

Preached on: Sunday, March 23, 2008

Anchored in Truth Ministries

1915 Avalon Ave.
Muscle Shoals, AL 35661

Website: www.anchoredintruth.org

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/anchoredintruth

Well, let's go to Calvary this morning. Look over at Mark 15. The Gospel of Mark 15.

I heard about a little girl who was out with her father buying new shoes for Easter Sunday and I'm not the father and the little girl is not my little girl, I read this. The point was that mom was pregnant with their third child and so she couldn't get out and get around so dad was going to take her out and buy her some shoes and they found some shoes and she tried them on and she was so excited and the father thought, "You know, I need to really teach my daughter about the true meaning of Easter." And so he said, "Sweetheart, do you really know what Easter means?" Now this is a little bitty girl. She said, "Yes, daddy, I know." He said, "Well, go ahead and tell me what does Easter mean?" And she went like this, "Surprise!" And that dad said, "You know, I think she's got it." Surprise death. Surprise hell. Surprise the grave. Surprise discouraged disciples. Surprised skeptical world. He is risen. Amen.

Well, we're gonna look at before the cross right before his crucifixion. Mark 15 beginning in verse 6, we'll go through verse 15 and then read, read verse 24.

6 Now at the feast [this is Pilate, the Roman governor] he [Pilate] used to release for them any one prisoner whom they requested. 7 The man named Barabbas had been imprisoned with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the insurrection. 8 The crowd went up and began asking him to do as he had been accustomed to do for them. 9 Pilate answered them, saying, "Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?"

Now, boy, that was a sarcastic jab because they hated Jesus being called the King of the Jews. Verse 10,

10 For he was aware that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy. 11 But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to ask him to release Barabbas for them instead. 12 Answering again, Pilate said to them, "Then what shall I do with Him whom you call the King of the Jews?" 13 They shouted back, "Crucify Him!" 14 But Pilate said to them, "Why, what evil has He done?" And they shouted all the more, "Crucify Him!" 15 Wishing

to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas for them, and after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified.

Verse 24,

24 And they crucified Him, and divided up His garments among themselves, casting lots for them to decide what each man should take.

I just finished reading a book about John Adams, our second President, and Thomas Jefferson became our third President after him and the most significant event of Thomas Jefferson's presidency, at least his first term, was the Louisiana Purchase. He purchased this mass land area that made up about a third of our present country for \$15 million. Now that is a great exchange. Two things significantly we look back on and realize about the Louisiana Purchase. Number 1 was we got a lot for a little, and number 2, it connected the East and the West of our country into one whole. We got a lot for almost nothing considering what little was paid and it sealed the union of the East and the West forming one country. Well, that's really what Calvary did for us. We get a lot for nothing and it unites a holy God with sinful man.

I've entitled this "The Verdict" as we see Pilate giving his verdict on this day concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, but also God has some verdicts here and we'll, we'll look at all of those in just a moment but first I just want to do something of a running commentary of the text.

Now in verse 6 it says at this feast Pilate, the Roman governor, you remember that the Jews are under the, uh, oversight of in, enslaved to Rome at this time. They're, they're captive and, uh, the Romans, uh, had a hard time with the Jews. Everybody that's tried to control the Jews have had a hard time and the last thing they wanted, they wanted was some sort of riot or some sort of insurrection among the Jews and so Pilate, the Roman governor here over Jerusalem, wants to do anything he can to keep these Jewish authorities satisfied and one of the things they did was release someone to them every year at the Passover and so that's what he's talking about in verse 6. I think this was built on the symbolism of the children of Israel being released from Egyptian captivity.

So he's talking to them. Now it comes, we go to verse 7 and the man named Barabbas is mentioned, that he was an insurrectionist. They called these guys dagger men. These are men who were, uh, zealous patriots for Jewish independence and they were known to go up beside a Roman guard or a Roman official and take out a small dagger and stab him to death and put it back under their cloak and run off. So he was a murderer, an insurrectionist.

Then when you come to verses 8, 9 and 10, the crowd begin to ask him, "Release for us somebody." Pilate begins to ridiculingly say, "Well, why don't I release this Jesus, your King, the King of the Jews?" And they say, "No, we don't want you to release Jesus, we want you to release Barabbas for us instead."

Now these religious authorities, these Jewish leaders were devoured by envy over Jesus Christ. Jesus had gained fame, he had gained a following, and he could do miracles, and plus Jesus who was the truth, dismantled the religious system whereby they got power and control over the people. It is still that way today. There's so many that want a religious system to be front and center because it is a power, an empowering rather and a controlling mechanism over the lives of people but Christ liberates from all of that.

Then there's an interlude and probably during this interlude is where verse 11 comes in. It says the chief priests stirred up the crowd to ask him to release Barabbas to them instead. This is probably when Pilate went in and talked to his wife about what is he gonna do about their requesting Jesus to be crucified.

Then verses 12 and 13, the multitude here turn on Jesus. Pilate says, verse 12, "What shall I do with him whom you call the King of the Jews?" Verse 13, "They shouted back, 'Crucify Him!'" Now this is quite a stark change from what they thought about Jesus earlier on. When Jesus was feeding the multitudes, when Jesus was healing the sick, when Jesus was raising their dead while they loved him and they followed him enthusiastically, but now he's strangely quiet and he's seemingly helpless. He's not the Messiah they thought he would be. He's not the Savior they in their minds had figured out that he ought to be.

I wonder sometimes if some of you might be a little disappointed in Jesus. He's not quite what you figured him out to be. His demands are too high. His, his standards are too high. It's, I saw a little flash of a news program just this week and, you know, they're talking about things about Easter and in their research, I forgot what company did this research about religion in America, they found out that the majority of people are looking for church – now listen to this – the majority are looking for churches with stricter theology and higher moral standards. How about that? Maybe that's an awakening. They want stricter theology, they want Bible doctrine not the words of men, and higher moral standards. I thought that was interesting.

Well, in this day like most days, they had Jesus figured out to be the kind of Messiah that would please them and do as they wanted and meet their needs and their whims and their desires, but now he's quiet and he's being delivered over to be crucified. They go from Palm Sunday crying hosanna now to what's called Good Friday saying crucify him. Their commitment to follow the Messiah was not based on what the word of God taught but based on their subjective emotional whims.

Verse 14, Pilate answers back to them, "Well, why? What evil has He done?" I believe Pilate was absolutely convinced Jesus was innocent of anything wrong but he was caught in the middle here.

Then verse 15, Pilate bites the dust. Look at the phrase, verse 15, "Wishing to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas for them, and after having Jesus scourged, he delivered him or handed Him over to be crucified." Scourging was a, a flogging they would give you with a cat of nine tails. They would take and tie your hands up and over a high post

and stretched your back out and a, a, a whip that had nine strands and often bone and metal would be tied in the strands, it would dig into the back and rip the flesh off and expose veins and muscles and sometimes internal organs and often people died during the flogging itself.

Well, that's the setting. Pilate examines Jesus. Pilate goes to the people. Pilate says, "I'm gonna release someone. I do it every year at this time commemorating your release from Egyptian captivity. Shall I release Christ, this Jesus, your King?" And they said, "No. We'll take the murdering insurrectionist. Crucify Jesus!" Pilate gives in and gives Jesus over to be crucified.

Now let's go to some conclusions for practical application here and we'll look, first of all, at Pilate's verdict and Pilate's verdict was this: innocent but condemned to crucifixion. Innocent but condemned to crucifixion. Now what is this based on? It's based on judicial cowardice. Here Pilate's true character comes shining through. Pilate's colors are yellow and more yellow. Corrupt, self-serving politicians who live off the sacrifices of the common man like ticks on a yard dog are nothing new. These Jews threatened Pilate with a riot. He knows that'll displease Caesar and Pilate will do anything to get them to calm back down. Pilate takes his stand on Christ, the wrong stand, but one thing this does teach us and you must grasp this, Pilate shows us you can't evade Jesus Christ. You cannot evade him. You cannot avoid him. You have to take a stand about him. You have to. You can't get around him. Pilate was looking for every way to sidestep this issue and not have to deal with this. His wife even told him she was troubled in a dream about him but Pilate couldn't evade Jesus Christ and neither can you.

In Matthew 12:30 the Bible says, "He who is not, who is, rather he who is with Me is not against Me." And then Mark 9:40, "He who is not against us is for us." Jesus pointing out with the positive and the negative, "You're either for Me or you're against Me. You're either against Me or for Me." There's just no neutral ground and you may say, "Well, I'm not really devoted to Christ and I'm not sold out to Christ but I believe He's a good man and I believe He's Savior of the world." Listen, if you're not really for him, you're really against him. There's no neutral ground with Jesus Christ. You don't take the Lord of glory and put him in your pocket as a good luck charm and whip him out or lift him out some day when you might need him. You bow before him as Lord and he's Lord of all or he's not Lord at all.

You can't evade Jesus Christ. On judgment day there'll be only two groups: those who are for him and those who are against him, but by then it will be too late. The imperative of the Scripture is always now. Now turn to Christ. Now believe in him. Now treasure him. Now confess your sins and ask for his forgiveness. The Psalmist said today, today that you would listen to his voice. The Bible never says tomorrow. The Bible never says next week or next month or next year. Today hear his voice and bow before him as your Savior and your Lord, your King.

Pilate's verdict of Jesus Christ. Innocent but condemned to crucifixion. But I want to look beyond this text and get the systematic overview of teaching about the cross and bring in

three verdicts from God. First of all, the first verdict of God is he's innocent but condemned to crucifixion. Now if you look at that you might say, "Well, that's what Pilate said, is it not?" It is. Jesus or rather the Father's verdict of Jesus was, first of all, the same as Pilate, innocent but condemned to crucifixion. The Father looked down on Jesus when he began his earthly ministry, he was baptized by John the Baptist and the Father spoke from heaven and said, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased." Do you realize God has never and could never say that about any other human who's ever walked the earth other than his Son Jesus Christ? "The One in whom I am well-pleased." He's pure. He's perfect. He's sinless. He's righteous.

So God the Father agrees with Pilate, of all people, innocent but I'm condemning him to crucifixion. A couple of cross references here. Acts 2:22 and 23, "Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know--this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death." God predetermined this. God caused this innocent one to be crucified. God said, "You're innocent but I'm condemning You to crucifixion." 1 Peter 3:18, "For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just," he's innocent, "for the unjust," that's us, "so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit." You see, the point is if Christ were not perfect and pure, if he were not the spotless Lamb, he could not die for the sins of men. He had to be innocent. Innocent, pure and perfect but delivered over for our sins. In 1 John 3:5 the Bible says, "And you know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin." He's innocent but the Father condemns him to crucifixion, same as Pilate's verdict.

Well, that's not the only verdict God gives of Jesus on this day at the cross. God the Father gives a second verdict and the second one is: guilty by reason of substitution. "Well, he's innocent." Yes, he was innocent, perfectly innocent, holy and righteous, had never sinned, not one spot or trace of impurity or unrighteousness could ever be found in him but on this day the Father declares him guilty by reason of substitution. Listen to 2 Corinthians 5:21, "He made Him," that's God the Father made God the Son Jesus, "He," God, "made Him," Jesus, "who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." God the Father chose to look on Jesus on that day on the cross and look upon him as if he had committed all the sins we ever commit. The only way we could be forgiven, the only way Easter could have any meaning, the only way we can have victory and know that heaven is ours and God is ours in this life is if Jesus became guilty and stood in our place before God substituting for us, taking the wrath of God in our place.

You see, it was God's sovereign plan that all this would happen. You didn't think that all this was just going on. You didn't think that they just happened to arrest Jesus that night in the garden of Gethsemane and bring him in to the Sanhedrin and mistreat him and spit on him and abuse him and ridicule him and come to Pilate and Pilate just happened to arbitrarily decide to have him crucified. No, listen friend, it is comforting to know that God's hand was behind Pilate's hand.

The Bible says in Galatians 3:13, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us." We were all lawbreakers and the Bible says we're all cursed of God but Christ substituted in our place and he became a curse for us. The Bible says, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree." And in our major text, Mark 15, we saw what Jesus endured for us. Though innocent and though sinless, he endured the guilt and the condemnation of the grossest lawbreaker. Pilate ridicules him. He's repulsive to the Jews, his own people, the Jewish leaders and isn't it amazing what Pilate avoids and what the Jews are repulsed by, I am so desirous of. I am so drawn to him.

You see, really they wanted to kill Jesus as quickly and quietly as possible. They were working this thing out and trying to get it over with as quickly and quietly as they could. Isn't it amazing that this is the most publicized, read about and spoken of event in all of human history? Be sure your sins will find you out. Nothing that will be covered, Jesus said, that will not be revealed.

And then they began to say, "Crucify Him!" Of course, this cry was orchestrated by the religious leaders and it must have cut through the heart of Jesus like a hot dagger. These were his people. He birthed them through Abraham, called Abraham out of Ur of Chaldees to start a nation. He carried them and covered for them and protected them and brought them to fruition in, in Egypt and, and did all the provisions for them through all of those years and now he has come to them, his people, the Jews, and he's about to die and all he hears is their vengeful, hatred cry, "Crucify Him!"

The most abused child, the most battered wife, the most brutalized prisoner of war, none can compare to the rejection that Jesus felt on this day. Did he hear one comforting voice? Did he see one concerned tear? Did he receive one encouraging embrace? No. Only the piercing pleas of his own people yelling in a frenzied cry, "Crucify Him!" They're like a school of swarming piranha around a dead carcass, intent only on satisfying their desperate appetite but listen, remember, behind it all was the hand of God.

In God's infinite love, Christ was substituting for us, he was taking our place and therefore our standing of guilt for us, and he took all of that and when he was our substitute, our guilt was taken by him, our sin was borne by him, the wrath of God crushed him considering him guilty because he stood in our place. You know, there's a real sense in which your sin put him there.

I heard about a preacher who was gonna preach on the cross and he stayed up late on Saturday night studying his text and he just was so meditating on the cross of Jesus Christ and he had a dream and he said in that dream he saw himself there on Calvary the day Jesus was being crucified and he was 100 or so yards away and he ran up to the crowd kind of around the cross sneering at Jesus and laughing at Jesus and he shook a couple of them and said, "Don't ridicule Him! Don't do this! Help Him come off the cross! You can't kill Him!" And they just pushed him off. He grabbed the shoulder of one of those Roman soldiers and said, "Help Him! Help Him! Don't let Him die!" And the shoulder just, soldier just pushed him away. He looked ahead and there was one Roman soldier

standing 10 feet from the cross with his back to him, that soldier had a hammer in one hand and a spear in the other. He was the very soldier who had nailed the nails and punctured the wound into Jesus' side. That preacher ran up to that soldier and grabbed him by the shoulders and spun him around and before he could say, "Stop!" he saw that instead of a Roman soldier's face, that was his face.

Our sin nailed him to the cross. He was dying in our place. Your adultery nailed Jesus to the cross. "Pastor, I've never really committed adultery." Have you ever lusted in your heart? Jesus said you're an adulterer. Your murder nailed Jesus to the cross. "I've never murdered anyone." Have you ever hated in your heart? Jesus said that's the same as murder in the eyes of a holy God. Your lying nailed Jesus to the cross. Your cheating nailed Jesus to the cross. Your deceiving nailed Jesus to the cross. Your selfishness nailed Jesus to the cross. Your pride nailed Jesus to the cross. The Father's verdict of Jesus: guilty by reason of substitution. He's taking our place.

Well, first of all, the Father said, "I want to render the verdict that he's innocent but condemned to crucifixion." He had to be pure and innocent or he wouldn't qualify as Savior. Secondly, the Father says, "He's guilty by reason of substitution." And then lastly, we have a last verdict concerning us, concerning those who believe on Christ: not guilty by reason of substitution. That's God's verdict at Calvary for all who believe on Jesus Christ. Not guilty by reason of substitution.

Isaiah 53:6 and 8, "All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him. By oppression and judgment He was taken away; And as for His generation, who considered That He was cut off out of the land of the living For the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke was due?" The stroke was due us and it fell on Jesus but when Jesus died on the cross for those who would believe on him, it is at that moment that the Father in the holy halls of divine jurisprudence brought down his gavel upon the immutable judgment bar of heaven and he made a declaration that riveted its way to the utter ends of the universe, a declarating, declaration that made the angels sing and demons shudder, the clear clarion, unmistakable declaration, "Not guilty by reason of My Son's substitution on their behalf."

Just to help us meditate on the glory of this. I just went through the alphabet not trying to be clever, just want you to grasp it. He, the innocent, was attacked so that I, the guilty, could attain glory. He, the innocent, was beaten so that I, the guilty, could be blameless. He, the innocent, was condemned so that I, the guilty, could be cleared. He, the innocent, was demeaned so that I, the guilty, could be delivered. He, the innocent, was executed so that I, the guilty, might be excused. He, the innocent, was framed so that I, the guilty, could be forgiven. He, the innocent, was guilty so that I, the guilty, might be granted eternal life. He, the innocent, was hurt so that I, the guilty, might be healed. He, the innocent, was insulted that I, the guilty, could obtain incorruption. He, the guilty, was judged so that I, or he, the innocent, was judged so that I, the guilty, could be justified. He, the innocent, was killed so that I, the guilty, could become his kin. He, the innocent, was lashed so that I, the guilty, could know love. He, the innocent, was murdered so that I, the guilty, could be made new. He, the innocent, was named among sinners so that I,

the guilty would be named among saints. He, the innocent, was oppressed so that I, the guilty, could be an overcomer. He, the innocent, was punished so that I, the guilty, could be pardoned. He, the innocent, was quiet before his accusers so that I, the guilty, would have quiet rest before a holy God. He, the innocent, was ridiculed that I, the guilty, might be righteous. He, the innocent, was smitten of God so that I, the guilty, could know the salvation of God. He, the innocent, was tortured so that I, the guilty, might be a trophy of grace. He, the innocent, was undermined so that I, the guilty, might have union with God. He, the innocent, was called a villain so that I, the guilty, could be called a victor. He, the innocent, was whipped so that I the guilty could be a winner. He, the innocent, was xed out of life so that I, the guilty, could be xeroxed in the Lamb's book of life. He, the innocent, was yelled at so I, the guilty, could yell glory. He, the innocent, was considered a demonic zealot that I, the guilty, might inherit divine Zion. A great exchange took place. You are Barabbas. You are guilty. You can go free because God crucified him. Divine justice was done.

Say, "Pastor, it's Easter. It's about victory. It's about celebration. It's about a new day." But you know what, our culture has done the same thing with Easter they've done with Christmas, they want to keep it at a baby in a manger and don't give me anymore truth because I can make this little promise of this baby in a manger mean just about anything I want it to mean and Easter's become something of the same thing. It's about a new day, a new hope, a new peace, a new love, a new something and I can, if you just leave it on the resurrection and nothing more, you can make Easter mean just about anything you want it to but, dear friend, there's no true Easter, there's no bright morning of Easter without the dark night of Calvary. That's why there's Easter, and that's why Easter's victorious, and that's why Easter's glorious, and that's why Easter's wondrous because he took our sin and dark Calvary and he rose from the dead, the Bible says, should be proclaiming forth our justification from that sin.

Listen to Romans 4:25, "He who was delivered over for our transgressions," you've gotta have that part, "and was raised because of our justification." "What does that mean, pastor?" God delivered him over because in love we will never comprehend God chose to take his pure and innocent and righteous Son and look on him as if he committed all the sins we ever have or will commit and God crushed him with divine wrath on the cross, he was delivered over for those transgressions and then as Jesus, the holy, righteous, second person of the Godhead fully received the wrath we deserve, he absolutely perfectly received divine justice for all the crimes and the deeds and the transgressions that we committed. The Father looked down on his Son and he said, "You have done the job perfectly. There's nothing more to do. Arise, My love." He was raised because now we have justification. It is not through your baptism, it is not through your works, it is not through a church sacrament or a church ritual, it is not through keeping the law or the 10 Commandments or cleaning up your life, it is Christ's death that causes you to be righteous if you know him as Lord and Savior. If you've come to believe on him and you've taken your cross, your sins rather to him and confessed that you're a sinner before a holy God and that there's nothing good in you and nothing you can do to save yourself and throw yourself in, on, in faith on the merits of Jesus Christ, a great exchange takes place. Your sin was imputed to Jesus on Calvary and the wrath of God came on Jesus for

you and then the righteousness of Jesus Christ is placed in you and God looks on you not based on your performance, not based on your works but he looks on, at you based on the righteousness of his Son given to you. Your sin put on Christ. Christ's righteousness put in you. That's a great exchange but let's just always remember there's no glorious Easter morning without the darkness of Calvary's night. There's no justification without his being delivered over for our transgressions.

Now do you remember what happened after Jesus was raised? Have you ever asked yourself, "Why didn't God just make Him right? Why didn't God just make Him perfect?" You remember Thomas came up, Doubting Thomas, and Jesus said, "Thomas, stick your finger in these nail prints in My hands. Thomas, stick your hand in the, the spear hole in My side." He's resurrected but he's still scarred. Have you ever wondered about that? Why did God do that? Why the print of the nails? Why the wound in the side? Well, the Scripture doesn't tell us specifically but perhaps it is to show that you will not see Jesus if you will not see the wounds. Until you see the wounds, you don't see Jesus because your sins caused the wounds in Jesus. The resurrected Lord is resurrected forever but he's still the scarred Lord. He's not bound by death but he is wounded for eternity.

Isaiah 53:5 says, "But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; and The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed." Now listen to me very carefully: if Jesus did not actually, physically, literally rise from the dead by the power of his Father, that means the Father was not satisfied with his death for your sins and his death on your behalf. So if he's still in the grave, you are still in your sins and you are under the wrath of God now and will be forever. But if he did rise from the dead, if the Father did raise him, then that's because the Father said, "I am satisfied. You took the place of My children, You took their wrath and judgment in My place and every tiny ounce of just wrath and condemnation they should receive and endure in hell, I place it on You, My Son, and You have completely extinguished My wrath against them in Your own body on the cross. So therefore it's finished. Arise, My love."

So every time you think about the resurrection, here's what you need to think, you need to think of dark Calvary, then you need to think this, praise God it's finished. God raised him because my work for my sin to be forgiven is all settled and done. It's over forever and ever and ever. Now the problem is do you know Christ? Have you believed on him? I'm not asking have you walked to the front of a building or prayed a prayer but has there been a changed heart, a changed heart whereby you felt and sensed your need of Christ and the weight of your sin and you're not playing games anymore, you're not dotting i's and crossing t's, you're not just going to church but from you heart you've gone to Jesus and said, "Jesus, You're the only hope I have. You're everything I have. If you don't save me, I'm sunk. I place my faith in You, Lord Jesus. Take me, save me, forgive me, and give me Easter morning joy."

Let's all stand together in prayer.