

Justification – the heart of the Gospel

This week's verse: Romans 3:10-26

I. Intro

- A. In this class we will focus on the doctrine of Justification, which is the very core of the Gospel.
- B. We will learn about different aspects of the Gospel by examining a different passage of scripture each week
- C. My blog: <http://www.sarcasmagorical.com>
 - i. I'll post class notes, and sometimes a full written post on what the class was about.
 - ii. Disclaimer – my posts are my opinion, not the church's or anyone else's
- D. 4 pillars: Proclamation, Education, Evangelism, Missions
 - i. The foundation on which all four pillars are built is the Gospel, and the heart of the Gospel is justification.
 - ii. All four pillars are nothing without the Gospel. In fact, they don't even make sense without the Gospel

II. Background

- A. Historical Context (from Easton's Bible Commentary)

“This epistle was probably written at Corinth. Phoebe ([Romans 16:1](#)) of Cenchrea conveyed it to Rome, and Gaius of Corinth entertained the apostle at the time of his writing it ([16:23](#); [1 Corinthians 1:14](#)), and Erastus was chamberlain of the city, i.e., of Corinth ([2 Timothy 4:20](#)).

The precise time at which it was written is not mentioned in the epistle, but it was obviously written when the apostle was about to "go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints", i.e., at the close of his second visit to Greece, during the winter preceding his last visit to that city ([Romans 15:25](#); Compare [Acts 19:21](#); [20:2,3,16](#); [1 Corinthians 16:1-4](#)), early in A.D. 58.

It is highly probable that Christianity was planted in Rome by some of those who had been at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost ([Acts 2:10](#)). At this time the Jews were very numerous in Rome, and their synagogues were probably resorted to by Romans also, who in this way became acquainted with the great facts regarding Jesus as these were reported among the Jews. Thus a church composed of both Jews and Gentiles was formed at Rome. Many of the brethren went out to meet Paul on his approach to Rome. There are evidences that Christians were then in Rome in considerable numbers, and had probably more than one place of meeting ([Romans 16:14,15](#)).”

B. Literary Context

- i. Romans is Paul's clearest and most direct theological treatise on the Gospel.

- ii. Specifically, it illustrates that the Gospel is offered to everyone – Jew or Gentile – and that everyone is in need of the Gospel.
- iii. Chapter 3 comes after Paul has been laying out the case that the Law condemns everyone, and that man cannot be saved by his works.
- iv. Paul goes on to show how God, through the grace of the Gospel, has put to death our flesh, and now reigns in our life through grace.
- v. Aaron will be teaching next week on Romans 6:1-11, on how God has united us to Christ's death and resurrection in our baptism.

C. Content

D. Jesus Hermeneutic

- i. This verse is one of the best displays of the Law and Gospel
- ii. We will see how the Law shows us as completely condemned, and the Gospel brings us the promise that we are forgiven by God's grace.

III. The Law accuses all men (verses 10-20)

A. The case from the Old Testament

- i. Paul strings together a bunch of Old Testament passages into one passage that condemns man.
- ii. Psalms 14:1-3: The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds, there is none who does good. The Lord looks down from heaven on the children of man, to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God. They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt; there is none who does good, not even one.
- iii. Psalms 51:1-3: The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, doing abominable iniquity; there is none who does good. God looks down from heaven on the children of man to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God. They have all fallen away; together they have become corrupt; there is none who does good, not even one.
- iv. Psalms 140:3: They make their tongue sharp as a serpent's, and under their lips is the venom of asps
- v. Isaiah 59:7-8: Their feet run to evil, and they are swift to shed innocent blood; their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; desolation and destruction are in their highways. The way of peace they do not know, and there is no justice in their paths; they have made their roads crooked; no one who treads on them knows peace.
- vi. Ecclesiastes 7:20: Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins.
- vii. Psalm 10:7: His mouth is filled with cursing and deceit and oppression; under his tongue are mischief and iniquity.
- viii. Psalm 5:9: For there is no truth in their mouth; their inmost self is destruction; their throat is an open grave; they flatter with their tongue.
- ix. Proverbs 1:16-19: for their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed blood. For in vain is a net spread in the sight of any bird, but these men lie in wait for their own blood; they set an ambush for their

own lives. Such are the ways of everyone who is greedy for unjust gain; it takes away the life of its possessors

- x. Genesis 6:5: The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

B. The Law condemns all of us

- i. “There is none righteous; no, not one”
 - 1. No one can escape God’s judgment
 - 2. No one is free from sin.
- ii. “There is none who understands”
 - 1. Everyone is blinded by their sin
 - 2. Earlier in Romans, Paul argues that man knows God, but refuses to acknowledge Him as God, so God gives them over to their sins.
- iii. “They are altogether unprofitable”
 - 1. Man was created to glorify God
 - 2. Now that man refuses to honor God, he has ceased to live up to that for which he was made and becomes unprofitable
- iv. “No one does good”
 - 1. Even our greatest accomplishments are tarnished by our sinfulness
 - 2. Isaiah 64:6: We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.
 - 3. Examples
 - Cup of water with some poison
 - “A bowl of manure, infused with the finest of Bavarian cream, still fails to qualify as dessert” – Tabletalk
 - Royal Tenenbaum

C. The Actuality of our sins

- i. In our words
 - 1. Cruelty: “their throat is like an open grave”, “the poison of asps is under their tongue”
 - 2. Cheating: “with their tongues they have used deceit”
 - 3. Cursing: “their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness”
- ii. In our deeds
 - 1. “Their feet are swift to shed blood”
 - 2. “Destruction and misery” go along with them
 - death is the end of our sinful actions, so it is part of the destruction that follows along with our sin, but also destruction and misery are part of the consequences that come with our sin
 - Matthew Henry: “Besides the destruction and misery that are at the end of their ways (death is the end of these things), destruction and misery are in their ways;

their sin is its own punishment: a man needs no more to make him miserable than to be a slave to his sins.

- Proverbs 1:16-19

3. The totality of our sin

- James 2:8-13

- We are guilty against all of God's law. Keeping only part of it will not suffice.

iii. The root of our evil

1. Psalms 36:1-4: Transgression speaks to the wicked deep in his heart; there is no fear of God before his eyes. For he flatters himself in his own eyes that his iniquity cannot be found out and hated. The words of his mouth are trouble and deceit; he has ceased to act wisely and do good. He plots trouble while on his bed; he sets himself in a way that is not good; he does not reject evil.

2. Proverbs 1:7: The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.

IV. Justification comes apart from the Law

A. If we kept the Law, then we would have no need for Christ

i. Luke 18:9-14 – Jesus tells a parable of how a self-righteous Pharisee received nothing, but a tax collector, who threw himself upon God's mercy, is justified by faith

ii. If we have already broken the law, what can it do but condemn us?

iii. If a man was innocent of a crime, he might appeal to the law that would declare him innocent. But a man who is guilty can't appeal to the justness of the law that condemns him.

B. The law first accuses the Jews

i. Paul addresses the Jews first, because they are specifically the people who took pride in having been the people who received the law

ii. Paul's question to them is "Have you read it?"

C. The law accuses all of the world

i. Paul expands the accusation of the law to the Gentiles as well

ii. "For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God"

1. We don't glorify God as God

2. We are not glorified before God (he sees all of our sin)

3. We are not glorified by God (he cannot approve of us, as we are tarnished by sin)

iii. Matthew Henry: "Guilty before God is a dreadful word, before an all-seeing God, that is not, nor can be, deceived in his judgment-before a just and righteous judge, who will by no means clear the guilty. All are guilty, and therefore all have need of a righteousness wherein to appear before God."

V. Righteousness comes from faith (verses 20-26)

A. God's righteousness is revealed/manifested

i. It isn't something hidden for us to find, but it is clearly revealed to us

ii. Matthew Henry: "the brazen serpent is lifted up on the pole"

- B. It is apart from the law
- C. Yet the law and prophets bear witness to it
 - i. All the prophets and the Law point to Christ, and specifically to the Cross.
 - ii. Acts 10:43: “To him [Christ] all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”
 - iii. The Law proves itself insufficient in that it points to a different way of righteousness – Christ’s sacrifice
 - iv. The Law testifies to Christ, because Christ fulfilled all of the demands of the Law.
- D. By faith in Jesus
 - i. Christ is the object of our faith
 - ii. Saving faith holds on to Christ as prophet, priest and king
- E. It is to all and upon all
 - i. All of us have need of Christ, so all of us are equal in Christ – no gentiles or jews, men or women, etc.
 - ii. It is offered to everyone freely. No one is excluded from the offer of Christ, though many will not believe.
- F. It is by grace
 - i. The Gospel is given to us without any of our own merit
 - ii. Paul even highlights that it is “freely” given to us, underlining that it is an unmerited grace
 - iii. Even though Christ is offered to us freely, it was certainly not free to God. Christ paid dearly for our sins, that He might offer salvation to us, for free.
- G. Declares God’s righteousness, justice and glory
 - i. God planned this from the foundations of the earth – “set forth”
 - ii. God displays in Christ that He had not simply dismissed the sins that earlier saints had committed, but had forgiven them as he forgives us, on account of Christ.
 - iii. God’s mercy alone preserved man long enough to allow for Christ’s sacrifice.
 - iv. The sacrifice of Christ shows the depth of God’s judgment
 - 1. Nothing other than the blood of Christ would satisfy the Law
 - 2. Even Christ was not spared the wrath of God when our sins were imputed to Him.
 - 3. “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”
 - v. God not only demands righteousness, but He provides it
 - 1. Luther: “Thus the promises of God give what the commandments of God demand and fulfill what the law prescribes so that all things may be God’s alone, both the commandments and the fulfilling of the commandments. He alone commands, He alone fulfills.
 - 2. God does not share His glory with us. He is the just law-giver, and the justifier who makes us law-keepers.

H. Christ as propitiation

i. Hebrews 10:11-14

ii. Expiation vs. Propitiation

1. Expiation

- Satisfies the justice of God's wrath, but does not end it
- Continually offered up by the priests, year after year.
- Gives only a temporary peace with God
- Performed by priests, according to the Law

2. Propitiation

- Satisfies God's justice, just as expiation, but does more.
- Not only turns God's wrath aside, but wins his favor
- Offered once for all, no longer a temporary peace, but a permanent one
- Performed by God Himself, without the intervention of man, according to the Gospel

iii. The scapegoat

1. Leviticus 16:21-22

- Aaron is to lay his hands on the head of scapegoat and confess all the sins, then they send the goat out into the wilderness. In so doing, they place all their sin on the goat, and then drive it out of their midst
- This exemplifies the expiation/propitiation dialectic
- The scapegoat was offered up, year after year. Each year the priest had to once again confess the peoples sin and place it on the scapegoat
 - Originated by man (the priest)
 - Perpetually offered
 - Carries the sin away to avert God's wrath

2. Christ is offered up once and for all. In the same way, our sins are placed on Christ and he is driven from our midst – first in that He is crucified outside the city, and second in that He dies and is taken from us

- Originated and fulfilled by God and God alone, without the intervention of man
- Offered once and for all
- Not only does He carry away our sin and avert God's wrath, but He merits God's favor towards us

iv. Christ doesn't simply cover over the mercy seat with His blood. He doesn't simply turn God's wrath away to the scapegoat for the moment. He cries "It is finished" then commits His spirit to the Father, and then immediately the temple curtain is torn in two. He hasn't simply made atonement IN the Holy of Holies, but He has opened the Holy of Holies to all of us, that we can now have communion with God.

- v. Christ doesn't just get the King to stay our execution. He gets the King to adopt us as His sons!