

March 14, 2021 - David Baumgartner

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Preacher: David Baumgartner

[0:00] We welcome you to the media ministry of Bethel Community Church, knowing Jesus, making Jesus known. All right. It's good to see everyone here today. Glad you remembered to move your clocks ahead and it's good to be here.

We're going to be continuing our verse by verse study of Paul's letter to the Christians in Rome. So if you have your Bibles or your phones, if you would turn with me to chapter three, we'll be picking it up in verse 21.

Last week, our text in Romans was pretty striking, wasn't it? Have any of you ever heard the expression, don't kill the messenger? Well, I tell you, I think that's a really good statement because and I'm glad that Bethel affirms that.

Because if we didn't, Teddy would be a dead man today. I'm glad to see he's here. Our text was filled with bad news.

I mean, for example, we learned that everybody's a sinner under God's judgment. And there's no way for anyone to achieve a right standing with God.

[1:13] Moreover, we learned that there's nothing that we can say about it. It's because God is true and every man is a liar. I think the main point here is Paul has gone to great lengths to teach us about man's depravity and how deserving we all are of God's judgment.

Earlier in chapter two, you can look with me in Romans two, verses five and six. He says, because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

Remember that phrase, righteous judgment of God. Verse six, who will render to every man according to his deeds. In chapter three, we have this, what shall we say then in verse five, that God is unrighteous to inflict wrath upon us?

By no means. In other words, God is righteous to inflict wrath upon us. All of this leads to this question here. How are you and I to think about the Lord?

How are we to think about our God? Are we to picture him as angry all the time? You know, his basically is angry all the time, mean spirited, waiting to use his unlimited power to punish each one of us, every opportunity.

[2:44] Is God righteous? Would you say such a God is righteous like that? The righteousness of God. That's a major topic in this letter.

Paul speaks to it or speaks about it five times. And all of them are in this letter about their God's righteousness. But friends, if that's all we knew about God, about his anger and his wrath, I think that we would have to say, yeah, God is righteous.

I think that we can call this his judging righteousness. But that's not the complete picture. There's another way that God reveals his righteousness to us.

We can call this his saving righteousness. And Teddy hinted last week that there's some good news coming. And he was right. He was correct. After all the bad news that we saw in these opening chapters, we come to verse 21 of chapter 3.

It's really a study of salvation. And friends, what an honor and blessing it is to actually look at this text today with you. Because we're going to be looking at what did Jesus' death accomplish for us.

[4:07] Many of the commentators have actually said that this portion of Romans, that this is the sweet spot. This is the meat of this letter that Paul wrote to the Romans.

Let's go ahead and read it with me. If you have your handout, you're welcome to look at that with me at chapter 3, beginning in verse 21. But now, apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe.

For there's no distinction. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and 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.

This was to demonstrate his righteousness because in the forbearance of God, he passed over the sins previously committed. For the demonstration, I say, of his righteousness at the present time, that he might be the just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Father, as we come before your holy word today, Lord, we're awestruck by these words that Paul penned some over 2,000 years ago, because they apply to us, Lord.

[5:42] And they reveal to us the heart of a father. The heart of a God, a deity who looks at us through the eyes of grace and mercy, but yet who does not let sin go unpunished.

Father, we pray that through your spirit that you would open to us this text today and what it means for us and how we can rejoice in the salvation that has been purchased for us.

We ask for this grace in Jesus' name. Boy, when you look at the first two words here, beginning in chapter 20, verse 21, what does it say?

But now. How sweet that is. What a welcomed phrase. These two words here. But now. It literally means at the present time in redemptive history, the arrival of Jesus Christ himself.

He says in verse 21, but now the righteousness of God has been manifested. In other words, it's been made known. That's the perfect tense in the Greek.

[6:51] In other words, that's to describe something that was completed in the past, but whose results pertain now to the present. Well, what about this righteousness?

Well, there's a couple points here. First notice, it's been manifested apart. That is separate from the law. You might think of that as being separate from legalism.

In the Greek text here, this point actually comes first in a sentence. You would say that it's emphasized. And friends, it needs to be emphasized. And that's because all the false religions in this world teach that men and women can become right with God through doing works, through doing rituals.

But friends, that is false. I think the Jews of all people were the most religious of all. They believed that they could attain a right standing with God just by keeping the law.

But that's a false understanding. Back in chapter 3, verses 20, we learned that the religious system of the Old Testament was never intended to save anybody.

[8:00] No, its purpose was just to show us how evil we are and how much we need to be saved. And so this saving righteousness is separate from the law.

But notice here, secondly, we also see that the law and the prophets bear witness to this righteousness. You see that, verse 21.

The Old Testament system, in other words, you think of it, the sacrifices, the priesthood, all of those things pointed to something that would come later.

And of course, he's talking about the arrival of Jesus Christ. He says in verse 22, through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.

Why faith? What a blessed word that is. Faith is just simply trusting in, believing, receiving what God gives.

[8:57] Here's a quote about faith. Faith is the hand of the heart. It does no work on its own, but it only accepts the gift that someone provides.

And again, Paul reminds us how we need this. Look with me, verse 22. He says, for there's no distinction. Verse 23, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

When it comes to what it requires for salvation, no one measures up. We can say amen to that. Whether you're Jewish, whether you're a Gentile, whether you're a Protestant, whether you're a Catholic, a Mormon, men, women, whatever.

And you've probably been exposed to many illustrations of this, haven't you? I kind of like this one where you picture a canyon, maybe the Grand Canyon. And everyone is looking at the other side because on that side is heaven.

And then on this side of the rim is all of humanity lined up. Everybody's lined up to jump across to get into heaven. It's the only way to get there.

[10:12] How would that go? Well, you know, actually, some people would do better. I was looking up the current record holder for the long jump.

It's this guy named Mike Powell. Here's what he jumped. 29 feet, four and a fourth inches. 29 feet. That's almost 30 feet.

And that was at the 91 Olympics held in Tokyo. I think that's pretty good. It's a lot better than I can do, but it's not good enough.

It's not going to get him on the other side. The main point is this. No one would even come close to making it a cross. Everybody would land in different places at the bottom of the canyon.

They'd all be dead, but they'd be there. So, too, trying to reach the standard of holiness that God has established. It's impossible for us on our own to make it.

[11:13] Notice here this phrase, everyone falls short of what? God's glory. What does that mean? You know, you could say that, of course, everybody falls short compared to God's glory.

Isn't that true? Even the mightiest of angels would fall short of God's glory. What did Paul mean? I think there's two possible meanings here. We fall short of God's expectations for mankind.

So, in other words, glory here would be referring to what God originally intended for man to be.

There's a verse I put in Psalm 8 in your handout.

Look at what it says. The psalmist says, So that's the first possibility.

But here, I think, is a better one. It's referring to us failing to give God glory. And that's because from our foolish rejection of him.

[12:31] If you look back in chapter 1, verse 21, one of the descriptions we see, it's that we fail to give God the glory. And we do that with our foolish rejection of him.

It's not honoring him as God, it says, or giving thanks to him. Either case, though, it describes what Adam lost in the garden.

Adam lost his glory because he and Eve decided to be like, they wanted to be like God instead of delighting in God's glory. And they took upon them a sin nature.

And that sin nature consistently fails to give God glory. But, there's that word again. But what was lost through Adam can now be restored in Christ.

Well, how? Well, here's a main point, friends. Let's consider what Jesus' death accomplished for us.

And what we're going to see here is a string of things that Paul describes.

[13:37] You might think of these like pearls on a string, like a necklace. Here's the first one. Through Christ's death, sinners can be justified.

What a great word that is. We talked about that today. At the moment of faith, verse 24, we are justified. Now, that word's been used a couple times.

It means to be pronounced and treated as righteous. Did you know that that word justified is the same word as righteous in the Greek? Yeah, it's a legal declaration.

At the moment of faith, the righteousness of Christ is imputed. It's applied to our account with God.

You might think of it as the great exchange.

We give Jesus our sins on the cross, and he gives us his righteousness. And all the charges against us are removed from our record.

[14:41] Friends, this is the heart of the gospel. Verse 24, look with me. We are justified. And he goes on here. How? By his grace as a gift.

Our brother Frank here opened with that verse today out of Ephesians 2, verses 8 and 9. By grace you are saved, not of yourself, not by works, so that no one would boast.

The believer receives grace. What is that? That's undeserved favor, undeserved kindness from our Lord.

We don't deserve it. But it's freely given. It's a gift. It's not earned. Salvation is free to you and me.

And we can praise God for that. But it's not cheap. No. It came at a great cost to God. We might ask how.

[15:40] We'll notice in verse 24. Through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Here Paul adds another pearl or another dimension to our salvation.

That word redemption. That means to be released. To be delivered from something. Someone. But the key thing.

The key feature about redemption is that it involves a payment. The payment. You might think of it as a ransom. Now, we don't pay for that.

It's a gift. Somebody had to pay for it. And the only one who could is Jesus. Well, how did Jesus pay for it? Verse 25. Notice. God put Jesus forward as a propitiation by his blood.

I want you to notice this. It was God who put him forward. In the Gospels, we see all these different facets of Jesus's life, don't we?

[16:43] We see his life as a little baby in a manger. We see as when he grew up, his teaching ministry. We're exposed to his ministry.

We see his ministry of healing. His miracles, it's talked about. But friends, there was a day when the cross came into Jesus's view.

And Jesus was put forward by God. And he was put in a public manner. How? Well, he was executed for everyone to see.

He was put forward by God. Did you notice this is the first mention in this letter of Jesus's blood? It's the first time. Here's the price that was paid to satisfy, to turn away God's wrath.

And it was through his blood. Justice was satisfied. Wrath was turned away. That's what the word propitiation means. It just means to turn away wrath, to satisfy wrath.

[17:48] Now, does this mean that everybody's saved? No. Look with me again. Verse 25. It's received only by faith.

Faith. To believe. That's actually four times in our brief little passage here. Now, can someone have a false faith?

Yeah. Our faith is only as good as its object. Our passage into heaven comes only by faith in Jesus Christ.

And that's because he was the only one who could offer a perfect sacrifice. And only Jesus, therefore, satisfied our sin debt.

Later on in chapter 10, Paul's going to say that faith comes by hearing. It comes by hearing the word of the Lord. And that's why it's so essential that we proclaim that righteousness comes by faith alone in Jesus Christ.

[18:52] Because no one else will do. Just as we sang in that song earlier. Here's where this is all going, friends. Look with me. Verse 25. Talking about Jesus's death. It was to show God's righteousness.

Did Jesus die for you and me? Yeah, he did. But did you know that that's secondary? Wow.

Here's point number two. Jesus's death displays God's glory. I'm going to give you a little hint. This is what I believe.

Jesus's death on the cross was primarily for God's honor. Yeah. To glorify him.

Jesus died to show God's saving righteousness. Everything we do is for the glory of God.

Everything out there is for God's glory.

[19:54] There's many, many things that bring glory to God. But I believe that the single greatest thing that glorifies God is man's salvation.

Yeah. God gains glory by saving men. In fact, the fact that we benefit is secondary. Look, you might want to consider this on your handout.

Philippians chapter two. Look with me here. Paul's writing here to the church in Philippi about the death of Jesus. And he says this in verse nine.

Why? Speaking of Jesus, therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name. So that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth.

And every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Why? For the glory of God, the father. The chief purpose of Christ's death was to glorify God.

[21:03] God sent him. Jesus put him on display to bring satisfaction. Now, I want to ask you this.

Who or what did Jesus satisfy? His father's wrath. Justice had to be upheld. And when Jesus died, God was satisfied.

Yeah. It's true. God was satisfied. Do you realize that this is different from all of the Old Testament sacrifices when those were made?

Consider this. Out of all the millions and millions of animals that were sacrificed in the Old Testament, God was never satisfied with any of them.

Never. He was only satisfied by the one sacrifice that Jesus would make. And I think that this creates a problem for many people.

[22:04] Some people may ask this question. Well, why did all those animals die? Well, that might be a good question. But even more so, what about all those people who thought that they were doing God's will, doing what God requires?

Year after year, they're sacrificing. They're giving their best animals. For what? So that now Paul will come along and say, well, hey, it didn't count.

No. As far as the animals go, again, they symbolized that one sacrifice that Jesus would make. Here's a passage. You have it in your handout in Hebrews 10.

For since the law was, get this, but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities. It can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near.

Well, that talks about the animals. But what about the Old Testament believers? Look with me, verse 25. This, in other words, Jesus' death was to show God's righteousness.

[23:19] This, Jesus' death, was to show God's righteousness. And then he tells us why. Because in God's divine forbearance, he had passed over former sins.

Well, what's that? When he says former sins, these are sins that happened before Christ came along. Throughout human history, even back all the way to Adam, God did not forgive those sins. No, he just closed his eyes to them temporarily, knowing that a complete and perfect sacrifice would be coming later.

That word that you use commonly in the Old Testament is the word atonement. You heard it today, I think, in a passage that was read. Atonement just means covering.

Those sacrifices just covered temporarily until Jesus came along. Everybody, God and man, looked forward to that day.

[24:29] That day when that final sacrifice would be made. A final payment for our sins. Why is all this important? Well, here's the third point.

Because it, once again, displays God's character. Here's a main point here, friends. Verse 26. It, or all of this, was to show God's righteousness at the present time.

Now, I'm talking about in the cross. So that he might be just and the justifier. Of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Boy, do we know that God loves everybody and he wants everyone to be reconciled to him? He does.

In 1 Timothy chapter 2, Paul's talking about how we should pray for everyone. And then he says this. This is good and acceptable in a sight of God, our Savior. But notice what he says. Who desires for all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth?

[25:33] God loves the sinner. He is righteous. He's loving. God loves the sinner, but he hates the sin.

And sin has to be punished. And God cannot break his own laws. He cannot violate his own nature or his own sense of justice. Well, here's a question.

How can he do both? How can he be just and righteous while also showing love to people? Here's another question. How does saving righteousness relate to judging righteousness?

Well, the answers are found in Jesus. Through his death, both of these two things meet. God is just. And his justice was satisfied. He's also the justifier by extending mercy and grace to all those who put their faith in Jesus Christ.

[26:39] That's the gospel. What wonderful truths those are. If I could ask Jacob, Jordan, come on up. Let's meander up here.

We may wonder, why does God need to prove anything to man? I think one of the biggest paradoxes of all is that somehow in man's mind, that God is the one who is on trial.

Do you know what I mean? Yeah. How can anyone accuse God of anything? Friends, I think it happens all the time. For Jewish believers in Rome.

They may have thought after reading just these first few chapters in Romans. How dare you, Paul. How dare you tell us that we're in the same boat as those heathen Gentile dogs that you described in chapter one.

God established a covenant with our forefathers. That makes us special. Well, if you're a Gentile believer in Rome, maybe you could say, well, how dare you, Paul, tell us that we deserve judgment.

[27:53] Hey, buddy, this is Rome. This is the imperial city. You can't talk to us that way. Today, you and I may ask, if God is so loving, why does he allow something to happen?

I think even the best of us, you know, we may question God's character. One of the things that really struck me in the voice of the martyrs was a third guy named Andrew Brunson.

He was a prisoner for two years in Turkey. He actually talked about how he had a crisis of faith. It was amazing.

He talked about how he actually lost his friendship with God. And he had developed an offense. He had a place in his heart that he was holding an ought, an offense against God.

And he said the only thing that he could do was just to set his will to determine that he would seek the Lord. And he compared himself like a sunflower that just follows the Lord as a sunflower follows the light.

[29:19] And he said this because he did not have any joy or peace that he came to expect as a Christian. And I think about this guy, Andrew Brunson in Turkey.

And I think, boy, Lord, that's one of the best. He's one of the best that I would put forward to jump across the Grand Canyon. And yet, here's a guy who had lost his friendship with the Lord.

What about us? I think the oldest lie in the book is about what? It's about God's character. That was when that snake in the garden put a seed of doubt in Adam and Eve's mind.

Did God really say that? Can you really trust what the Lord says? This portion of Romans is very personal to me. And that's because there are people in my life right now who will not even talk about the Lord.

And they won't talk about him. Maybe you can relate to that. Maybe there's people in your life who won't even talk about God. Personally, I think it's because they sense intuitively God's displeasure with them.

[30:39] And so they won't even talk about him. Well, friends, God is glorious. And everything is for his glory.

God judges mankind through his judging righteousness. But, friends, there's another story. There's another side that we so few times get to talk about.

And that's about his saving righteousness. And through Jesus Christ, God's saving righteousness is manifested. You want to know the best way that you and I can glorify God?

It's to tell others about how he saved you. No one can argue with that. Think about it. You were a sinner. I was a sinner.

Deserving justice. But out of God's grace, he died for me. He died for you, too. I'd like to end with a quote from Stephen Curtis Chapman.

[31:42] It's about the gospel. He says, in the gospel, we discover we are far off worse than we thought.

But we're far more loved than we ever dreamed. Heavenly Father, thank you so much for the love that was revealed to us.

Thank you, Lord, that how you, who deserves to be glorified, that your glory was revealed at the cross.

Lord, you are deserving of all of our glory, all of our worship, all of our praise. You are deserving, Lord. Lord, please give us opportunities to share that.

A clear gospel message. Not of only the fact that you judge righteously, but that you save us because you are righteous.

[32:43] You love justice and you love mercy. Thank you, Lord. May you be worshipped by all of us. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen. Please stand with us as we sing a last song. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.