

Study of Romans

Book 2

Years ago, when I worked for a large manufacturing company, I was asked to serve on a committee of supervisors that reviewed employee concerns and suggestions. Once a month we would meet and read contributions to the dreaded “suggestion box”. I can tell you from experience that this form of communication deserves the bad reputation it has. Most of what was “suggested” fell into one of two categories: petty, personal gripes over which the company had no control (think, “my coworker smells”) and unrealistic demands that had no chance of becoming reality (think, “everyone should get a 3-hour lunch break). What most had in common was that they pointed out a problem (real or perceived) but did not offer any real solution (at least not an actionable one). It was with little fan fare that the program died.

There is a parallel between the corporate suggestion box and how most people approach the question of the human condition. Everyone knows something is off. Politicians, pundits, and even some preachers make a good living pointing out the problem, or at least their opinion on what the problem is. But often a real solution is not offered. We are told if we elect certain people that will fix it. Or we are told we can fix the problems simply by changing our perspective on them (combating homelessness or addiction for example). Even some preachers will insist a person

must simply try harder at being a good person and practicing their religion to make the world a better place.

Yet no matter how many times we recycle this playbook, the world only seems to be getting worse. And that is not just the subjective opinion of a middle-aged preacher, it is the testimony of Scripture (2 Timothy 3:13).

So far in Romans, Paul has carefully laid out the problem. He has asserted that all the world stands condemned in sin. He has presented the evidence and pronounced the verdict. Were that all he did in this letter it would still be true, even though it would leave the reader distressed. But thank the Lord, he does not stop with simply clarifying the problem. He moves on to explaining the solution. The only solution to such a complete and accurate diagnosis of our sin is the person of Jesus Christ. Righteousness revealed not only in God's just wrath toward sin, but in His gracious answer for sin.

In our next few studies, Paul begins to unpack the beauty of the gospel message that occupied his heart and mind so completely. I encourage you to consider carefully his words. What place does the gospel occupy in your life?

SERMON NOTES – Righteousness provided

Romans 3:21-31 – "But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been manifested… – *NASB*

1. Justification

    a. Is an _____ not a _____

    b. Is through _____

    c. Is by _____

2. Redemption

3. Propitiation

ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS

When I was 16 or so I had a car, I was working on. It was nothing special, a mid-80's Buick Skylark that had passed from my grandpa to my dad to me. It ran, but was overdue for some maintenance, so I had taken it off the road. As it was nearing completion, one night it was stolen from our driveway. Another teen had come upon it with the keys in it and taken it for a joy ride. Unfortunately, he took it quite literally over the river and through the woods. The car was a complete loss. Fortunately, or so I thought, he was found in the driver's seat with a broken arm. Fast forward to the court date when he would have to face his crime. We were assigned a victim's advocate and ushered into the court room where he, his parents and a lawyer were waiting. A few legal formalities were taken care of and then the defense attorney and prosecutor approached the judge. After a few moments of whispering the judge declared the case dismissed. That was it. No remedy. No satisfaction. It was explained later that the thief had claimed he borrowed the car from a friend but would not say who. Since no one saw him take the car there was not enough evidence to prove he stole it.

That day, the guy who stole my car was justified, at least in the eyes of the court. But if you had asked my opinion, I certainly did not feel the judge was just. I

felt robbed. It is popular today to claim a loving God would not judge anyone. That sin is a construct of the church to keep people in line. Many want justification without justice when it comes to the things of God. But we do not tolerate that in our human relationships. When a wrong is committed we long for justice not simply justification. And it is not just the offended party who should be concerned with free passes for wrongdoers. That day in the court room I wasn't the only one to lose something. That young man, whether he realized it then or not lost something too. His conscience suffered a cauterizing burn. The judge freed him from the consequences of his actions but not the guilt.

How wonderful and marvelous our God is! In His holiness He remains just, no sin goes unpunished. Yet in His love He justifies the sinner who comes by faith. Truly the hymnist is right, "Jesus paid it all, all to Him I owe. Sin had left a crimson stain; He washed it white as snow"

THINK ABOUT IT

1. Why do you think it is so easy for us to want to justify ourselves?

2. What are some ways we do this?

3. Read Ephesians 2:8-9. This is a familiar and widely used evangelistic passage. Consider the following key words. Define them and discuss how they shape your understanding of salvation.

    a. Grace

    b. Saved

    c. Faith

    d. Gift

    e. works

SERMON NOTES – Righteousness illustrated

Romans 4:1-25– "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." – *NASB*

1. By _____ not _____

2. By _____ not _____

3. By _____ not _____

4. By divine _____ not human _____

ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS

One of the skills we develop with maturity is the ability to apply information gained in one place or time with experiences in another place or time. For example, I know that when Michelle leaves the house that she is planning on coming back. I may not always know when, but am confident that her intention is to return home. I know this because she always does. Whether she is going shopping, to work, the church, or to visit a friend, I can apply what I know, that she is coming home, to each situation no matter how different they are. Conversely, think back to when you first left your child somewhere. You drop them off at grandma's and they cry when you leave. That is a new experience for them. They don't have a frame of reference for it. Eventually they are comfortable with being dropped off at grandma's house. But they still cry when you leave them home with a sitter or drop them in the church nursery. With each new experience you have to reaffirm the truth, that you will come back. Thankfully, this skill is learned fairly quickly, and the fear of abandonment goes away.

The Holy Spirit knew that the readers of Paul's letter would need to develop similar skills of application. Human tendency is to retreat to the familiar and so He inspired Paul to give this illustration of what he had already taught them. That our justification is by

grace through faith and not of works. He did this by using the example of Abraham and the testimony of Scripture. Of course, the benefit of this to us is that when we are tempted to doubt or wander from the truth of our salvation, we can look to God's faithfulness to Abraham as an example.

THINK ABOUT IT

1. Who is someone you look up to? What makes them a role model for you?

2. Read 1 Corinthians 11:1. What is Paul saying here?

3. Read Philippians 3:1-8. What is Paul's main point in this passage?

4. Discuss the difference between putting our hope in heritage, rites, or law and following the example of others who have followed Christ.

SERMON NOTES – The blessings of righteousness

Romans 5:1-11 – "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God..." – *NASB*

1. We have _____ with God

2. We have _____ to God

3. We have _____ of glory

4. We have _____ in trials

5. We have God's _____within

6. We are saved from _____

ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS

It is impossible not to see the comparison between the blessings of experiencing God's righteousness imputed to us and what the world is so hungry for. The lack of peace with God robs the world of peace. Because the unredeemed world is hostile toward God hostility defines all other relationships. In a world that enjoys access to seemingly endless information people are more closed off and boxed in than ever. The steady stream of information distracts, entertains, and manipulates us but cannot connect us in a meaningful way or answer the real questions of life. We desperately look for some steady hand in which to put our hope but disappointment and fear about the future dominate the mind. Trials wear down and crush the lost who see no present help or future hope of escaping them.

Real peace, access, hope, victory, and love cannot spring from the corrupted soil of human merit, effort, or religion. These can only be given freely to those who receive freely the gift of righteousness that is through Christ by faith. The next time someone asks you about the hope that is in you (1 Peter 3:15), don't hesitate to point them to the One who has blessed you so richly. He is the only right answer.

THINK ABOUT IT

1. Consider each of the blessings listed and answer the following questions.

    a. What counterfeits does the world offer for each of these blessings?

    b. Which speaks most deeply to where you are right now in your Christian walk?

    c. How would you explain these to a lost person?

SERMON NOTES – Righteousness contrasted

Romans 5:12-21 – "But the free gift is not like the transgression..." - *NASB*

By one man Adam

1. _____ entered the world

2. _____ is the result of sin

By one man Jesus

3. _____ is provided

    a. It is a free _____

    b. It is by God's _____

    c. It is by _____

4. _____ is the result of salvation

ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS

In an address to the House of Commons on August 20, 1940, Prime Minister Winston Churchill paid tribute to the fighter pilots who had performed so bravely in the Battle of Britian. His now famous line, “Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few” still resonated today. It is quoted whenever someone wants to express how the actions of the few benefit the many.

While the annuls of human history are replete with examples of astonishing sacrifice, if every example were combined, they would still pale in comparison to the sacrifice of Christ on the cross for lost humanity. In the field of human conflict with our greatest enemy; sin, Christ alone stands as the One to whom all is owed. All glory, all honor, and all power reside in Him.

THINK ABOUT IT

1. Read Genesis 2:15-18

    a. How are the conditions of the garden described? (review chapters 1-2)

    b. What law is given to Adam?

    c. What is the prescribed penalty for disobedience?

2. Read Genesis 3:6-8; 21

    a. What do Adam and Eve do?

    b. What is the immediate result?

c. What occurs in verse 21?

3. Read Hebrews 9:27

    a. What do we learn about death from this verse?

    b. What judgments are in view here?

4. Read 1 Corinthians 15:20-26

    a. What is the significance of Christ's resurrection?

    b. What is the result for us?

Sermon notes answer key

Act
Process
Faith
Grace

Faith
Works
Faith
Rites
Faith
Law
Power
effort

peace
access
hope
victory
love
wrath

sin
death
salvation
gift
grace
faith
life