

SERMON NOTES

By Pastor John Paul Miller

In The Grip of God's Grace

The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans

Romans 3:20-31 - "How God Saves Sinners (Pt. 2)"

Romans 3:20-31, *"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. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; 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: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: 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; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law."*

How does God save sinners?

The answer to this question is the subject of our text here in Romans.

It's the most important question we could ever ask – it's man's greatest need.

How does God Save Sinners?

First, we are all sinners (Romans 1:18-3:19)

The answer: 1. Absolutely apart from the law (vs. 20-21)
2. Through faith in Jesus Christ (vs. 22-23)
3. By Grace (vs. 24a) – "freely" without a cause

The source of our justification is faith.

Grace alone, through faith alone.

We now move on to the Ground of our Salvation, or justification.

It's in Christ and His cross.

The Ground of our Salvation is the cross of Jesus Christ.

Sinful man can't be saved apart from the cross (it's not just love & grace!)

Lyric's of an old song: "If you want to get to heaven, you can't go around the cross."

The danger of Christianity without the cross:

The cross is central and essential to the gospel.

Sir John Bowring, in 1825, shipwrecked on the south China Sea in the harbor of Macao. Said: "In the cross of Christ I glory towering o'er the wrecks of time; All the light of sacred story gathers round its head sublime."

How does God save sinners?

I. At a Great Cost (vs. 24b-25a)

Romans 3:24b-25a, "...*through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood,...*"

Our salvation is by grace through faith, but it's not cheap, it cost God the father, the life of the son.

It's through the cross that a righteous God can justify or (declare righteous) the unrighteousness or condoning their unrighteousness.

The cross is the "Great Wisdom of God.

It's how God justifies the unjust.

There are two key words in understanding the cross:

1. Redemption (vs. 24) - "...*through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:...*"

Redemption is a commercial term borrowed from the marketplace, as justification is a legal term borrowed from the law court.

In the Old Testament it was used of slaves who were purchased in order to be set free. It was also used in describing Israel who was redeemed from captivity in Egypt (the Passover was a type...).

For us it speaks of us being bought by Christ's blood and set free.

Free from the bondage of:

1. Sin – (it's guilt & penalty)

Titus 2:11-14, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope — the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

2. The Law

Galatians 3:13, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:"

Galatians 4:4-5, "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."

3. Bodies of Sin

Ephesians 4:30, "And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."

There is coming a day of redemption.

When?

Romans 8:23, "And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."

Glorification at the Rapture.

2. Propitiation (vs. 25a)

The cross of Jesus Christ is a redemption of sinners, but it's also a propitiation of God's righteousness & warmth,

What does Propitiation mean?

It's not the same as used by pagans.

John R. W. Stott – In the pagan perspective, human beings try to please their bad-tempered deities with their own paltry offerings. According to the Christian revelation.

a) **It's Nature** - John R. W. Stott – God's own great love propitiated his own holy wrath through the gift of his own dear Son, who took our place, bore our sins and died our death. Thus God himself gave himself to save us from himself.

It's the death of Christ for God the father to satisfy the demands of His holy righteous law.

b) **The Need** – It is necessary because God's law was broken and His righteousness demands it.

c) **The Author** – The author is God not man!

- a. We cannot satisfy the demands of God's law.
- b. God in His undeserved love has done for us what we could never do by ourselves.

1 John 4:10, *"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."*

1 John 2:2, *"And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."*

d) **The Price** – Blood (vs. 25)

There Is a Fountain Filled With Blood

*There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.
Lose all their guilty stains, lose all their guilty stains;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.*

*The dying thief rejoiced to see that fountain in his day;
And there have I, though vile as he, washed all my sins away.
Washed all my sins away, washed all my sins away;
And there have I, though vile as he, washed all my sins away.*

*Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious blood shall never lose its power
Till all the ransomed church of God be saved, to sin no more.
Be saved, to sin no more, be saved, to sin no more;
Till all the ransomed church of God be saved, to sin no more.*

*E'er since, by faith, I saw the stream Thy flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme, and shall be till I die.
And shall be till I die, and shall be till I die;
Redeeming love has been my theme, and shall be till I die.*

*Then in a nobler, sweeter song, I'll sing Thy power to save,
When this poor lisping, stammering tongue lies silent in the grave.
Lies silent in the grave, lies silent in the grave;
When this poor lisping, stammering tongue lies silent in the grave.*

*Lord, I believe Thou hast prepared, unworthy though I be,
For me a blood bought free reward, a golden harp for me!
'Tis strung and tuned for endless years, and formed by power
divine,
To sound in God the Father's ears no other name but Thine.*

William Cowper, 1772

2. In Perfect Justice (vs. 25b-26)

Romans 3:24b-26, "... to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

The cross is "redemption" of sinners, a 'propitiation" of God's wrath. But now also a "declaration" of His justice.

Old Testament – God's righteousness forbearance (vs. 25b)

New Testament – God is just in justification

John R. W. Stott – "The cross is the righteous basis on which the righteous without compromising his righteousness."

In saving sinners through the cross God has:

- redeemed His people
- propitiated His wrath
- declared His righteousness

What should our response be?

Wonder and Worship! – at His wisdom, holiness, love, and mercy.

All this should humble our hard hearts.

3. Paul's Defense of God's Salvation (vs. 27-31)

Romans 3:27-31, *"Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law."*

By anticipating three questions:

1. Where then is boasting? (vs. 27-28)

Boasting is the outward verbal expression of pride (Satan & Sin)

No Christian can boast – Salvation is a gift of God's Grace

The ugliest sin among Christians is self-righteousness

Think of what heaven would be like?

Illustration: Paul boasted in his self-righteousness days (Philippians 3). But after his conversion he said, *"God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."* (Galatians 6:14)

We should only boast in the Lord (1 Corinthians 1:31)

Praising, not boasting!

2. Is God the God of the Jews only? (vs. 29-30)

No nation or race, no church has a monopoly on God.

There's only one God, who saves all people of every nation the same way.

3. Do we then nullify the law through faith? (vs. 31)

We are not against the law – "antinomianism".

The miracle of Justification:

1. God provides a righteousness apart from the law.
2. Righteousness comes through faith.
3. By God's Grace.
4. Made possible by the cross.
5. Where God's wisdom and justice is seen.
6. It excludes boasting but in Christ alone.
7. It excludes discrimination.
8. It upholds the law.

2 Corinthians 5:21, *"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him".*

All that we are and have done became Christ's, and all that he is and has done, became ours.

When I Survey the Wondrous Cross – Isaac Watts 1824

In Loving-Kindness Jesus Came

In lovingkindness Jesus came
My soul in mercy to reclaim,
And from the depths of sin and shame
Through grace He lifted me.

*From sinking sand He lifted me,
With tender hand He lifted me,
From shades of night to plains of light,
O praise His Name, He lifted me!*

He sought me long before I heard,
Before my sinful heart was stirred,
But when I took Him at His word,
Through grace, He lifted me.

His brow was pierced with many a thorn,
His hands by cruel nails were torn,
When from my guilt and grief, forlorn,
In love He lifted me.

Charles H. Gabriel 1905

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