

Romans
Message 34
Something is Marvelously True, But What?01
Rom 3:19-26

- 19 Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.
- 20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.
- 21 But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;
- 22 Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:
- 23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;
- 24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:
- 25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;
- 26 To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. KJV

Introduction:

All of God's Word is important, there is no question. This very man who wrote these words said in a place, "all scripture is given by God and is profitable." There is not a single word given by God to man that is not immensely valuable, useful and helpful to us and not a single breathed syllable that can be considered a waste.

At the same time, there are pieces of scripture which seem to condense massive realities and incredible revelations such as the one before us today.

Let us remember where we are and set ourselves, as much as we can, down beside Paul as he writes, trying to understand, at the same time, the people and the environment into which he was sending these words. He is completing his third missionary journey and is heading back to Jerusalem with a gift for the saints from the Gentile churches, particularly the Macedonians of whom Philippi was a part.

The church at Rome has sprung up without the involvement of any of the apostles (no, not even Peter) and is a theological mess, if we can read between the lines and assume that Paul was addressing needs he knew them to have.

He had declared in the opening section of this letter,

Rom 1:16

- 16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. KJV

We have remarked in how interesting it is that he would think them in need of clarity on the gospel but it seems they really did.

Then, beginning at 1:17 and continuing all the way through 3:20 he has built a massive case concerning two things:

1. All men are depraved sinners, and
2. There is no difference in that matter between Jew and Gentile, they are all condemned.

Before us today lies a sort of a summary of God's remedy for the situation which He has created for the whole world. It is far to large for us to attempt to cover with any kind of thoroughness today but I want you to see if you can grasp a little of the enormous sweep of these words and the powerful ideas they represent.

Notice the topics:

The Righteousness of God (mentioned twice, 21,22)
Faith of Jesus Christ
Justified Freely
By His Grace
The Redemption that is in Christ Jesus

We sort of imagine that if one could master and understand those topics he might have a handle not only on what Paul was saying but what the whole of scripture has to say. In fact, Paul referenced the connection here between what he is referencing and "The Law and The Prophets," the Jewish euphemism for the Scriptures of God.

Let me just make a few observations about these ideas which we will seek to develop going forward.

The Righteousness of God mentioned here does not mean the Righteousness which God possesses as one of His Attributes but the Righteousness He conveys to men whom He calls and enables to believe.

The Faith of Jesus Christ does not relate to Jesus 'believing' anything. That is an idea a little difficult to imagine in a Being Who Knows All Things. Faith is not really an issue with Him. So, this is something else, probably the whole system of Faith relating to Him, which is necessary to be understood on some significant level if one is going to be considered as Righteous before God.

Justified Freely comes from the word which means 'to give as a gift' but also 'gratuitously, 'undeservedly,' and 'without a cause.' It means that the justification God gives does not have conditions which one meets and then becomes deserving of the gift. It is literally and totally 'undeserved.'

By His Grace - I have frequently shared with you a case built from the uses of the word in scripture that 'Grace' is NOT 'unmerited favor,' and idea which is better associated with 'mercy.' Grace, as we can readily show from scripture is far better aligned with the idea of 'enablement' which is the 'free gift' we must mentioned. It is the mechanism of the New Birth, the Spiritual Resurrection which God grants to the dead soul from which Repentance, Faith, and

Obedience, the proofs of spiritual life, spring.

The Redemption that is in Jesus Christ - We have often spoken of Paul's insistence upon including Union with Christ as the foundational reality of God's rescue of sinners. It is by being taken into Union with Him that our sins became His, His death became the satisfaction of them before the Father, His burial sealed us against ever going backward to that state from which we have been saved, His Resurrection gave us Spiritual Life and His Ascension gives us access to the Father in Heaven.

All of this Paul included as God's solution to the impossible problem of man's sin. All of this you need to understand at least on some working level to comprehend what he was saying here.

As I was writing this I was reminded of how I was taught to use pieces of this in a sort of a little "Salvation Sales Pitch" and how embarrassed I am that I would ever have thought to use it in this way.

This is a massive sweep of theology. A full Systematic Theology course would be necessary to fully explain it. While we are not going to attempt that, I will do my best to make these ideas understandable to you.

Let's begin with this phrase from v. 21.

21 But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;

There is a righteousness from God, given to men, that is not conditioned upon them keeping the Law and that righteousness is declared, according to Paul, in the Jewish scriptures, "the law and the prophets."

Now, if we are honest, this statement is a little bit disconcerting to us because we have been conditioned to think of the OT as being primarily about Law and about the blessings that came on Israel when they kept it as well as the judgments of God they experienced for not keeping it.

The idea that there would be a revelation and a 'witness' contained within those scriptures that God granted righteousness to men on some other basis than the Law is honestly not one which is self-evident to us.

Neither was it self-evident to those to whom Paul preached, whether Jew or Gentile.

But we must remember that Paul did not have any of the New Testament we have in written form to preach from. He was writing it as he went and we do not see any evidence that he knew of any of the gospels to be in circulation. So, the only scripture he had was "the Law and the Prophets" so, if there is a case to be made, it must be made from there.

First, let us talk about this idea, "the Righteousness of God." Paul has made the case that no men are righteous, that they do not seek after righteousness, that they exist in a state of depravity with no redeeming qualities at all so far as God demands are concerned, nothing at all to qualify them to have a relationship with Him.

If they are going to have any such qualification it is going to need to come to them from outside themselves and, obviously, we are talking about it coming from God. It is not said here because this is a sort of a summary, but there is no other source for such a quality.

Righteousness means purity and because it is the Righteousness of (or from) God it will be absolute purity without any imperfection at all, a kind of Righteousness which would qualify a man to walk and commune with Deity without the Deity being contaminated by the corruption of man.

In other words, it means that corruption is completely cleared away, perfectly and completely, and that somehow the man is viewed as perfect in the sight of the Creator. Otherwise the avenue of Communion between the two has an impossible barrier, man's corruption.

So, where do we find such a relationship between God and man apart from the Law. Paul is going to use Abraham and we will get to him but is he the only case?

Gen 4:1-5

- 1 And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD.
- 2 And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.
- 3 And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD.
- 4 And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering:
- 5 But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. KJV

The LXX says that the Lord "looked upon" Abel, suggesting that he looked upon him with favor. The AMP says He "had respect and regard" for Abel. Remember now, "there is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." How, then, does God regard Abel with favor? Only if He has done something for Abel, somehow changed him so that his sins are not an issue and it does not call God's purity into question for "respect"ing him.

Does killing an animal, shedding his blood and burning his body on an altar of stones accomplish that?

Heb 10:4

- 4 For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. KJV

So, there is a Righteousness from God apart from the Law at play here, something that God did which made Abel fit for communion with Him.

Heb 11:4

- 4 By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh. KJV

“He was righteous,” but not with a righteousness of his own doing. The offering sprung from a heart which had known the work of God. It was “by faith” that he offered the acceptable offering. Righteousness was already at work before the sacrifice was made.

Reason and Revelation deny a sinner becoming righteous by killing an animal.

There is a Righteousness of God apart from the Law.

Consider Abel’s younger brother.

Gen 4:25-26

25 And Adam knew his wife again; and she bare a son, and called his name Seth: For God, said she, hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew.

26 And to Seth, to him also there was born a son; and he called his name Enos: then began men to call upon the name of the LORD. KJV

Why? Why would wretched sinners, such as Paul has been describing for 3 chapters, take it upon themselves to “call upon the name of the Lord”? It is presented by Moses in a straight-forward way so that we have no reason to doubt that this is sincere and earnest, that it involves the same sincerity that we found in Abel. In the beginning of chapter 6 he will call them “sons of God,” and, again, with no questioning of the reality of that.

If they were successfully calling upon the name of the Lord and God, the Holy Spirit, through the pen of Moses, was calling them sons of God, it appears that the calling was successful and that a relationship with God had been established. It is through this line of humans we will get Enoch, who walked with God, and Noah with whom God was also pleased.

How could they commune and interact with God? They were righteous. Where did they get their righteousness? If it was satisfactory to God, it came from Him. And we are many years away from the Law being given at Sinai.

There is a Righteousness from God that is apart from the Law. And, it is witnessed by the Law and the Prophets.

Such a righteousness exists, Paul affirmed, a righteousness for men, making them acceptable to God, not produced by their faithfulness to the Law.

Why is this an issue?

Because this is not just one option among many, this is the only hope for the sinner.

If he is indeed what Paul said, what chance does he have?

Rom 3:10-18

- 10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:
11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.
12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.
13 Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips:
14 Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness:
15 Their feet are swift to shed blood:
16 Destruction and misery are in their ways:
17 And the way of peace have they not known:
18 There is no fear of God before their eyes. KJV

What could we possibly imagine that such a person might do to avoid the eternal consequences of just being who he is?

Any plan of salvation that requires him, without assistance from God, doing anything to gain the approval of God is just hopeless. It cannot happen. He cannot change his basic nature and his nature is contrary to God on every level.

- 21 But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;**
22 Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ...

This righteousness that God gives to sinner is “by faith of Jesus Christ.” So, what does that mean?

It is Faith “of Jesus Christ” just like the righteousness is “of God.” We are not worried about whether God is righteous or not and we are not concerned with what Jesus believes. It is a righteousness which belongs to God, is given by God and is satisfactory to God. The Faith is concerning Jesus Christ, a faith system which centers on and revolves around Him. At this point in the discussion we are not even concerned about what men believe. We want to know what this “faith of Jesus Christ” is.

Let me demonstrate some passages.

Rom 3:3

- 3 For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? KJV

The Divine Faith system is not overthrown because some Jesus did not believe.

Gal 2:16

- 16 Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by

the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. KJV

The Faith system of Jesus Christ is the system in which and by which people are justified before God. The Law is one system and the Faith of Christ is the other.

Gal 2:20

20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. KJV

Again, this has nothing to do with what Jesus believes but it is the system of faith that guides our lives.

Phil 1:27

27 Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; KJV

Striving together to advance the Faith, the belief system taught by Paul.

James 2:1

1 My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. KJV

He went on to talk about how the church operated, that system of faith concerning Christ which they are taught in the NT.

This teaches us where the Righteousness of God comes from and how it comes to us, how we are Justified through the Work of Christ.

22 Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe:

It is not a righteousness which we acquire by believing. This is the great error of evangelical Christianity in our time and it has been for some time. This Righteousness is a gift of God, as Paul is about to say and about which we will speak in the next message.

Those to whom God grants this Righteousness believe, that is for sure, but they cannot believe their way into Righteousness. We are all guilty sinners and Paul has made that point.

We cannot help ourselves, that is for sure.

There is a Righteousness which God will accept.

It is wrapped up in this thing called "The Faith of Jesus Christ," the religion of Christ, True

Christianity. Our only hope is in fully embracing that Faith, believing in full that which Jesus, the Prophets, and all the apostles have written down for us to believe.

This is the reason Paul took the time to write this whole letter. It is all a part of this thing that God has revealed, this Righteousness of God, this Faith of Jesus Christ, and it is essential to us to understand and embrace the whole of it, not little cherry picked sections made into a religious sales pitch so that someone can persuade us to say the 'magic words' and supposedly be saved.

We should take note of the fact that this letter from Paul does not contain the 'Faith of Jesus Christ,' it is the Faith of Jesus Christ in written form. And, it is all essential.