

Romans

October 18, 2009

Romans Three

Romans 3:21-26

This is the eleventh lesson in our exposition of the Book of Romans.

The Theme of the Letter

Romans 1:16-17

“For 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. For in it the **righteousness of God** is **revealed** from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘**The just shall live by faith.**’ “ Romans 1:16-17

Title: “**The Gospel**” (2)

Read Romans 3:21-26

We only covered verse 21 last time and we will resume from where we left off. For the benefit of anyone who missed the last lesson it is important to know how important Romans 3:21-26 is to the understanding of the Gospel.

Mr. Charles Alexander comments on “apart from the law” as being an astounding statement to the Jew. Paul, a Pharisee, believed justification was by the law and now he writes righteousness is apart from the law!

On this passage:

Martin Luther: “...the chief point, and the very central place of the epistle and of the whole Bible.”

John Calvin: “... there is not probably in the whole Bible a passage which sets forth more profoundly the righteousness of God in Christ.”

John Calvin: “Justification is the main hinge upon which religion turns.”

If one’s presentation of the gospel does not conform to 3:21-26, then what they preach is not the gospel, it is, rather, what Paul condemns in Galatians as “a different gospel.” Let’s be reminded of what we learned in 1:1; “the gospel of God.” The gospel of God is a righteousness, not just **about** God, but a righteousness **provided by** God!

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The death of the Son of God on a cruel cross.

Romans 16:25-27 25 Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the **revelation** of the mystery kept secret since the world began 26 **but now** has been made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures has been made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith-- 27 to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.

Is this "... righteousness of God ..." a **new doctrine**, something never heard of before?

On the contrary, it is "... **attested by the law and the prophets...**"

Don't ever think that you don't need the OT. There is a continuity in the OT to the NT that is essential for a correct understanding of God's righteousness.

Augustine: "The OT is the NT concealed; the NT is the O.T. revealed."

"In the Old Testament God meant what He said; in the New Testament God says what He meant." John Wilmot

How did Adam and Eve obtain an acceptable covering for their sin?
They made for themselves aprons of fig leaves to cover their shame.
But God, shed the blood of an animal, and God provided their covering.

Cf. Psalm 32: 1-2

***"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered.
Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity."***

Paul and the Lord Jesus Himself demonstrate how the righteousness of God is
"attested by the law and the prophets."

Paul, in Chapter Four, gives us the paradigm of the method { means } of justification by faith alone. There Paul will show how Abraham became right with God; before the law was given through Moses and before Abraham was circumcised.

Recall what Jesus taught on that wonderful event on the road to Emmaus?

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Luke 24:25-27; 44-47.

Luke 24:25-27 25 Then He said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" 27 And beginning at **Moses and all the Prophets**, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things **concerning Himself**.

Luke 24:44-47 44 Then He said to them, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the **Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me**." 45 And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. 46 Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, 47 and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

And don't miss how the understanding of the gospel is received:
It "**... has been revealed.**" **Meaning what?**

It is not in man's ability to understand the gospel apart from revelation!
Cf. 1 Corinthians 2:14.

Matthew 11:25-30 25 At that time Jesus answered and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have **hidden these things** from the wise and prudent and have **revealed** them to babes. 26 Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. 27 All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom **the Son wills to reveal** Him. 28 Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

vs 22 Paul repeats vs 1:16-17, where he says he is not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, the power of God for everyone who has faith, for in it the righteousness of God is **revealed** from faith to faith... Now he **adds that the object** of this faith is Jesus Christ. Cf. Matthew 1:21; John 3:16; Acts 4:12.

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This righteousness is granted to all those - and only to those - who put their faith into practice. It makes no difference whether a person is rich or poor, Gentile or Jew, young or old, male or female, educated or uneducated.

There is no distinction!

vs 23 Everybody in the whole world “have sinned,” and therefore “fall short of the glory of God.” Sin is defined as “missing the mark,” to “transgress,” to “fail to meet the standard.” The Greek language first uses the verb tense of sin that **occurred once** in the past, “all sinned,” and another verb tense to express the **continuing** sin, “fall short.”

We all sinned in Adam, and then everyone of us continue to sin on purpose and in person. Therefore we “missed the mark,” in Adam and continue to “fall short,” of the glory of God.

We have seen in other studies that the root of the word translated “glory” means “opinion.” What is my opinion of God? It never reaches to its fulness and so I continue to “fall short of the glory of God.”

“... those whom He justified, He also glorified.”

Sin robs me of justification and glory, **but now**.

vs 24 “...being justified **freely** by His grace ...”

freely Cf. John 15:25 “without cause.”
grace spontaneous generosity without any expectation of return.

grace is to guilt as mercy is to misery.

Grace	=	Mercy
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Guilt		Misery

Only if you acknowledge your guilt, by Holy Spirit conviction of sin, can you understand “freely” and “by His grace.”

“... through the **redemption** that is in Christ Jesus.”

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redemption “to redeem” lit. “to set free by paying a price.”

The redemption price is the precious blood of Jesus.

And the redemption price was not paid to the devil.

What would the devil have to do with the blood of Jesus?

Matthew 20:28

... just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a **ransom** for many."

Ephesians 1:7

In Him we have **redemption** through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace

Colossians 1:14 ... in whom we have **redemption** through His blood, the forgiveness of sins

1 Peter 1:18-21

18 knowing that you were not **redeemed** with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. 20 He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you 21 who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

The price of redemption has been paid in full.

vs 25 "... whom God **set forth** ..." i.e, to declare publicly

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vs 25 “... to be a **propitiation** NIV: sacrifice of atonement

A lot of words have been wasted trying to make this say “expiation” instead of “propitiation.” What is the difference?

Propitiate means to appease the anger.

In classical Greek it means appeasing the gods through a sacrifice.

Expiate means to “get rid of” or “change the character of” that which causes alienation. So **expiate** means to be rid of sin, but without the aspect of appeasement. Many of those who argue for **expiate** oppose the doctrine of the wrath of God.

The image of **propitiate** is from the root of the word translated “mercy seat.”

Lev 16:14. The “mercy seat” was the covering, a golden cover placed over the arc which contained the Ten Commandments. This arc was placed in the most holy place. Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the High Priest entered to sprinkle the mercy seat with the blood of atonement. It has to do with satisfaction of the broken law. **But what is “satisfied” if not the wrath of God?**

John Calvin comments on this subject, and it is noteworthy that Calvin uses the word “expiation.” And some who argue for “expiation” try to use Calvin to support their claim. But when I read Calvin I observed that **every place** where he used “expiate” he added the phrase “to appease the wrath of God.”

Calvin: “God, without regard to Christ, is always angry with us. And that we are reconciled to Him when we are accepted through His righteousness.... God is **propitious** to us as soon as we have our trust resting on the blood of Christ, for by faith, we come to the possession of this benefit.”

It seems to me that “**expiate**” {to remove} sin apart from “**propitiate**” {appease} is not what this is about. Why did Paul take most of three chapters to establish the **wrath** of God settled on the whole world, if that wrath is not to be appeased?

vs 25-26 **passing over**; “remission,” “put away”

The Greek word is “pretermission” and only used here in the N.T.

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Trench: “The pretermission or passing by of sins for the present, leaving it open in the future, either entirely to remit, or else adequately punish them, as may seem good to Him who has the power and right to do the one or the other.”

It was this “passing by” of sin before the cross in the sense that God justified and saved believing sinners without having their sins paid for, thus bestowing mercy without having justice satisfied, which would make God **appear** as if He condoned sin. That had to be set right in the thinking of the human race. The matter was always right in God’s eyes, for He looked forward to the satisfaction of the broken law at the cross. It makes no difference with God whether He saves sinners before or after the cross. The cross is an eternal fact in the reckoning of God. Of course the cross had to come, for a righteous God could not pass by sin, but must require that sin be paid for. His justice must be satisfied and His government maintained.

“...to demonstrate at this present time...”

Liberal theologians have come along and taught that the historical event isn’t necessarily true; that an historical Adam, the virgin birth of the Christ, the bodily resurrection, are not essential: it is the “truth” of the message that matters.

So in that way they deny the inerrancy of the Scriptures.

But we have **real guilt** that must be punished and we have a **real Savior** who died for the sin of His people. Jesus actually accomplished something on the cross, He did not simply make the way of salvation possible, to be dependent on man’s “decision” to be effective.

Something actually happened on that hill in Calvary, a Savior died, and the righteousness of God was demonstrated. Sin must be punished. And sin was punished! Punishment of sin may be passed by for a time, but sin must be punished and not simply forgiven.

Thus sin is always paid for, not condoned.

“... that He might be **Just** and the **Justifier** of of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Before the crucifixion of our Substitute there was a legitimate charge against the justice of God. There were people in hell because of their sin and there were

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people in heaven whose sins had not been atoned for! But when Christ made the atonement the justice of God was demonstrated.

Dr. George Smeaton {1870}: “The word JUST, applied to God, means that He asserts just claims and inflicts just punishment ... This determines the character of the atonement. Such language would be unmeaning, if it were not admitted that the atonement is in the proper sense of the word a satisfaction of divine justice ... And that when the apostle adds, ‘that He might be just, AND THE JUSTIFIER’, he alludes to the fact that these two apparently conflicting perfections, justice and grace, meet in full harmony on the cross: justice suffers no violence, and grace has full outlet. This enables us to form a right judgment as to all those theories which allow only one element in the atonement, and reduce all to love. When modern theology commits itself to this one-sided theory, it is clearly out of harmony with the Pauline theology. As to the attempts which are at present made in many quarters to subsume justice under love, they are all sorry evasions of biblical ideas.” The Apostles’ Doctrine of the Atonement, pp 142-43

“... the one who has faith in Jesus.”

One more thing needs to be said. Your faith is not the cause of your justification. There are those who think that among those who hear the gospel, someone exercises faith and then God justifies him on the basis of his decision.

Faith is the means by which God the Holy Spirit enables the sinner to believe. Even faith is a gift of God so that there can be no boasting.

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Let's try to summarize up to this point: Using the OT Paul shows that everyone is by nature under the power of sin and accordingly, "there is none righteous, no, not one." If this is true, and it is surely the teaching of Scripture, the attempts to gain salvation by performing works of obedience to God's law will fail. Therefore, by law-works no flesh {mortal being} will be justified in His sight, for "through the law comes the consciousness of sin." {3:9-20}

But when things look to be at their worst, the gospel is revealed and there is hope.

"But now, apart from the law, a righteousness, attested to by the law and the prophets has been revealed, namely, a righteousness from God." This righteousness, in order to be effective in one's life, must be appropriated by faith in Jesus Christ. This gospel is for every one who will be saved, Gentile and Jew alike, "for there is no distinction, since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." {3:21-23}

The redemption price paid by the Savior for the justification of those who place their trust in Him, and through Him, the Triune God, was no less than His own precious blood, that is the offering up of Himself. This means that the full measure of the wrath of God was judicially moved from those He came to save and imputed to Himself, so that He, Jesus, took the punishment for the sin of His people. All this was designed from eternity as He was "... the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." {Revelation 17:8}

What Jesus did was to voluntarily offer a wrath-appeasing sacrifice, to be made effective in the lives of God's children by means of a God-given faith.

Only when a person is convicted of his personal guilt and condemnation and trusts only the righteousness of Jesus Christ, does God declare that they are justified.

Justification is the righteousness of God imputed, not infused, to the sinner's account and then they are free from every aspect of guilt.

While this atonement was in the mind of God from the foundation of the world, it was necessary that the Christ come into the world according to the Scriptures.

The certainty of a thing does not remove the necessity. God has chosen a people by divine election, but those who are God's elect will come to faith in Christ through belief of the gospel. Because God justified people before the actual atonement was

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made, there was a legitimate charge that God Himself was not just. That charge has forever been answered by the propitious offering of Jesus the Christ.

By God's grace, next time we will look at **Romans 3:27-31**, and answer the question: Has the law been abolished?