

Romans 3:21-31
“The Wonder Of It All”

Greeting / Welcome / Introduction

(Overview/Introduction)

Ten verses today, and they are packed with Gospel power - Telling us of the reality of our sin and our need for a savior - They tell us Who that Savior is, how we come to Him - And how it is all done by the Grace of God

Frederic Godet, a 19th century theologian called Romans; ***“The cathedral of the Christian faith”***

In 1513 a devout Catholic Monk, wrestling with his own inner turmoil of faith pondered these words in Romans 1:17; ***“...the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “The Just shall live by faith.”*** The monk went on to say: *“Night and day I pondered until . . . I grasped the truth that the righteousness of God is that righteousness whereby, through Grace and sheer Mercy, He justifies us by faith. Therefore I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise.”*

That Monk was Martin Luther and his experience led to the reformation movement and the birth of Protestantism

Augustine was converted in A.D. 380 by reading Romans 13:13&14

John Wesley gained assurance of salvation by hearing Luther’s commentary on Romans

And John Calvin wrote about Romans; *“When anyone understands this Epistle, he has a passage opened to him to the understanding of the whole Scripture.”*

I mention these men to highlight how powerfully this book, Paul’s Epistle to the church in Rome impacted men who became influential in the growth of the Christian faith - It impacted them spiritually, personally and practically - It moved them and motivated them

It can and will do the same to us if we read and study and ponder and consider and meditate on these verses, and all of Scripture - If we are open to a move of the Holy Spirit on our lives and our church

The same Holy Spirit who came down with tongues of fire at Pentecost
The same Holy Spirit who came upon and led those men and many others from Church history - The same Holy Spirit here today calling and moving on us and our church - Calling us not only to understanding of Scripture but of practical, Biblical living - Calling us to the “Great Commission” - Calling us to GO! - AMEN?

(Read Romans 3:21-31)

In today's verses we will learn;

- About the Righteousness of God apart from the law
- That ALL have sinned
- About being “justified freely”
- Of redemption through Christ Jesus
- And about Jesus being a propitiation as a demonstration of God’s righteousness

As we go through the verses today we will encounter some theological terms and phrases that Paul uses - I want to define these with a practical, Biblical application so that we might know more fully where we came from, where we are, where we heading and how we might apply these Scriptures to our lives so that we can do what we've been called by God to do

So that on That Day when we stand in the Presence of The Lord we will hear those words spoken in the parable of the talents in Matthew 25; ***“Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord.”***
- AMEN?

(Review of Romans chapters 1-3:20)

Chapter 1 - Paul introduced us to the Gospel, telling us: *“I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to Salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek”* (v.16)

- That the righteousness of God is revealed (v.17) by faith - It is unobtainable by human effort of any kind
- That the wrath of God has also been revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness (v.18) - A righteous God must respond and deal with our sin
- And that the knowledge of God is revealed or made manifest to us, by God - Everyone has the knowledge of God written upon their hearts and can see His invisible attributes in the things that are made Paul writes

Therefore, everyone is without excuse - No excuses - No good enough - No look at me/Look what I did

Chapter 2 - V.1 is a most damning proclamation, telling us we who judge are inexcusable because we condemn ourselves for we do the very things we judge others for

Paul further writes that God's judgement is according to His Righteousness and Truth - No one escapes from the truth

He says all are guilty; Jew and Gentile alike and that all are in need of the Gospel; God's saving Grace found in Jesus Christ

Chapter 3 - Last week in the first part of chapter 3 we heard Paul quoting Psalm 14 confirming the OT scriptures that; ***"there is none righteous, no not one"*** - And that; ***"there is none who does good, no not one"***

He continues, telling us that the law shuts us up and declares the whole world guilty (v.19) - And in v.20 that it is because of the law that we have the knowledge of sin - The law reveals our sin

So what then...?

V.21 - So we saw in chapter 1 that the righteousness of God has been revealed in the Gospel and it is from faith to faith - Here in v.21 he elaborates telling us that not only has it been revealed but that it's been revealed apart from the Law and that the Law and the Prophets are witness to it

Now we know the law is perfectly righteous because it came from God - But Paul also told us that the law, although righteous does not have the power to save - Righteousness has been revealed and so to the Law has been revealed - The law is a revelation from God of His perfect moral standard and it is a witness to His righteousness

What did the Prophets witness to? - A lot of things with regard to Israel and God's plan - But many prophecies were about the coming Messiah; the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world - The perfect sacrifice once and for all for the sins of the world

In Matthew 5 Jesus said that He did not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets but to fulfill them - He is the fulfillment, which means He was the only one to ever keep God's perfect Law perfectly

Paul says that, unlike the Law there is a righteousness from God that has the power to save, and that that righteousness is The Gospel - And The Gospel is Who? - JESUS!!! - And Jesus is the fulfillment of the Law but is apart from the Law - He is the righteousness of God in the flesh and the Gospel is the testament to Him - "***For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.***" (John 1:17)

V.22 - How does this happen? - How is this Righteousness obtained? - It is through faith in Jesus Christ that we become the righteousness of God - What is faith?

In this context it is an absolute utter reliance on and trust in the Person of Jesus Christ and His finished work on the cross - A reliance and trust that He is The Only Savior, our Savior from sin and death - He is our only Hope for Heaven

He is our connection to God, not generally or intellectually but personally, and spiritually

We can only obtain the Righteousness of God from God - His Righteousness is the only thing that can make us right with Him - Again, how? - Faith!

And who is this for? - ***“...to all and on all who believe.”*** - This is NOT a statement of the universality of Salvation, in that everyone is saved; certainly not!

This is saying, as all Scripture says that Salvation in Christ is offered to all, is available to all - But we know that not all will believe - Not all will be saved - Only those who respond to God's call upon their heart

V.23 - This is probably one of the most well known verses in the Bible - For there is no difference Paul tells us - All have sinned - This verse IS speaking of universality - The universality of human sin - All people groups - All creeds - All colors - All religions - All cultures - From all time to all time

All people are guilty before God and need to be reconciled to God, but that can only come by God and through God - Because if this is true that ALL have sinned, and it IS, then the wrath of God, God's Divine Judgement is inescapable

If He truly is a Righteous God, and He IS, then He has to be a Just God - These two, Righteousness and Justice are inseparable parts of God's Nature, Who He is - God is Righteous therefore He has to be Just - God is Just therefore He must be Righteous

Let me take a moment to address this idea of a wrathful God, an angry God

Yes He is angry; AT SIN - Because sin is rebellion against God - It's mankind thumbing their nose at God - Turning away from God - Rejecting God and all His Truth and Glory

Is this not the world that God has to deal with - Just look around - We have gone our own way We have rejected God's Righteousness for self-righteousness

Schools; no more prayer - You can't hand out Bible tracts but you can hand out condoms - Things that the Bible says are wrong are now right; Abortion, homosexuality and all kinds of evil

Am I supposed to say these things? - The Bible does - Paul did in chapter 1 when he said that God's wrath has been revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth And that people have exchanged the truth of God for a lie

Isaiah 5 says; ***“Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; Who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! (21) Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight!”***

Jesus pronounced similar “woes” in Matthew 23 to the religious “leaders” - There He was, Righteousness in the flesh and there they were plotting to kill Him

V.24 - Having said all that, we read in v.24 that we are *“justified freely”* - Justified freely? - By an angry God? YES!!! - Because He is not only an angry God He is a gracious God - A merciful God - A loving God - A forgiving God and a patient God

What does it mean to be justified? - It means to reckon or declare to be righteous - Each of us has an account, if you will before God - That account is our entire being, our entire life; every deed, every thought, every word, every attitude, every motive - And that account is in debt, it's bankrupt - And not only that, but we have no ability to pay that debt

Being justified is not just being declared sinless and not guilty or having our sins forgiven - It is God declaring us righteous - He is imputing or ascribing to us His righteousness - And to Jesus He imputes our sin

2 Corinthians 5:21 says it best; ***“He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”*** - This has been termed by some Theologians as; *“The Great Exchange”* - It has been termed by our dear Brother Ed Snow as *“Scandalous”*

He not only declares us righteous but we ARE actually MADE righteous in His sight - When He looks at us He sees a righteous man, a righteous woman - And He does this... Freely it says - Oh there's a cost, but to Him not to us - We owe a debt we cannot pay and Jesus paid a debt He did not owe and it's credited to our account - Hallelujah!!!

No amount of time or human effort can eradicate sin - A penalty must be paid - The penalty that satisfies the sin debt of all mankind for all time is the shed blood of Jesus Christ and this is by Grace, through faith -

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.” (Eph 2:8&9)

Redemption in Christ Jesus - It is an atonement - An exchange - To reclaim - Regain - Recover - Retrieve - A Ransom paid - We've been redeemed, bought back from death to life by faith in Jesus Christ and His death, burial and resurrection - AMEN?

V.25 - God set forth or we could read it; God set Christ forth - It was by deliberate plan, purpose and forethought that God the Father set forth God the Son - It was by deliberate plan, purpose and forethought that God the Son, Jesus Christ came to be a propitiation - To propitiate means to appease or atone - Jesus appeased God's need for a payment for sin - He atoned for it or satisfied the requirement

And how did He do this? - By His blood - By His shed blood is how He accomplished propitiation

All of it; Righteousness - Justification - Redemption - Propitiation all come by His shed blood to us through faith - Faith in His blood? NO!!!

Our faith is in Christ Himself - The person of Christ is the object of our faith - The shedding of His blood is the means by which He accomplished the plan of salvation - But only a resurrected and living Christ Jesus can save us and give us life - AMEN?

He did this why? - ***“To demonstrate His Righteousness”*** - Again, not only will there be no excuse when person stands before God but they won't be able to point to any place else, to anyone else - It has been demonstrated by Jesus; His sinless life - His death on the Cross - By the empty tomb - Once and for all - Demonstrated; observable for all to see and decide

“...in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, (26) to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness”

Forbearance is a legal term which means the act of refraining from exercising a legal right, especially in regards to enforcing a payment or debt - It can also mean patience or endurance

So God, refrained from exercising His legal right to judge sin - He exercised patience - He passed over previously committed sins

Which sins were those? - If we look further on in the same verse Paul states why God did this, telling us that God did this to demonstrate His Righteousness - Did what? - Passed over sins that were previously committed

In v.26 - Paul uses a time reference - He says God did this to demonstrate His righteousness ***“at the present time”*** - He uses the life, death and resurrection of Jesus as his reference point - The sins that were passed over were the sins of those who were saved before the cross - Old Testament Believers

These were people who believed God; They believed His promises, they believed the prophecies and they believed His Word - They looked forward to the coming Messiah

Of course they didn't know His name or see His life but they believed God about His coming - Remember Genesis 15 regarding God's covenant promise to Abram, later called Abraham, it says; ***“He believed God and it was accounted to him as righteousness”*** - **BY FAITH!** We see, very early on in the Bible, the principle of Justification; righteousness was credited to Abram's account **BY FAITH!** - Before circumcision - Before the law was given we have Justification - God's Righteousness being declared upon Abraham by God - How were people saved before the cross? - **BY FAITH!**

Verse 26 concludes saying God demonstrated His righteousness; ***“...that He might be Just and the Justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”***

This is not saying that this demonstration made Him Just or the Justifier - It was made that we would know that He is Just and the Justifier of those who believe - “might” here is not maybe - It's a statement affirming what is already established and has already been revealed - This statement is a confirmation of a Divine reality - God IS Just and He alone IS the Justifier of all who have faith in Jesus - Justification came by God through Jesus Christ and is attained by Faith in Jesus

V.27 - No boasting Paul says - Every person is accountable to God for their entire lives - Each one of us will stand before God to give an account

of our lives from beginning to end, and though we may have done some “good” things, those things cannot offset or pay for our sin

Remember earlier in chapter 3 Paul, quoting Psalm 14 stated that no one is righteous there is no one who is good - It is God’s perfect standard that we are measured by - It is God Himself that we must measure up to

V.28 - Paul concludes as He started, that it is by faith apart from the law that we are saved - Not only saved, not only Justified but by faith we have peace with God (Rom 5:1) - We have access to His Grace (Rom 5:2) - We stand (2 Cor 1:24) - We walk (2 Cor 5:7) - We live (Gal 2:20) - The promise of Christ has been given (Gal 3:22)

Without out a doubt it is by Grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone

V.29&30 - Paul reminds the reader that there is but one God and that He is the God of the Jew and the Gentile - The Jew and the Gentile need to be justified before God - The Jews, like their Father Abraham need to come to God in faith

Old Testament Jewish Believers did so by looking forward to Christ - That changed for them when Jesus went to the cross, died and rose from the dead - By this He not only secured salvation but He fulfilled ALL the Hebrew prophecies about the coming Messiah - No one can deny the Savior of the world and be saved - Anything else would be self-salvation - Self-righteousness

Finally, Paul answers the question probably posed by many Jews, especially first-century Jews, that faith certainly does not void the law - In fact he says that faith establishes the law - How?

When we think law in this context we should think Jewish - The law represents God’s establishment of a Jewish nation - His separation of

Jews from other peoples so that they became His chosen people - The law represents their religion - Their rituals - Their customs and their identity

God gave you the perfect law he is saying and you have not kept it perfectly, no one has - But there is One Who has - There is One Who fulfills the law and that One is Jesus (A Jew!) - Again, remember back to Matthew 5:17 where Jesus said He did not come to destroy the law but fulfill it

The law is “established” - The law is confirmed - The law is affirmed - The law is complete - The law now is the law of faith, faith in the One Who fulfilled the law by living a perfect sinless life and dying a sinners death - The One Who Knew no sin but BECAME sin for us thus establishing the law to the world - That by faith we also “establish” the law in our hearts

What more shall I say? - I leave you with an exhortation; meditate on these things - Pray about these things - Think about these things

Let these things;

- *Righteousness*; that we ARE the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus
- *Justification*, that we have been justified, declared not guilty by God, through God and before God
- *Propitiation*; that Jesus Christ is the propitiation, the atonement for our sin - He appeased the requirement of the law on our behalf
- Redemption; we are redeemed, made right by God through The God-Man Jesus Christ

Let these things take root in our hearts - Let them move us to awe and wonder - Let them stir our souls to GO and proclaim the Good News - That the captives have been set free - That we are in right relationship with the God of ALL creation - That we, by faith are the children of God

AMEN?