

Overcome by Glory

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[0 : 00] So we're going to be reading Romans 3 verse 21. 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 Jesus Christ for all who believe.

For there's 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 Jesus Christ, 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 has passed over former sins. 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.

Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No. But by the law of faith.

[1 : 24] For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law. Or is God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the un...

Sorry. For is God the God of the Jews only? Is he not the God of the Gentiles also? Yes. Yes. Of the Gentiles also. Since God is one, who will justify the...

Sorry. Since God is one, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith? Do we then overthrow the law by this faith?

By no means. On the contrary, we uphold the law. Okay. So today, my topic, our title is Overcome by Glory and also for Glory from Romans 3, 21 to 31.

Before I start, I just like to... I mean, for some people here may not know what the term righteousness means because this passage talks about righteousness a lot.

[2 : 34] So in the simple form, righteousness is being straight, not crooked in God's eyes. And so we can only be either righteous or non-righteous.

There's no more scales in terms of either we are black or white in that. Either we are crooked or we are straight in God's eyes.

While holiness or godliness are different, we can be more holy or more godly as we grow in the knowledge of God. Okay. Let's pray first before we start.

Father God, we are so thankful that in Christ alone, that we have our hope based on the meaning of our life.

May you help us to appreciate this as we come to your word this morning. We pray and give thanks in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. So in my father's old house, there was a large old mirror hanging on one of the walls.

[3 : 46] So in this, I only have this picture that's taken 46 years ago. The mirror is at the back of all the people.

They are all my siblings. Okay. I'm from the right, the second front. That was me. But the point is that in that mirror, there were a few lines of text written in, inscribed in the mirror in a very beautiful ancient Chinese choreography.

No one in the house seemed to pay any attention to the writing of the mirror. It's actually just part of the furniture. But it somehow attracted me. What was the writing about? Because it was an ancient character, it's not easy to interpret and see what that was.

And I asked my older siblings, and nobody seemed to understand what it was either. It took me many years. And gradually, I found out that it was written by Mancius.

Mancius is a follower of Confucius. He's a philosopher, he's written many things. And this is part of his writing. So what it meant was something like this in English.

[5 : 02] He said, first free yourself of wrongdoings and evil thoughts. Then bring order to your family, after which govern your people well, and the land is yours.

So obviously it is written to rulers, people want to be leaders, to say that you need to be free yourself from evil first, before you can rule other people.

So this is written about 2300 years ago. Mancius could see that for a person to rule others, he must first refine his characters.

He understood that no one could rule others simply by using force. We can, like Russia can occupy Ukraine by using force, but it won't be, not a real rule is that people will be forced into submission.

So he just said that, he knew that for that to be meaningful, for one, like a parent to be able to help the children to grow, you just can't use, simply by using force.

[6 : 17] And the person himself needs to have good characters to start with. So he urged people to try hard to do that. But then, like the inscription on the old mirror, this advice has mostly been ignored by people.

Even, I mean, even some people may try to refine their characters, but they would find that impossible to free themselves from wrongdoings and evil thoughts.

In the Old Testament, in the book of Jeremiah, in chapter 13, verse 23, it says, Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots?

Then also you can do good who are accustomed to do evil. So, this word does not say that dark skin or spotty skins are evil.

It's saying that evil is just part of our nature. We are born with it. We can't change it. That is what the Old Testament conclusion would be.

[7 : 23] And what is evil? So, we have to go back to chapter 1 of Romans. We read about the manifestation of evil.

We can summarize it. First, we replace the worship of our creator with worship of creatures. So, there are many idols, any other things that we worship rather than the real creator.

And then we replace godly passions with ungodly passions. So, having passion is God-given capability, but we use it for things that are not pleasing to God.

And replacing godly attitudes with ungodly attitudes. And so, there's all the hatreds and angers and wars and fights in the world. So, these manifestations are the result of us doing what we think is right to do in our own eyes.

Evil is suppressing the truth that is revealed by God and replacing it with our own ideas. And evil is seeking our own glory. And in Romans 3.10, it says, None is righteous.

[8 : 35] No, not one. Because, well, we can say that we are more righteous to other people in some way. But in God's eyes, we are either righteous or unrighteous.

And no one can say, I am righteous before God in God's eyes. Even without the Bible telling us, like man's shoes, we can see the effect of evil in the world.

Throughout history, there were leaders who tried to reduce evil in the world. However, such ways tend to create other evils. Because those leaders themselves were crooked and self-centered.

If they are not straight, they cannot help to make other things straight. So, for example, communism was devised to reduce the disproportional distribution of wealth and power in a society.

But the application of communism by self-centered leaders caused millions of death and suffering. And it still failed to create an equitable society.

[9 : 41] And I think even the war now is happening is a remnant of communism in the way how people assess things, value life, or this is part of the result that we're still living through.

I think about whether we can simply decide to become a different person. Can we actually change our ways?

One smooth thing to think about our habits. We used to think that people can change their habits quite easily. But increasingly, as we read the psychologist's report, or their thinking nowadays, they are suspecting that people have different capacities to change their habits.

For example, I used to think that people who consistently turn up late for meetings did not try hard enough. As I read these reports, I realized that I have never tried to be on time.

This is just part of me, to be on time. It's not trying. But then I realized that people who are consistently late, maybe are the ones who actually try very hard, but just couldn't do it.

[11 : 00] And that explains quite a lot of things. And this realization helps me to sympathize with those who are habitually late.

It's not that they lack of trying, but it's just very hard to change a habit. And if you can't even change such a simple habit, what hope do we have to change our nature?

Now, you might think that if it's so difficult to change our habits, does it then let people off the hook in terms of do people have bad habits?

Or should parents let untidy children to remain untidy? Or a short-tempered child to remain short-tempered? I'm not saying that, but what I'm saying is that a tidy child does not need to work hard to be tidy, because tidiness is in the child's makeup.

But an untidy child needs a lot of help to be tidy, because tidiness is not part of it's makeup. And the understanding of this helps us to approach our children, other people, and help them.

[12 : 08] But then why should a person want to change? There's another thing that we need to consider. Because it's so difficult to change our habit, it makes a lot of effort.

Then why would we change in any case? So why would a habitually late person want to be on time? And why would an untidy person want to be tidy?

So we are usually forced to change our habit because of the fear of punishment, or because of shame. But such change may not last, and we tend to relapse into our default habit or behavior when there's no threat to us.

So I hope that you can agree that we cannot simply decide to be a different person if we want to. There's still one more question I need to deal with before we come to our Roman passage.

The question would be, if we cannot simply decide to be a different person, why does God still find fault with us? Are we responsible for our unrighteousness or sinfulness?

[13 : 17] So if I say I'm not responsible for my evil character, then who is responsible? Can I say the devil makes me do it? James 1, 14-15 says, James is one of the books in the New Testament.

But each person is tempted when he is low, and entices by his own desire, then desire when he has conceived, gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown, brings forth death.

The devil can tempt me only because of because of me having this desire to be my own God, to satisfy my own desire.

I choose to disregard and disobey God. So even if I blame the devil, I'm still responsible for responding to the devil's temptation.

Now can we blame God for creating us like this? God gives us a consciousness of self. So with this consciousness of self, we can choose to enjoy relationships or other things.

[14 : 31] At the same time, we can also choose to destroy relationships and abuse other things. Baming God for creating us with a consciousness of self would be like blaming our parents for giving birth to us when we are going through a tough time, or like blaming God for giving us good appetites when we are overweight.

In chapter 17 of Exodus, the Israelites did exactly that. They were thirsty. They were in the wilderness. They couldn't find water.

God brought them up to Moses from Egypt. So they blamed God and Moses for taking them out of Egypt. And they could not take their anger out on God. So they therefore wanted to stone Moses to death.

God told Moses to bring his staff, there's the stake that's on his hand, which represents authority and judgment to Mount Horeb.

God said, Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink.

[15 : 42] Though it was totally unjust for the people to blame God for taking, rescuing them, rescuing them out of Egypt, God took the blame.

God was standing before Moses when he struck the rock. Because God took the blame, there was living water throwing out of the rock for the people to drink.

Can a leopard change his sports? Can a person do good who are accustomed to do evil? So the answer to Jeremiah's question comes in our reading this morning, from Romans 3, 21 to 31.

And the answer is yes. So in verse 21, it says that, But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law.

When we try hard to follow the law by our own effort, we will find it impossible as our own nature goes against the law. When we think we can obey the law better than other people, our achievement becomes a means of boasting.

[16:53] When we think we are not as good as others, our failure becomes a means of jealousy and resentment. Jeremiah 13, 23 in the Old Testament already hindered that there needs to be another way for people to become acceptable to God.

The righteousness of God in this verse means that it means the righteousness that comes from God and the righteousness that is required by God. And God has provided this other way.

So in verse 22, it says, The righteousness of God is through faith in Jesus, Christ for all who believe. Jesus gave himself up to take the blame for our sinfulness.

We can become acceptable to God through Jesus and in Jesus. When the statement into the Bible study was asking, Why is that phrase, it said, Through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.

Can't the sentence be shortened to true faith in Jesus Christ? Why? Why? Why? For all who believe. There is redundancy in the sentence. It could be this emphasis in terms of its true belief, true faith in Christ.

[18:13] In this verse, I like the King James Version better. It says, By faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe. I think the King James Version translation is more helpful here.

I make righteous, not because of my faith as such, even though I do believe, but it's because of the faith which Jesus Christ has, the faith of Jesus, and which has been given to me.

I can't even have that strong faith that the Lord Jesus has in trusting God to do all that God would. But Jesus did, and that was being given to me as I believed in Him. Verse 23, For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Everyone needs to come to the cross to be able to be free from themselves and their sinfulness. And how does this happen? And why does the change happen?

[19:15] Just like, why do a person change the habit? So, God initiated the move to change us. So, in Jesus Christ, God took the blame and suffered for the consequence of sin.

In Jesus, God also held us to see His glory, and that is important in seeing God's glory that affects our change. In our society, in our life, what do we see as glory?

So, some people will think that display of military power, or in a wedding, we have a cavalcade with a hundred expensive cars, a beautiful building plated with gold, or Superman defeating the bad guys.

these are only worldly glories. The glory of God is far more than this. We can see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

It is a glory of grace, a glory of truth, a glory of purity, a glory of kindness, a glory of love. So, when we are shown such a glory, we realize that we have not lived up to such a glory that God created us to be.

[20:27] And that's why we have fallen short of that glory as God's people, God's creatures, and God's men and women. When we see the Lord Jesus Christ, we realize how much we have fallen short of that.

And when we face such a person as Jesus Christ, what can we do but to bow before Him, to repent of our sin, and to worship Him? In verse 24 and 25, He says, We 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.

So, in the bulletin, there is a helpful writing about these terms justification, redemption, and righteousness. I can also think that we are justified.

Why is that? Justified as a gift, redemption, justification and redemption. So, I'm thinking, when we are justified by God, we are justified by God as a judge, the judge of all the earth.

When we are redeemed by God, we are redeemed by God as the king and the father. So, justified means that I was crooked before, now I'm made straight in God's eyes.

[21:50] Redemption means that I wasn't God's people before, now I'm God's person. I'm not God's child before, I'm now God's child, a son of God. So, this initiative is taken by God, and we see that this change has to come from God.

He put forward Christ Jesus as a propitiation. And what is propitiation? There's a word that we hardly use nowadays. So, propitiation is related to wrath and relationship.

Propitiation is required to reverse wrath and to restore relationship. Romans 1, 18 tells us that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness.

The rest of Romans 1 then tells us how the ungodliness and unrighteousness manifest themselves in this world. So, God actually requires this propitiation for his wrath to be resolved and restore the

relationship.

So, is God being petty-minded in requiring propitiation to mend our relationship with him? So, in our relationship with people, we might be petty-minded if we require propitiation for an offender to reconcile with us.

[23 : 14] If somebody offend me and I said, you need to buy me a chocolate so that I would be friends with you again, that's the requirement.

But, such requirement would be seen as petty-minded. Why is that so? Because, in a conflict between two persons, usually there's wrong in both sides.

I can't just say that you are the party of wrong. I can't say I've got no wrong in that. And that's why, usually, we cannot say that it requires propitiation.

But, in our relationship with God, it's different because God has done no wrong towards us. It's not only that, he has done all the good things, given us all the good things for us, and yet, we repay him with contempt.

That's more. We do not only repay good with evil to God, but we also rebel against our creator God. We have committed treason of the highest order when we choose to worship idols in terms of God, and ignoring him.

[24 : 28] And so, it is only right that we should live under the wrath of God until an appropriate propitiation has been put forward. And we do not have any resource to put forward this propitiation.

God did this for us. The blood of Jesus propitiated for our offense towards him. And this action of God is consistent with God's nature.

He's both merciful and just. The consequence of rebellion against God is death. Partly because God is the source of life, partly that is because of the consequence that God has warned Adam and Eve that the day you disobey me, that you will taste death.

But then, God is the source of life. When we distance ourselves from God, that's the natural consequence anyway. God does not actually need to do anything active to show his wrath.

If he does nothing at all to bring us back to him, then our destination is death. And we, I mean, like the world, we will fight.

[25 : 50] We will be at war with one another and destroy ourselves. So, there is a consequence anyway. But in God's mercy, he forbore our rebellion in the past as he waited for the appointed time to reveal how he can forgive sinners and not compromise his own holiness.

The proposition by the blood of Jesus is the way he can call us back to him without destroying us. So, verse 26 tells us why Jesus is the only way for God to reconcile with us.

There's no other way for God to be just and at the same time forgive our rebellion and treason. So, for people who say that all the ways will bring us back to God, that's totally nonsense.

if you know how badly we have offended God and rebel against God, there's no other way except through the proposition of the blood of Jesus.

So, God initiated the proposition. God has held us to see that through the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ, we can be justified. When we are justified by God in Jesus Christ, it means that God cancels our sins and bestows us the righteousness of Jesus.

[27 : 13] God justifies everyone the same way, whether you are a religious person or an irreligious person. Religions cannot make us acceptable to God because even if we can somehow fulfill the demands of religious laws, we will become proud.

Proud. Pride is a hallmark of self-centeredness. Pride seeks glory for self. And we like boasting because we want to justify our existence.

Do you know that when you don't need to boast to justify your existence, you can feel so free. You don't need to let people know how good you are, how successful you are.

This is all that we think about day to day when we interact with people. And if you know that you don't need to boast anymore because God has accepted you, you are wearable in His sight.

That's freedom. You don't need to justify yourself. God has justified you. So, is there any use for the Old Testament laws then?

[28 : 29] Yes, they are there to keep our mouth sharp as in verse 19, the same chapter. It said, now we know that whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law so that every mouth will be stopped.

Actually, it stops us from boasting because we know that we can't attend anything that the law requires. and so, at least it would do that.

But also, the Old Testament law tells us what pleases God and how we should live a life that is pleasing to Him. So, we don't throw away the law now that we have been accepted by God. Instead, we uphold it because we know that there's what pleases Him. Not only that, we also know that through this law, through following the law, we are given the life to live, a life that is glorious, honorable, and eternal.

Okay. So, this is why we are justified for. We are not just being accepted and then became justified and righteous and then our life seems to just end there.

[29 : 42] But no, no, that is only the beginning and there's a lot more to come once we are right with God. and we have to understand that there's not the end of it, there's only the beginning.

So, in Romans 2, 7, it tells us, to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and mortality, he will give eternal life.

in a way, it implies that none of us seek this thing and then we need to understand what they mean, how we should live our life.

have a look again in my old family photograph with my siblings. So, there was, I was 14 years old then.

None of us in the picture knew Jesus. We, we did, we worship idols, we did hope to have a good life in some way.

[31 : 15] Have some job when we get older or have family and that's about it and we all knew that we would die one day because as we worship idols, we worship all sorts of God, we also burn incense and supplies to our ancestors so that they don't suffer in hell.

So, that is the hope that we have basically you just live their life and die and hope that somebody from your descendants would keep supplying things for you while you're in hell so that you don't suffer so much.

I'm not sure. So, that's what made me quite unsatisfied with life. What sort of life that is? Why should we live for?

In particular because we were quite poor. It just didn't make sense and I didn't think that that should be the way and that's what made me started to look for the truth.

At that time, I mean, I wasn't seeking anything in no-go. So, I wasn't even having any concern with my family even though my parents, they worked very hard for the family.

[32 : 33] My older siblings also worked very hard. I was only thinking about myself. Though the saying of Mancius did sort of point to the fact that I might have this wrongdoing, the evil thoughts, but I didn't actually understand.

I didn't think that I was a bad person and I didn't think, even I was, I didn't even know how to change in terms of what do I do. all this changed when I see the glory of honor of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So at first I thought glory was just being majestic and shining something like the sun until I saw Jesus. So in the Gospel of John we are told that and the word became flesh and dwelt among us and we have seen his glory as the only son from the father full of grace and truth.

So what as the word said we should seek for glory and honor and immortality what do they mean? And when we see Jesus then we know what they mean.

Jesus is full of glory we've seen his glory as of the only son from the father full of grace and truth. Well Jesus did not have a shining appearance he did not have earthly power or wealth he didn't even have attractive faith as the Bible told us.

[34 : 04] So where is Jesus' glory? He was full of grace and truth. Grace in that when you talk to him you will know that he is not there to belittle you but to show you compassion but to show you compassion.

Truth in that when you talk to him you will know that he is not there to endow you but to set you free. There's only two things but there are a lot more in terms of when we see Jesus Christ we will see glory.

glory. And I thought honor was being respected by others and that's why I was as a teenager I was trying to get more respect from my friends and that's honor.

but when I saw Jesus then I knew that that wasn't the true honor. Jesus lived out the honor of being a man. Though he was not respected by man but he completed his mission of restoring our honor.

Psalms 8 chapter 5 says yet you have made man a little lower than the heavenly beings and crown him with glory and honor. You know when God created us he crowned us with glory and honor.

[35 : 25] We have lost that. What is honor? Do you feel honor to be a woman or a man? Is that something special?

Is it something that is exciting? Do you feel honor to be a husband or a wife? A father or mother? feel honor to be a teacher or a musician? Feel honor to be part of the church? We lost that sense of honor in terms of God has created me, God has given me this.

It's an honor to be God's creature in that way. We lost that. C.S.

Lewis in his nine years story helped me in some way. in the Prince Caspian story. After the battle, this little mouse, Rupichi, he was injured and his tail was cut off as well.

[36 : 31] Aslan healed him but the tail was still missing. when Rupichi appeared before Aslan, he bowed before him and then he realized that he didn't have the tail.

Then he felt ashamed. He said, I can't come before you without my tail. Aslan said, why? What's important of the tail?

Rupichi said, I'm created as a small mice. the tail means that this is part of me as being created by him, by Aslan.

That's why he felt ashamed not being complete before him. It just helped me to see that I'm created by God and I have a mission and I have I'm reflecting God's glory in the way I live.

And so that affects how I take my role in different aspects of life. When we have this sense of God, then our life will be different.

[37 : 45] How we react, act with people, how we face the stress that we face, we experience day to day, if we have this sense of honour.

About immortality, so I thought immortality was being alive forever, but I didn't even know what life is until I heard Jesus saying, I am the resurrection and the life, whoever believes in me, though he dies, yet he shall live.

death, you word death, so I live Gas