

Belonging To Jesus
Multiply – Our Discipleship
Romans 3:20-26 – Grace Church – 9.6.26

A big welcome to you this morning. Welcome to those watching online and welcome to Danny and our friends in our care room upstairs.

How things start is critical to their formation. For a baby, those first months of development in the womb are vital. In construction, the most important step in building is the foundation. And for us, our most important discussions are over these next three weeks. And today's discussion is where it all begins. How do we begin as a disciple?

Christianity is full of cliches! Are you saved? Give your life to Jesus? Is Jesus in your heart? Do you Believe in Jesus? Are you Washed in the blood? Did you Trust in Jesus. What in the world is the church talking about?

Today, I want to take us to the foundational reality of every true follower of Jesus Christ. You can go to church, live a good life, do good things, give to others ... but if we don't have a true grasp on what we talk about today, you are not a genuine Christ follower and you will experience the punishment of God on the other side of life. So what we talk about today is mission critical. Turn to Romans 3:20-26.

A Disciple is someone who will ... Belong to Jesus, be With Jesus and become like Jesus.

You need to belong to Jesus. It's more than understanding about, believing in, appreciating, knowing things about ... you must belong to Him. Our text for today lays out a little differently ... let's dig into it and we'll see ...

Four Truths for Belonging to Jesus!

Romans 3:20-26 "Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin. But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus."

The first thing we need to see in the text is ...

1. The Insurmountable Debt v. 22-23

Romans 3:22-23 "There is no difference between the Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

This is the issue that we all face ... all of humanity faces. **All have sinned – all are sinners.** V. 22 gives the statement that doesn't sound like a big deal, but if you were a Jew in that day, it would have been terribly offensive – "There is no difference between Jew and Gentile." The Jews would have had a problem with this statement ... because for the Jew, non-Jews (Gentiles) were horrible people. They wanted nothing to do with them. Jews were the righteous and Gentiles the unrighteous. Paul, who wrote this text (being a Jew) drops a truth bomb on the reality that Jews and Gentiles are no different. Look at what Paul wrote a few verses ahead ...

Romans 3:9-10 “What shall we conclude then? Do we (Jews) have any advantage? Not at all! For we have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin. As it is written: ‘There is no one righteous, not even one.’”

So follow this ... Jews and Gentiles are equally unrighteous because **the standard of righteousness** and unrighteousness is not how a Gentile matches up against a Jew, **it’s how the match up is between all of us and God. That’s why Paul says ... “for ALL have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”** And in that matchup, we are toast!

ILLUSTR: So how bad is our sin problem? Sinning 3 sins a day. A sin is a wrong action, a wrong word, a wrong motive, a wrong attitude and a failure to do what is right. Imagine if you only did 5 sins a day – 3 sins a day. When you realize it’s a wrong attitude, most of us admit that we commit three sins before we get out of bed in the morning. 3 sins a day is well more than 1,000 a year. I’m 56 – so that makes 55,000 sins against God, and if I may be honest for us all – that’s the tip of the iceberg for us. We have hundreds of thousands and millions of sins on our account.

That’s insurmountable – and it’s all condemnable – justifiably punishable for all eternity. That’s the deficit we are dealing with. So how do we deal with that mountain of sinful debt?

2. The Insufficient funds v. 20

Here’s where many make the argument, “but I’m a pretty good person.” “I’ve done a lot of good things in my lifetime.” Or if you are from Kentucky, you’d say, “I didn’t smoke and I didn’t chew and I didn’t go with girls that do.”

This was the argument of the Jews. I’ve been pretty good at keeping the Old Testament laws. Look at all the good things I’ve done. .

Good deeds don’t eliminate the justice required for our bad deeds.

Obviously, we want people to be good but we must realize that doesn’t cause the justice/judgement for our bad deeds to suddenly disappear.

ILLUSTR: If I rob a bank and I stand before the judge – but I did other good things. I gave \$ to the poor. I helped an old lady across the road. I was an honor student at school. “I didn’t do the really bad things – like murder”. Well, the text delivers the difficult news ...

Romans 3:20 “Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God’s sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin.”

The text declares that not only will obeying the law NOT make us “righteous” in God’s sight, truly understanding it only brings to mind how utterly sinful we are.

This is why Jesus told the pharisees ... you have heard it said, don’t commit adultery – but I say that anyone who looks with lust at another has already **committed adultery in his heart**. Or do not commit murder. Anyone who hates another has already **committed murder in his heart**. Then there’s **jealousy, envy, pride** ... and the more we become familiar with the righteous, perfect standard of God, the less we become enamored with this perceived status of our righteousness.

So if we try to pay our insurmountable, condemnable **sin debt with our own righteousness, the check will bounce**. If we walk in with our stack of good deeds, it will still say, **“insufficient funds”** – and we won’t even come close. You have a better chance leaping across the Grand Canyon than you do caring for your own sin debt with

your own righteousness. So how can our immeasurable mountain of sin be completely done away with? Well, here is the best news you'll hear all day

3. The Immeasurable payment v. 23-25

Romans 3:23-25 "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood – to be received by faith."

Let's work through these 3 verses and uncover how you can escape the punishment we deserve for our sin.

- "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" – (Jew and Gentile) we all are in the position of judgement for our sin – there are no exceptions. We are all guilty – unrighteous before God.
- We all can be "justified" (declared righteous – "just as if I'd never sinned") by the redemption (purchase) that came by Christ Jesus. So although unrighteous before God, I can be seen as fully righteous before Him ... and it's by Jesus redeeming or purchasing me. How did Jesus make this purchase?
- The currency to purchase us (redeem) is the sacrifice of Christ – the shedding of His blood." He gave His life so we could have ours. He took our unrighteousness and gave us His.

ILLUSTR: Checkbook. For all you people below 30, google what a checkbook is or visit a museum. It will be there next to stone tablets, parchment and the equipment for smoke signals. On one side is the expense (debt) that goes out – it's what we need to pay out. The other side shows the funds that come – our income. Our book is justified when the debt owed on one side is fully covered by the funds made available on the other side. None of argue about our expenses. We all know that we've sinned – and sinned egregiously against our God. We have a massive debt. The main issue comes when we talk about how that debt gets satisfied or justified. Some say that our good deeds and obedience satisfies our own debt ... but Paul says "Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin." Our deeds, obedience, works of the law are wholly insufficient income to cover the magnitude of our expense sheet of sin. So how can our expense of sin be fully covered and justified? "... and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus." Oh, I wonder what He did to justify my expenses? "God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood – to be received by faith." Here's how the prophet Isaiah referred to this reality, over 600 years before Jesus died on the cross ...

Isaiah 53:5 "But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all."

This is the gospel plain and simple ...

God punished Jesus as if He were you!
God accepts you as if you were Jesus!

"The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all". This is the great transaction ... that the God who never sinned was punished for all of our sins. He died so that we can live.

Illustr: A friend of mine here in the church had an organ transplant 9 years ago. It was a liver transplant. He explained to me how he had to be ready at a moment's notice to go to Nashville for this transplant because the donated organ could only survive so long in this process. He then mentioned that he has to take a pill every 12 hours for the rest of his life because his body will naturally try to reject this foreign object. But then he said the phrase that I don't think I'll ever forget as long as I live ... "It is not lost on me that someone had to die so that I could live."

And that's how it is with our rescue. Someone had to die so you could live. Someone had to be punished so we could have peace with God. We get life because of His death. We get His righteousness because He took our unrighteousness. We get peace with God because He was punished by God.

DEACONS BEGIN TO HAND OUT COMMUNION CUPS.

MUSIC BEGINS TO PLAY.

Verse 25 says "it is received by faith". Faith is more than just knowing Jesus died for our sin. If that's all we have then congratulations, Satan is fully aware of all of this too. Faith is more than knowing, it's relying. Abandoning hope or trust in anything else and completely counting on Jesus death as the punishment for our sin.

ILLUSTR: Charles Blondin was a famous French tightrope walker who captivated the world in 1859 by crossing the mighty Niagara Gorge on a wire. He performed many stunts as he crossed that ¼ mile gorge. He crossed with a balance pole, in a sack, blindfolded, on stilts – all to the thunderous applause of the huge crowds standing around. One time, he had a wheelbarrow. He asked the crowd – "Who here believes I can cross the Niagara with this wheelbarrow?" and the entire crowd erupted in cheers! Then he said, who would like to get into the wheelbarrow to cross with me?" and it was deafeningly silent. That's the difference between belief and faith. One is just knowledge the other is full reliance.

Our rescue, our justification is not based on us. Rather, it's when we are FULLY DEPENDANT on Jesus' death. All our eggs are in that basket. We are counting on it because there is no other name under heaven by which we can be saved, but the name of Jesus Christ. When we realize that He is the way, the truth and the life and no one comes to the father but by him. I'm not relying in my effort, my works, my heritage, my associations, my accomplishments in any way, but am wholly reliant on the reality that Jesus was tortured and punished for all the things that I should be tortured and punished for – that's the faith we are talking about here and it's about which the old hymnwriter said, "my hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness."

Before we take this together Bow your head with me ...

Q. When it comes to your rescue, are you at the knowledge level or the faith level?

If it's just been rote, routine and ritual and not full reliance – that needs to change today - right now.

Communion ... You hold in your hand the representation of the currency that God used to purchase your rescue.

I've written out the confession of someone at the faith level ... Can we say it, pray it, together? Whether you've never confessed this or you've said it many times, can we say it together?

"Dear Father. I know I'm a sinner. I know I fall short. I deserve your punishment. But I receive your grace. I'm fully dependent on Jesus, that He died, in my place for my sin, so that I can be your child. Forgive me, lead me, I'm yours. In Jesus name, AMEN."

The Bread:

Isaiah 53:5 "But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all."

The Cup:

1 Peter 1:18-19 “For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.”

Pray ... Would you stand with me. I want to give you our fourth and final truth and I already filled it in on your study guide so don't worry about that ...

4. The Incredible ownership. V. 24

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

Redemption – to buy ... or in this case, to buy back. Q. What did Jesus buy with His death on the cross? You. He didn't buy your sin, rather, He cancelled out your sin! **He bought you.**

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 “Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.”

YOU ARE NOT YOUR OWN; YOU WERE BOUGHT AT A PRICE!” In the Christian life there is no “my body, my choice.” If you are fully dependent on Jesus' death to bear your penalty for sin, I've seen the deed to your life and your name isn't on it! His is! You are not your own.

So, the first foundation block of a disciple is that YOU BELONG TO JESUS. Do you? If you don't, let's connect (email). If you do, remind yourself everyday. Put it on your screensaver. On your lock screen. Post it on FB/Instagram. Get a necklace, a bracelet, a picture, a magnet, a tattoo, a ring. Ask yourself, what should be different in me since he owns me? But let's start here. I belong to Jesus.

PRAY