How to Be Reconciled with God
Romans 3:25-31
90-401

Open your Bible, if you will, to Romans chapter 3. I said this morning that I wanted to do on Sunday nights another run through Romans 4 and 5, and I got a little push-back on that from some high powered sources who said to me, “Well, you’ve done that in the past, we want you to do something else.”

And I said, “Well, fine, that’s great. Any particular favorites?” And I got a few suggestions.

So this week I’m going to have to decide what the Lord wants me to say next Sunday night in the series. But we’ll....I’ve got a list of both front and back on a sheet of paper of things I want to do on Sunday nights, so I’ll let you know next Sunday morning exactly where I land. And we’ll leave Romans 4 and 5 alone for as long as I can restrain myself from that great text.

But I do want you to look at Romans 3 tonight, and I just want to draw your attention to verses 24 and 25 as we come to the Lord’s table to think about the cross, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith.

I want you to look at the word “propitiation,” with me for a little bit tonight. The word propitiation means satisfaction...satisfaction, to propitiate someone is to satisfy someone. And God is the one who is being satisfied in the death of Christ. That is what that verse is saying. It could be arranged this way, “God displayed Christ publicly on the cross to satisfy Himself...to satisfy Himself.”

To dig deeper into that, it is a satisfaction from God’s perspective, it gives Him glory. It is a satisfaction that glorifies God. You do understand that before the cross, salvation was a reality, right? People since the Fall in Genesis throughout all of human history have been being saved. They have been forgiven. They have escaped judgment. They have been promised eternal life and heaven. True salvation has been going on since immediately after the Fall. The question is, how can God do that and still be righteous? How can God pass by sin? How can He overlook sin and simply forgive it?

Well the cross answers the question. And all the way along through that entire Old Testament history of God forgiving sin and giving salvation, there was the sacrificial system running concurrently with the offer of salvation. And the sacrificial system pointed to the fact that without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness. Blood must be shed, justice must be satisfied, death must come, the soul that sins must die or someone must die in that soul’s place.

So the picture of what was to come was there alongside the offer of forgiveness. Sinners who

repented of sin and called out to God for forgiveness and grace and mercy were saved. But God's righteousness was still not satisfied. So, verse 25 says, God displays Christ in His blood publicly as a satisfaction. And then in verse 26, a demonstration of His righteousness so that He may be viewed as righteous, or just, and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. The question always was in the Old Testament, "if God forgives sinners, how can He be just? We see the mercy in it, we see the grace in it, where's the justice in it because sin must be punished?

So God puts on display His righteousness, His justice by making His Son the substitute for all the sinners who will ever live who are being forgiven and given eternal life. Therefore, the death of Christ becomes that satisfaction which not only satisfies God primarily, but satisfies anyone who might impugn the righteousness of God.

God's glory is at stake here. God's glory is the priority here. Salvation is for the sinner, of course, the path to glory. But salvation also is ultimately for the glory of God. It is to say to the entire world, and all those who may have wondered throughout all of redemptive history, that God is just. While He is the justifier of sinners, He doesn't sacrifice His justice for that, He puts His justice on display through the blood of His own Son who becomes that satisfying sacrifice.

So when you look at the cross, obviously, for us, it is the place where we go to see the source of the greatest benefit to us. There in the cross we find our greatest blessing. And that for us is often the main feature but the cross must be viewed beyond that. It is the place where God is putting His character on display, His righteousness on display.

Many years ago I preached a message called, "How Christ Died For God." We know He died for us. We know He died for sinners. But He also died for God, to satisfy God and to satisfy any accusation against God for forgiving sinners without justice being meted out. This at the end of everything is, of course, the highest value in the work of Christ, is that God would be honored, and God would be satisfied and God would be glorified.

It's pretty apparent to anybody who studies the Bible at all with any diligence that the glory of God is the primary theme in Scripture, as Psalm 115:1 says, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us but to Thine name give glory because of Thy loving-kindness and truth. The glory all belongs to You." In fact, in Romans 1:5 we are reminded that the very purpose of evangelism is for His namesake. That is, we have received grace and apostleship, we bring about the obedience of faith among all the nations for His namesake. Not only is God's glory the issue in the very death of Christ, which protects His glory, which preserves His righteousness, displays His righteousness, but all who come to Him through the cross and the provision of Christ become a part of those who glorify Him, so that He is glorified in the very act of Christ and He is glorified in the redemption which that act provides. We, Paul says, bring about the obedience of faith. That is we proclaim the gospel, people believe and obey the gospel, coming to faith and that for His namesake...for the glory of His name.

In 3 John there is a similar testimony given in verse 7. Verse 7 says, "They went out, the men we ought to support, for the sake of the name." Here again is the very same emphasis given that we evangelize for the sake of the name, for the honor of God, for the glory of God. So whatever way you look at salvation, either from the point of the sacrifice of Christ which gives glory to God by putting His righteousness on display, or whether you look at it by the effects of the cross, the redemption of sinners who become glorifiers of God themselves, the primary purpose for everything is wrapped up in glorifying God.

Now you all know that through the book of Romans, salvation is the theme. And when it comes to its wrap up, the doctrinal section, look at chapter 11, the end of the chapter there, before the practical section that begins in chapter 12. As Paul looks back over the whole of this great treatise on salvation, verse 36, he says, “For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to Him be the glory forever, amen.” This is the pinnacle of the entire discussion of the great sweeping doctrine of salvation.

When we get a glimpse into heaven in Revelation chapter 4 and verse 11, “Worthy are You, our Lord, and our God,” the one just called holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty. “Worthy are You, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power for You created all things and because of Your will they existed and were created.”

Now that’s just a sort of general overview of the reality that when you come to contemplate the cross, you have to understand that beyond the fact that Christ died for us and above that reality, Christ died for God. I want us to look at the death of Christ from the divine perspective, from what it meant to God. Let’s go back in to the gospel of John, chapter 7 and verse 18, and let’s hear this from the lips of our Lord Himself.

John chapter 7, Jesus, of course, is saying if you believe what I teach, you are responding to God, verse 17. Then in verse 18 He says this. “He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory. But he who is seeking the glory of the One who sent Him, He is true and there’s no unrighteousness in Him.” Here Christ gives testimony to the fact that the driving power of His life, the driving motive of His life was to glorify His Father.

If you go over to chapter 8 of John’s gospel, they accused, in verse 48. Jesus of being a Samaritan and having a demon. They were looking for everything they could possibly say to discredit Him. And Jesus answered in verse 49 and said, “I do not have a demon, but I honor My Father and you dishonor Me. I do not seek My glory.” This is the mark of Christ. He understands that His life, His death, His resurrection, all redemption that comes out of that is to the glory of God.

In the twelfth chapter of John’s gospel, just one more from that book, Jesus says in verse 27, “My soul has become troubled. What shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour? But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name.” And what hour is He talking about? The cross. “And a voice came out of heaven, ‘I have both glorified it and I will glorify it again.’” God always glorifies His name and He will do that through Christ. And what Christ is talking about is the hour of His death in which He will glorify God. And again, how does He glorify God? First of all, by putting on display God’s righteousness so that God can never be accused of being one-sided, gracious, loving, compassionate but unjust, unrighteous. And secondly, by redeeming sinners who will be added to the chorus of voices that give glory to God for the wondrous gift of salvation. And that’s a verse that you know very well, 2 Corinthians 4:15 which talks about the fact that Paul preaches the gospel he says so he can add more voices to the choir that glorifies God. In 1 Peter chapter 4 and verse 11 it says, “So that all things; in all things God may be glorified through Christ.”

It’s so important for us to get beyond the personal. It’s wonderful for us to embrace the realities of the cross that speak of our own redemption and our own future glory. But to be really full in your understanding of the cross and to be a worshiper rather than just a person who’s thankful for what’s

been delivered to you, to be a true worshiper of God, you go beyond what the cross means to you and engage yourself with what the cross means to God.

There's one other statement that Jesus made in John 17:4 in which He looks at His cross in the high priestly prayer and says, "I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do." And He's anticipating the cross and the resurrection.

Great missionary, David Brainard, said, "I do not go to heaven to be advanced...this is his comment to Jonathan Edwards who wrote his biography and he was on his death bed when he said it...I do not go to heaven to be advanced but to give glory to God. It is no matter where I shall be stationed in heaven. It is no matter whether I have a high or low seat there, but to live and please and glorify my God, that's what matters. My heaven is to please God. My heaven is to glorify Him, to serve Him, to be wholly devoted to His glory."

And so, the eternal purpose of salvation is to make us capable of glorifying God forever. If I can get you to think about heaven in that way, then I can change your perspective, I think. Most people think about heaven on the level of what it's going to mean to us, right? What it's going to be like to be there and be in that environment and be blessed and be perfect and be joyful and be peace...at peace in this eternal blessed state, and we falls short of realizing that the whole reason we will be in heaven is not for self-satisfaction, but to satisfy God by giving Him glory from our perfection. The cross is where God displays publicly His Son as a satisfaction so that His righteousness is on display so that He is glorified as a righteous, holy God. And beyond that, all those who are then forgiven become those who bear this testimony to the righteousness of God and the glory of God and they do it forever and forever throughout all eternity.

There's no question that God is righteous. From a biblical standpoint, the Bible is absolutely crystal clear, that God is holy, holy, holy. "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?"says the Scripture. He is a righteous God.

When He gives testimony to Himself, His own testimony is to His integrity as a holy God. He is righteous. "He will...this is Exodus 34:7...by no means leave sin unpunished. He will by no means leave sin unpunished."

The pagans had their deities who were capricious, who were inconsistent, who were whimsical. On the one hand they demanded certain quote/unquote righteous behaviors or moral behaviors out of their followers, but they themselves violated all of those things in the world of fantasy gods. The Greek gods, the Roman gods of biblical times were good and evil, mixed. The true God cannot be allowed to fall into that group. The true God cannot be viewed as capricious. The true God cannot be viewed as inconsistent. He cannot be viewed as all love and kindness and mercy and not righteousness. But God had tolerated sin, as I said, through all of redemptive history. Many unrighteous people had appeared to prosper. And God had overlooked sin for centuries. And now, it's time at the cross to make a statement of His righteousness.

It's necessary...go back if you're not in Romans, for a moment, to the section we're looking at. The reason this is so important is given at the back half of verse 25, to demonstrate His righteousness because in the patience of God He passed over the sins previously committed. We talked about that last Sunday, didn't we...the goodness of God, the kindness of God which is meant to lead you to

repentance, previously committed sins meaning before the cross. Throughout all of man's sinful history since Adam fell, wherever people believed on Him or wherever people repented, expressed love, worshiped Him, asked for mercy, grace and forgiveness, He withheld judgment and granted salvation.

I can't talk about this without thinking of Acts 17. "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent," and the next verse says, "because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness, those who didn't have their sins judged in Christ, through a man, namely Christ, whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."

In the past, God overlooked sin. Now He doesn't overlook it anymore. It has been judged on the cross. He didn't interfere. There was no real visible indication that the justice of God hadn't satisfied. You couldn't say sacrifices did it, because they were repeated again and again and again and again and obviously could not take away sin. In fact, if you go back in to Old Testament history, for example, in Malachi's day, the Jews accused God. They said, "Everyone that does evil is good in Your sight, and You seem to delight in them. Where is the God of justice?" they said. This isn't an indictment that comes from God's own covenant people, how can You do this? How can You make wicked people prosper? How can You be so gracious and forgiving? Where is the God of justice?

Boy, you'd have to be pretty self-righteous to ask that, wouldn't you? To be able to walk up and face God and say, "I'd like to see Your justice on display, I'm really tired of Your mercy. I'm fed up with Your grace and Your kindness."

Psalm 78:38 says, "He being compassionate forgave their iniquity and did not destroy them. And often He restrained His anger and did not arouse all His wrath." People look at the Old Testament and they say, "What kind of a God in the Old Testament is so vengeful and so fearful", as we saw last Sunday. That's just the opposite of the question you should ask. Even the Jews are saying, "Where's Your justice? People are getting away with sin all over the place and You don't seem to be doing anything about it. All we see is compassion and mercy. Bring on Your justice."

They could see a God of mercy in the Old Testament. They could see a God of love in the Old Testament, though there are people today who don't seem to be able to see that. But where...their question was....is the God of justice, and where is the God of holiness, and where is the God of righteousness?" And this kind of questioning is coming from some highly self-righteous people who think their lives are blessed because they're good. And they think cheap forgiveness is a moral evil. They think a judge is unjust if he allows a criminal to get away with a crime and there's no penalty. So that in the Old Testament there is a thick veil that hangs over the justice of God and over the righteousness of God, and He keeps dispensing, as Romans 2:4 last week we pointed out, His goodness and His kindness and His compassion and His mercy. And the prophet even asked the question in Micah 7:18, "Who's a pardoning God like You? We've never heard of a deity like You. You just go on forgiving, and forgiving, and pardoning. How can You do that and be just?"

For four thousands years, at least, the spectacle presented by mankind to the whole moral universe was a scandal. God keeps loving, showing compassion, forgiving penitent and broken sinners. Where are the wages of sin? Who pays the price? This is a kind of impunity that marks God. So when the cross comes, it is true that Jesus dies for sinners, but it is also true that He dies for God, to satisfy the long-waiting justice of God, to fulfill, if you will, the petition of the Lord's prayer, "Hallowed

be Your name."

Oh my how the death of Christ satisfied God, satisfied Him perfectly. We were not redeemed with corruptible things, Peter says, silver and gold, but by the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. In that sense, we understand our redemption. But so was God satisfied by that same sacrifice. The death of Christ revealed that God is just. He is righteous. He is holy. And His righteous justice has been satisfied and we than now can glorify Him as Christ did in His fullness in the beauty of all that He is.

There's no way to overstate this. It would be impossible. This is so absolutely critical because everything ultimately has to be to the glory of God. There can't be any loose ends. I love what it says in Zechariah 9:9, I just thought of it and looked it up, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion, shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem, behold your King is coming to you, He is just and endowed with salvation." He is just and endowed with salvation. The cross provides then the clear revelation of God's justice. He does inflict, as I said last time, punishment on every sin that's ever committed by every person who ever lives, either they are born under His judgment in Christ, or the sinner bears the weight himself.

So that, back to Romans 3, He can be the justifier, verse 26, of the one who has faith in Jesus and still be just. He can forgive the sinner because Christ pays the penalty. Psalm 85:10 says it this way, "Mercy and truth are met together. Righteousness and peace have kissed each other."

This is the cross. It is the substitutionary act of Christ. Takes you all the way back, doesn't it, to Isaiah 53, and I am doing to do a series on Isaiah 53. "He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities." Takes you to 2 Corinthians 5:21, "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us." All the substitutionary language of the New Testament focuses on this great sacrificial act that satisfied God's justice, but it also satisfied God from the perspective that it stopped the indictment that He was unjust. The cross is a monumental thing. We now look at the cross and we see God glorified in that act, His righteousness preserved. And then we through the cross being saved become glorifiers of God both now and forever and forever. Let's bow together in prayer.

Our Father, we thank You tonight for just a brief meditation on the reality of the cross, the glory of the cross from the perspective of Your holy integrity. So clear for us. There are no loose ends in the Scripture, nothing missing, nothing left out. Everything is perfect. Every question is perfectly answered. Every dilemma perfectly resolved. You are God to be glorified now and forever. What a privilege it is for us to be given life through faith in Christ so that we will be the very beings who now and one day in a glorified form will give You the glory that You fully deserve. Lord, work in our hearts tonight, we pray.

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