

In View of God's Mercy - Week 3

Romans 2:12-3:26 - Pastor Matt Dean

The gospel is the good news of God, about Jesus, authenticated by the Bible, for all the nations, unto obedience of faith - for the glory of His name.

Last week: a glimpse into broken humanity and the sinfulness of man, the dangers of misdirected worship, and how people exchange the truth of God for a lie, how people exchange the glory of God for idols

Paul is encouraging humility with one another and before Jesus, and unity with one another because of Jesus.

God's Judgment and the Law

¹² For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. ¹³ For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. ¹⁴ For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. ¹⁵ They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them ¹⁶ on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

Paul is continuing to make the point to the Roman church, to the non-Jewish/Gentile Christians – moral law is written on the hearts of people who were unaware of the Jewish law, that human conscience bears witness that there is right and wrong...

¹⁷ But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast in God ¹⁸ and know his will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed from the law; ¹⁹ and if you are sure that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, ²⁰ an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth— ²¹ you then who teach others, do you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal? ²² You who say that one must not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? ²³ You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law. ²⁴ For, as it is written, “The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.”

Paul is making the point to Jewish Christians — that knowing the law and boasting in the law – only further reveals they couldn't actually keep the law.

Again, with humility, unity, and maturity in Christ in mind, he is helping them see – they too are without excuse, that as Jewish followers of Jesus – they have an equally grievous issue with sin... so much so, that he quotes Isa 52:5 saying that it is because of Jewish sinfulness that the name of God being blasphemed among the nations.

²⁵ For circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law, but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision. ²⁶ So, if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? ²⁷ Then he who is physically uncircumcised but keeps the law will condemn you who have the written code and circumcision but break the law. ²⁸ For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. ²⁹ But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.

Circumcision was a sign and seal from God and his covenant with Jews – it wasn't meant to be an alternative to obedience, but a commitment to obedience. Many Jews had a false sense of assurance that circumcision had saving power – but Paul is making the point to them: “Circumcision minus obedience equals uncircumcision, while uncircumcision plus obedience equals circumcision.” (Stott)

Again, Paul has a point in mind – a goal of humility, unity, and gospel maturity for these believers – and he has to help these Christ followers from a Jewish background see that the real sign of belonging as the covenant people of God was not simply being circumcised or having the law, but the personal obedience that both the law and circumcision demand.

John Stott makes a helpful summary of this passage of what Paul is saying... to be an authentic member of God's covenant people, *“the essence of being a true Jew who may indeed be ethnically a Gentile, is not something outward and visible, but inward and invisible. For the true circumcision is in the heart, not the flesh. It is brought about by the Spirit, not the law, and it wins the approval of God rather than human beings... Human beings are comfortable with what is outward, visible, material, and superficial. What matters to God is a deep, inward... work of the Holy Spirit in our lives”*

God's Righteousness Upheld

3 Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? 2 Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God. 3 What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God? 4 By no means! Let God be true though every one were a liar, as it is written,

*“That you may be justified in your words,
and prevail when you are judged.”*

5 But if our unrighteousness serves to show the righteousness of God, what shall we say? That God is unrighteous to inflict wrath on us? (I speak in a human way.) 6 By no means! For then how could God judge the world? 7 But if through my lie God's truth abounds to his glory, why am I still being condemned as a sinner? 8 And why not do evil that good may come?—as some people slanderously charge us with saying. Their condemnation is just.

In these verses Paul addresses what would be four Jewish objections to what he is saying – that his teaching would undermine God's covenant, nullify God's faithfulness, question God's judgment, or misconstrue the glory of God.

Paul is wanting them to see:

- That possessing the law and circumcision would not shield them from God's judgment.
- That God is ALWAYS faithful even with people are not - that His covenant has enduring value
- That God will competently judge the the immoral gentiles, the self righteous moralists, and Jews
- That God's glory does not need the contrast of sinful humanity to be glorious - He IS glorious.

Paul has set the table for all to see the next conclusion – people, we have a serious problem. He pulls together quotes from Ecclesiastes, Psalms, and Isaiah – all pointing to the fact – that all people are guilty before God, comprehensively affected by sin and its ungodly desires.

Paul strings together a series of verses that describes human character, behavior, and the root cause of sin - the reality of humanity with no fear of God.

No One Is Righteous

⁹ What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, ¹⁰ as it is written:

“None is righteous, no, not one; ¹¹ no one understands; no one seeks for God.

¹² *All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.”*

¹³ *“Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive.”*

“The venom of asps is under their lips.”

¹⁴ *“Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.”*

¹⁵ *“Their feet are swift to shed blood;*

¹⁶ *in their paths are ruin and misery,*

¹⁷ *and the way of peace they have not known.”*

¹⁸ *“There is no fear of God before their eyes.”*

This is a devastating description of humanity, prone to sinfulness and selfishness and self reliance and violence – a history study¹ shows that in the last 3400 years, less than 300 years have seen no war. Human violence comes at tremendous expense. In World War II, it cost an estimated \$225,000 to kill one enemy soldier.²

This description of human depravity – it reveals the extent to which sin has affected all people. Showing its extent is not the same thing as showing its unique degrees of severity in people individually. All of us have been affected by sin.

JI Packer says it this way, “No one is as bad as he or she might be, nor is any action of ours as good as it should be.”

¹⁹ 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. ²⁰ For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

Martin Luther — the point of the law is not to make men better, but worse, that is to say, to show people their sin, that by the knowledge of their sin, people may be humbled, terrified, bruised and broken, and by this means may be driven to seek grace and come to Jesus

JB Phillips “it is the straight edge of the Law that shows us how crooked we are”

But now - we see God has intervened.

Now we see a different righteousness revealed.

Apart from the law, yet even the law and the prophets bear witness to it.

It’s the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

It’s the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ - FOR ALL WHO BELIEVE

Listen to this good news of God, about Jesus, as told in Scripture, for all nations, for obedience unto faith, for the glory of God.

¹ Will Durant - Lessons From History

² David Helms, source not cited

The Righteousness of God Through Faith

²¹ 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.

²¹ But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—

What it means to be right before God and to possess righteousness as the people of God has been manifested (**revealed, made known, brought into the light**) and it's apart from the law.

²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.

We are counted as righteous before God through our faith in Jesus. Our complete confidence in Jesus, our trust in Jesus how this happens.

For there is no distinction: ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

The universal problem of guilt and sin for all people, also has one exclusive solution for all people – the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ. There is no other way. There is no other name.

There is no other option because there is no other God – and the one true and living God – who is glorious, sent his one and only Son, his very best to redeem and save people at their very worst.

²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

To be right with God – to be justified by his grace is a gift – when through your faith in Jesus, your sins, all your sin – is completely forgiven, and you are not just forgiven, through your faith in Jesus that forgiveness comes with the righteousness of Jesus – it's yours now.

To be redeemed in Christ Jesus – is to be rescued at our worst and in our inability to save ourselves, and this redemption came at a high cost. Just like the people of Israel enslaved and held captive by Egypt, it took the power of God, the blood covering of a Lamb, and a miracle of God's ability and desire to rescue His people.

We too, enslaved. We too held captive. We too needing a miracle. We too – seeing the glory of our great and gracious Redeemer who has rescued us for His namesake.

Marcus Loane, an Anglican Australian Bishop, wrote, "The voice that spells forgiveness will say, "You may go, you have been let off the penalty which your sin deserves. But the verdict which means acceptance (justification) will say, "You may come; you are welcome to all my love and presence."

(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.

This gift of grace - from God through the blood of Jesus - is to be received by faith. The word propitiation – this putting forward of Jesus by way of a punishment that led to a bloody death on a cross – was to satisfy the wrath of God against sin; put another way, this putting forward of Jesus to be punished for the death we deserve is what appeases God’s holy hostility towards sin.

Jewish priests would repeatedly offer the same sacrifices, but they can never take away sins – but when Christ offered for all time – a single and sufficient sacrifice for sins – it was enough. By a single offering, Jesus has perfected for all time, those who believe. Death was necessary for new life. Blood was necessary to be made clean.

What this means – is that all people who believe - who trust in Jesus - justified by his grace as a gift - redeemed by his grace for his glory – have peace with God. Now. And Forever.

CH Hodge was a leader at Princeton Seminary in the 1800s, and he writes, “Pardon and justification are essentially distinct. The one is the remission of punishment, the other (justification) is a declaration that no ground for the infliction of punishment exists.”

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.

Tim Keller – “God is both the JUDGE who cares enough about the world to set standards and hold us accountable to them, and the JUSTIFIER, who has done everything necessary to forgive and restore us. He is a FATHER worth having and He is a FATHER we can have. The cross is where, graciously and liberating, we see that He is just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.”

He is good and He is God.

He is just and He is our justifier.

His justice is perfect and we have been made perfectly acceptable in Jesus.

This gospel really is good news for all who believe.

In view of God’s mercy – what can we do?

Believe, trust fully, walk in complete confidence in Jesus, in a whole-life response to God.