

A REFRESHER ON THE GOSPEL

Romans 3:19-26

Paul is explaining to the church at Rome about how God can justify both Jews and Greeks and He does so with a new covenant of Grace. But he (Paul) explains how the Jews were “under law” and the Greeks were not. This passage shows how all people can be justified before God apart from the Law ... apart from the Old Covenant. The passage gives us tremendous HOPE in that it points to the Person of Jesus and His gracious act on the Cross as our substitute. In fact, Paul uses several words here that describe Jesus’ death on the Cross.

I. THE WORLD IS GUILTY BEFORE GOD IN THAT NO ONE CAN BE GOOD ENOUGH TO BE WITH THE HOLY GOD

The “law” in these verses represent man’s attempt to be “good enough.” It is God’s standard of holiness and righteousness revealed in the law (the Ten Commandments and the Love Command of Jesus). And the Bible teaches that EVERY PERSON—every man and woman—is under the law. In other words, the world system is this: if you try hard enough and do good enough you will be okay and God (who grades on a curve because He understands you) will let you into heaven (His presence). If you are SINCERE, you will be okay with God. The Bible does not teach that here (in Romans) or elsewhere.

The Bible teaches that the “deeds of the flesh” will not do anything for us except that when we “try” to please God

through our efforts we will always feel guilty. “No man will be justified in His sight”. In fact, our trying only results in the knowledge of sin. It is like a downward vortex; we try but it only gets worse!

II. “BUT NOW” TELLS OF JESUS AND THE CROSS BEING THE NEW WAY TO BE JUSTIFIED BEFORE A HOLY GOD

The “but now” speaks to a new day, a change in the order of things. God has intervened and made the way for us to be righteous; we can be judged righteous based NOT ON OUR PERFORMANCE but ON THE PERFORMANCE OF JESUS FOR EACH OF US.

III. THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETS FORETOLD OF THIS WONDERFUL NEW COVENANT THAT WAS TO COME THROUGH “THE DELIVERER”—THE MESSIAH OF THE WORLD

IV. THIS NEW WAY TO RIGHTEOUSNESS IS NOT ACHIEVED, BUT IT IS RECEIVED THROUGH FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST

And since this righteousness was received through faith it made all mankind equal in regards to acceptance by almighty God. It was now up to each individual person to exercise biblical faith in the Person of Jesus Christ. We will discuss what this word FAITH means in just a moment.

V. ALL HAVE SINNED AND FALLEN SHORT OF GOD’S HOLY STANDARD

To sin means to be impure, to miss the mark or standard. The typical illustration is that of a target that is NEVER HIT. The more you try the worse you get! But when biblical faith is exercised, then the work of Jesus on Calvary is applied to all who truly believe. The key here in this particular verse is that the "falling short" part is a present continuous tense! You say what does that matter. Well it means that the verse could be translated this way: "all have sinned and are CONTINUALLY FALLING SHORT of the glory of God!" You see that means that our faith is also an ongoing thing; it is both a point in time and an ongoing state of being because of the operation of the Word and the Spirit within us. We never ... NEVER achieve righteousness before God. God gives us His righteousness based on Jesus' work on Calvary; and that is given if we have genuine faith in Jesus Christ.

VI. KEY WORDS EXPLAINING JESUS' WORK ON THE CROSS FOR ALL WHO BELIEVE

1. **JUSTIFIED – Justification** - A forensic term, opposed to condemnation. As regards its nature, it is the judicial act of God, by which he pardons all the sins of those who believe in Christ, and accounts, accepts, and treats them as righteous in the eye of the law, i.e., as conformed to all its demands. In addition to the pardon (q.v.) of sin, justification declares that all the claims of the law are satisfied in respect of the justified. The law is not relaxed or set aside, but is declared to be fulfilled in the strictest sense; and so the person justified is declared to be entitled to all the advantages and rewards arising from perfect obedience to the law (Rom. 5:1–10).

It proceeds on the imputing or crediting to the believer by God himself of the perfect righteousness, active and passive, of his Representative and Surety, Jesus Christ (Rom. 10:3–9). Justification is not the forgiveness of a man without righteousness, but a declaration that he possesses a righteousness which perfectly and forever satisfies the law, namely, Christ's righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 4:6–8).

The sole condition on which this righteousness is imputed or credited to the believer is faith in or on the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith is called a "condition," not because it possesses any merit, but only because it is the instrument, the only instrument by which the soul appropriates or apprehends Christ and his righteousness (Rom. 1:17; 3:25, 26; 4:20, 22; Phil. 3:8–11; Gal. 2:16).¹

2. **GRACE** - Undeserved acceptance and love received from another. Although the biblical words for "grace" are used in a variety of ways, the most characteristic use is to refer to an undeserved favor granted by a superior to an inferior. When used of divine grace toward mankind, it refers to the undeserved favor of God in providing salvation for those deserving condemnation. In the more specific Christian sense it speaks of the saving activity of God which is manifested in the gift of His Son to die in the place of sinners.²

The person from whom grace is sought is almost without exception in a position of superiority or authority over the person seeking the favor. There is no obligation of the superior to show this grace. It is totally dependent on his generosity.³

¹ M. G. Easton, *Easton's Bible Dictionary* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1893).

² Jimmy A. Millikin, "Grace," ed. Chad Brand et al., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 678.

³ Jimmy A. Millikin, "Grace," ed. Chad Brand et al., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 678.

3. **REDEMPTION** - Deliverance by payment of a price. In the New Testament, redemption refers to salvation from sin, death, and the wrath of God by Christ's sacrifice. In the Old Testament, the word redemption refers to redemption by a KINSMAN (Lev. 25:24, 51–52; Ruth 4:6; Jer. 32:7–8), rescue or deliverance (Num. 3:49), and ransom (Ps. 111:9; 130:7).

In the New Testament it refers to loosing (Luke 2:38; Heb. 9:12) and loosing away (Luke 21:28; Rom. 3:24; Eph. 1:14).

In the Old Testament redemption was applied to property, animals, persons, and the nation of Israel as a whole. In nearly every instance, freedom from obligation, bondage, or danger was secured by the payment of a price, a ransom, bribe, satisfaction, or sum of money paid to obtain freedom, favor, or reconciliation. People may redeem property, animals, and individuals (slaves, prisoners, indentured relatives) who are legally obligated to God or in bondage for other reasons. God alone, however, is able to redeem from the slavery of sin (Ps. 130:7–8), enemy oppressors (Deut. 15:15), and the power of death (Job 19:25–26; Ps. 49:8–9).

The New Testament emphasizes the tremendous cost of redemption: "the precious blood of Christ" (1 Pet. 1:19; Eph. 1:7)⁴

4. **PROPITIATION - EXPIATION, PROPITIATION** - Terms used in Christian theology that directly correlate and define the nature and effect of the atonement in relation to God and believers. The two terms have somewhat different meanings and are sometimes placed in opposition to each

⁴ Ronald F. Youngblood, F. F. Bruce, and R. K. Harrison, Thomas Nelson Publishers, eds., *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1995).

other by theologians, though it is also possible to see them as complementary. Expiation speaks of the process by which sins are nullified or covered (this is **MERCY**). Propitiation, taking a personal object, speaks of the appeasement of an offended party—specifically the Christian God—from wrath or anger. Expiation falls under the concept of propitiation. In Scripture it cannot exist without propitiation. Other terms used for propitiation are appeasement and placation.⁵

The atoning death of Jesus on the cross, through which He paid the penalty demanded by God because of people's sin, thus setting them free from sin and death. The word means "appeasement." Thus, propitiation expresses the idea that Jesus died on the cross to pay the price for sin that a holy God demanded (this is **PAYMENT**).

Although Jesus was free of sin, He took all our sins upon Himself and redeemed us from the penalty of death that our sins demanded. As the writer of 1 John declared, "He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world" (1 John 2:2; atoning sacrifice, NIV, NRSV).⁶

These biblical / theological words summarize how a person can be made right with God through the work of Jesus on the Cross. The Scripture here in Romans says that through this action of Jesus on the Cross that it (His death on the Cross) shows God's righteousness. How? Because in the past God did not judge us for our sins. BUT sin had to be judged in some way. So how did God show He was just and righteous? He did so by judging our sins on the Person of His Son Jesus

⁵ Jeremiah H. Russell, "Expiation, Propitiation," ed. Chad Brand et al., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 533.

⁶ Ronald F. Youngblood, F. F. Bruce, and R. K. Harrison, Thomas Nelson Publishers, eds., *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1995).

Christ.... WOW! Sin had to be judged. He could have wiped us off the face of the earth in the blink of an eye. But He did not. Isn't that fantastic! Isn't that deeply humbling! My friends, do not ever "get over" this. He judged and punished all of my sins while they were laying on Jesus my Savior and Lord! GLORY TO GOD ... GLORY TO GOD! Oh friend, let's shout this glorious Gospel!

VII. NOW WE CAN BE ABSOLUTELY SURE THAT ANYONE WHO HAS BIBLICAL FAITH IN JESUS WILL BE FORGIVEN AND DECLARED RIGHTEOUS

He justifies and declares righteous all who have faith.

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

FOR ALL – This was RADICAL for Paul to say this. He was telling the very religious people that you did not have to have a "nice background" in order to be declared righteous. You did not have to do anything extra. You were not to be considered second class for a while in order for you to be a full part of God's family. God's declaration of His righteousness imputed to you had nothing to do with your/our goodness, our ability ... NOTHING. It had to do with God's Grace shown in Jesus on Calvary. Folks, ALL can come ... ALL. There is no distinction ... it is right here in the text: "for there is no difference, ALL have sinned and come short of the glory of God"! And there are not varying degrees of judgment for sin. Sin is heinous and black and terrible; it is a heart gone awry; it is a dirty heart. And we all need Grace. So when we come to Jesus I am glad that ALL can come because I feel like (if there were degrees of sin) that I am the lowest of low. And when I hear that ALL can

come; well I weep today. Oh, THANK GOD THAT I CAN COME! Oh, Praise the Lord that He drew me unto Himself. I did not have a clue. Nor did any of you! We, all of us, were dead in trespasses and sins and He gloriously made us alive. This wonderful salvation is FOR ALL!

WHO BELIEVE – “through **faith** in Jesus Christ, for all who **believe**.” The word for believe and faith are the same Greek word – pisteuo. This word means so much more than an awareness of facts about something. This is a giving of oneself to another; a placing of trust in the thing or person that is the object of one’s belief. Since this is talking about a Person, we are talking here about the most intimate trust: a HEART ACTION as well as a cognitive ACT OF THE WILL. It is MIND, WILL, AND EMOTIONS. And it is intensely personal.

ILLUSTRATION: It is personal. It is a surrender to a completely new way of life – somewhat like when you entrust yourself to another person for marriage.

True biblical belief then is a directional change in one’s heart (repentance is certainly a key part of biblical belief). The New Bible Dictionary mentions in its discussion of faith or belief, the concept of SURRENDER. I think this is a very good way to describe it. Surrender to Jesus as LORD and Savior of one’s life is the kind of belief or faith that Paul is speaking of here. This is not just belief in the facts surrounding Jesus’ life. You can believe the following and still not be saved: Jesus is the unique God Man sent from God the Father; He lived a perfect sinless life; He died a cruel death on the Cross as a substitute for all who will trust in Him; He bore the punishment for the sins of all mankind; He rose from the dead to prove that all of

this is true and show His complete authority over everything; He ascended to heaven; and one day He is coming back to judge the earth and bring an end to time as we know it and then reign for eternity. A person CAN BELIEVE ALL THE RIGHT THINGS ABOUT GOD, JESUS, THE BIBLE, SOUND DOCTRINE, ETC. ETC. ... BUT that person can still be terribly lost! Friends, what we are talking about here is SURRENDER TO THE PERSON OF JESUS—not just believing all the right things! You can be in church EVERY SUNDAY AND BE AS LOST AS A GOOSE!! You can read the Bible often and be lost! Oh friend, what I am talking about here is SO IMPORTANT. Have you ACTUALLY SURRENDERED YOUR HEART AND LIFE TO JESUS? And if so, are you now talking with Him about everything in your life? You see, if you have genuinely surrendered that will issue forth in an ongoing relationship AND fellowship with Jesus. You see, if your surrender was genuine then His salvation is real and He holds back nothing from ANYONE who has faith (surrender) to and in Him. He gives His Holy Spirit—His abiding presence—forever! GLORY TO GOD. He also JUSTIFIES, HE REDEEMS, HE MAKES PAYMENT FOR OUR SIN, HE GIVES US GRACE NOW AND FOREVER! Glory to God! When we trust Jesus, we are declared righteous! Amazing! Romans chapter eight teaches us that we have the witness of the Holy Spirit; First John says we have an anointing from God!

WE MUST QUIT LIVING OUR CHRISTIAN LIFE BASED ON OUR FEELINGS, AND BASE OUR THINKING ON THE WORD OF GOD

WE NEED TO ACTUALLY RECOUNT OR REHEARSE THE TRUTHS ABOVE IN OUR MINDS AND HEARTS REGULARLY – Justification by grace through faith; Payment for ALL of our sin has been

made; My salvation is based on God's Grace shown in Jesus, not my efforts; A permanent price has been paid (Redemption) to purchase me back from the slave block of my own efforts ... my own self sufficiency; and the Holy Spirit has been permanently given to continue to convict and change me forever! We need to think about stuff like this over and over and over! Why, because we revert back to junk way too quickly and easily (that is in our minds). We are on a new training schedule and we need to hang in by crying out to Him daily.

WE HAVE SOME REALLY GOOD NEWS TO TELL PEOPLE! THE GOSPEL IS FANTASTIC! WE NEED TO HELP PEOPLE UNDERSTAND THAT BIBLICAL BELIEF IS NOT WHAT THEY THINK IT IS – WHAT PEOPLE HAVE SEEN IN THE CHURCHES ACROSS OUR VALLEY AND IN AMERICA HAS BEEN MORE A SOCIAL THING THAN TRUE REPENTANCE AND SURRENDER TO JESUS.

I see this as the MAIN PROBLEM affecting people around Roanoke. People have an idea about Church and Bible truth: "it does not really make any difference if you attend church and call yourself one of those 'saved' people." They just do not care anymore. And yet they live dissatisfied lives looking for something of meaning and something real that can meet their deepest needs. Most have given up looking and are settling for less and just going along to get along. That is why we must understand this stuff we are talking about here in this passage. It is key to what happens when a person trusts Jesus Christ. And no other religion, no other philosophy, no other quasi religious teaching teaches these truths ... NONE!

We have THE UNIQUE SAVIOR – THE WAY THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE.

THE CHURCH IS CHRIST'S BODY TO BRING THIS MESSAGE TO THIS COMMUNITY AND THIS WORLD – WORTHY OF YOUR LIFE'S INVESTMENT

THIS IS A SUPERNATURAL GOSPEL – IT IS NOT UNDERSTOOD BY MOST IN OUR VALLEY – HOW ARE THEY GOING TO KNOW UNLESS WE GO?

If you need Jesus today, we stand here ready to help you express your repentance and surrender to Him. If you need a church home where you can grow in the Word and your Walk with Him and be on this Gospel team, we want to work with you and watch the Lord use us His people in many ways. We will help you follow Jesus here at Riverdale! I could say much more about this passage today. It is FULL of meaning and great life transformational truth. I thank you for being here. Please come now as we sing and as the Lord leads.