



ROMANS

The Gospel of God

The Gospel of Justification!

Romans 3:21-31

Message #8 of 33 – S1135

Sermon given on December 15, 2024



Sunday Morning Service

Pastor Rick Lancaster

The Gospel of Justification!

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Opening Comments

- Open your Bibles to **Romans 3**
- Today, we continue the series through the letter to the Romans – **The Gospel of God!**
- Let's open this time in our service with a word of prayer. - **Pray**

Teaching

- **The Gospel of Justification!**
- After Paul introduces himself in the opening verses of the letter, he expresses his desire to come and visit them and share the gospel with them.
- Paul tells them why and establishes the theme of the letter in verses 16 and 17 of chapter 1 (**Romans 1:16-17**).

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "*The just shall live by faith.*"

- Paul wants to preach the gospel because of its power to transform lives.
- Paul says at the end of verse 17 that a just person shall live by faith.
- Faith is going to be one of the major sub-themes Paul is developing throughout this letter.
- And Paul makes a connection to living by faith and being a just person.
- Another word for just is right or righteous.
- A just person is in a right relationship with God.
- A just person is also living a righteous life before God.
- It is through the Bible that we learn what that means, because it is not natural.
- We'll touch on that more later.
- Chapter two begins with an exhortation to those who think they are somehow immune to God's judgment by a faithless exercise of religion.

- Religion without faith cannot save anyone.
 - The power of the gospel to transform people outside of a right relationship with God to be children of God is by faith.
 - Romans 3 challenges the religious Jews to examine their faith.
 - Just being religious, even Jewish, does not make you better than anyone else.
 - In fact, everyone is equally messed up in the eyes of God.
 - There is no such thing as a good person.
 - Even the very best human falls exceedingly short of God's perfection (**Ivan Turgenev**).
- "I do not know what the heart of a bad man is like, but I do know what the heart of a good man is like, and it is terrible."**
- The reality of the fallenness of mankind is a dilemma for both God and man.
 - How can helpless man who is irredeemably broken by sin ever be right with holy, righteous God.
 - From God's perspective, divine justice demands condemnation for sin.
 - But God's love compels Him to reach out to guilty humanity.
 - That brings us to our text for the day.
 - **Romans 3:21**
 - 'the law' = the Mosaic Law found in the Pentateuch.
 - One of the issues with man's interpretation of the Law is that it caused some to believe they could achieve God's righteousness.
 - Their very best fell grossly short of God's perfection.
 - The Law and the prophets witnessed that human attempts at righteousness failed to achieve God's standard of perfection.
 - The continual need for sacrifices proved that to be true.
 - The Law proved that man needed something beyond the reach of man to be right with God.
 - **Romans 3:22a**
 - Speaking of the Messiah, the coming Savior, Jeremiah said (**Jeremiah 23:5**).
- "Behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "that I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; a King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth."**

- Jesus is both the righteousness of God and the human example of righteousness toward God.
- Paul has made it clear that it is hopeless to try to be right with God through our effort.
- Our only hope of being right with God is through faith in Christ Jesus.
- **Romans 3:22b-23**
- Even if someone was 99.99% righteous, they would not be righteous enough to satisfy God's standard of perfection – they would still fall short.
- Only faith in Christ makes us right with God.
- Faith in Christ makes us equal before God.
- Even if someone only has 0.01% righteousness, faith in Christ makes them just as righteous before God as the person who is 99.99% righteous.
- That doesn't mean we don't need to try to be right in our behaviors (**R. Kent Hughes**).

“Human righteousness is of great importance in human relations and should not be practically minimized, but it does not produce God's salvation.”

- God calls us to live out His standard of perfection as well as we are able (**1 Peter 1:15-16**).

...as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, ¹⁶ because it is written, “Be holy, for I am holy.”

- Practical righteousness of how we live in relation with other people.
- When we live in a way that is right before God, it is right before other people and allows them to see God's goodness, love, glory, and something of His perfection.
- Paul's objective is to help us to realize that we are helpless to be righteous enough for God to save us.
- We are helpless, but not hopeless.
- Through faith in Christ, we achieve what is impossible through human effort.

• **Romans 3:24-25**

- ‘propitiation’ = sacrifice of atonement.

Atonement: to be cleansed of sin or from the defilement of sin.

- An innocent animal was sacrificed to satisfy God's wrath over sin.
- Jesus was an innocent Man, the only innocent Man who ever lived.

- When He shed His blood on the cross, it cleanses of the guilt and penalty for sin of anyone who puts their trust in Him.
 - The same word is used in the Old Testament to refer to the Mercy Seat in the Jewish temple.
 - This was the golden cover of the Ark of the Covenant.
 - Once a year the high priest would go behind the veil to sprinkle blood on the Mercy Seat to seek atonement for all the people of Israel.
 - The Mercy Seat was where the atonement was made.
 - Once atonement was made for sin, God was free to be merciful, not give them what they deserved, to all sinners covered by the atonement.
 - As Christians, Christ is our mercy seat.
 - ‘in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed...’ – ‘forbearance’ = patience.
 - God did not pour out His wrath in the past for our sins.
 - God is patient and merciful.
 - He gave us time to repent and put our faith in Christ.
 - That should be humbling to us and make us grateful for God’s mercy.
 - God made a way to forgive us and maintain His moral integrity by directing toward Himself, in the person of His Son the full weight of the wrath we so richly deserved.
 - Jesus took our wrath on the cross.
 - Also, by doing it this way God declares His hatred of sin and evil.
 - God poured all His wrath on His Son (**Romans 8:32**).
- He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?**
- John 3:16 tells us that God loves the world and so He sent His Son to save us.
 - God loves every individual person who has ever lived.
 - He proved that love by sending Jesus to take the wrath we deserved because of our own sin (**Romans 5:8**).
- But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**
- God proves His righteousness through His mercy.
 - **Romans 3:26**

- God demonstrates His righteousness by making a perfect way for sinners to be justified – made right in His sight.
- God is just – God is always right – in full alignment with His perfect standard of holiness and righteousness.
- God is the justifier – He has chosen a way from within His perfect righteousness to make sinners right with Him.
- That way is by putting our faith in Jesus.
- It is the only way sinners can hope to approach righteous God (**John 14:6**).

Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

- Paul then tells us what our response shouldn’t be.
 - **Romans 3:27-28**
 - When it comes to our salvation there can be no boasting.
 - All we provided in the process of salvation is our sin.
 - God did everything. This is a call to humility and humility is the key to a fuller experience with God’s grace in your life.
 - **Romans 3:29-30**
 - There is only one God and therefore there is only one salvation.
 - No one gets special treatment when it comes to salvation.
 - The ground at the foot of the cross is level and makes us all equal.
 - **Romans 3:31**
 - Paul touches on a topic he will cover more fully later.
 - What is the relationship between the Law and faith.
 - Does faith cancel out the Law. His response is, certainly not!
 - Faith confirms that the Law is just and right. But more on that later.
 - The main takeaway for us today is this: if you have trusted in Jesus, you are right with God.
 - All you did to be right with God is give your sins to Him and accept that Jesus died for those sins.
 - That means we are no longer at war with God (**Romans 5:1**).
- Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ...**
- Once you are at peace with God, you don’t have to work to stay at peace with God.

- You didn't do anything to make peace with God – He did everything, even giving you the faith you needed to believe.
- I have known people who are uncertain about how God feels about them.
- God loves you! He has always loved you.
- Nothing you do or don't do will change how much God loves you.
- When you put your faith in Christ, you were made right with God.
- Nothing you do or don't do will change how right you are with God.
- It is not a spectrum or a scale. If you put your trust in Jesus – you are right with God – period!
- Listen, I am not a perfect man, husband, father, pastor, brother, friend.
- I am flawed in many more ways than I would like to be or am humble enough to admit.
- But one thing I don't concern myself with is how God sees me.
- He sees me through the righteousness of His Son, Christ Jesus **(Philippians 3:9)**.

...and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith...

- That means that I don't have to worry about how to make myself right with God – I am right with God.
 - I do still have to work on all the rest of my flaws, but even in that I know God is doing the heavy lifting **(Philippians 2:12b-13)**.
- ...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure.
- Let's close with this – if you have put your faith in Jesus, you are right with God.
 - Rest in the peace of God and then let Him make you more right, more like Jesus, as you interact with the world around you.
 - The gospel is the power of God to save and transform us to be like Jesus.
 - Rest in the peace of God and walk with Jesus day-by-day.
 - **Pray! Last Song!**