Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

How Christ Died for God, Part 3: Declaring God's Righteousness
Scripture: Romans 3:29-31
Code: 45-33

We come to Romans chapter 3 in our study tonight. And I really want to go on to the last little part of the message I intended to give last week, but also pick up some things that I think are of great importance for us in understanding the meaning of this chapter. We are at the heart of the teaching of the New Testament in this chapter. Paul has described for us the human condition. He has detailed for us the human situation from the divine viewpoint. Men, religious and irreligious, moral and immoral, have chosen to glorify themselves rather than God. We learned that from chapter 1. Consequently, both kinds of people, religious and irreligious, or moral and immoral, are under the wrath of God, under the condemnation of God's judgment.

But, God also made it possible for man to avoid that judgment and make men right with Him, make them acceptable in His presence. And the way He did it was to pour out His fury and to pour out His wrath on Christ, and Christ became the substitute for men. He bore the wrath of God. He suffered our pain. He died our death. And His death satisfied God's just requirement and it freed God's love and mercy and grace to be enacted toward man because the penalty was paid.

So, the news was bad in chapter 1 and 2 and part of chapter 3, but the news is very good in the text to which we are looking. Paul has said Christ became a satisfaction in His death. He satisfied the just requirement of God's divine and holy nature. He satisfied what God required against sin and now God has been able to give to us His grace and mercy when we accept the work of Jesus Christ. So, in our text, chapter 3 verses 21 to 31, is really a unit that tells us about the meaning then of the death of Christ, how that Christ died as a satisfaction and we, by faith in Christ and in the work He did, receive the grace and mercy and forgiveness of God.

Now, we've tried to say it in a simple way. The death of Christ enables a man to be made right with God. That's basically what justification by faith means, or righteousness by faith means, that we are made right with God by faith, not by works, not by something we've done but by believing in what Jesus has done. And so, you remember verses 21 to 25 laid out a description of how a person is made right with God. And we saw in verse 21 that it is apart from legalism. You're not made right with God through legalism. It is based on divine revelation, verse 21 says, it is revealed, manifested by God. It is acquired by faith, verse 22 says, by faith in Jesus Christ. It is provided for all, it says, unto

all and upon them all that believe. It is given freely, verse 24 says, we are made right with God freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. And it is paid for by His sacrifice, verse 25, His blood. The act of pouring out His life became a satisfaction to God.

So, Paul has told us really some tremendous truths: That we are made right with God, not according to works or law, but by God's own gift, which is received by faith, provided for all who will respond in faith, given freely and paid for by the sacrifice of Christ. Now that is how God makes man right with Him. And that is the basic idea of justification by faith, to make men right with God, to make men acceptable to God, to enable us to have fellowship with God now and forever.

Justification is a declaration. It is a statement. It is an affirmation. It is God saying, based upon the merit of Jesus Christ, based upon the death of Christ, based upon the righteousness of Christ and your faith in Christ, I declare you to be right with Me, I declare you to be just, to be righteous. In Romans chapter 4 verse 11 it says that righteousness, the end of the verse, is imputed unto them. That is... That is, it is granted to them. Based on the work of Christ, God declares us righteous.

Now, in a very real sense, we are not righteous. We are unrighteous. And we don't, by believing, make ourselves righteous, but God declares that we're righteous and He imputes that righteousness to us in that declaration because Jesus Christ has paid the penalty for our sin.

Second Corinthians 5:21 says, "God made Christ to be sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

Now I want you to turn for a minute in your Bible to Galatians chapter 3. And we have a little longer introduction because I had a short sermon left over from last week, so don't be nervous. But in Galatians 3 verse 24 it says: "The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ that we might be justified by faith." Now there's the same thing, justification by faith. This is the terminology of the Reformers, this is the great heart of Christian doctrine: We are made right by faith. We are just before God by faith. We have a great Savior who has given us a great salvation.

Now let's go back and just finish up the last few thoughts on Romans 3. Now we have seen what salvation does for us. I just went through it. But in this passage from verse 25 on, the first half is what it does for us, 21 to 25a; 25b to 31 is what it does for God. And salvation is important toward us. It's even more important toward God. And four great things are stated here.

First of all, Jesus' death on the cross declared God's righteousness. Verse 25 says, "To declare His righteousness." That's why Christ died, to declare the righteousness of God for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. And we've explained that now for several weeks. In other words, Jesus had to die on the cross in order that God would manifest His righteous hatred of sin. If God just passed by sin, just forgave men, saved them, took them to heaven and nobody paid the penalty, then God could be accused of being an unjust God because a just God demands a penalty for sin. So when Jesus died on the cross, it is a declaration of the righteousness of God.

Secondly, the cross exalts God's grace. The cross exalts God's grace. After verse 26, in which he reaffirms what he said in 25, he then says, "Where is boasting? It is excluded. By what principle? The principle of works? No, because works would ...” If we got saved by our works, we would boast; but by the principle of faith. “So we conclude that a man is made right with God by faith apart from the deeds of the law.” Now, if you're not saved by what you do, you're saved by what God did and that exalts God's grace, doesn't it? Because you couldn't do anything to earn it. G.S. Bishop said years ago, "Grace is a provision for men who are so fallen that they cannot lift the axe of justice, so corrupt that they cannot change their own natures, so averse to God that they cannot turn to Him, so blind that they cannot see Him, so deaf they cannot hear Him, and so dead He Himself must open their graves." End quote.

God reaches out in grace to save so that the cross exalts His righteousness because it shows us how He demanded a penalty even if He had to pay it Himself and His grace, because He extends salvation to those who could never earn it and never deserve it.

Now the last three verses. The cross also reveals God's consistency. And I could have used several words, that might not even be the best one, but I think you'll understand. Verse 29, "Is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also, seeing it is one God." We'll stop there.

Now justification by faith, Paul preached. The Jews believed you were justified by what? By works, or law. Now this verse attacks that in a very interesting way. Do you know the fundamental verity, the fundamental truth of all Judaism? Do you know what every Jew first of all knows as the definition of his religion? It's Deuteronomy 6:4, "The Lord our God is one God." That is the essence of all Jewish faith. That is the first article of the manifesto of Judaism. "The Lord our God is one God." And that is repeated throughout the Old Testament Scripture. God is one God. There are no other gods. God will tolerate no other worship. All the other idols are wood and stone and so forth that cannot answer.

There are no other gods, only the one God, the true God. Isaiah 45:5, "I am the Lord and there is none else, there is no God beside Me." And then in verse 6, "That they may know from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none beside Me, I am the Lord, and there is none else." "Look unto Me and be saved all the ends of the earth." Listen to this, "For I am God and there is none else."

Now, if people are to look unto Him and be saved, He's the only God, then He's the only way to be saved, right? Now that's what he's saying here. He says to the Jews, "Look, is God the God of the Jews only?" And they're going to have to say no. Because there's only one God and He is the only God and they know it from the articles of their faith. He is the God of everybody. And that's basic. Is He not the God of the Gentiles? And he answers as if he were answering for the Jews. "Yes, He's the God of the Gentiles, seeing He's one God." He's everybody's God. You've only got one God and He's everybody's God. There are no other gods. Now that was basic to their understanding.

First Corinthians 8:5 says: "For though there be that are called gods, and maybe some called gods, whether in heaven or in earth as there are gods many and lords many, but to us there is but one God, the Father of whom are all things." There may be some called gods, but there's only one.

Now, watch this reasoning. If there's only one God and all Israel would have to affirm this, if there's only one God then He must be the God of the Jew and the Gentile. Now this is very hard for the Jews to handle because they didn't like to think that the Gentiles got in on their God. That, you see, was Jonah's problem. When God said go to Nineveh and preach, it wasn't that Jonah was afraid to preach, he didn't mind that. It wasn't that Jonah was lazy. It wasn't that Jonah wanted to stay home with his wife and kids. It wasn't that Jonah didn't think he'd get a big enough love offering. You see, the reason Jonah did not want to go to preach in Nineveh was he did not want Gentiles getting converted and making claims on his God. That's how narrow their perspective had become. He ran because he really didn't want to see Gentile salvation. You think that's not true? Listen to Jonah 4:2, "He prayed to the Lord and said, ‘I pray, Thee 0 Lord, I fled, for I knew that Thou art a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness and repentest thee of the evil." I knew if I went there You'd save those crummy Gentiles. That's what he said. And I really couldn't handle it. Really hard for them. But they knew God was the God of the Gentiles. He was the God of everybody.

And the Old Testament, oh my it's so loaded with it. And Ruth said, "Entreat me not to leave Thee, or to turn away from following after Thee, for where Thou goest, I will go, and where Thou lodgest I will lodge, Thy people shall be my people and thy God my God." And she was a Gentile. God had always been the God of the Gentiles. He was the God of everybody. Look at Naaman the Syrian. Dr. Barnhouse used to say Naaman was the Hitler of his era, and Naaman the Syrian, who received

leprosy, came to worship the true God. He is the God of everybody.

Now listen, if God is the God of the Jew and the Gentile, then God has a mode of salvation that is the same for both. Follow this. And it can't be keeping the law because the Gentiles what? They don't have the law, they don't have it. So if God is going to justify the circumcision, it's going to be by faith and the uncircumcision. It's going to be by faith because one God has one mode of salvation. It's interesting reasoning. If there were many gods, there could be many religions. But there's only one God, there can only be one way to approach Him. "Go into all the world," said Jesus, "and preach the gospel to (Whom?) every creature." The same gospel for every creature. "Neither is there any other name given among men whereby we must be saved." No other name. "No man comes unto the Father but by Me," said Jesus. Only one way, one God, one mode, one approach, that's it. God is the God of everybody and God doesn't have a works system for Jews and a faith system for Gentiles. And that may have been what they were sort of coming to. "Well, maybe He does save some of those people by their faith, who haven't heard, who don't really know, who just can trust, sort of in whatever limited perceptions they have, but for us it's law." And he is saying no, there are not two ways. There's one God and that's basic to your faith, and justification by faith comes to those who come to that one God, whether they be Jew or Gentile. So salvation must be apart from keeping the law, it must be apart from works for God to be consistent. Heathen and religionist alike are saved by faith in Christ, very basic, very basic.

And you can find that same principle throughout the New Testament. There is no other way to be saved than by faith in Jesus Christ, no other way. Be you a religious Jew or a heathen Bushman, there is one God, 1 Timothy 2:5, and “one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all.”

If indeed then (Look at verse 30.) God is one, and He is, then He will justify — And the future tense means a permanent purpose. From now on, He will continue to justify, make right with Him. — those who are the circumcision (That's the Jews.) and those who are the uncircumcision the same way through faith. John Murray calls this "The ethnic universalism of the gospel." The whole human race, listen to me, is reduced to the same level. In verse 19, see it there? The whole world is guilty of sin so they're reduced to the same level in the doctrine of sin. And here in verse 29 and 30, they are reduced to the same level in the doctrine of salvation. It's exactly what was said in 1:16 of Romans, "For I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile." It's the same. It's the same. God is utterly consistent. He is glorified by the revelation of His absolute, unwavering consistency.

So, God is on display at the cross. I mean, you know, when you see the mass of religions all over the world and you see the complexities of all of those religions, and then you look at Christianity — one God, one Mediator, I think of what Ephesians says, "One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all." One way to Him and that's so direct and so clear and how it glorifies God, utterly consistent, one way through faith. And He never changes.

People say, "Well, were you saved by faith in the Old Testament?" You better believe it. That's the only way anybody's ever been saved. God has never altered His method one wit. You say, "Well, weren't they saved by works in the Old Testament?" No, no one could ever be saved by works. They were responsible to live a life of righteousness just as we are, but they were brought into the capacity to do that by believing God. Noah, Genesis 6:8. People say, "Oh, we're in the dispensation of grace, grace didn't begin till the New Testament." You want to bet? I don't bet, but I'll still bet you that. Genesis 6, are you ready for Genesis 6? "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." And if he hadn't found grace there, he would have been drowned like everybody else.

Moses, Exodus 33, found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Romans 4:3, Abraham was saved by faith. Romans 4 will also teach us that David was saved by faith. And that's before Israel. That's pre-Israel. That's way back; Noah, Moses, Abraham.

Then you move into the Israel...the period of the national theocracy, and the same thing is true. The prophet Habakkuk says the just shall live by what? By faith. And you read Hebrews 11 some time. Read it. It starts all the way back with Enoch, “by faith Enoch.” And by faith all these heroes, all the way to the eleventh chapter. And then you come into chapter 12 and it says, "Seeing we are compassed about by so great a cloud of witnesses," and that is not talking about people sitting in an arena somewhere. Those people are witnessing to the beauty of faith, to the reality of faith, to the life of faith. And if you have this many people testifying to the reality of faith as the only way to God, then that's the way we ought to live, by faith. Never been any different. Men are redeemed always, past, present, future, by believing God. And in that time they had to believe all that God had revealed and now we believe all that God had revealed which is all that He'd revealed then and all that He's revealed in His Son. But we still believe all that He revealed.

And in this age in which we live, just as before Israel, during Israel's time, and now as Israel's been set aside, we are redeemed by faith, by believing. But as James says, "Saving faith will manifest fruitfulness." There's no question about that.

You say, "Well, if you're not saved by works and you're not saved by keeping the law, doesn't this mean that the law is useless?" And that's the last argument he deals with in chapter 3. Look at it in verse 31. "Do we then make useless the law through faith?" *M genoito*, no, no, no, no, no. "We establish the law." We don't make it void. You see, this takes us to the fourth point. The cross of Jesus Christ declares God's righteousness, exalts God's grace, reveals God's consistency and finally, confirms God's law.

You say, "Well, now wait a minute! That's a legitimate question. I mean, if you can't get saved by keeping the law, then what good is the law?" And you know, the Jew at this point may have been reaching back to some of his Old Testament roots. Psalm 119:126 says, "They have made void the law." In Jeremiah 8 it says, "How do ye say, we are wise and the law of the Lord is with us? Lo, certainly in vain He made it. The pen of the scribes is in vain." There had been others who had sort of said, well, Your law is void, it's useless. If the law can't save us, then it's useless. All its efforts are zero.

No, no, no, no, no. No, no he says. It is established. How can that be so? Listen very closely. Because the law was never given to do what? To save you. You say, "What was it given for?" It was given to show you you needed to be saved. Big difference. It was given to demonstrate your sinfulness, not to save you from it. It was given to drive you to God in faith, to drive you to the point where you said, "I can't ... I can't live up to Your standards, God, I can't live up to Your standard. What will I do?" And at that point, God intervenes in His mercy and grace and says, "I think you see your sin, I think you're broken over your sin and repentant for your sin and I offer you through faith grace and forgiveness and healing."

So, the death of Christ on the cross doesn't make void the law, it establishes it. Now just sum it up in three simple thoughts. First of all, it establishes the law by the penalty. You want to know how...how valid the law was? It had to be exacted. Jesus had to die. The law was established in the cross of Christ. The law said, you sin, you die, and somebody had to die. That affirmed the law. The law said sin brings death and it had to be. The law is not useless, the law is not void. When Jesus died, He was saying, this law is in effect, it must have its demands met. In Matthew 5:17 when Jesus said, "I am not come to destroy the law and the prophets but to fulfill them," I think He was particularly looking at the cross and saying, "I'm coming to verify the law by showing you that it must have its due."

So, in the death of Jesus Christ for salvation, the penalty of the law was paid and it established the validity of the law. Secondly, not only the penalty, but the purpose. You see, the law only had one

purpose, and that was to bring us to Christ. Look at verse 20 of chapter 3 and I could take you to about a half a dozen but I won't. But this one says, "...By the law comes the knowledge (Of what?)of sin." In Romans 7, Paul says, "When I saw the law, then I saw my sin and I saw my death." I mean, if I didn't know the rules then I wouldn't know I was breaking them, right? So the law is your schoolmaster, Galatians 3 says, to drive you to Christ. It is your disciplinarian. It strikes blows against you to show you your inadequacy, your inability. The law worked in Paul and all it did was stir up sin. When the law goes to work it just stirs up sin, sin, sin, sin. It can't cure it, it just makes it manifest. But it has to start the process of salvation at that point.

You say, "Well, why can't the law save you?" Because James 2:10 says, "If you keep the whole law and offend in one small point, you're done." So nobody can be saved by the law, all it does is stir up sin, stir up sin.

So, the law has a good use. And when Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, it's so masterful, laid down His law, He said, "I say this ... and I say this ... and I say this ... and I say this ... and here's what you ought to do ... and here's what you ought to do .... and here's what you ought to do," and you don't do any of it. And he said, "Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect," and "Your righteousness better exceed that of the scribes and the Pharisees or you're finished," you better keep all God's law. And why was He telling them that? Some people say, "Oh well, that's how it's going to be, we're going to do that in the future and so forth." No, no, He was telling them that so they could see the impossibility of it all.

Remember when He first gave them the law? They said, "Oh, we'll do all that." Remember that in the Old Testament? "We'll keep all those commandments." And so you know what the Lord did? He just kept piling them on till they couldn't even figure them out, let alone keep them. People say to me, "Well, why are all those laws in the Old Testament? So many little laws and all?" I think some of the stuff is there just to show them the absolute impossibility of doing it. And the whole point was to drive them to the need of a Savior. But it isn't void, believe me, it's valid.

And finally is the thought of potential. Penalty, purpose and potential. When you put your faith in Jesus Christ, then you can fulfill the law, right? Then you can. Romans 8:3, "For what the law couldn't do in that it was weak through the flesh." In other words, the law in your flesh couldn't do anything. "God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us." But we couldn't do it in our humanness, but we can do it through Christ, "If we walk not after the flesh but after (What?) the Spirit." Isn't that great?

Justification by faith does not make void the law; it makes the keeping of the law a possibility. The law is not useless. It had to have its just dessert and Christ die. It was there to drive us to Christ and it is there now to be fulfilled in the energy and power of the blessed Holy Spirit. So, the law is confirmed. And when you look at the cross and you see Christ dying, see there the exaltation of God's law, His righteous wrath is coming down on Christ because His law demands it. And see there, also, the penalty for sin, so that you understand that the law will drive you to see your sinfulness. And then see in the sufficiency of Jesus Christ, in the granting of His Holy Spirit a new ability to keep the law.

The cross exalts God four ways: His righteousness, His grace, His consistency, and His law. I think of the hymn, "0 what a Savior is mine; In Him God's mercies combine; His love will never decline; And most of all, He loves me." What a priceless treasure.

You've probably heard it said that if you work in a barnyard, you smell like a pig. You want to know something? God worked His salvation in the muck of this barnyard called earth and He came in human flesh and rubbed shoulders with pigs and went away without a stench, only spotless glory for Himself. That's what Paul is saying. Look what salvation does for us. Look what it did to glorify our blessed God. And so, the Reformers said, "Salvation is *sola gratia*, by grace alone; *sola fide*, by faith alone; *sola Deo gloria*, for the glory of God alone." Let's pray.

It's been a great joy to have shared these truths in this chapter. I suppose every preacher of the Word of God longs to teach this section because of its profound richness; and yet is at the same time somewhat threatened by the awesomeness of the task. But what a joy it's been to delineate the doctrine of salvation as it glorifies God. And our great prayer, of course, is that God would be glorified in our lives as we affirm that salvation, as we believe in Jesus Christ, as we receive Him. And my prayer tonight is that if there is anyone who has not done that, that you would embrace the one who died for you, that you would see your sin as over against the law of God and that you would come to the one who alone can save you from that inevitable judgment. In your heart, all you need do is believe and open your faith to Christ and with all of the misgivings and all of the things you may not understand, He'll embrace your commitment at that point, fill in all the gaps, if you'll offer Him your life.

Father, we pray to this end for Christ's sake. Amen.

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