

“Getting a Grip on The Gospel”

Romans 3:19-26

(Part 3)

Sunday 22 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) Over the last two Lord's Days we have been considering the main tenets of the Gospel by doing a verse by verse exposition of some verses in **Romans 3**. The aim thereof is to help us get a better grip of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, so that we may be better at making the Good News known, living the Good News and preaching it to ourselves daily. Ultimately as we have clearly seen, a Gospel-preaching Church has to also be a Gospel-going church and its members need to earnestly desire to make the Gospel known. But in order to be faithful to the Great Commission, we need to understand the Gospel, and once we appreciate the Gospel and the Grace of the Lord Jesus that comes to us as unworthy sinners through the Gospel, there ought to be a desire within us that others would be exposed to that very same grace as we have received. However, we see sadly that in many sectors the Gospel is no longer proclaimed as Christ has commanded us to do. A pseudo-Gospel is made known; the essentials of the Gospel are not proclaimed, and in the name of Christianity many thousands of people are being misled by a message that does not preach Christ crucified. This we need to oppose by making sure that we remain faithful to the Gospel of Christ Jesus our Savior.
- b) The grounds have sadly shifted; it has shifted so far, the message has become so diluted, the Church has sadly lost so much ground and the message of the Gospel has been so defaced. That this question, namely **“What is the Gospel?”**, in our day and age engenders mutually exclusive answers, often dogmatically defended without any

reference to the Bible, is quite frankly alarming. When so called evangelicals hold highly disparate opinions as to what the Gospel is, and when we look around and see that evangelicalism has become so broad a term that it is difficult to explain it, and when we see that there seems even among evangelicals no agreed upon “gospel” and no sense of responsibility “to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 1:3), then we come to see that to a large extent the Church has left the Gospel behind.

c) The apostle Paul in **Romans 3** so masterfully nails the colors of the Gospel to the mast, and in seven distinctive statements highlights clearly that God has defined the Gospel for us in terms that do not allow the message to be diluted, and do not allow the message of the Gospel to be left behind:

✚ **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. 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. Aside from repentance there is no hope of salvation.

✚ **The Gospel comes to all on the same basis, and its righteousness is available to all on the same basis, since all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.** There is no distinction, all mankind comes from the mothers' wombs' spewing lies. There is not one who seeks God; there is not one who pleases Him. And therefore the Gospel presents a call to repent to all men everywhere, for such God has commanded. And the glory of the Gospel is that it contains a promise that all who repent are made righteous in the sight of God.

✚ **The Gospel presents a justification that is freely made available to all who put their faith in Jesus Christ.** Justification means that God treats upon repentance, even the vilest offender, as if he had never sinned. We are declared just on the grounds of the accomplished work of the Savior that merits forgiveness in the sight of God to all who repent of their sin and place their trust in Christ.

d) All of this, I trust you thus far can see, indeed is Good News. This indeed is reason for celebration. Dear fellow believer, won't you rejoice with me this Lord's Day as we contemplate the goodness of our God in and through the Lord Jesus Christ as revealed to us so graciously in and through the message of the Gospel. And then as we proceed this Lord's Day, may God give us a clear understanding of the Gospel and the necessity of holding onto it in undiluted form. And may we be encouraged afresh by God the Holy Spirit, to live the Gospel, to make the Gospel known, and to preach it to ourselves daily as a demonstration of our own dependence upon our God.

Point 6 – “Justification comes through the Redemptive Work of Christ” (v24)¹

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

- a) **V24** In **1 Corinthians 15:1-3** the apostle Paul refers to the Gospel “as of first importance”. The question is, do we view the Gospel in the same light? To this, hear what CJ Mahaney has to say in his book, *The Cross-Centered Life* – “If there’s anything in life we should be passionate about, it’s the Gospel. And I don’t mean passionate only about sharing it with others. I mean passionate about thinking about it, dwelling on it, rejoicing in it, allowing it to color the way we look at the world. Only one thing can be of first importance to each of us. And only the gospel ought to be.”²
- b) Now that is a really helpful reminder. **Only one thing ought to captivate the thinking and living of the disciple of Christ and that ought to be the Gospel.** If the Gospel presents a justification to repentant sinners that came at great cost to Christ, then the response of the disciple ought to be a gospel-dominated, gospel-centered life on the part of the believer.
- c) **V24** The apostle Paul now in **verse 24** specifies that justification comes only through the redemptive work of Christ. This word “redemption” needs to be clarified. In the nineteenth century the well-known Charles Hodge, Professor of Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary, said that “redemption” as used here in **verse 24**, means “delivery effected by the payment of ransom... That from which we are redeemed is the wrath of God; the price of our redemption is the blood of Christ.”³ **We saw last Lord’s Day that justification is a gratuitous act of God as far as we are concerned. And though justification was completely free to us, it was in fact not free to Christ, as He ‘purchased’ it with His own blood. It was the ransom that Christ had paid that freed us from the wrath and anger and punishment of our God.**
- d) Now friends, at this point we need to make a very important distinction. We need to be asking what the difference is between **justification** and a **mere pardon**; and this is absolutely crucial for us to understand in the light of the Gospel. **A pardon is overlooking or excusing an offense, without exacting a penalty for the offense.** A pardon could for example be granted gratuitously by a president or a governor for no reason at all, and at times the pardon may even be granted at the expense of justice. **When it comes to justification however, justice can never be violated on God’s part by a gratuitous pardon of a guilty convicted sinner.** No friends, you see, justice must be satisfied, and the apostle Paul tells us here in **Romans 3** that it indeed has been satisfied. The penalty that exacts justice on the part of the guilty has been paid in full on behalf of the sinner, as this has been paid “through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus”. Christ therefore fully satisfied the demands of the law, which in this case called for death. And justification means that the Sinless One dies for the guilty and His sinlessness is our righteousness and He sees us

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)

² CJ Mahaney, *The Cross Centered Life*, (20-21)

³ Charles Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, reprint 1955; 1886), page 91.

no longer as guilty sinners, but as free and innocent of guilt, based on the completed work of Jesus Christ.

- e) This means the penalty of our sin has been fully paid by Christ. Charles Hodge defined it as “*delivery effected by the payment of ransom*” – Christ voluntarily offered Himself as that payment; a payment acceptable in God’s sight simply because Christ was the chosen means of redemption. It was the Father’s will that His Son would be crushed for the redemption of sinners (Isa 53:10).
- f) Like last Lord’s Day this simply highlights the gracious nature of grace – that undeserved favor that comes to all undeserving sinners upon redemption. What a glorious thought. What a wonderful truth to rejoice in. ***What a reassuring truth to know that justification comes through the Redemptive Work of Christ.***

Point 7 – “God Presented His Son as a Sacrifice of Atonement” (v25)







Romans 3:25 (ESV) “...²⁵ whom ***God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.***”


- a) **V25** This seventh and final tenet as described by the apostle calls for yet another explanation of a crucial theological term. The term “***propitiation***” as used here can be defined as: “***A sacrifice of atonement that takes away God’s wrath by taking away sin.***”
- b) There really are two terms that play a role here, ***expiation*** and ***propitiation***. Expiation has to do with removing something or taking something away. In biblical terms, expiation is the taking away of guilt through the payment of a penalty or the offering of an atonement. Propitiation on the other hand, has to do with the object of the expiation, meaning propitiation brings about a change in God’s attitude in that God moves from being at enmity with us to being for us. Through the process of propitiation, we are restored to fellowship with God. ***Propitiation therefore has to do with God’s wrath being appeased.*** Perhaps allow me to explain the term in a really simple way by firstly showing you how propitiation works in pagan religions. Propitiation is an ancient word, which we as Christians have in common with other world religions. To propitiate a god is to offer a sacrifice that turns aside the god’s wrath. Anyone who believes in a god knows that they need some way to stay on the friendly side of that god. So they give gifts to the god, or serve in the temple, or give alms. And if the god is angry with them, they pay a price, or make a sacrifice, or find some way to soothe the god’s anger: ***they propitiate him.***
- c) In contrast to ***pagan religion*** it is crucial that I point out that ***Biblical propitiation*** in every way is distinct from ***pagan propitiation***. ¹God requires propitiation because He is holy and just. God responds to sin with absolute consistency, and “***his wrath is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness***” (Rom 1:18). ²In pagan religion humans appease the god by themselves making offerings by which they hope they can silence the anger of the gods. Biblical atonement calls for God Himself declaring what type of sacrifice He accepts and then Himself providing and making that atonement. ³And, thirdly, the only type of sacrifice that speaks to Biblical propitiation, in the fullness of time, is that of God giving His only Son to die for us. As John Stott wrote: “***God Himself gave Himself to save us from Himself.***” Now that is Biblical propitiation.
- d) If God presented His Son as an atonement for sin, then that atonement assumes the wrath of God against sin, and our complete liability to God’s holy and just wrath. In ***Ephesians 2:3*** Paul writes that we “***were by nature children of wrath***”. Yet what propitiation

teaches is that in and through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ the wrath of God had been appeased, and Christ turned aside God's just and holy wrath, which we should have born, by dealing with it through the blood of the cross. A sacrifice, in other words, was needed to appease, remove, or take away the anger and wrath of God. Christ, as our substitute, died in our place, dies the death we ought to have died and settles the score of God's wrath once for all.

- e) **There are two important truths** we need to learn this morning concerning this propitiatory sacrifice, **and the first of those** is that God presented Christ, or set Him forth as an atoning sacrifice. In God setting Christ forth we are reminded that it is God the Father who initiated the whole plan of salvation. It is God Himself that provided His only Son to satisfy His justice and appease His own wrath. A glorious thought, dear saints, to know that God the Father Himself is the One who devised a way whereby His wrath against sin may be fully executed, apart from us experiencing the force of that wrath. His Son completely propiated that wrath and fury by the once-off sufficient sacrifice of Calvary's Cross.
- f) **The second point is that this propitiation is appropriated by sinners through faith in the Blood of the Lamb.** This, we are told, is to be received by faith. When referring to His blood the apostle is obviously referring to the death of Christ on the cross. This phrase, "the blood of Christ" is a favorite term of the New Testament writers; it occurs more than thirty times. **It is the blood of Christ that**; cleanses our consciences from the defilement of sin (Heb 9:14); purifies us from all sin (1 Jn 1:7); gives us confidence to enter the Most Holy Place (Heb 10:10); turns the holy wrath and anger of God away from us (Rom 3). These are but to mention a few of the examples of what the New Testament teaches the blood of Christ has accomplished on behalf of repentant sinners.
- g) **V25** In other words a sobering truth is taught here; one which the believer in Christ fully needs to appropriate. Nothing we do, can cleanse us from sin; it is not our contrition or lamenting sorrow over sin; it is not even in our own repentance; it is not even in cutting ourselves up emotionally and coming before Christ time and again over the same sin that can cleanse us of sin. There is only one thing that can save us from sin, and that is the blood of Christ, shed once for all on Calvary two thousand years ago, and appropriated daily or even many times a day that cleanses the believers' conscience and provides an ongoing and renewed sense of peace with God. **Our Savior paid the price in full. There is nothing we can do. Ours is the responsibility to repent and our God graciously does the rest.**

Conclusion: Preach the Gospel to yourself, but get ready to make it known to others as well.

- a) So in conclusion then as we ask what the Gospel is – I believe we have clearly seen that the goodness of God is clearly expressed in and through 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
 -  A justification that comes through the Redemptive Work of Christ

 A justification that comes as a result of God presenting His Son as a Sacrifice of Atonement

- b) There you have 7 tenets of the Gospel as clearly laid out by the Apostle Paul in **Romans 3**. This then is the Gospel with which we need to become thoroughly familiar with. ***This then friends, is the Gospel that we need to preach to ourselves daily, for as we have seen, the Gospel is not only for the purpose of getting us saved, but the Gospel is very specifically for the believer to be appropriated every day.***
- c) To preach the Gospel to ourselves daily means that you continually face up to your own sinfulness on a daily basis in the light of God's holiness and law, and as you see your sinfulness, as revealed to you by the Spirit, you then flee to Christ through faith in His shed blood and righteous life. It means that we daily appropriate through faith that Christ fully satisfied the righteous demands of the law of God, that Christ is our propitiation and that God's holy wrath is no longer directed toward us. To preach the Gospel to ourselves means we remind ourselves of the glorious words of **Romans 4:7-8** – ***“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.”*** It means as we preach the Gospel to ourselves that we also remind ourselves of some of the glorious promises of the Gospel - **Romans 8:1** ***“1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”*** It means that you believe that ***“13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”(Galatians 3:13).*** It means that you believe that Christ forgave all your sins, past, present and future (**Colossians 2:13**), and that He ***“now has reconciled (you) in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him...”*** (**Colossians 1:22**). That's the Gospel, and that's the message that must so become part of the believers' life that he preaches it to Himself daily.
- d) But, friends, not only do we have a responsibility to ground ourselves in and make the Gospel known to ourselves daily, also do we have a responsibility to make this Good News known to those who have not yet heard and those who do not know Christ. It would be futile if we preach this entire series and do nothing in light of what God has taught us. So make every effort to join us Christmas Day at 8 am as we consider the Gospel in light of the Incarnation of Christ the Son of God.
- e) Until then precious friends, rejoice in Christ, rejoice in the hope of the Gospel, rejoice in the grand knowledge of propitiation, and rejoice dear saint that the wrath of God is no longer set against you, but that Christ has fully born that wrath and that God loves dearly those who are His own.
- f) Rejoice that the Gospel indeed is Good News!

Amen!

Soli Deo Gloria (For God's Glory Alone)

Glenvista Baptist Church – 22 December 2019