

Romans 3:21-26

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- [0 : 00] On this Father's Day, Happy Father's Day to all of our fathers. Trust us, this has been a good day for you. Turn in your Bibles, please, to Romans chapter 3.
- Romans chapter 3. And I'm going to read verses 21 through 26. Romans 3, 21 through 26.
- Listen to God's Word. But now, the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law.
- Although the law and the prophets bear witness to it, the righteousness of God through faith in Christ, in Jesus Christ, for all who believe.
- For there is no distinction. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified by His grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by His blood to be received by faith.
- [1 : 30] This was to show God's righteousness because in His divine forbearance, patience, He had passed over former sins.
- It was to show His righteousness at the present time so that He might be just and the justifier of one who has faith in Jesus.
- Let's pray. Father, praise You for this day, a day of Your grace, Your favor, Your blessing. And thank You for the people of God gathered, gathered to worship, to even worship through our hearing and listening to Your Word.
- May Your name be praised. May we see You more clearly, even through the Scripture on this afternoon. It's our prayer in Christ's name.
- Amen. Amen. Up until this past week, I had written two names on my 312 card.
- [2 : 45] I had a third person in mind, but it wasn't until this week that I was in contact with that person and greeted this brother, this friend, not a brother just yet, this friend warmly and exchanged just some words about how things in our lives, what have you.
- A dear person that I've known for some years, have even had the occasion to go on different outings with him, but he was the last name that I filled in on my 312 card.
- My prayer is that the Lord would guide us in both the selection and as Dave put it so very well, that God would arrange these divine rendezvous and superintend and oversee our getting together because though we may come and present the gospel, it is only through his working and his power that these individuals will come to Christ.
- Here's a question for you, though. What if the Lord does arrange such interaction and contact and opportunities?
- What is it that you're going to share with them? What are you going to tell them? What is the core message that you and I give as ambassadors of Christ?
- [4 : 24] What is the message that we share? The questions are about content. Content.
- While a missional mindset demands that you and I recognize that we're living in a post-modern, post-Christian era that we live in and make adjustments accordingly, we've got to make sure that what we give them is, in fact, the gospel.

I was reminded that we're living in a different day when my grandson gave me this Father's Day card. It says, you grew up without heartless phones and yet you didn't mind.

you didn't need a VCR to kick back and unwind. You didn't miss computer games or pay-for-view TV, but it must have been a little dull till they invented me.

Yes, Dave, I do remember the days of fans and fans. Matthew's Cooler. Anybody remember Matthew's Cooler other than me? Those were the days.

[5 : 47] We're living in a different day and we've got to consider that. That needs to be a part of our mindset as we are agents, God's agents, in this world of the gospel as we take the message to them.

But, on the other hand, we must make sure that our missional and cultural and social and generational sensitivities which are right to have that in that process that you and I are not tampering with the message itself.

We need to make sure that that is the case. In Paul's approach in Athens, as Dave has gone over over the last two weeks, the great intellectual capital of the world, it differed from his approaches in other cities in the Mediterranean world.

In Dave's next message, which is a few weeks down the road, you will see, however, that the essence of that message in Athens did not change.

It was consistent, very consistent, though in a different place to different people, it was consistent with what he had proclaimed elsewhere. So then, what in fact is the ball that you and I are to carry into this world?

[7 : 22] In the midst of opposition, and guess what the opposition of this world tries to do to you and me? Those of us who are carrying the gospel, they try to strip the ball from us to get it out of our hand.

And then, they try to give us something else to carry in its place, only to find out that when we think that we have scored, there's nothing on the board for the gospel at all.

Because if you're not careful, what you and I carry just may not be the gospel at all. But guess what, brothers and sisters?

the passage that is before us on this afternoon, it helps us to get the gospel right. And I know you and I want to get the gospel right, do we not?

The importance of this brief paragraph, very dense in the language of the New Testament, really just one sentence, cannot be underestimated.

[8 : 29] There are those, for instance, commentator Cranfield, speaks of this particular passage. He says, it's the center and heart of the whole main section of the letter.

This is important stuff here. Leon Morris notes that this is possibly the most important single paragraph that was ever written.

Putting it up there pretty high, huh? Luther called this the chief point and the very central place of the epistle and of the whole Bible.

Now, I hope that you want to listen on the basis of those kind of endorsements. I pray that through God's grace, I will be able to help you to see because this is one of those passages that we come back to again and again.

And it really does something to you, really, to use this as a mirror of sorts to look into. Here, indeed, is the very essence of the gospel that we embrace and celebrate and proclaim.

[9 : 44] This is the gospel. Our gospel legacy finds its roots in the very soil of the passage that's before us. May God give us enlightenment and understanding.

Notice, too, the context of this passage. Look in Romans with me. Look at, it sort of goes from chapter 1, verse 18, to chapter 3, verse 20.

And what you have there, notice how it begins in chapter 1, verse 18, for the wrath of God is revealed where?

from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

That's how it begins, the previous section. Notice how it ends in chapter 3 and verse 20. For by the works of the law, no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes the knowledge of sin.

[10 : 53] So basically he takes us from 118 to 320 and we see the situation or an indictment against the human race.

And the question comes after reading this, have you reached a verdict concerning the human race, the condition of the human race, the envelope given to the judge, the defendant, the human race rises, it's on its feet, and the judgment is pronounced before God and by God of guilty.

Guilty. And Paul takes these chapters to really to present in very stark terms the condition of the human race.

All are guilty. Both the religious and the irreligious are guilty before the court of heaven. Paul's summary is seen in chapter 3 verses 9 through 18.

Look at that with me. Just allow me to read some of that. What then? Are we Jews any better off?

[12 : 13] No, not at all. For we have already charged that all. And notice we've heard that word several times haven't we already in our readings. All.

Both Jews and Greeks are under sin. It's influence. It's like we all have the same disease, folks. All of us. As it is written, and he goes on down, he uses several passages, many of them from the Psalms, just to sort of paint this picture of the corruption of humankind from its head to its toe.

None is righteous, no, not one. No one understands, no one seeks for God. All have turned aside together. They have become worthless. No one does good, not even one.

Their throat is an open grave. They use their tongues to deceive. The infection, it shows itself in our speech. The venom of asp is under their lips, so he goes all the way down from head to toe.

That's the picture that he's painting here. Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness. their feet are swift to shed blood, and their past are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they have not known.

[13 : 21] There is no fear of God before their eyes. Guilty. Huh? Irreligious religious and religious. A biblical summary.

The condition of the human race here is laid bare. Jew and Gentile, religious and irreligious alike, all under the influence of sin, all disease.

But notice when we come to our text on this afternoon in verse 20. It turns a corner. The first two words indicate that, but now, there's a change.

Something is shifting. Something is changing. And it's recorded here for us, but now, a turning point, as indicated by the words, a major shift in the letter up to this part, and it speaks about a righteousness of God that burst on the scene.

it has come on the horizon of the present, and it is, guess what, it is not through the law, not through law keeping. Clearly, the text notes that it is apart from the law that is like a mirror that exposes sin, but not a medicine that can cure sin.

[14 : 46] It's great at diagnosing condition, but it's impotent as far as curing it, but now, notice what it says, these are key words here, the righteousness of God.

Remember, we've seen that, we've seen that back in chapter 1 and 17, for in it, that's the gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, the righteous or the just shall live by faith.

Does not scripture in varied ways, in varied places, speak about the very righteousness of God? All the way back to Genesis chapter 18, Abraham, and interacting with his angelic visitors, speaks about, for be it far from you, shall not the judge of all the earth do what is just, do what is right?

Psalms 7 and 11 speak about God is a righteous judge, a God who feels indignation every day. and then 11 and 7, for the Lord is righteous, he loves righteous deeds.

And Psalm 119, 137, righteous are you, O Lord, and right, right, right are your rules. It wasn't three, it's just one. Right are your rules. But again, we see in various other places that really validate and speak about the righteousness of God.

[16 : 18] So what are we talking about when we speak about the righteousness of God? I think John Stott has summarized it well for us and allow me to quote him.

He says, the righteousness of God is God's righteous initiative, notice this, in putting sinners, like us, right with himself by bestowing upon them a righteousness which is not their own, but his.

This righteousness of God is God's just justification of the unjust, the righteous way of pronouncing the unrighteous righteous, in which he both demonstrates his righteousness and gives his righteousness to us.

He has done this through Christ, the righteous one who died for the unrighteousness, and he does it by faith when we put our trust in him and cry to him for mercy. That's the righteousness of God.

It is God's gracious verdict of righteousness pronounced upon those who believe. And the only way that a person becomes righteous is to receive it.

[17 : 30] It's not something that can be achieved. It's something that must be received. The only way that one is by God's approval comes from God and be received from him.

Notice it's manifested apart from the law. The divine initiative has emerged. It's a new day. A righteousness from God appears.

It's from him. He's the source of it and him alone. It means by which the human race infected from head to toe with the cancer of sin with the disease that separates them from God Almighty can be made right with him.

That I would trust has appeal. We're into free stuff are we not? Just attach that word on and give away.

That gets a crowd. Here's something greater than any gift of favor from anyone that God offers to us something that we cannot earn.

[18 : 46] It's not a new initiative. Did you notice that? Look at verse 21 and following. It said it's manifested apart from the law although the law and the prophets bear witness to it. It's something that was embedded within the context within scripture the law and the prophets!

the Old Testament it speaks about it and what Paul is going on to do he's going to show you through the lives of Abraham and David that it's not a new initiative though it's broken onto the scene in great fashion it's not something new it's something that God has planned already we've seen this in 117 the significance of faith as the means of embracing what the Lord has prepared but notice he wades further into these soul refreshing waters in chapter 4 as I mentioned with examples of Abraham and David the status of being right with God is through receiving what God himself has done in and through his righteous son the righteousness of God verse 22 through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe for there is no distinction apart from the law he's already noted that rather than impart righteousness the law exposes unrighteousness

Paul continues two things mentioned regarding the righteousness of God the status of a right standing with him that's what it is it is through faith in Jesus Christ and if being right with God is apart from the law how does one get right with God it's through faith the means of being right with God is through trusting!

faith in a living person and what he has done is what's in view here faith in his saving work which satisfied God's righteous just demands against the sins of humanity but secondly it is for all just as the extent of the disease the corruption is all the human race so the status of righteousness and irrevocable legal standing is available to all who have been infected who believe for all have sinned verse 23 and fall short of the glory of God and are justified by his grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus let me tell you what you have here you have humanity and those who are incarcerated they have often you see on their garb

DOC Department of Correction again it speaks of their status they are in essence condemned they are there because they have been pronounced guilty and so what you have here is humanity all in the same state with this sort of garb and incarcerated no distinction all are guilty when we look at the make of and this is what I would call humanity being on death roll and notice that the death roll crowd normally when we think of it used to be back in the day a prisoner would wear stripes you remember the black and the white stripes and the even how humiliating is that you know all of them wore the same thing you know and you could see they were on the chain gang whatever you so but notice normally we think of those kind of people and these kind of prison stripes being on death roll but often we don't think about those who are wearing pinstripe suits they're on death roll too so you go all the way those who have prison stripes which maybe we can understand them being there but also the ones wearing pinstripes and everybody in between those you might say who are down and out and ugly and those who maybe are sophisticated and guess what everybody all of humanity is on death roll it's inclusive the death roll crowd includes male and female from all classes and background and yet the scope or the extent of the cure matches the extent of the infection the infection that is spread to all humanity so the cure the antidote is available to all who believe all who receive

[23 : 30] Christ and they get this exchange of garments the old filthy garb of unrighteousness is cast aside and we are clothed with the very righteousness of Christ Christ oh what it's it's awesome quite awesome really just to think about that and that's why we sing songs like we've sung on this afternoon amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me guilty vow and helpless we spotless lamb of God was he full atonement can it be hallelujah what a save the vileless offender who truly believed that moment from

Jesus a pardon received God has given on the basis of his righteous judgment and justice our garb has been exchanged through Christ like the person released from prison we have a new righteousness our we have thrown away the filthy garb of even self righteousness and unrighteousness and in Christ and through him we have been made new the text continues all sin falls short of the glory of God here we have this familiar verse in context sin is the failure to measure up to the standards of God's righteousness

I remember my background in the holiness church and the holiness church has the Lord has used them to mold me into the individual that I am today in positive ways and then there's some influences that I still haven't been able to shake but nonetheless one of the things that we had this notion I think a faulty notion about sin because there was this notion that we could live free from sin now let me tell you what happens if you redefine sin perhaps you can live free from sin but according to this all are guilty but so that's what you have for we fail to measure up to the standards of God we oftentimes in our most weeks here at church and those leading the congregational prayer we pause for a time a confession of sin because we miss

God's standards in our thoughts in our various deeds it's the failure to give God the honor that he deserves it's refusal to honor God as the sovereign God that he is it's forsaking God for things that are not God chapter 1 and verse 23 we miss the mark we're guilty but notice all are justified by his grace and notice how it comes to us as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus if justification which is a declaration of righteousness just like condemnation is a declaration of guilt if this happens it has to come from God because this is a status that you and I could never own on our own the only way to get it is to receive it because you cannot earn it look at this look at look what we have guilty humanity offered a gift from

God of something that they cannot earn on their own and it comes by merely receiving it by faith in Jesus Christ justification as a gift what we have here is the verb form of the noun that we see in verses 21 and 22 and what's in view again it's a legal pronouncement of righteousness on those who have been determined guilty huh now just think about that so Lord how can you do this how in the world on the one hand you say that we are guilt laden people but on the other hand that that you're pronouncing us righteous I mean is there something wrong with this picture there this seems to be it's a miscarriage of justice and not by none other than the

[29 : 07] God of the universe and you ask yourself can this kind of God who pronounces those who are guilty righteous can you trust that kind of God is he trustworthy judges on earth would be removed from their positions for lesser if there is anyone who should know right from wrong is the one who has set the standard himself the one who punishes sin is granting sinners the status of righteous how can God do that notoriously unrighteous people missing the righteous standards of almighty by miles but yet in the very next breath you had them being freely forgiven being given the gift of righteousness what in the world is going on how can God do this how is it that God can do such a thing without indictment of his holiness and divine integrity being called in question how can those who deserve the most extreme punishment receive the greatest of all gifts redemption is rescue with a price tag it's the paying of a ransom it's deliverance at a cost it's the price of rescue it was the price of a slave from the slave market and

Christ death was and is the price for our rescue our deliverance whom God verse 25 put forth 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 the death of the son of God was the payment price the means by which his own wrath against sin is satisfied the death of the sinless spotless substitute appeased the very wrath of God the just for the unjust as scripture speaks of it the innocent for the guilty and the sacrifice of Christ removes the very wrath of God because the wrath of God in fact fell on him with all the force of

God's wrath for he made him who knew no sin to be sin for us that we might be made or might become the righteousness of God in him John uses the same word propitiation for he is the propitiation satisfaction for our sins not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world in this is love not that we love God but that he loved us and sin son to be the propitiation for our sins Christ notice it reached backwards and it reached forward forward that's what the text is saying in his anticipation of his remedy for the sins of mankind God patiently bore!

with humanity's sins not exacting the punishment that was deserved and in doing so God was open to the charge of injustice but God had a plan that in the fullness of time God would send forth his son made of a woman made under the law to pay the debt the sin debt of humanity you might say was on the tab of God in and through the death of his son God makes good on this sin debt of all who trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior bearing the full weight in his own body on the tree so what is the content of the gospel that we preach here it is in a nutshell the infinitely glorious God of the universe has found a means about which he can be reconciled with notoriously unrighteous people without violating or compromising his holy character where

God can be charged justly with being unjust it is through the atoning the wrath diverting sacrifice of his son the good news is that all who receive him they become children they're in right relationship with God they enjoy the privileges of children here and go to be with him when this life is over what do we do with the gospel the greatest message ever is the message of the gospel and it needs to be broadcast with megaphone like voice in all the earth by those who celebrate their God and their life in the gospel that's you and me so what do you tell them whether they're in Athens or Austin or Altgeld or Albany Park or Hyde Park or Oak Park what you tell them must be equal in substance in content with what we see here in this particular passage now here's the deal the packaging may be different the presentation may be different but you can't alter the content modify the language if you will but don't tamper with the message don't strip it of its offense because no one really likes to have the mirror held up to them and really to see their flaws handle it wisely winsomely but this is the message this is the ball that you and

[35 : 34] I carry it may take you a while to tell them it may not happen immediately there may be preliminaries but this brothers and sisters is the content which is unalterable as you and I seek to be missional people what's the gospel God's son is God's answer to man sin tell them tell them humbly as one having having received it yourself don't tell them with pride but tell them as one who knows the condition of your own heart and knew what you were before and after and where God has brought you from tell them from your personal experience of where you've come from tell them about the depths of God's mercy tell them that as one who is a recipient of grace that is greater than all of our sin tell them this is the message to tell them unrighteous people who trust in the life and death of the righteous one are given the gift of a righteous standing before the righteous

God of the universe do you possess this righteousness have you abandoned your efforts to be right with God on your own with this gospel jewel before us and offered to us who would try to embrace anything because there's absolutely nothing greater God's son is God's solution to man's pollution being missional doesn't mean that we alter the message in reality there is no mission accomplished brothers and sisters without this message that we see in Romans chapter 3 verses 21 through 26 embrace it own it and share it having experienced it yourself let's watch and see people come to

Christ even in our day let's pray Lord we give thanks unto you this afternoon thank you for this great great passage of scripture it's really like the part of the heartbeat of the bible here in a biblical revelation God's son giving himself for sinful people like us oh Lord guilty vile and helpless oh the scriptures describe this as as dead and lost and without hope but God who is rich in mercy with a great love wherewith he loved us while we are yet in our sins Christ died for us Lord we own this message today we glorify you and give you praise through

Christ our Lord amen won't you stand