

ROMANS CH.3

MAJOR THEME: THE GOSPEL: THE RIGHTEOUSNES OF GOD REVEALED IN JUSTIFICATION

Hymn: #436 I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say #419 There Is a Wideness in God's Mercy

(Modified Outline of John A. Witmer- Assistant Professor of Systematic Theology, Dallas Theological Seminary; The Bible Knowledge Commentary; SP Publications; 1983; p.438)

- 1) INTRODUCTION AND THEME (1:1-17)
 - A) Apostolic Greeting (1:1-7)
 - B) Apostolic Travel Plans (1:8-15)
 - C) Apostolic Attitude (1:16-17)
- 2) RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD REVEALED IN CONDEMNATION (1:18-3:20)
 - A) Against Pagan Humanity (1:18-32)
 - i) Reasons (1:18-23)
 - (1) For Suppressing God's Truth v. 18
 - (2) For Ignoring God's Revelation v. 19-20
 - (3) For Perverting God's Glory v.21-23
 - ii) Results (1:24-32)
 - (1) Abandoned to Fornication v.24-25
 - (2) Abandoned to Sexual Perversion v. 26-27
 - (3) Abandoned to a Depraved Lifestyle v.28-32
 - B) According to Divine Standards (2:1-16)
 - i) Truthfulness (2:1-4)
 - ii) Impartiality (2:5-11)
 - iii) Jesus Christ (2:12-16)
 - C) Against Unfaithful Jews (2:17-3:8)
 - i) Condemnation because of their hypocrisy (2: 17-24)
 - ii) Condemnation because of their trust in "rites" rather than God (2:25-29)
 - iii) Condemnation because of their unbelief (3:1-8)
 - D) **Against All Humanity (3:9-20)** Paul has spent two full chapters driving home the point that there is not one pagan, moralist, Jew, sophisticated or barbaric person who does not stand condemned before God. He has explained the reasons, the results, and the standards of their condemnation. Here, he makes his final arguments to his case that humanity is in serious trouble and can do nothing about it.
 - i) **All Under Sin (3:9-18)**
 - (1) Paul isn't going to let people think this accusation that "all are under sin" is just his opinion. He is going to prove it from the Jew's own scriptures: He collates a veritable anthem of condemnation drawn from the Psalms and Prophets:
 - (a) Ps. 14-1-3; Ps. 5:9; Ps. 140:3; Ps. 10:7; Is. 59:7,8; Ps. 36:1
 - (2) V. 10-12 the word "none" is used 4 times and "not even one" is used twice on either end of the "nones".
 - (a) Do you think Paul was allowing any exceptions? Do you allow any exceptions in your mind?
 - (3) V. 13-18 Paul's anthology describes how everyone's mouths, movements, and minds; what they say, do and think are entirely debased and godless.
 - (a) If you have come to faith in Christ as an adult, you likely have very little challenge in accepting this grim assessment. If you are someone who has been born and raised in the faith from a child, you may not have a hedonistic past to convince you, but you likely have more faith to simply accept God's word on the deal.
 - ii) **All Conscious of Sin (3:19-20)**
 - (1) V.19 "...that every mouth may be silenced" Lit. "stopped"
 - (a) You can always tell when the truth of how desperate a person's situation is has become clear to them...they are silenced. There is a complete cessation of any

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more prattle about how good they are or how they are not as bad as someone else. The mouth is stopped and they KNOW they are accountable to God. Has your self-defending mouth been stopped yet?

- (2) V. 20 “THEREFORE” marks Paul’s final and all-encompassing word on the Righteousness of God’s revealed in Condemnation.
- (a) “...NO ONE will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law”
- (i) (Lit. “by works of law”; in other words by any law or standard strived for or even achieved; whether written on your conscience as a Gentile or on Tablets of Stone for the Jew)
- (b) “...rather, through the law we become conscious of sin”.
- (i) The Law or law was NEVER intended to save anyone. The law only make one conscious of sin. It points out God’s standard and illustrates convincingly one’s inability to live up to it. The law is only an instrument of condemnation.
1. Rom 7:7 What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "Do not covet.
 2. Rom. 7:13 Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! But in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it produced death in me through what was good, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.
- (3) Whew! If you are feeling laid low, silenced and in need of help, then Romans 1 and 2 has done its job. This is an imperative pre-requisite. For until a true sense of need is recognized, what Paul is about to say will have little meaning.

3) RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD REVEALED IN JUSTIFICATION (3:21-5:21) “But now”...finally Paul and we with him make a turn and begin to get our heads above the dark and dreadful clouds of condemnation. Like an airplane breaking through a heavy cloud ceiling after take-off, we are about to pop through condemnation and come into the clear, bright, and beautiful blue sky of The Righteousness of God Revealed in Justification. Thank God!

A) Provided Righteousness Explained (3:21-31)

- i) V.21-28 Paul now reveals the glorious great news that God has provided sinful humanity a righteousness that saves us from the just condemnation we have come to accept is true of us. Calvin, Luther, Godet and other have called these verses “the marrow of theology” for they are the richest, deepest, most life giving words in all the Bible. This seminal passage explains HOW a, any and all persons can be saved and it does so using several key words whose meanings are critical to understanding the way of salvation. So we are going to clearly define some terms used here so we can extract the marrow and goodness from this portion scripture:

ii) Sin

- (1) Transgression, an overstepping of the law, the divine boundary between good and evil.
- (2) Iniquity, an act which is inherently wrong whether expressly forbidden or not
- (3) Error, departure from what is right
- (4) Missing the mark, a failure to meet the divine standard (**v. 23**)

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- (5) Trespass, the intrusion of self will into the sphere of divine authority
- (6) Lawlessness, or spiritual anarchy
- (7) Unbelief, or an insult to the divine truth
 - (a) Sin originated with Satan
 - (b) Entered the world through Adam
 - (c) Was and is universal in its infection- it is a "Biogenetic Weapon of Mass Destruction" (*Demory Green*)
 - (d) Incurs the penalties of spiritual and physical death
 - (e) Has no remedy but in the sacrificial death of Christ made available by faith
 - (i) Sin may be summarized as threefold:
 - 1. An Act- the violation of or lack of obedience to, the revealed will of God
 - 2. A State- the absence of righteousness
 - 3. A Nature, enmity towards God

(List modified from CI Scofield Reference Notes)

iii) Justification

- (1) A legal term meaning "To declare someone righteous" (not make them righteous)
- (2) This declared righteousness is "imputed" to sinners and is an accounting term meaning to credit to one's account.
- (3) An act of "divine reckoning" and does not mean to *make* a person righteous, but rather it *treats* a person as righteous.
- (4) Originates in grace; it is freely given.
- (5) Is through the redemptive and atoning work of Christ alone
- (6) It is received by faith not by works of law. (*Imagine an orphaned and homeless person being told they were an heir to a million dollars inheritance and it has been deposited into their account. Until they go to the bank and formally ask for it and make a withdrawal, they are not "justified" and remain a poor beggar even though the inheritance is there.*)
- (7) Summary: It is the judicial act of God whereby he justly declares and treats as righteous the one who believes in Jesus Christ. The justified believer has been declared by God to have nothing laid to his charge (Rom. 8:1, 31-34)

(List modified from CI Scofield Reference Notes)

iv) **Redemption**- to deliver by paying a "ransom" price. It is the sin-ward aspect of Christ's work on the cross. If you have ever read Uncle Tom's Cabin you may recall the deplorable and pitiful scenes of slaves being bought and sold. Stripped naked, made to jump and have their teeth examined as if they were a horse or mule. What made this especially dreadful is that families were often split up as different buyers bought one or the other. This is the spiritual scene of our redemption, for we are slaves.

- (1) ἀγοράζω- to buy IN the market place; man is held and dominated by Satan as slave and "sold to sin" (Rom.7:14) but he is also able to be bought IN the market for the "right price" which is nothing short of the blood of The Redeemer, Jesus Christ.
- (2) ἐξαγοράζω- to buy OUT OF the market; meaning to remove from any future sale and speaks of the security and finality of redemption; never again to be returned to the place of bondage and exposed to the lot of a slave. Christ Jesus leads us OUT of the slave market, puts us in His wagon and takes us far away from this place forever.
- (3) λυτρόω Lit. "ἀπολυτρώσεως" in v.24- to loose and set free; commonly used to indicate the new freedom a slave had when released by his master.

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(a) A slave set free by his master was wholly free; but he could choose to remain as the slave of the new master whom he loved. The “new voluntary” relationship is seen in Ex. 21:5-6 and was sealed by the master piercing the ear of the slave with an awl on the door post of the house...Christ himself was the perfect example of “voluntary” yielding to His Father’s will. According to Psalm 40:6, quoted in Heb. 10:5-7, Christ said “Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but my ears you have pierced (bored). We will see much more of the application of this to our own lives when we get to Ch.6.

v) **Propitiation** (Atonement)-It is the God-ward aspect of Christ’s work on the cross.

- (1) Two English words have historically been used to translate the Greek word ἰλαστήριον in v. 25. meaning the “Mercy Seat”; place of propitiation (Heb. 9:5). Closely associated is the word ἰλασμός- meaning “the propitiation” itself
 - (a) 1 John 2:2 “He is the atoning sacrifice (Lit. ἰλασμός propitiation) for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.”
 - (b) 1 John 4:10 “This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice (Lit. ἰλασμός propitiation) for our sins”
 - (c) The English word propitiation came into use in the late 1500’s and is from the Latin “pro”- forward and “petere”- to seek and strive for. Here in Romans and following the context and logical thought progression of v.25-26 “propitiation” is the preferred English word, rather than atonement.
 - (d) The English word “atonement” coined by William Tyndale in his 1526 English Bible translation.
 - (i) Tyndale attempted to consolidate all the meaning of both the OT and NT usage into a new, and single word in the English language: AT- ONE- MENT - To be made one with.
- (2) In the OT, the blood of the sacrifice was sprinkled on the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement representing that the righteous sentence of the Law had been executed, changing the place of judgement in to a place of mercy.
- (3) In the NT, Jesus Christ Himself is both the blood of propitiation and the mercy seat; the meeting place; the place where A Righteous God and condemned sinners meet.
- (4) It is not the placating of a vengeful God or ‘appeasing’ God’s wrath by satiating his desire for sacrificial blood (this is what pagans do with their false gods). It does not infuse compassion into God, for God IS love and is the “compassionate and gracious” God as declared to Moses in the cleft of the Rock.
- (5) Rather ‘propitiation’ is the work of Christ upon the Cross which allows God to exercise His unchanging compassion on condemned sinners without violating His own Righteousness or violating the moral order of the universe. God is perfectly righteous and just to meet us in Christ and to extend His own righteousness to condemned sinners. In other words, as Fiona has so eloquently said, “God isn’t doing anything dodgy here”.
- (6) “Men are not saved by coaxing mercy out of God; they are saved when they dare to believe God has been merciful enough to provide a Saviour and that He IS propitious.” *(Lewis Sperry Chafer, ST Vol 3 p.95)*
- (7) “No more transforming message could be uttered than the proclamation that **God IS** propitious...**not when** faith or confession made Him so, but because of the death of His Son. Neither sinners nor sinning saints are appointed the task of propitiating

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God. Christ has accomplished that perfectly, and the door into the grace of God is open wide" (Lewis Sperry Chafer, ST Vol 3 p.96)

- vi) **Reconciliation**- καταλλάσσω- (katá, "down to an exact point," intensifying /allássō, "to change")- means to change completely. This is the manward aspect of Christ's work on the cross.
- (1) Though this term is not used here in this section of Romans it is important to define it as part of the "trilogy" of the "completed work of Christ" alongside redemption and propitiation.
 - (2) God has "changed completely" the situation between us and him in Christ. It is the removal of enmity between condemned sinners and God. It must be remembered that it is man who is reconciled to God not God who is reconciled to man. In our sin **we** made God **our enemy** in **our** minds. God has always been for us even to the point of providing condemned sinners with his own righteousness. Reconciliation is the removal of that enmity for us.
 - (3) 2 Cor. 5:17-21 illustrate this reconciliation most clearly:
 - (a) It is universal in scope and already accomplished
 - (b) It requires an individual response of belief to activate it
 - (c) When Paul says "Be ye reconciled", "...what is it men are implored to do? Simply this: God is satisfied with the solution of the sin question as consummated by Christ in His death, and the sinner is petitioned to be satisfied himself with that which satisfies God." (Lewis Sperry Chafer, ST Vol 3 p.92)
 - (4) This "trilogy" of Redemption, Propitiation and Reconciliation refer in particular to that which Christ Jesus accomplished for the *unsaved*.
 - (i) Four other great words belong only the *saved*: Forgiveness, Regeneration, Justification, Sanctification and Glorification.
- vii) V.23-24 Just as all are condemned sinners and have sinned and (*therefore*) fallen short of the glory of God (*ie: participation in the divine nature and triune oneness with God as sons*)...equally all these same ones are now justified freely (Lit. δωρεάν- as a gift; without any cause) by grace (*ie: God's unmerited and undeserving favour; God's Riches At Christ's Expense*)
- viii) V.25 The propitiation of Christ clearly vindicates God's righteousness for Lit. "passing over" sins committed in the past dispensations. His forbearance was based on his foreseeing the coming and completed work of Christ. God saved in the OT on the same basis as he saves in the NT...by grace, through faith in Jesus Christ the Messiah and expressed in obedience according to the dispensation in which one lived. This "passing over" was evidence of His grace **not** His injustice
- (1) The propitiation of Christ clearly vindicates God's righteousness in the present also. He is not doing anything dodgy or violating His nature or the moral fabric of the universe when he justifies condemned sinners. He is "just" when He acts as the "justifier.
- ix) V.28 For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law
- (1) Here is the great the Sola Fide- by faith alone, verse that was the protestant Reformation's heart cry along with the other "Solos"
 - (a) Scripture alone (Sola Scriptura)

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- (b) Christ alone (Solus Christus)
 - (c) Grace alone (Sola Gratia)
 - (d) Glory to God alone (Soli Deo Gloria)
- x) V. 31 When Paul speaks of upholding the Law, it doesn't mean trying to keep it. It means to take your place under it as a condemned sinner, conscious of what sin is and thus silenced. But it goes on, in faith, to trust and receive the Righteousness of God provided.
- (1) To uphold the Law means to believe God is good, propitious towards sinners, even YOU...and that He is satisfied with His divinely inspired solution. It means to be satisfied yourself with the solution and receive the free gift of God's provided righteousness. This is the goal of and the only proper response to the law.