

“Getting a Grip on The Gospel”

Romans 3:19-26

(Part 2)

Sunday 15 December 2019

Glenvista Baptist Church

Romans 3:19-26 (ESV) ¹⁹ Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. ²⁰ For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. ²¹ But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— ²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. ²⁶ It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”

Introduction:

- a) Recognizing, as we saw last Lord's Day, that terminology has undergone radical redefinitions in the last twenty to thirty years, we see the need for continually defining terms as per their original intended meaning by the author of Scripture. As evangelical believers we may not fall into the trap of redefining terms simply to make them more palatable. We may not succumb to cultural fads that seeks to feed the lust of narcissism, for we are warned that in the last days people will be lovers of self and would have their ears tickled by a soft, watered down version of the Gospel. Therefore beloved friends, it is so crucial that you and I are clear on the Gospel. We need to know what it is; we need to be able to defend it; we need to know its terms; we need to know how to define it; we need to live it and we need to be able to tell it. Without a thorough grasp of the Gospel we will be tossed about all over the place by every cunning wind of doctrine and this may not be. So this series aims at helping you get a firm understanding of the Gospel, whilst living in a world that is gospel “light”.
- b) The question therefore is, **WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?**. We find ourselves again in **Romans 3** as we continue to see ***seven of the tenets of the Gospel*** as clearly laid out for us in this passage of Scripture.
- c) In our first study of this topic we have looked at the first three of these tenets and it would be wise to remind ourselves what they were before we proceed:-

✚ **The Gospel brings to undeserved sinners upon repentance a righteousness that cannot be attained by works of the law.** No works, no good deeds, no charity, no effort on the part of man, can attain for him any merit whatsoever in the sight of God. All the law does, is it highlights how far man falls short of the glory of God, and it puts man in a position where he is enabled to see his utter need of Christ. There is no righteousness by works of the law.

✚ **The Gospel brings to undeserved sinners upon repentance a righteousness that comes from God, apart from the law.** This righteousness comes through Christ, who lived a life of perfect obedience unto the law. Through His obedience He attained for us what the first Adam failed to do, and in Him as second Adam, all who believe are justified in the sight of God and in the sight of the law by the merit of Christ.

✚ **The Gospel brings to undeserved sinners upon repentance a righteousness that comes through faith in Jesus Christ alone.** Aside from Christ there is no hope of salvation. Faith is the hand that receives this righteousness, which comes as a gracious gift from the Lord, yet even the act of receiving this righteousness cannot happen unless the Lord sovereignly opens the heart and the eyes of the sinner.

d) As we then proceed, these first three tenets remain crucial to our understanding of the rest of the text, and remain foundational to what we see as we proceed in the text this morning.

e) **If I had to ask you in a sentence or two to tell me what the Gospel is, I wonder what your answer would be?** I trust that this exposition will sharpen your tools dear friends, and enable you to have a clearer and more specific understanding of what the Gospel is, to enable you to not only defend and make the Gospel known to others, but also to live and preach the Gospel to yourself daily.

f) With that in mind then, come with me as we continue to see the Gospel laid out in some profound terms by the Apostle Paul in [Romans 3](#).

Point 4 – “Righteousness is Available to All on the Same Basis, since All have sinned and Fallen Short of the Glory of God” (v22-23)¹

Romans 3:22-23 (ESV) “For there is **no distinction**:²³ for **all have sinned and fall short** of the glory of God,…”

a) **V22-23** In the context of the Gospel it is crucial that we understand that **all of mankind is equal in the sight of God**, in that “**all have sinned and fall(en) short of the glory of God**”. In the plan of salvation all people are treated equally in that all who are sinners are commanded to repent. In the apostle Paul's sermon in the midst of the Areopagus, this stipulation of the Gospel is made abundantly clear - [Acts 17:30-31 \(ESV\)](#) “³⁰ The times of ignorance God overlooked, **but now he commands all people everywhere to repent**,³¹ because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”

¹ Credit is given for the use of the outline to Romans 3 to Jerry Bridges in his book – *The Discipline of Grace – God's Role and our Role in the Pursuit of Holiness* – (NavPress 1994)

- b) Now you need to remember again, what the definition of righteousness is that we saw last Lord's Day - **Righteousness means that a standard is set by God, which requires exact and perfect conformity to the law of God, and the standard of obedience, which the law requires, is absolute perfection.** That means that every sin, is a violation of the righteous standard of God, regardless how small that sin may seem from our perspective. All sin, **both big and small**, are a violation of the standard that God has set in and through His Son Jesus Christ. Now this, of course, is not to say, that God sees no distinction in the seriousness and aggravation of different sins, but what it reinforces though is that even the smallest of sins is a violation of God's Law and deserves the penalty of death. In other words to put it plainly – one person may seem like a fairly “decent” sinner, whilst another seems like a blatantly obnoxious God hater and enemy, yet in God's sight, both are sinners and deserve death unless they repent.
- c) **V23** In other words, because “all have sinned and fall(en) short of the glory of God”, all are in the same position, and all are called upon to repent. **This call to repent comes to every living human being on planet earth, and not even one is exempt from this command. And because the call of the Gospel comes to all on the same grounds, by implication then, this righteousness of the Gospel, which comes through faith in Jesus Christ, is equally made available to all who repent.** Every repentant sinner that heeds the command to repent, is a sinner that graciously gets clothed in the righteousness of Christ. Meaning, prior to repentance the outcome is equally damning on all who don't repent, whilst after repentance all of that damnation is supernaturally removed, and the sinner becomes accepted in the Beloved and freed from the curse of sin, which now no longer belongs to him, as this has been fully dealt with in the sacrificial ransom which the Savior paid on behalf of all who believe.
- d) So as much, as righteousness is available to all on the same basis, seeing all have sinned and don't meet the requirements of God, salvation is only available to those who heed the call of the Gospel and in genuine repentance come before God to receive pardon, restoration and total forgiveness. Again, this is exactly why the Gospel is called Good News. So Good is the News that the burden of sin, the curse of death, the penalty of rebellion and the horror of hell, is removed from those who deserved nothing but God's anger, but instead are given the glorious news of pardon from on high and life everlasting.
- e) **A proper response therefore to the Gospel message is an acknowledgement that indeed we are sinners and indeed that we are in need of God's forgiveness.** This acknowledgement that we have indeed fallen short of the glory of God (**Rom 3:23**), transfers the sinner whom at first belonged to the Kingdom of Satan to the Kingdom of God in which the marvelous light and glory of our God sets us free (**1 Peter 2:9**). All this because our Savior perfectly adhered to the law, and fully appeased the wrath of God via means of an acceptable sacrifice to God on the cross of Calvary. Therefore, as much as the Gospel is Good News, we need to remind ourselves daily that this pardon did not come cheap. It was the costly, voluntary sacrifice of Christ the King, who loved

us whilst we were still sinners and gave His life completely, even to the point of death (Phil 2), so that we may live.

Point 5 – “Justification comes Freely by God’s Grace, to All who put their Faith in Jesus Christ ” (v24)





Romans 3:24 (ESV) “...²⁴ and ***are justified by his grace as a gift***, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,....”

- a) **V24** This fifth tenet as taught here by the apostle Paul calls for the need firstly to have a grasp of the meaning of **justification**. What does **justification** mean? Herewith then another important definition to take note of in the context of understanding what the Gospel is. This definition is found in the Westminster Shorter Catechism and I believe this is most helpful – “Justification is an act of God’s goodness (*free grace*) by which He forgives all our sins, accepts us as righteous in His sight, ***treats us as though we had never sinned***, and all this He does on the basis that Christ died; He died on our behalf, and this justification is received by faith alone.” So here it is made abundantly clear that we could have only been acquitted of sin, and seen as if we had never sinned because of the “redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (v24). We are only justified and made right with God, because Jesus in full paid the penalty of our sin, and settled the debt we owed to God, and “made peace by the blood of his cross” (Col 1:20).
- b) **Now that then means that we are absolved from any charge of guilt, and we are by God’s grace and upon the merit of Christ declared absolutely righteous.** And if you remember our definition of righteousness, this then means we are as a result of the “redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Rom 3:24), seen as having exact and perfect conformity to the law of God and the standard of absolute perfection which the law requires has been attained for us by Christ. We are as a result of this discharged from all liability to God’s wrath and we are personally accepted by God because of Christ. Justification therefore puts us in the position in which we are counted before God as having perfectly obeyed His law.
- c) **V24 Verse 24** teaches us that our justification before God is based solely on the meritorious work of Christ and our union with Him. ***Friends this thought is profound – this means that God sees every believer as so connected with Him, that legally, what Christ did, we did.*** Our union with Him, means we not only died and lived with Him, but in Him we are legally declared to fully have kept the law. So when He during the incarnation lived a life of perfect obedience, it is as if we had lived a life of perfect obedience. When He died on the cross to satisfy the righteous demands of the law, which could have been satisfied by death only, it is as if we died on that cross. In other words Christ stood in our place as our representative, both in His sinless life and in His sin-bearing death. That is why the apostle Paul wrote, “I have been crucified with Christ” (Gal 2:20).
- d) ***In other words, friends, it is crucial that you and I understand this morning, that as far as God is concerned, justification is a completed work.*** The penalty has been paid in full and God’s justice has been completely satisfied. It is also crucial to stress that it can only be received through faith and must be applied to the soul on a daily basis through faith.
- e) **V24** This justification comes to us “freely by His grace” (NKJV); that means it comes our way without any payment of any kind. We paid nothing for the righteousness of Christ; Jesus paid it all. ***And as we saw so clearly last Lord’s day, this righteousness, this justification cannot whatsoever be merited by any form of good works; meaning there is absolutely no exchange of value between the sinner and God. It needs to be understood, loved ones, that this is in an absolute sense a gratuitous act on God’s part.*** I want you to see

that the freeness of justification was foretold by the prophet Isaiah - [Isaiah 55:1 - 1](#) “Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! **Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.**”

- f) This dear friends, is grace. Grace, as we know is the undeserved favor of God shown to those who deserve nothing but His wrath. **And by mere definition, grace presupposes that those who are shown grace were guilty in the first place. And to be more accurate, we are to refer to this as Sovereign Grace. Reason being, that God is under no obligation whatsoever to dispense such grace to any of us at all. We see for instance in [2 Peter 2:4](#) that He did not dispense grace to the angels that sinned, and so it needs to be understood clearly that the prerogative to grant such favor to undeserving hell-bound sinners lies solely within the sovereign plan and goodness of God.**
- g) We read in [Romans 4:6-8](#) how King David rejoiced over the righteousness of God that is credited to the repentant sinners' account - “...⁶ just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works: ⁷ “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; ⁸ **blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin.**” David knew the fact that God would not “count sin” against the man whose “lawless deeds are forgiven”, and he uses it here as an opportunity to celebrate in Christ.
- h) We see also in [Galatians 2:16](#) how the apostle Paul affirms again that salvation does not come through works of the law, but only through faith in Jesus Christ - “...¹⁶ yet we know **that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ**, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.” Again and again we see that the Gospel does not offer to us a works-righteousness but only a righteousness that comes by faith as a result of the accepted sacrifice of Jesus Christ.
- i) Therefore the believers' joy, hope and prayer ought to be like that of the Apostle Paul, as we echo prayerfully his words in [Philippians 3:9](#) - “⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith...”
- j) Praise God, this morning, loved ones, that all of this comes our way without any merit on our part or without any price we have paid, or without any works we have done. All this, a work of grace – a work of underserved favor – a work in which what we really deserved is withheld from us – a work in which what we don't deserve is freely given to us. Praise God, that at the expense of His Son, the riches of Christ have lavishly been poured out on hell-deserving sinners like you and me. Praise God for such great grace. Praise God for such amazing love.

Conclusion:

- a) So in conclusion as we ask what the Gospel is – I believe we have clearly seen this morning that the goodness of God is clearly expressed in and through the Gospel.
- b) Thus far we have learnt five crucial truths pertaining the Gospel, which help us clearly define the Gospel. In the Gospel we have: -
-  A righteousness that cannot be attained by works of the law
 -  A righteousness that comes from God, apart from the law
 -  A righteousness that comes through faith in Jesus Christ alone
 -  A righteousness that is available to all on the same basis, as all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God

 A justification that comes freely by God's grace, to all who put their faith in Jesus Christ

- c) There you have the first 5 tenets of the Gospel as clearly laid out by the Apostle Paul in Romans 3. **Now friends, we want you not to forget that there is a bigger picture here. The reason we are reminding you of what the Gospel is, is simply because we clearly believe God has given us a mandate to make this Gospel known, in and through the local Church as the carrier of the message.**
- d) It needs to be made known first and foremost because God has given this instruction clearly to His Church, but it also needs to be made known because it is Good News. In 1525, William Tyndale, the pioneer translator of the Bible into English, wrote these delightful words – *“Euangelion (the Greek word for “the gospel”) is a word signifying good, merry, glad and joyful news, that makes a man’s heart glad and makes him sing, dance, and leap for joy.”* And friends it is precisely because of this that gospel doctrine must be faithfully taught in our churches. But not only must gospel doctrine be taught, a gospel culture must also exist. In other words, and we have said this many times before, doctrine must always lead to duty.
- e) For you see, **gospel doctrine** will create a **gospel culture**, just as the **doctrine of grace** creates a **culture of grace**. And therefore, beloved friends, when a church has its doctrine clear and the church has a clear gospel culture, such a church, will be a powerful church pertaining the things of the gospel. However there are no shortcuts in getting there, first a clear foundation of sound biblical doctrine must be in place, before a gospel culture can be exhibited in the face of a dying world. Without sound doctrine, the culture of the Church will be weak. Without a clear gospel culture, the doctrine will seem pointless. And therefore a **Gospel-preaching-Church** must also be a **Gospel-going-Church**. Its members must not only be equipped with a thorough knowledge of the Gospel, but its members must also be equipped to make that Gospel thoroughly known.
- f) So let me ask you, dear saint? **Are you willing to go?** I am not asking whether you are willing to go to a foreign country, or remote Africa, or somewhere where the Gospel has not been made known. I believe the Gospel asks us firstly to go to our own Jerusalem, before we even consider Judea or Samaria (Acts 1:8). So the real question is whether you are willing to go to that friend at school, or that colleague at work, or that neighbor that has been living next door for many years, or your domestic worker or just perhaps the person in the queue in front of you? **Are you willing to go? Are you willing to give your all, so that a dying world may hear the Gospel of Good News?**
- g) In light of this challenge, I end of this morning with a very challenging quote from Francis Schaeffer: *“One cannot explain the explosive dynamite, the *dunamis*, of the early church apart from the fact that they practiced two things simultaneously: orthodoxy of doctrine and orthodoxy of community in the midst of the visible church, a community which the world could see. By the grace of God, therefore, the church must be known simultaneously for its purity of doctrine and the reality of its community. Our churches have so often been preaching points with little emphasis on community, but exhibition of the love of God in practice is beautiful and must be there.”*²
- h) **Oh, may this Church, not only be a preaching point that passionately makes the Gospel known, but may it particularly be a dynamic community that exhibits the love of God. May this Church not only be known for preaching and teaching the Gospel within these four walls, but may it particularly be known as a Church whose members go outside of**

² Francis A. Schaeffer, *The Church before the Watching World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press 1971), 62

these four walls and passionately, clearly and biblically make this Gospel known wherever God has strategically placed her members on a weekly basis.

i) All this to the Glory of our Supreme and Superior Savior.

Amen!

Soli Deo Gloria (For God's Glory Alone)

Glenvista Baptist Church – 15 December 2019