

## ROMANS 3:19-26 "God Is Just And The Justifier of We Who Have Faith In Jesus"

Last week's text left little doubt that no one can boast of being good enough, so as to earn salvation, or to claim that, by nature, man is basically good and deserves to be given a break by God, so as to enter into a relationship with God, based on his potential goodness.

That might work in school where they grade on the curve, but in God's economy we're told in Psa 5:4 "You are not a God who takes pleasure in evil; with you the wicked cannot dwell."

Those with the sentence of "guilty as charged", because of sin, cannot dwell with God.

And as a quick reminder, those who naturally fall into that category include every person of the human race.

Rom 3:10-12 "As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; 11 there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. 12 All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one."

Now this creates a bit of a dilemma because if those with sin cannot dwell with God, and if all men are sinners, this severely limits who can dwell with God.

In other words, no one can. This was the point Paul was making to the Jews, who felt that they could dwell with God simply because they were Jews. In a sense many of the Jews felt they were above the law. They also believed that since the Gentiles didn't have the benefit of the covenant promises they would never be given the opportunity to dwell with God.

They were wrong on both accounts. Paul quotes a number of O.T. passages as we see in Rom.3:10-18, and then he goes on to say in Rom 3:19 "Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God."

If a Jew felt that somehow he were above the law, because of his position with the nation of Israel, Paul shatters that pipe dream with a reminder that, if you are part of the nation of Israel then the law of Moses not only speaks to you as a Jew, but it declares what your natural position with God is, guilty of sin.

The Jew was right to declare that the Gentiles were guilty before God, but he had to include himself, according to what the word of God clearly said, as to his natural state.

And so, as a Jew, if you were going to boast of having the law then you must also concede that the law says to you that "there is none righteous, not even one."

Why? Why is that? Look at verse 20..... " because by the works of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the law comes the knowledge of sin" (NAS), or as the NIV puts it .... "Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin."

Oh, so there's a purpose for the law, but it's not to be a means for our righteousness? Exactly! And what is that purpose? The purpose of the law is to show us clearly what sin is and how our coming up short of the law's expectations makes us all the more guilty before God.

"For through the law comes the knowledge of sin." What if I don't have the law of Moses, am I still guilty? You bet! Because you have a law written on your conscience that was put there by God.

Rom 2:14-15 "(Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, 15 since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.)"

Judgment will come either way.

Rom 2:12 "All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law."

This news is designed to silence every mouth, or as the NAS puts it, "that every mouth may be closed." Charles Hodge makes the comment: "all men should be reduced to silence under the conviction that they had nothing to say against the charge of sin."

No one escapes God's righteous judgment. But the law has a very important role in showing us more clearly our responsibility to our God and how short we come to His holiness.

So, what's the deal? Do we just acknowledge that we're sinners according to God's law and wander through life aimlessly and hopelessly lost? That depends on our understanding of the law and its ultimate purpose.

Of course, the law's purpose, as we see here in Romans, is to give us a knowledge of sin, but it's also to be used to teach us something. You see, the law is ultimately designed to teach us that the law is not sufficient for giving us eternal life.

This is what Paul told the church in Galatia.

Gal.3:24-26 ..... "the law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith. But, now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus."

The NIV puts it this way.... Gal 3:24 "So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith."

The literal Greek speaks of the law as being a child-conductor, which implies that the child is placed under the supervision of a teacher, with the express purpose of revealing the true nature of the law.

But many of the Jews didn't get it. They lost sight of the fact that the law was meant to be their tutor or teacher, so as to lead them away from self-dependence, to a total dependence on God and His promises by faith.

But, instead, they insisted that they could keep the law, so as to earn favor with God and in so doing the self was elevated to a position of thinking it was very good because it pursued, what was perceived to be, righteousness and godliness through the law.

Here's what the law was intended to do. If you look at the book of Leviticus and Deuteronomy you get a glimpse of what the law required. Look at those two books sometime today. There are so many rules and regulations that by the time you get through them all you'll want to throw up your hands and say, 'Lord how in the world can anyone keep all of these laws so as to earn Your favor?'

And with that question comes God's response. 'Well done. Now you see how impossible it is to even come close to trying to earn My favor by keeping such laws, which are designed to teach you, or to be your tutor to lead you to My Son Jesus Christ by faith, Who is able to give you eternal life.'

So, "by the works of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the law comes the knowledge of sin."

And being sinners, we are all held accountable to God as we see in verse 19. Now let me just mention quickly a couple of things here about the words "accountable" and "justified".

These are legal terms which are designed to be used in a court of law. In fact, our salvation must, of necessity, be a legal act to satisfy our guilt, even as one who goes before a judge must be legally be acquitted of his or her crime.

The word accountable is *hupodikos* in the Greek and it means "under sentence". And so for the sinner, which includes all mankind, it is not simply a possibility that we may be punished, but rather we are actually "under sentence" by God and we will not escape judgment and the penalty according to the law, which is death.

And that will silence anyone's mouth. If you've ever seen a court room scene where the person being accused of a crime, who thinks he will not be declared guilty, is then told by the foreman that the jury has declared him guilty of all charges, the first thing the camera does is to get a close up of the guilty party. His mouth may be open, but nothing comes out as he stands there amazed.

That will be the scene of many a person who thinks that they could never be guilty before a loving God, but who will stand before the judgment seat of God to receive their sentence. Guilty as charged. Death.

That's what it is to be accountable to God. But, verse 20 speaks of being justified in His sight, not through the law, but by some other means.

Now, the word "justified" is another legal term. This term means to be declared, not guilty. That's what you want to hear when the court foreman comes out to read the verdict. Not guilty.

And that's what you want to hear when you stand before God. Not guilty. You have been justified. Now it's important that we understand this aspect of our salvation because it will give us a much greater appreciation of what we have in Christ.

William Barclay does a very good job of explaining what justification actually is, as it pertains to judgment seat of God. He

begins by explaining what the Greek word for justify is. It's *Diakioun*.

Now that is significant because, as he says, "All Greek verbs which end in "-oun" mean, not to make someone something, but to treat, to reckon, to account him as something. If an innocent man appears before a judge, then to treat him as innocent is to acquit him....

..... But, the point about a man's relationship before God is that he is utterly guilty, and yet God, in His amazing mercy treats him, reckons him, accounts him as if he were innocent. That is what justification means. When Paul says that God justifies the ungodly, he means that God treats the ungodly as if he had been a good man."

Now, the Jews had a problem with this teaching because they had been taught all of their lives that to treat a bad man, as if he were good, was a sign of an evil judge.

Pro 17:15 "Acquitting the guilty and condemning the innocent-- the LORD detests them both."

Exo 23:7 "Have nothing to do with a false charge and do not put an innocent or honest person to death, for I will not acquit the guilty."

You can see how the average Jew cringed at such a promise that God would justify the ungodly. And yet that's exactly what He does. We who understand that the law is not our savior, but our condemnation, have no other choice but to humbly come before our God for mercy.

And mercy is what has been extended to all men in Christ. But this mercy and love, which has been promised to all who repent of their sin and turn to Christ for forgiveness, must be consistent with the justice of God.

For to justify the ungodly without a legally just reason is wickedness. And God is not a wicked judge but a just Judge and a loving Father.

Again, keep in mind, our justification is a declarative act. It doesn't make us just, it declares we are just, or to put it another way, it declares us to be not guilty even though we deserve a guilty verdict. It is as though the satisfaction of our guilt has been met entirely even though we did not actually meet that satisfaction of

the law. So we are "just" by a declaration from God, not based on "us" actually having an inherent righteousness before God.

This is where Paul is taking us.

Rom 3:21-26 "But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. 22 This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. 25 God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, [as the one who would turn aside his wrath, taking away sin] through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished- - 26 he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus."

Let's look at Rom 3:21 "But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify."

When we speak of the righteousness of God in this instance, we are talking of His character which is holy, undefiled, perfect in every way.

This righteousness is the basis for our fellowship with our God, but as the verse says it's a righteousness from God, apart from the law. But it goes on to say that the law and the prophets testified of it.

Paul touched on this righteousness in chapter one when he said in Rom 1:16-17 "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. 17 For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith." [Hab. 2:4]

That's the key, and that's what Paul had in mind when he wrote that the law and the Prophets testify of this. The law testified to it in the sense that it directed people away from a self-righteousness by showing how no one could keep the law adequately to please God.

The Prophets testified of it in the sense that they continually implored the people to trust and follow God and not to go off following their own ways.

In both cases faith in God's promises that He would deliver them is the issue of our salvation. And so we read in the O.T. by the Prophet Habakkuk in Hab.2:4 .... "but the righteous will live by his faith".

Not faith in faith, but faith in God and His power and His promises of deliverance from the legal problem of the penalty of sin, which has as its punishment, death.

And where is this righteousness of God found?

Rom 3:22 "This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe."

Our righteousness is in Christ. And this takes us back to the legal problem Paul has been addressing, when he brings in such terms as "accountable" to God and "justify". He says, 'all are guilty and everyone needs to be justified to have his guilt lifted, and to be declared just, making a just and righteous relationship with God possible.

He repeats this problem here in our text.

Rom 3:23-24 "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus."

This is an interesting passage because it places all men in the same position. All have sinned. Now the word sin doesn't sit well with a lot of people, especially people who know deep down that they are sinners but who won't give up their sin, and choose to live outside of God's way of salvation.

The word sin in the Greek is *hamartano* and it's an archery term which means to miss the mark; and by implication to err. What is the mark, according to God's standard? Perfection, because that's who God is. We come short of God's standard and we err and are therefore guilty.

And so to sin is to miss the mark and, as the verse continues, we fall short of the glory of God. We fall short of being able to have fellowship with a perfect God because we are not perfect, and as we started this study with the verse from Psalms it read in Psa 5:4 "You are not a God who takes pleasure in evil; with you the wicked cannot dwell."

"Wicked" is an expressive, but true picture, of someone who has missed the mark, who has not met the perfect standard of God

which establishes the only way we can have fellowship with God forever.

'Oh, God!, is there no way to bridge that gap which eternally separates us from You?' Glad you asked. We need to be justified, which is to be declared, not guilty of the sin, or of missing the mark of God's righteousness.

Look at verse 24.... Rom 3:24 "and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus."

This is starting to get good. God says that I can be justified and that this justification has been extended freely by grace. But it had to come through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

Now the word "redemption" is important because it describes that someone can actually be bought back. The word is literally translated, "ransom in full".

You ever hear of someone holding a person for ransom? The idea is that I'll give this person back to you when you cough up a million bucks. You have to pay big bucks to get them back.

That is what God has done for us in Christ Jesus. The difference is that the price is the same price you and I must pay for our sin, if someone doesn't volunteer to buy us back. And that price is death.

Jesus paid that price. He ransomed us by His death, in our place on the cross. He paid the price so that we could have a righteousness from God to allow us to have eternal fellowship with Him. Not a righteousness that comes from us, or a righteousness which comes from the law, but a righteousness which is found in Christ Himself.

Remember, we've fallen short of the mark. That mark, that standard, is God's perfection. Where can we find someone who will stand in our place who meets that perfect standard, who has not fallen short?

There's only One person who meets the perfect standard of God and that is God Himself. This is why it was only possible for God to stand in our place for the penalty of our sin.

Mat 1:21-23 "She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 23 "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a



son, and they will call him Immanuel" [Isaiah 7:14]--which means, "***God with us.***"

Joh 1:1,14 "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."

This is why the cults fall woefully short. They all deny that Jesus is God. And since only God can forgive sin, they speak of a Jesus who is powerless to forgive your sin. And if your sins are not forgiven you are still guilty and will pay the price with your own life, eternally separated from God.

Jesus taught this in Mat 9:2-7 "Some men brought to him a paralytic, lying on a mat. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven." 3 At this, some of the teachers of the law said to themselves, "This fellow is blaspheming!" 4 Knowing their thoughts, Jesus said, "Why do you entertain evil thoughts in your hearts? 5 ***Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'?*** 6 But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins..." Then he said to the paralytic, "Get up, take your mat and go home." 7 And the man got up and went home."

Only God in the flesh can forgive sins. In Theological terms we call it the incarnation of the Son of God. God took on flesh and dwelt among men. Immanuel.

But Immanuel had a job to do. He was born to die to buy us back.

Rom 3:24-25 (we) "are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus." 25 "God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, [as the one who would turn aside his wrath, taking away sin] through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, ..."

God cannot overlook His justice. Justice must be served and it was in Christ. How so? The NIV puts it "God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement." The KJV says, "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation". The NAS would agree with the KJV where it says, "Whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith."

The word "propitiation" is the better translation and it gets to the heart of the matter. The word propitiation, in Theological terms,

means to appease the wrath of God. To turn away His anger toward sinners.

How much does God hate sin? Enough to inflict a just punishment of eternal separation. What will appease that wrath? A just sacrifice. Christ is that sacrifice, who not only appeases Gods wrath towards sinners, but will actually bring us into a peaceful relationship with our Creator whereby we may cry out to Him Abba, Father.

This act of shedding His blood on our behalf allowed Jesus Christ to purchase us as a ransomed gift. Our salvation is a gift at a very high cost. Verse 25b-26..... "He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished-- 26 he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus."

God's justice is what salvation is all about. But it is God's love which meets that justice as He, the Holy and righteous and Just One, now becomes our Justifier. He justifies us before God and presents us before the Father blameless.

But that justification comes through faith in the One who died in our place and then rose bodily from the dead. His righteousness has been placed to our account. When the Father looks on us, who have placed our faith in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins, He sees, not our righteousness, but the righteousness of Jesus, the Perfect One.

How can we say thank You for so great a gift? Love the Lord who gave you life eternal and give your life to Him every moment with a life of loving obedience.

Jesus Christ; God, Lord, Master, and Savior. He laid down His life and took it up again so that you and I would never have to live without Him again.

Praise Him with a life of worship and service unto his honor and glory! And realize this. That the same power which overcame the grave is the same power He gives to us to overcome the temptations of this world. He continually works in our lives that we may live for Him.

He alone is our righteousness; He alone is our propitiatory sacrifice; He alone is our Justifier and He alone is our salvation. He alone deserves our full allegiance and love. Give Him glory

with a life of gratitude and walk in the new life He gives with a new attitude which shows thanksgiving through faith and obedience.