

# Gods justice through forgiveness

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] to the book of Romans this morning, this time to Romans chapter 3, following chapter 2, obviously. We're going to be looking at the first 26 verses of Romans chapter 3, you know, as the natural divide from 27 goes into chapter 4. You know, Romans is basically the gospel simply explained, the gospel. So, Romans chapter 3, beginning at verse 1, now hear God's word.

Then what advantage has the Jew, or what is the value of circumcision? Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God. What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God? By no means. Let God be true, though, everyone were a liar, as it is written, that you may be justified in your words and prevail when you are judged. But if our unrighteousness serves to show the righteousness of God, what shall we say? That God is unrighteous to inflict the wrath on us? I speak in a human way. By no means. For then how could God judge the world? But if through my lie God's truth abounds to his glory, why am I still being condemned as a sinner? And why not do evil that good may come, as some people slanderously charge us with saying their condemnation is just? What then? Are the Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, as it is written. No one 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 venom of asps is under their lips.

Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood. In the past are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes.

[ 2 : 2 8 ] 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. For by works of the law, no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. 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 fallen 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. Amen.

Well, we're going to come back to God's chapter three. Over the past few weeks, we have spent time looking at the gospel of God. You have, whether you've realized it or not, hopefully you have realized it, got to see the beauty of the gospel, and why the gospel is so important for the world, and also, equally important, why the gospel is so important for the church. You know, the church needs to hear the gospel as well. Well, here in chapter three, we begin to see why the gospel is unique. It's a message based on something that God has done. It's a message based on something that has happened. You know, and Paul, in these 26 verses, is explaining that there's only one way to get right with God. God has to do something. Yeah, Paul's very, very clear that if you're going to get right with God, the initiative has to start with God, not with you. Now, that's really important.

You know, you think of human relationships. You know, how do we get right with another person? Well, normally, you know, if we have to go and make the effort, and there's a little bit of doing, no, not with God. You know, God initiates. Paul is basically saying that there's only one way to get right with God, and that is through the Son, Jesus Christ. You know, Jesus is absolutely central. Yeah, Jesus is, like, really, really important. Now, how important is Jesus in your life?

Well, I'm going to explain to you just how important he is. You have life with God because of him. You will also escape the judgment of God to come because of him. And on that day, you will receive the words, your sins are forgiven.

That's not a small thing. I mean, that's massive. That's, like, super important. You know, let it soak in this morning, at least, just for a moment. You know, God has forgiven you in Christ Jesus. And nothing else matters, does it, when that sinks in down to where it should go. Everything else seems just not important. I think God, this is what God thinks of me.

[ 6 : 24 ] Now, Jesus is important, and in Romans chapter 3, we find out why. In short, it is because he is the saviour. It is because God promised that he would send someone who would save people from their sins.

Sin is a big deal to God. It should be a big deal to people. Unfortunately, it isn't because we tend to like it quite a lot. Yeah, it's interesting, isn't it, that we like the very thing that God hates.

You know, we actually like the very thing that God wants to get rid of. You can understand the battle between yourself and God and Jesus Christ, you know. This is why we confess our sins every Sunday morning. Why? Because it's important.

Yeah, I mean, you know whether or not you're confessing your sins. I don't know. But you really ought to be. Why? Because Jesus Christ makes us right with God and only Jesus Christ.

Well, how do I become part of the promises of God? You know, it's one thing to know about what God has promised. You know, it's quite another thing to actually become part of that promise, to be included in the promise of God. You know, that's what Romans chapter 3 is speaking about.

[ 7 : 43 ] And it begins with the question of advantages. You know, are God's people in the past any better off? You know, that's the question being asked here at the beginning of chapter 3. Are the Jews any better off? And Paul basically says, yeah, yeah, you're really better. Here's why you're better off. You have received God's law. You've received the word of God. You've received the blessing of God. You've had God's provision. You've had God's presence. You've had everything.

As a Jew, as a Jew being sort of awoken by God, there were huge advantages. You know, that's what makes their unfaithfulness all the more serious. You know, imagine experiencing that amount of blessing and then you're unfaithful. Yeah, your unfaithfulness is so much more serious to God. You know, it's so much more shocking, perhaps. You know, Paul says, look, you've had plenty of advantages and you've sort of squandered them all. I want you to think about your own life and the advantages that God has given you. You ever find yourself coming back to the same place, perhaps more than once? Yeah, you've never really learned your lesson. Now, what's the one thing that remains the same apart from you making the same mistake? Well, isn't it the fact that God is faithful, forgives you all over again? And that's what God's like with the Jews. They're blessing upon blessing and yet, you know, they take themselves back to square one. I guess it's a bit like, you know, children being brought up in a Christian home. And let's assume for a minute by Christian parents who actually follow the commands of Scripture when it comes to bringing up children.

That's, you know, not just a Christian home, but, you know, parents who really teach their children. You know, great advantages. You know, that's the difference between me and my wife. You know, my wife grew up in a home where she had a Christian dad, a Christian mum.

You know, taught the Bible. Me, you're the complete opposite. You know, by God's grace, my mum, because she wanted a bit of peace and quiet, you know, sent me off to Sunday school.

But look what happened. Yeah, God knows what he's doing. And then several years later, my mum comes to faith. The Jews were sort of children brought up in a Christian home. Plenty of advantages. And then they basically turned around to their parent and said, stuff you. Yeah, that's what Paul is saying here. You know, and I guess that's similar, even perhaps today, where, you know, people grow up in a Christian home and then they turn around to God and, you know, they get to experience all the blessings, you know, as Hebrew 6 says.

[ 10 : 47 ] And then, and then just turn their back on God. It's a shame. You know, God's in control, so we don't need to worry. You know, but that's the issue here. There are advantages, massive advantages. But Paul says, you've not, you've not, you've not made the best of them.

You've actually ruined everything. So the question is, you know, what do you do with a people like that? You know, what do you do with a people like that? Well, here's the question. It has nothing to do with what the people like. It has to do with what God is like. I mean, isn't that the case with everything? What do you do with a person that has experienced many blessings from your hand?

How do you respond to them? Well, it all depends on what you're like, not on what they're like. It all depends on what your, what's your response going to be. And the answer time and time again in Romans chapter 3 is, look, God is faithful. It's just so faithful. Again and again, we ruin the advantages that God has given us. And again and again, God proves himself to be faithful. It all depends on what God is like, doesn't it? You know, we know how bad we can be, and God knows us better than anybody else. But that's not the issue. The issue is, is who's dealing with us? Yeah, well, God's dealing with us. And what's, what's God like? Because that's the important question. You know, Daniel, you have to go and see the headmaster. Well, what's the one thing that I'm going to want to know more than anything else? What is he like? Or what is she like? Has, has she or he got a reputation for dishing out justice, you know, just willy-nilly? Or, you know, that's, that's the thing that you need to be concerned with. So Paul says, you know, you've had advantages. You've ruined it. But God is faithful. You know, God is faithful. He, that's something worth spending a lot of time on. You know, let it sit, it's the first thing that's going to happen when you spend time on just how faithful God has been towards you. You're going to love him more at the end of it. And boy, do we need to love God more than what we do. And how are we going to do that? Well, I guess it's a bit like anything. You need to know the person. You need to find out more and dwell. Well, the next thing that comes after the advantages is the argument. I, do you know, I love this bit about Romans chapter three, verses five onwards. You know, why is it that sometimes God's people think that they're smarter than God?

Now, why do you think, why do you even think you can get away with it? So the argument goes something like this in verses five and six. It's either an argument or they're at least raising the question to God to excuse themselves. In other words, they're trying to make God the reason for not being able to obey him. I want you to think about that for a moment. Making God the reason for why you can't obey him. God, I'd be able to obey you so much easier if you gave me the answer to this prayer.

God, I'd be able to follow you so much easier if you only gave me that. God, my devotional life towards you, my Bible reading, my study, my attendance at church, all of that would be so much better if only you did this for me.

[14:27] Yeah, what do you think's happening? They're doing the same thing. In other words, God, you're the reason, you know, why I'm not living faithfully. That's the problem, isn't it?

Yeah, ask God to help you. You know, ask God to give you the strength. Sure, you know, do it daily. Do it more than, do it more than once a day. You know, ask God to sort you out.

But don't say, God, you're the reason. You're the reason why I can't obey you. You're the reason why, you're the reason why you're not making it easy. You know, I understand that we do that because, you know, people have always done that before God. That's the argument. You know, God, you're the reason why I can't obey you because you haven't given me this or you haven't given me that or you don't do this for me or you don't do that for me or you've had, you've had tons of advantages.

You know, why is it that we think we're cleverer than God? You know, why is it that we want to hold God to our low standards? You know, the issue is, I think, for all of us, God's people then and God's people now is that, you know, we find it hard to take responsibility for our own actions, don't we?

You know, if we get down to the bottom of it, you know, yeah, God's always going to help us out. But, you know, God's going to help us out to take responsibility for our own actions.

[15:56] Why does God always get the blame? I find it interesting, in California, they have this thing called the San Andreas Vault, Vault, Vault, they might have a vault as well, but a fault.

Why are the most expensive houses and the biggest houses built on it? And when it goes crashing into the sea and lives are lost as well as beautiful homes, lives way more important, why is God going to get the blame? And you know he is.

Why does God always get the blame? I think God will look down and say, you know what, and why are you so stupid to build on a fault in the first place? You know, we've got to be careful about arguing with God. Yeah, argue in prayer, fight your case.

Yeah, Spurgeon said that. You know, you want to go to pray with God? Yeah, take it out with him.

You know, have a real spiritual argument and fisticuffs. You know, wrestle with God to make your point known. Yeah, nothing wrong with that. But don't ever think you're smarter than him.

You know, don't ever think that you can be in the right and he could be in the wrong. It's never going to be the case. The argument. Well, that leads us to the next section then, that, you know, no one's

righteous. Verse 9, are the Jews any better off? And Paul says, no, well, why not? You've had all these advantages and now you're telling us we're not any better off.

[ 17 : 28 ] Here's why. Because everyone sinned against God. And when everyone sins against God, whether you grew up in a home with tons of privileges or you grew up in a home with none, if you sinned against God, it's exactly the same. And that's what Paul's saying here to the Jews.

Look, you've had all of these blessings, all of these privileges. You're no better off because at the end of the day, you've sinned just like everybody else has sinned. You know, that's the defining mark, isn't it? You know, no one's righteous. That means no one's right with God. No one's legally right with God. No one's morally right with God. No one's righteous.

No, not one. The trouble is, is that, you know, we always think we're the exception. You can always guarantee you're going to meet someone who thinks they're the exception. It normally goes something like this. I'm a good person. Now, no one's righteous. No, not one.

I'm a good person. Are you offended at the fact that you're told by God that you're not righteous?

Don't be offended because the same God is going to save you through Jesus Christ.

Take it on the chin. Take responsibility for your sin and then let God forgive it. You know, let God deal with it. You know, you're not different. You're not the exception.

[ 19 : 01 ] We all need God's forgiveness. You know, when God says no one here, it really does mean no one. It's not an exception here. Now, what does that mean? Well, it doesn't just mean personal issues. It means world issues.

Yeah, think for a moment. You know, is there much peace in the world or is there more ruin? You know, if you've got a very small mind, you know, where you pick yourself up and just live in this little corner, you'll probably think the world's pretty rosy at the moment.

You know, but look at the world as a whole. There's plenty of ruin. There's plenty of destruction.

There's plenty of sin and devastation. You know, Paul says here, you know, you're living in paths of ruin and misery.

Just take into consideration the whole of human history. Think of the destruction. Think of the unrighteousness. Think of how things, you know, despite the fact that we're told that they can get better medically, physically.

Not for a lot of people they haven't. You know, look at the world today, richer than it's ever been, and yet more poor people than ever before.

[ 20 : 20 ] Don't tell me that's a better world. The paths of ruin are everywhere. You know, not just in nations, but, you know, all the way down to families and all the way down to personal lives.

Why? Sin. Unrighteousness. You know, all of this stuff is just not good. God wants to get rid of it. God is going to get rid of it all.

But take responsibility that it is a serious situation. You know, why does it happen? Well, Paul says here in sort of verse 18, here's the real reason why all of this continues to happen.

There's no fear of God before anybody's eyes. Have you ever seen a child who isn't afraid of getting smacked? Can you correct them?

No. They just go right ahead and do whatever they want. Why? They have no fear of being told off. I went to school with a few people just like that.

[ 21 : 28 ] I wasn't like that. I was good. None of us are good, but you know what I mean. Every now and then, you know, there's no fear of being told off.

You just don't care. And what happens when you get a nation that doesn't fear God, or a society that doesn't fear God? Well, here's what you'll have happen, is they'll just continue doing whatever they want to do.

They'll rape. They'll pillage. They'll destroy. They'll ruin. And then they'll move on to somewhere else that's got it good, and they'll do exactly the same unless they're stopped. Force often is stopped with force.

It's just... I've got five children. And the world's rapidly changing. You know, how are you going to prepare these people to live in this type of world?

Well, there's only one way of escape, and that's the gospel. Yeah, paths of ruin we live in. Why?

Because no one fears God. And Paul's saying, look, don't be a person that doesn't fear God.

[ 22 : 39 ] I've often spoke about the song John Lennon, Imagine There's No Heaven, and why I hate it. I might even write a book on it one day. Why I hate that song so much, and why it's right to hate it.

You know, anybody who thinks that they can die and that's the end of it. You know, there's no judgment beyond the grave. No. The trouble with that is, is that too many people in this world are going to get away with their sin.

Way too many people are going to get away with their sin. For all the bad things that they've done, they die. And to most of the world, they've gotten away... No, they've not gotten away with it. Why? There's the judgment to not look forward to.

God is just. God does deal with it. Have no fear about that. But God is patient. So the whole world, then, is accountable to God.

You know, everyone's accountable. Everyone's got to be able to give an answer for the life that they have lived. And here's the thing, that the more you know about the standards of God, the more aware you are of sin.

[ 23 : 46 ] You know, if a child does something wrong, and they don't know that it's wrong, you know, they've touched something that they've not meant to touch, but they've not been told not to touch it, you can't really tell them off, can you?

Yeah, you're maybe a little bit upset, but, you know, they didn't know any better. You know, God's like that with people. You know, but the moment you know, the moment you know, everything changes.

Why? You know, it's like the parent who says to the child, you know, don't touch the glass of milk. It's there upon the, just don't touch, just leave it alone.

Just please, please don't touch it. You can have it later, don't touch it. You know, the mother goes out of the kitchen and she comes back in, and what does she find? You know, the glass is on the floor, it's broken everywhere, there's spilt milk, it's just a mess.

And you know how milk stinks, you know, when it's just, you know, left. You know, you think, and all this is going through your mind. How am I going to clean this up? What's the issue? You know, the issue's not the broken glass, it's not even the spilt milk.

[ 24 : 46 ] That's not the problem. The problem is they didn't listen. That's the problem. That's the real sin. The real sin is no one's listening. So why do you think we've been given a gospel message?

Go away and listen. You know, make sure people listen. Why? Because that's what sorts the problems out. We move on then to the more important part of justice and forgiveness.

Or not more important, but the good part of justice and forgiveness. You know, everyone has to be judged. You know, I wonder if you know what justice is.

I mean, do you actually know what justice is? You know, think about it for a moment. Think about it in terms of money. One man borrows off another man a sum of money. And over a period of time, the man pays all of it back.

You know, the debt's cleared. Everything's back to the way it was before the money was borrowed. Let's just imagine for a moment that he doesn't pay it all back. He only pays back 70 or 80%.

There's still a debt outstanding.

[ 26 : 02 ] In other words, an injustice has occurred because the payment back has not been the same to what was taken. That's really important. The payment back has not been the same as what's been taken.

That's important. That's injustice. Or think about it in terms of how Jesus put it. Someone slaps you across the cheek. It hurts, doesn't it?

You know, how would you know? I'm imagining. Someone slaps you across the cheek. You know, what's justice? Well, justice is raising your hand and slapping them back to the same weight, to the same equal measure.

You know, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. You know, God is saying, don't, you know, sinful people have a habit of paying back more. Okay? You hurt me this much, I'm going to hurt you this much plus.

Right? You know, when God says an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, he's not advocating violence. He's saying, don't, don't go into injustice. You know, justice is to pay back what you've been paid.

[ 27 : 09 ] That's justice. But here's the thing. Is God just with you? No. You know, my sin against God is more than a slap across his face.

And so is yours. Does God hit us back? Yeah, no. He doesn't, does he? He doesn't hit us back.

And what happens to the justice then? How does, how's the justice taken care of if God isn't hitting us back? There's a problem, isn't there?

Yeah. You know, here's why. The problem is that sin is a different kind of debt. It's not like a money debt where you can pay it back.

Sin is, you know, you've not obeyed God. You've, you've sinned against God. You've broken his laws. Here's the problem. What kind of debt is that? And how big is that debt?

[ 28 : 13 ] You know, if you were to pay that debt back, how big is that debt to pay back? You know, many of us don't know. You know, when we sin against God and it's called a debt, none of us perhaps, or many of us probably don't have any idea just how big is that debt?

Now, how big is that debt that we owe God? And here's the thing. It's a debt that you can't pay. And here's why. Because it's not like a money debt. You know, if I borrow 10 pounds off you and I pay you 10 pounds back, the debt's cleared.

We're all happy. No injustices happen. Everything's fine. But let's say I hurt you. You know, I really hurt you. Not just physically or mentally or spiritually.

You know, but let's say I've done some damage towards you. You know it doesn't matter how many good things I've done afterwards, I can't undo the wrong thing. You know, once it's broken, it's broken.

Once it's damaged, it's damaged. And that's what sin is like with God. You've not taken something from God in the sense that you can pay back. You've damaged something. You've broken a law.

[ 29 : 17 ] You have fallen from a state. There's no way of making that right again. You see the problem. You've not borrowed something that you can pay back. Now, this is a different type of debt.

This is a debt where, you know, the sin is a stain, a mark, a falling from the state. You've dented. You've destroyed the standards of God.

You know, many of us know that when we sin against another person like that, you can do a hundred good deeds afterwards. It doesn't change the fact that you still did that one. Now, that's the problem that God has, or that we have, rather.

What is justice? Well, justice is that the debt has to be paid. So, how does God solve that problem? I mean, that's a big problem, isn't it? How does God solve that problem? Here's how. Forgiveness.

What is forgiveness? Well, forgiveness is this.

[ 30 : 18 ] It's not returning what would be just. Someone slaps you on the cheek. Forgiveness is absorbing the pain and not hitting them back.

That's what forgiveness is. Is it hard? You bet it's hard. Do we get it right? Do we do it all the time? No, we don't do it all the time. But that's forgiveness. Forgiveness is absorbing the pain.

It's absorbing the debt. It's absorbing the hurt. And never paying it back. And that's what God does with us. He absorbs it. He says, you know, I understand you're not going to be able to pay this back, but I'm going to absorb it all.

And I'm going to forgive you in return. But here's the problem. God is just. God has to punish sin. You know, God can't just be faithful in some cases. He has to be faithful all the time. So what does God do with all the sin? People can't get away with sin, right? All sinners must die.

[ 31 : 24 ] It's non-negotiable. What does God do with that? Here's what he does. He takes his son. And his son takes all of our sin upon himself.

All of it. Why can he do that? Well, here's why. Because he's never broken the law of God. He's never sinned. He's been perfect his whole life and continues to be perfect. Now, that's why he can take all of our sin.

What is he doing? Well, he is God. Jesus is God. And he is absorbing the sin. He's not paying it back. He's taken it all to himself.

And then God has to be just. Sin has to be punished. That's the cross. The cross is where God is absorbing our sin.

And where God judges it because he's just and faithful. You know, the cross is how God saves us. The cross is how God forgives us.

[ 32 : 24 ] The cross is how God makes you right with him. He provides his son, verse 25, as a propitiation. And what propitiation means is this.

That God takes all the sin off of you and puts it on him. He absorbs it. And then punishes him instead of you. You're forgiven.

You're free to live for him. That's what he does. Now, that's forgiveness. You want to know what forgiveness is?

It's not just saying sorry. It's not just saying, oh, it's okay. Don't worry about it. No, it's absorbing the pain. It's absorbing the sin and never paying it back.

The thing is, with God, sin has to be judged. He has to be a just judge. And so he has to punish sin. And the way that he gets around this terrible problem is by providing his own son to take the punishment instead of you.

[ 33 : 26 ] That's the gospel. Here's the exhortation, then, as we close. Know this. God is absolutely patient with you. You know, he wants everybody to come to faith in Jesus Christ.

You know, God is patient. The other thing is, is never forget that God is forgiving. It doesn't matter how big your sin is. It doesn't matter how often you sinned.

It doesn't even matter if you're going to premeditate a sin. And many of us do. God is still going to forgive you.

Why? Because it doesn't matter about you so much. It matters about what he's like. And he forgives. You know, our sin is much more than a slap across the face.

But God never pays us back. Never pays us back. He absorbs it, takes it. That's forgiveness. And our sin is much more serious than a slap across the cheek.

[ 34 : 27 ] So, verse 26. God is the just God and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus Christ. You know, as we said at the beginning, Jesus is really important.

Why? It's the only way you can get right with God. It's the only way you can be forgiven. Jesus is really important.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.