

But Now... The Brightest Light from the Darkest Place

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[0 : 00] All right, please turn with me in your Bibles to Romans chapter 3. Romans chapter 3. If you are visiting or new to the church, welcome. My name is BK. I have the joy and pleasure of serving as one of the pastors here.

We have been in this book of Romans for over a year with a few different breaks, but if you've been missing, I'm going to give you a short catch-up.

To where we are today so it'll make sense to you going forward. If you are familiar with the breakdown of the book of Romans, it starts off with a very simple biblical introduction.

It's basically a letter to the saints in Rome. Paul's writing them, hey, hi, how are you? Love you.

Can't wait to come and see you.

And he's talking about his incredible excitement that he gets to come and bring them the gospel.

[1 : 06] But by the time we get to verse 16, Paul makes this incredible statement. He simply says, for I am not ashamed of the gospel.

Another way of saying I glory in the gospel. For it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. To the Jew first and also to the Greek.

For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith. As it is written, the righteous shall live by faith.

It's a big statement. It kind of comes out of nowhere. And if you remember a year ago, I was trying to explain this text and the effects that this text upon reading it would have had on those Romans. And I use this analogy as it's almost as if your doctor shows up at your door or someone that you love and trust.

[2 : 10] And they say, hey, I've got the best news for you. There is a, I have in my hand the greatest medicinal cure in the world.

This pill, which I offer it to you for free is glorious. It will cure you of all your ailments. It could be your arthritis.

It could be cancer. It does not matter. This will cure all. And most of us respond, hey, hey, doc, thank you.

I appreciate you loving me enough to come and offer me this, this pill, this, this, this medicine that will cure me.

But as you can see, doctor, I'm quite fit. I might have a few aches and pains along the way, but I'm quite healthy.

[3 : 17] I live in Squamish, right? I mountain bike or I road bike in the winter. I ski. I hike. I enjoy the beautiful outdoors.

Like, could I even just eat the carnivore diet, right? Can I be any more healthy? In fact, I look like Ray Crumey up here, right? I'm just spiritually healthy at, what, 52.

You're just this epitome of everything that's healthy. But this next section in Romans 1 that we find from verses 18 of chapter 1 through to Romans 3, 20, is where the doctor proves you wrong.

The doctor says, hey, listen, I've got the medical tests. We've taken the x-rays. We've done the scans. You're not just sick, but your whole body is festering with this disease.

This disease is called sin. And this disease infects everything. It is a genetic disorder. It is in your DNA.

[4 : 29] Every breath that you breathe actually makes you sicker and it infects everyone around you. Not only that, it affects your thinking.

It affects your speech. It actually affects your actions to the point where you think you're making the right decision. You're doing the right thing, but it isn't. It's been twisted.

And all the doctor needs to do is he needs to turn you around so you can look at your life. And there's damage. There's this infection has spread everywhere.

There's ruin and misery. And the fact is, your parents were infected. Your spouse who you're married to is infected. And those cute, wonderful little kids that you had, guess what?

You've passed that infection down to them as well. There's no denying it. It is everywhere. It affects those that look healthy.

[5 : 31] It affects those who don't look healthy. And finally, you see it. At first, the doctor was nice by saying, hey, here's this pill.

Take it. I am not ashamed of the gospel. I glory in the gospel. This righteousness of God. Take it. And you're like, no, no, no. So now he's taking you down the road to show that you are indeed sick. There's a genetic disorder. Every cell in your body is cancer ridden. The proof is before you. There is no argument.

There's only one question to ask the doctor is, doc, is it too late? Is there any hope?

And that's where today's text comes in, beginning in Romans 3, 21. This passage of scripture that we are going to be looking at this morning is considered the greatest turning point in the Bible.

[6 : 45] It is the answer to the question that every soul wrestles with, which is, how can I, a guilty, infected sinner, ever be right with a just and holy God?

The fact is, Romans 1, 18, chapter 3, 20, exposes us for who we really are.

Romans 3, 10 says, there is none righteous. No, not one. Paul reminds us in Romans 3, 19, every mouth is stopped.

The whole world accountable to God. To understand Paul here is to understand that the Bible is clear.

The Bible says we are not basically good. We are not slightly off course. We are not good people who need a little help.

[7 : 58] That's not us. The Bible clearly teaches we are condemned sinners under the divine wrath of God. And there's only one honest question that should be on our lips.

Is there any hope? So by the time we get to chapter 3, 21, we read these two words.

But now. But now. My encouragement to you is you do not want to read these two words too quickly.

We don't want these words to slip through like they're just some meaningless words that Paul was using to fill some space.

But these two words change everything. The famed preacher, Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones said, There are no more vital words in the whole of scripture than just these two words, but now.

[9 : 13] James Boyce called it the greatest turning point in God's dealing with the human race. This morning I titled the sermon, But now the brightest light from the darkest place.

I took it from the words of John Stott who wrote, After the long dark night the sun has risen. A new day has dawned and the world is flooded with light.

But now a righteousness from God apart from the law has been made known. The cavalry is here. God's righteousness is now going to be presented to us. Now listen to me here. If you have ever felt the weight of your sin, if you've ever wondered whether God can forgive you, if the enemy has ever whispered in your ear, there is no hope for you, this is the answer.

But now. You were lost, but now you are found. You were blind, but now you see.

[10 : 31] You were dead in your sin, but now you live together in Christ. But now. This is where we're going today.

Into what's called the heart of the gospel. And I want to be clear to you this morning. I am not giving you advice. I am not providing you moral instruction.

What I am sharing with you this morning is the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. If you're here and you're asking the question, if you're here and you're asking the question, how can I be made right with God?

You want assurance that your sin is forgiven and your guilt has been lifted, that you want to stand in the light instead of the shadows, then I ask that you pay attention to these next six verses.

Because they are wonderful and they are glorious. Because this is the gospel. This is our anchor.

[11 : 37] This is our hope. This is our peace. Let's read it together. Romans 3, starting in 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 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.

This was to show God's righteousness. Because in his divine forbearance, 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 the one who has faith in Jesus.

So this morning, I'm going to present to you three aspects of God's righteousness. And within each aspect, I am going to give you three truths of God's righteousness.

[13:10] So beginning in verse 21 to 22, we see this medicine, which makes you healthy, that heals you completely, is the righteousness of God.

We've got a problem. You and I are not righteous. Why? We might be more righteous than our neighbor.

We might be more righteous than our sister. We might be more righteous than our spouse or even our parents. But the righteousness that God requires is perfection.

Why? Because God is perfect. It is who he is. He is holy, perfect, majestic. He is the standard. God doesn't adhere to a standard outside of himself.

God is the standard. And not only that, God demands it. God demands perfection. God demands perfection.

[14:16] And as far as I know, I have yet to meet anyone who comes close to this. You might say, well, I try to be a good person.

It's not good enough. I go to church. Nah, that's still not going to work. You see, I keep the commandments.

Well, most of the time. But here's the kicker. The law doesn't save you. The law that we have from God is actually the gavel which slams down and says, guilty.

So what does God do? He simply says, but now the righteousness of God has been manifested. It has been revealed.

What it means is God has revealed a righteousness that is actually not based on your performance. This is good news, by the way.

[15:21] He's revealed a righteousness that is not based on your family lineage. It doesn't matter who your parents are or were. It doesn't affect that.

It is not based on your religious resume or your lack of religious resume. You see, Jesus Christ or God revealed a righteousness that comes from himself.

It's not achieved. It's received. It's not earned. It's revealed. This is the gospel.

This is God doing for you what you cannot do for yourself. The only way to stand before a holy God is in righteousness, and we don't have it.

But God simply says, I'll give it to you. I'll give it to you. Now what is offered by God is not a cheap cover-up.

[16:30] It is not a theological technicality. It is actually a righteousness that satisfies every demand of the law. And here's the punchline.

It's freely given. So what I want you to see under this heading is three truths about the righteousness of God from the text itself. First, the righteousness doesn't come from keeping the law.

Righteousness doesn't come from keeping the law. Look at your text. It says, apart from the law. So that righteousness doesn't happen because of the law. The righteousness doesn't come by you or me keeping a set of rules.

It doesn't come by climbing a ladder or checking certain religious boxes. What Paul is saying here is it comes apart from the law. Completely independent of your ability to keep it.

Now any Jew of that day reading this would have been stunned. They would have been thrown back. They would have said, I thought righteousness comes through obedience.

[17:43] Paul simply says, nope. You can't earn it. God has to reveal it. Which brings me to the second truth about God's righteousness is that this is not a new idea.

This is not a new way. Look at the text. It says, although the law and the prophets bear witness to us. What this means is this is the same gospel that we read in the Old Testament is now being fully revealed in the new.

It's not new. It's not plan B. It's not God scrambling because the law failed. It was always God's plan from the beginning.

Genesis 3 tells us the seed of the woman will come to crush the head of the serpent. Genesis 15 tells us that Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness.

Leviticus, the whole sacrificial system actually pointed to a substitute that we would need. And Isaiah 53 simply says, The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

[19 : 01] You see, all of these things, the law and the prophets were pointing forward to the day when Jesus Christ would come and accomplish what you and I could not do.

This righteousness isn't new. This righteousness isn't new in God's mind. It's just been finally revealed in history. And the third truth about this wonderful righteousness is that it's received through faith in Jesus Christ.

Notice the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. This is the medicine.

This is the medicine. This is the pill. This is the injection. This is what saves you. It's called faith in Jesus Christ.

It's not faith in yourself. It's not faith in your religion. It's not faith in your parents or what they told you. It's not faith in how sorry you feel about your sin.

[20 : 12] It's not faith in I promise to do much better. It's not a faith about how strongly I believe in something.

The faith that he talks about is a trust, a reliance, a surrender in Jesus Christ alone. And who is this righteousness for?

For all who believe. This means you. This means me. No matter your past.

No matter your background. No matter how deep the guilt or how long the record of sins you have. This righteousness that God offers you is available to you today, this day.

So my question for you is, have you received that righteousness? Have you put your full weight on Jesus Christ alone?

[21 : 26] Are you done trying to measure up? Have you finally said, I can't do it?

But Jesus did. That is called saving faith. My friends, there is a righteousness available.

And I'm going to tell you right now, it's not found in you. It's only found in Jesus Christ. And the offer that Paul gives the saints written 2,000 years ago is still available today.

So the second aspect of this righteousness that I want to talk about is I want to talk to you about the cost of this righteousness.

This righteousness that costs. You must say, it's got to be too great. I can't afford it. And you're right, you can't. Because it only comes through the blood of Jesus Christ.

[22 : 31] Note, 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.

If there was an inner sanctuary to the gospel, this is it.

This is the costliest transaction in history. This is the hill on which heaven and hell divide.

This is the blood-soaked center of Christian hope. There are three truths you need to understand about this cost.

The first is everyone needs to pay. It is a, I'll say it better, everyone needs this blood. It is a universal need.

[23 : 41] Notice it says, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. This is not a slogan. This is a sentence. This is a courtroom verdict. Everyone, all, no exceptions, have sinned.

The pagan, the religious, even your sweet grandma who made you cookies and sang, Jesus loves me, all have sinned and fall short.

We just don't stumble on occasion. This we fall short is present tense, which means we keep falling short.

It's not all of a sudden it stops. It's always there. And it's not that we just make mistakes. It's that we miss the mark of God's glory.

We miss the mark of God's perfection. We miss the marks of God's purity. We miss the mark of God's holiness.

[24 : 55] And unless something changes, we will remain condemned. So that's the first truth.

It is a universal need. The second truth, it is, my friends, a stunning gift. A stunning gift. And are justified by His grace as a gift.

If verse 23 is the x-ray, verse 24 is the prescription. God just doesn't expose our sin. He actually makes a way to make us right.

This word justified, it's a huge word. It is a legal declaration. It means not guilty. And more than that, it means that you've been declared righteous.

Imagine that. The judge just doesn't drop the charge. He credits you with the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ.

[25 : 57] And how does this happen? By His grace as a gift. See, grace is not God helping good people get better.

God is saving rebels who should be destroyed. And this grace comes at the great cost of His Son's blood.

Now, I want you to understand, and we're going to get into this later on, but God is not offering a pardon. And I want you to understand this.

God doesn't offer a pardon. And there's a distinction to be made that's theological here. A pardon cancels the penalty, but leaves the relationship unchanged.

What it means is, I am guilty, but God pardons me from the judgment that I have to receive. You notice in the States, whenever the president is going out of the office, you'll read about all these people he pardons.

[27 : 10] It doesn't mean they're not guilty anymore. It's that they don't have to pay for their crimes. That is not what God is offering. You see, in Christ, we're not pardoned.

We are actually justified and adopted as His children. To be pardoned means you would leave the courtroom and leave. But He justifies you because He credits His Son's righteousness to you, and we're welcomed into the family.

Do you get that? That is huge. This changes anything. And we're going to get into it later as we dig in our opens. But I wanted us to really understand. This is out of all my study in the text the last couple of weeks on this.

This is the section that gripped my soul the most. It's not that we're pardoned, which Lord knows we appreciate. But God does so much more.

He then adopts us as His own children and welcomes us in to the family of God. Is that not glorious? Is that not great?

[28 : 22] Galatians 4, 7, You are no longer a slave, but a son. And if a son, then an heir through God. And of course, I want you to note the cost of this redemption.

Through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. This word redemption is from the slave market. It means to buy back, to set free at a price.

When we are in ourselves, we were shackled in sin. We have no ability to buy our way out. We cannot bargain.

We can't escape. There is no negotiation. Perfection is the standard. And then Jesus walks in. He doesn't walk in with silver or gold. But He gives us His blood. Whom God put forward as a propitiation by His blood.

[29 : 33] That word propitiation. How many times have we used it in our conversations, right? Just, I think, four days ago, Bronson and I were having a conversation about propitiation.

Of course not. Nobody has these kind of conversations. But it's an important word and it's an essential word. And what this word means is, it means the righteous wrath of God was satisfied by the blood of Jesus.

There was only one thing that could pay and it could pay it. It totally satisfied those who were to receive that payment. Not only was the price enough, but the substance was enough.

The cross wasn't just a tragedy. It wasn't just an example of love. The cross, if you did not know, was a sacrifice that turned away the wrath of God.

That's what it was. It wasn't to rescue us from hell. It wasn't to pay off the devil. It was to save us from the righteous wrath of God.

[30 : 52] And the only substance that could do that was the precious blood of Jesus Christ. God didn't look the other way.

God doesn't lower the standard when he forgives us. He poured out what we deserved on his son. Notice the phrase, God put him forward. These were the actions of God. The father sent the son. Some heretics of this day call this divine child abuse. No, this was the triune God working in unity to save sinners.

Amen. Jesus didn't go to the cross to change God's mind about you. Jesus went to the cross to satisfy God's justice for you.

[31 : 57] And now because of that blood, because of that propitiation, you can be justified. You can be free.

It's like the judge who has declared you guilty. Step down from the branch and then climbs up on the cross.

You can't pay it, but I will. I'll take the sentence. I'll pay the fine. I'll serve your time. You see, this isn't religion.

This isn't morality. This is the gospel. So my question to you is, have you ever trusted Jesus like this?

And I'm not talking about I believe Jesus exists or I grew up in church, but the understanding that I was under wrath, but now by his blood, I have been redeemed.

[33 : 07] If you believe that today, you can walk out of this church declared righteousness, righteous in the sight of God. That means you can walk in the light of Romans 8, 1, that there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

This is good news and it can be your news. But now I want to bring you to the third point of this sermon and it is a discussion on the character of God.

The character of God who is both just and justifier. Let's continue reading out of verse 25. Let me ask you a question that gets to the heart of Romans.

Romans. How can God who forgives sin still be righteous? Do you get that? How can God who, how can he forgive sin and still be righteous?

This is what this statement is answering because that is the question. That's the tension that hangs over the entire Bible. How can a holy God let guilty people go free and still be holy?

[34 : 56] If a judge let a known murderer walk free without a sentence, you and I would declare that judge to be corrupt. Would we not? It'd be corrupt.

We would understand it is a miscarriage of justice. We wouldn't hate the law. We would hate the judge. But that's what God seems to do all through the Old Testament.

David committed murder and adultery. And what does God say? 2 Samuel 12, 13. It says, the Lord has taken away your sin.

What? How can that be? Where is the justice? And here is the answer. Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ. Three points to help you understand that. One, notice it says, God passed over sin for a time. In his divine forbearance, he had passed over former sins.

[36 : 02] That's not God ignoring sin. That's God holding back his judgment. That is God staying his hand. Not because sin didn't matter. Because God was waiting for the day when the full penalty would fall on his son, Jesus Christ.

Every Old Testament saint, Abraham, Moses, David, Ruth, they were all saved on credit. They were all saved on the eventual blood of Jesus Christ.

Not because the bill was canceled, but because the bill was coming due at the cross. Notice it said, God paid the debt once for all.

It was to show his righteousness at the present time. At the cross, we see justice and mercy colliding. God didn't sweep the sin under the rug.

He put it on Jesus Christ. Every lie, every lust, every bit of self-righteousness and shame, It was all paid in full.

[37 : 17] Because here's the thing. The cross is not simply about saving us. The cross is about vindicating God.

You with me on that? It's not just saving us. It's vindicating God. It shows that he is not lenient or unjust.

It shows that he is righteous. And his cross proves it. Note, it says, So that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

One author simply said, underline that. Highlight that. Tattoo it on your soul. God is just. God doesn't compromise his holiness. God is justifier. He makes the ungodly righteous through Jesus.

[38 : 27] This is the gospel. God didn't lower the standard. God met it in Jesus.

God didn't say, let's just pretend sin didn't happen. He said, I see the sin and I'm going to deal with it fully on my son.

This is why we worship. This is why we sing. This is why we fall on our faces in gratitude. Because at the cross, God upheld his judgment and unleashed his mercy.

Mercy. At the cross, justice is upheld and mercy is extended.

And the guilty walks free. And the guilty walks free. Because the sentence was served by Jesus Christ. And I can assure you this morning, this can be your story as well.

[39 : 42] If your faith is in Jesus Christ. Are you trusting in God to just let things go?

Are you trusting? I think I can do enough good things to outnumber the bad things. If you are, that's not dealing with the God of Scripture.

Because the Bible says that God will punish every sin. Either in hell forever or fully on the cross.

There is no third option. And here's the beauty. Jesus took the wrath.

God's justice has been satisfied. So what does that tell us? You can stop trying to save yourself.

[40 : 48] You can stop burning yourself with this law. You can stop trying to prove yourself. It doesn't mean you can hear Jesus.

I love Jesus. But I'm going to go home. And I'm going to clean myself up for Jesus. You can't. He says, come.

I will cleanse you. Quit stressing. Quit worrying about it. All you need to do is believe.

He says, he is just and the justifier of the ones who have faith in Jesus. And that can happen right here, right now.

Now. If I can conclude. The fact is we've spent the last few weeks in the courtroom of Romans.

[41 : 48] Every witness has been called. Every charge has landed. The evidence has been overwhelming. Guilty. Guilty. Guilty.

And just when hope seems lost. Just when the gavel is about to fall. God speaks. But. Now.

Everything changes. Now.

Now. Everything changes. Not because you earned it. Not because you deserved it. Not because you turned your life around.

But simply because God revealed a righteousness that comes from him through Jesus Christ for all who believe.

If anybody asks you what is the gospel. That is the gospel. That is grace. And that is the only way to be made right with God.

[42 : 47] So my question is. Have you received this righteousness? I'm not asking if you know about it.

I'm not asking if you grew up around it. I'm asking you, have you received it? Do you know what it means to say, I was under wrath, but now I'm under grace.

It doesn't mean I was condemned. It means, but now I'm justified. I was dead, but now I'm alive in Christ.

The fact is you can be made alive with God today, not by climbing, not by stressing, not by working, not by weeping, but by believing.

So if you're here this morning and you've never put your trust in Jesus, I encourage you to stop waiting. Stop pretending you're good enough.

[43 : 53] Drop the mask that is on your face. Drop the defenses, the excuses, the arguments. Step into the light. Don't tell me you like it in the shadows.

All you got to do is turn around and you know there's misery and destruction there all the time.

Because the judge who should have condemned you has now made a way to save you.

So if you've been hiding in sin or you're drowning in your guilt, hear this.

There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. This can be you, but you must repent and believe.

So for you that are here that are believers in Jesus Christ, the fact is some of you are still walking around like you're still on trial.

[45 : 04] You deal with the guilt, the shame, the fear. Tell me I'm wrong. But listen. If you trust in Jesus, your case has been closed.

The judge is satisfied. The sentence is served. You are free. So stop living like you're waiting for a verdict.

You've already got one. And it says you're righteous. My prayer for you this summer is that you would carry that with you.

You will fall. You will fail. You will struggle. You may doubt. But every time the enemy whispers, you're not good enough. Your sin is too great.

Here, have some guilt. Have some shame. You're to lift your head and say, that was true, but now. Can I hear that again? But now.

[46 : 10] Everything's changed. You can say, I have been justified freely by his grace. I am clothed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

I stand because not what I've done, but because of what Jesus has done for me. This is the gospel. This is our hope. This is our peace. This is our peace. And that's the power of the words, but now. Let me pray.

Two simple words, oh Father, but now that changed everything. Father, I pray that this word, these words from your holy scriptures would penetrate these hard hearts, these closed minds, these minds that think they know it all.

But yet, if they truly open their eyes and look around, they know things are broken. Their lives have been affected by this brokenness, this disease called sin, and it's everywhere in their own selfishness, in their own entitlement, in their own pursuits of their own glory.

[47 : 29] But Lord, we have a word from you. But now, your righteousness has been revealed.

This righteousness wraps us. It clings to us. And it saves us. Father, I pray that we would never be a group of people who take sin casually, that we would ever...

And it's so easy to talk about sin as brokenness, or just doing your own thing, or trying to add polite words to it. It clearly is rebellion against you.

It is rebellion against your word. It is rebellion against your word. Father, we give you thanks for this passage, which lifts the weight and gives us the hope.

It means that when we look at Romans 3, 9, it talks about the weight of sin. And it's the passage that removes that weight, that crushing weight that sin brings to our lives.

[48 : 52] Father, we truly believe that salvation is a work of you. We can just preach this word, and we pray that your Holy Spirit would work in the hearts here to help them respond to the call, this call of salvation, this call to believe, this desire be created within them to repent and turn from their sin and turn towards you.

We're not talking about a pardon that just saves us from the punishment, but we're truly welcomed into heaven as adopted sons and daughters of the King, the Lord Most High.

What a beautiful image that you have given us in your word. We ask these things in your most holy and wonderful name. Amen.