MERCY** (*Grudem, Systematic Theology, p. 568*). The word for "***atonement***" in the New Testament can be translated as "**cover**," or "**propitiation**," which is what it means when Paul uses the term in **Romans 3:25 – (Speaking of Jesus) whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, NASB**). ***This is the process by which God becomes favorably disposed toward us by sending Jesus to pay the penalty for our sin through His sacrifice on the cross***. We did not in any way merit this sacrifice. Rather, it was purely an act of God motivated by His love for us. As we think about the ATONEMENT OF CHRIST, it should provoke some questions in us like, Why did He do it? How did He do it? And, For whom did He do it? I invite you to join me as we spend the next twenty-five minutes together attempting to answer these three questions.

Why did He do it? Here's the simple answer according to the Bible. **Jesus left the glory He had in heaven, a mere glimpse of which Peter, James and John, three of His disciples, experienced on the Mount of Transfiguration** (**Luke 9:28-32 -- Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray. 29 And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white. 30 And behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah, 31 who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. 32 Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep, but when they became fully awake they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him**) **and came to live on earth as a representative human-being** (**Hebrews 2:17 -- Therefore he (Jesus) had to be made (human) like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people**) **in simple obedience to His Father** (**Galatians 4:4-5 -- But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, 5 to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons**).

This, however, is only a partial answer to the question, **"Why did Jesus do it?"** – **He was sent by His Father**. Here's a second related question spawned by the first: "**What motivated God to send His Son to atone for our sins**?" Let me suggest two reasons from the Bible:

- **God was motivated by His love**. LOVE IS SELF-SACRIFICE FOR THE HIGHEST GOOD OF ANOTHER. It is part of God's nature to give of Himself for the benefit of others. In fact, it's part of the very fabric of HIS BEING to be LOVING. The Apostle John tells us that GOD IS LOVE (**See 1 John 4:8**). IT IS CHARACTERISTIC OF HIS NATURE TO BE LOVING. Think of it this way: The Bible says that **He has always been loving** even before He created anything (Jesus refers to His love before the 'foundation of the world' in **John 17:24**), **He is now loving** (**See Revelation 1:5 – To Him who loves us**) and **will always be loving** (**Psalm 103:17 -- But from everlasting to everlasting the Lord's love is with those who fear him**). **It makes sense then that He would love mankind** (**See John 3:16; Romans 5:8) enough to send His Son to redeem us**.
- **God was motivated by His justice**. **The justice of God requires that the penalty imposed by God for our sin (Romans 6:23 -- for the wages of sin is death) must be paid.** Let me be clear: There are only two ways to spend eternity with God in heaven. (**1**) **Never Sin** – in which case there is no penalty for sin to be paid. This is, however, an impossibility. In fact, one of the purposes of God's law was to reveal sin in us according to **Romans 3:20 -- Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God**. The only other option available to us as sinners is the second one …. (**2**) **To be forgiven of our sin through personal faith in Christ's atoning sacrifice on the cross**. This payment to satisfy the justice of God could only be made by someone who had not sinned. Paul explains that this is why God sent Jesus Christ in **2 Corinthians 5:21 -- For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God**. **So why did Jesus offer Himself to pay for our sins? Because the love of God and justice of God required it**. There simply was no other way (**Luke 24:25-26 – (Jesus speaking to two men after His resurrection on the road to Emmaus) --** O **foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Was it not NECESSARY that the Christ should suffer these things…**?) Listen: **IF SOMETHING IS NECESSARY, IT IS ESSENTIAL. YOU CAN'T DO WITHOUT IT**. **David Martinez was competing on a national cooking show with the chance of a lifetime – to make his favorite dessert for a handful of the great master chefs of the world.** He and the other contestants had the opportunity to ask the pros for advice, then to select the specific ingredients for each of their concoctions. Finally, the competition began, and it wasn't too long into it before David realized he had forgotten the most important ingredient! To make a stellar rice pudding, it is important to remember the rice! Add to that the fact that he was not permitted to go back and correct his mistake, and, well, his dessert was doomed to failure until a fellow contestant shared her rice with him. What did David Martinez learn from being on the show beyond a great lesson in generosity? If you're going to make rice pudding, don't forget the rice. **When it comes to our salvation, it was necessary/essential for Christ to die in our place for our sins. There was simply no other way for us to inherit abundant and eternal life.** (**Summary: Why did He do it? Jesus was sent by His Father to die for us to demonstrate His love and satisfy His justice. It was necessary for Him to do this in order for us to be saved**.)

How did He do it?

- **Christ obeyed for us*. This is called active obedience***. If Jesus needed only sinlessness to offer Himself in payment for our sins and not a life of obedience to God, He could have died for us when He was but an infant. But the Bible says that at '**just the right time…Christ died for the ungodly** (**See Romans 5:6**).' This meant that He had to obey His Father for thirty-three years. **In so doing, He fulfilled all righteousness** (**Matthew 3:15 -- It is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness**), **something the first Adam and all descended from him failed to do**. This made it possible for Christ to become our righteousness (**1 Corinthians 1:30 -- Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom and our righteousness and sanctification and redemption**).
- **Christ suffered for us*. This is called passive obedience***.
  - **Jesus' life was marked by suffering**. He learned obedience from the things He suffered (**See Hebrews 5:8**). He endured hostility from sinful men (**See Hebrews 12:3-4**). Even the prophet Isaiah, some seven

hundred years before His birth, recognized that as the Messiah of God, Jesus had to suffer (**Isaiah 53:3-5 -- He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace**).

- **Jesus' death was marked by suffering**. His pain only intensified as He drew near to His final days.
  - **He suffered the pain of crucifixion**. Those who were crucified were forced to inflict upon themselves a very slow death by suffocation. It was a long, drawn-out agony designed to inflict the greatest possible suffering.
  - **He suffered the pain of sin**. Jesus was perfectly holy. He hated sin with His entire being (**Matthew 5:29-30 -- If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. 30 And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell**). Yet at Calvary, He took on Himself all the offenses of those who would someday be saved (**See 2 Corinthians 5:21**).
  - **He suffered the pain of abandonment**. On the cross, Jesus faced His agony alone. His disciples left Him as soon as He was arrested (**See Matthew 26:56**). But far worse, our Lord was also deprived of the closeness He enjoyed with the Father (**See Matthew 27:46**). As the One who bore our sin, He was cut off from the sweet fellowship that had been His greatest joy in a life filled with sorrow.
  - **He suffered the pain of God's wrath**. As He died in our place, Jesus took upon Himself the wrath of God that should have been ours to suffer (**Romans 3:25-26 – (Speaking of Jesus) whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. 26 It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus**). He took the punishment intended for us and, in so doing, delivered us from death.

A duck hunter was with a friend in the wide-open land of southeastern Georgia. Far away on the horizon, he noticed a cloud of smoke. Soon, he could hear crackling as the wind shifted. He realized the terrible truth: a brushfire was advancing so fast they couldn't outrun it. Rifling through his pockets, he soon found what he was looking for-a book of matches. ***He lit a small fire around the two of them. Soon they were standing in a circle of blackened earth, waiting for the fire to come***. They didn't have to wait long. They covered their mouths with handkerchiefs and braced themselves. The fire came near--and swept over them. But they were completely unhurt, untouched. **Fire would not pass where fire had already passed**. God's wrath is compared to a consuming fire in **Isaiah 30:27**. It is coming just as He promised. However, if you stand in the burned-over place, not a hair of your head will be singed. ***Christ's death is the burned-over place***. There we huddle, hardly believing yet relieved to have escaped the flames. (**Summary: Why did He do it? Jesus was sent by His Father to die for us to demonstrate His love and satisfy His justice. It was necessary for Him to do this in order for us to be saved**. **How did He do it? Jesus obeyed God and suffered in our place for our sin.**)

For whom did He do it? Jesus died to bring those He has chosen into a saving relationship with God (**Ephesians 5:25 -- Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her**). **The purpose of our Lord's sacrifice was not to make salvation merely a possibility for mankind, *but to actually save His people from their sins*** (**Matthew 1:21 – She (a virgin) will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."** Note that this is not merely a reference to the Jews but to the Messiah's people—which Luke demonstrates includes Jews, Samaritans and Gentiles—**Acts 2:4; 8:17; 10:44**). **If we say that Christ died for the sins of everyone, then it would seem that God would be acting unjustly by eternally punishing some on the basis of sins for which Christ has already suffered and died**. Now, some people might object to this narrow view of the atonement and quote **John 3:16-17,** which says, "**For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world**

to condemn the world, but to save the world through him." However, it is clear from the verses that follow that Jesus did not intend to save everyone, but only those who believe in Him (**John 3:18 -- Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God**). **Wayne Grudem** provides this distinction when it comes to the atonement (Systematic Theology, pgs 601-02): It is true to say that "***Christ died to bring the free offer of the gospel to all people.***" But it is equally accurate to say, "***Christ died to actually pay the penalty for all the sins of His people only***." And that is what the atonement accomplished.

Conclusion: So, let's review one more time: **Why did Jesus do it? Jesus was sent by His Father to die for us to demonstrate His love and satisfy His justice. It was necessary for Him to do this in order for us to be saved**. **How did He do it? Jesus obeyed God and suffered in our place for our sin. For whom did He do it? For those who believe in Him**.

Do you believe in Jesus? Have you placed your trust in Him as the atoning sacrifice for the sins and offenses that you've committed against a holy God and for which you deserve His judgment? In the shedding of His blood, Christ demonstrated that God is both loving and just. In addition, He provided the only way for us to be reconciled to our Heavenly Father.

Louis Pasteur's coworker in the demonstration of what used to be called the germ theory was Dr. Felix Ruh, a Jewish doctor in Paris. The physician's granddaughter had died of black diphtheria, and Dr. Ruh, vowing he would find out what had killed his granddaughter, locked himself in his laboratory for days. He emerged with a fierce determination to prove, with his colleague Louis Pasteur, that the germ theory was more than a theory. The medical association had disapproved of Pasteur and had succeeded in getting him exiled, but he did not go far from Paris. He hid in the forest and erected a laboratory in which to continue his forbidden research. Twenty beautiful horses were led out into the forest to the improvised laboratory. Scientists, doctors, and nurses came to watch the experiment. Ruh opened a steel vault and took out a large pail filled with black diphtheria germs, which he had cultured carefully for months. There were enough germs in that pail to kill everyone in France. The scientist went to each horse and swabbed its nostrils, tongue, throat, and eyes with the deadly germs. Every horse except one developed a terrific fever and died. Most of the doctors and scientists wearied of the experiment and did not remain for what they thought would be the death of the remaining horse. For several more days, this final horse lingered, lying pathetically on the ground. While Ruh, Pasteur, and several others were sleeping on cots in the stables, the orderly on duty had been instructed to awaken the scientists should there be any change in the animal's temperature during the night. About two o'clock in the morning, the temperature showed a half-degree decrease, and the orderly awakened Dr. Ruh. By morning, the thermometer had dropped two more degrees. By night, the fever was entirely gone, and the horse was able to stand, eat, and drink. Then Dr. Ruh took a sledgehammer and struck that beautiful horse a deathblow between the eyes. The scientist drew all the blood from the veins of this animal that had developed the black diphtheria but had overcome it. **The scientists drove as fast as they could to the municipal hospital in Paris. They forced their way past the superintendent and the guards and went into the ward where three hundred babies lay, segregated to die from black diphtheria. With the blood of the horse, they forcibly inoculated every one of the babies. All but three lived and recovered completely**. **They were saved by the blood of an overcomer. How about you? Have you been saved by the blood of an overcomer – the Lord Jesus Christ? If not, you can be right now.**