

BOB HALLMAN - THE EPIC LIFE

A Righteousness from God

Romans 3:21-31

2000

Introduction

Summary of last week:

Paul exposed the comprehensiveness of man's depravity: *no one is righteous*

He then described the fruit of man's depravity: *words and deeds are evil*

Finally he stated the cause of man's depravity: *there is no fear of God before their eyes.*

Paul has backed all sinful mankind, Jew and Gentile alike, into the totally dark and seemingly inescapable corner of God's wrath ((1:18-3:20)

This situation presents a dilemma for both God and man.

1. From God's perspective, sin demands the full expression of His wrath and punishment.
Yet, God loves man and desires reconciliation
2. From man's perspective, sin eliminates the possibility of a right standing before God.
Yet, man also longs to be reconciled to God

There are only two ways to be right with God:

1. Through human achievement -- living a perfect life without sin
2. Through divine achievement -- trusting wholly on Christ' sinless perfection.

Having presented us with a seemingly hopeless situation, Paul now begins to open the window of divine grace that lets in the glorious light of salvation through the righteousness that God Himself has provided in His Son, Jesus Christ.

Illustration: Medical

(Post note: Bob gave this message again in 2017 and used his health situation as an effective illustration)

Our spiritual condition can be explained using a medical illustration involving the process we go through when something is wrong with our physical bodies.

Symptoms: When we experience physical symptoms in our bodies, we know something is wrong, but don't always know the root cause. On a spiritual level, we experience symptoms such as a guilty conscience.

Test: Our doctor might typically order a blood test to pinpoint the source of the problem. Likewise, in a spiritual sense, we also need a test for a proper diagnosis. The Bible lays out two tests, one in the Old Testament and one in the New Testament:

Exodus 20 -- The Ten Commandments

Matthew 5-7 -- The Sermon on the Mount

Just as a blood test can diagnose a physical problem but is powerless to correct it, similarly, the Law is powerless to correct our spiritual problem of sin. Spiritually, we might be good in a lot of areas, yet our problem is terminal apart from Jesus Christ. The Law functions as a diagnostic test, identifying that our problem is *sin*.

Diagnosis

Once a doctor has test results, he can make a proper diagnosis and provide a remedy. Our spiritual test, the Law, clearly identifies our problem is sin, leading to death.

Remedy

The Jews believed the Law was the remedy and in Romans, Paul corrects their faulty mindset. The Law is not the elixir of life or the remedy for sin. The Law is the diagnostic "blood test" so to speak--helping us to identify the problem areas in our lives. The Law was provided as a tutor to lead us to the Remedy, Jesus Christ. We can respond by ignoring the symptoms, denying the diagnosis or agreeing with God's diagnosis. We face eternal separation from God unless we accept His remedy. Believers who have accepted God's Remedy no longer under the Law but under grace. We're set free from the Law to live a life of love for God and others.

I A Righteousness from God

Rom 1:17 "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."

The only righteousness that men possess is *unrighteousness*.

Is 64:6 "All our righteous acts are like filthy rags."

A. A righteousness that is not based on the **law**

The Law was never a means of salvation. Its purpose was to show how impossible it is to measure up to God's standards through human effort. The commandments, rituals, and sacrifices taught in the OT are a part of His divinely inspired Word. But they could never remove sin, forgive sin, atone for sin, or give a new and righteous standing to a sinner. Instead, the Law was given to demonstrate the impossibility of ever meeting God's standard of sinless perfection.

Phil 3:9 "... and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ-- the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith."

Application:

If you are trying to be accepted by the Father on the basis of your own goodness, or the consistency of your Quiet Times (devotions), or the frequency of your evangelism -- you'll never be justified or made righteous. The Law can never justify you. It can only show you that you are a sinner in need of a Savior.

B. A righteousness that has been made **known**

Made known = Phaneroo = "To make apparent, to show or declare"

1. The Law testifies of it

Testify = Martureo = To be witness, to give [evidence], to bear witness"

Gal 3:8-9 "The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you." So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith."

2. The Prophets testify of it

Acts 10:43 "All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

Luke 24:44 "He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."

C. A righteousness that comes through **faith** in Jesus Christ

Faith = Pistis = "Persuasion, conviction, assurance, belief"

Notice, our righteousness comes from being linked personally to Jesus Christ --not just having a vague belief in God.

Even the demons believe in God (James 2:19). For a person to receive the righteousness of God, he must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Just as all men are equally condemned by God for their sin (Rom 3:19), they are equally offered God's gracious salvation through faith in His son.

1. To all who believe regardless of race

Though there were culture, social and religious differences between Jew and Gentile, they shared at least two things in common:

1. They were equally objects of God's wrath because of their sin
2. They were equally objects of God's mercy because of Christ's sacrifice

Application:

Regardless of race or nationality or any other human contrivance that separates us and makes us distinct as a people, there is only one way to enter into salvation: through faith in Jesus Christ.

Rom 10:12-13 “For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile-- the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

a. For all have **sinned** and fall short of God’s glory

Sinned = Hamartano = “To miss the mark”

An archery term for "missing the mark or bulls eye"

Fall short = Hustereo = “To be deficient, to fail to meet the objective or standard”

Ecc 7:20 “There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins.”

Illustration: Airplane flight to California

An airline whose motto is, “Wherever you’re going, we can take you most of the way!”

Their FAA documented safety record?

Most planes crash at take off

Some make it halfway and ditch into the sea

A few have made it all the way to their destination only to crash into the airport tarmac in a burning ball of flames, killing everyone on board.

In every case, the plane was destroyed and every passenger was killed

Their goal? “To someday, somehow, get at least one person safely to their destination.”

b. For all are **justified** freely by His grace

Because of His justice, no sin will ever go unpunished; yet because of His grace, no sin is beyond His forgiveness.

Justified = Dikaioo = “To render just or innocent – as if you had never sinned”

It changes the judicial standing of a convicted sinner and imputes to him a righteous standing before God so that the individual is declared to be fully righteous in God's sight.

It is a legal term meaning "continually being justified"

Justification didn't just happen when you received Christ as your Savior, but it happens every day. Even at this very moment you are being justified -- or declared righteous -- by Jesus Christ.

Application:

Often we link our justification with our performance. When we are performing acceptably, we "feel" justified. When we're not, we feel that our right standing with God has been forfeited. But this just isn't so. Justification is a continual action. A continual declaration by God of a right standing in Christ.

Freely = Dorean = "Gratuitously, without charge, without cause"

In other words, not prompted by anything that we can possibly offer -- now or in the future.

Grace = "Unmerited, underserved, unearned favor"

Eph 2:8-9 "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--not by works, so that no one can boast."

"Just as no one is good enough to be saved, no one is so evil that he cannot be saved"

1. Through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus

Believe = Pisteuo = "To have faith in, to entrust or commit yourself to another"

Redemption = Three Greek words for redemption:

Agorazo = The act of redeeming [allowing the subsequent selling]"

Exagorazo = The act of redeeming never to return [permanent possession]"

Apolutrosis = "The act of redeeming in order to free [as in the case of a slave]"

This word is used of someone going to the slave market [agora], and buying a slave for the purpose of setting that slave free -- forever. So we were purchased by Christ not for the purpose of using us or trading up later, but to set us free!

1 Pet 1:18-19 "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect."

II A Righteousness Through Christ

A. God presented Christ as:

1. A sacrifice of **atonement**:

Atonement = Hilasterion = "An expiatory, an atoning victim, propitiation. It means to make amends or to reconcile."

The Hebrew version of this word is used in the Old Testament is used of the mercy seat of God which covered the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies. The mercy seat was the place where once a year on Yom Kippur, the High Priest would sprinkle blood as a foreshadowing of the work of Jesus Christ (Lev 17:11) But it had no power to pay the penalty for a single sin. It could only point to the true and effective offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

1 Jn 4:10 "This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins."

2 Cor 5:21 "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

Application:

It is impossible to calculate the multiplied trillions of sins that have been committed by mankind throughout the ages. It would be virtually impossible to even number the sins represented among us -- much less the world. God knows it all. He sees it all. His wrath is justified. But instead of pouring it out on us, He emptied His anger on His own Son in order that we might be set free.

a. Through faith in His blood

Phil 3:8-9 "Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ-- the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith."

B. God did this to:

1. Demonstrate His **past** justice

a. He left previously committed sins unpunished

Acts 17:30-31 "In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed."

Simply put, in the past God did not pour out his full wrath on men for their sins. He was patient and merciful. Why?

2 Pet 3:9 "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."

Note: The redemption that God accomplished through Christ looks back in history and reaches those who lived before the time of Christ and looks forward to those who lived after the time of Christ.

2. To demonstrate His **present** justice

In one act of sacrifice, God's righteous wrath was satisfied and the believing sinner was justified.

Is 45:21 "There is no God apart from me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none but me."

a. He is just in **judging** man's sin

God found way to forgive us and still maintain His moral integrity. He forgave us without condoning our sin.

Deut 32:4 "He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he."

b. He is just in **justifying** repentant sinners

Justifier = Dikaioo = "To render just or innocent"

Rom 4:25 "He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification."

There is a double transaction that takes place at the moment of salvation:

1. All that we are and have done becomes Christ's
2. All that Christ is and has done becomes ours.

2 Cor 5:21 "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

1. Those who have faith in Jesus

The way is open for anyone who believes in the finished work of Jesus Christ to be assured of salvation and eternal life.

Rom 10:4 "Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes."

III A Righteousness by Faith

A. Faith excludes boasting. Why?

Boasting = Kauchesis = "The act of glorying or rejoicing"

Because the power of salvation is in the cross of Christ and in His finished work of redemption, we have no grounds for self-congratulation.

1. Boasting is rational if one relies on the **Law**

Rom 4:2 "If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about-- but not before God."

2. Boasting is irrational if one relies on **faith**

1 Cor 1:30-31 "It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God-- that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord."

B. Faith excludes boasting. Why?

1. We are **justified** by faith apart from the Law

Martin Luther affirmed that salvation is "sola gratia, sola fide, soli Deo gloria"
By grace alone, through faith alone; to God alone be the glory.

Eph 2:8-9 "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--not by works, so that no one can boast."

Gal 2:16-17 "know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified."

C. Faith excludes boasting. Why?

1. God is the God of both Jew and Gentile

a. The **circumcised** are justified by faith

Acts 13:38-39 "Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses."

b. The **uncircumcised** are justified by faith

Acts 15:9 "He made no distinction between [Jew and Gentile], for he purified their hearts by faith."

IV A Righteousness of Balance

A. The Law is not **nullified** by faith

The question rephrased is, "If men have never been saved on any other basis than faith in God, then the law is and always was useless!"

To this argument Paul responds with a resounding, "NO!"

Matt 5:17-18 "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished."

B. The Law is **upheld** by faith

What was the purpose of the Law? According to Gal 3:24, it was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith."

In other words, the law was given to show men the perfect standards of God's righteousness and to show that those standards are impossible to meet in man's own power. The purpose of the law was to drive men to faith in God.

Conclusion:

There are only two ways to be right with God:

1. Through *human* achievement -- living a perfect life without sin
2. Through *divine* achievement -- trusting wholly on Christ' sinless life and sacrifice.

Know that our Savior loves you. It won't be long before He calls us home. But in the meantime, we have work to do. Each of us has a unique platform of challenges from which we can point people to Christ (eg. physical disease, financial woes, etc). People watch us and think "How are they going to go through that? Will they still follow Christ?" When they see your joy and mysterious peace that comes from the heart of God, they're drawn because they have the same symptoms you have but they don't know what the remedy is. We have the remedy. And one day we'll finally be healed. But for now, we struggle along like everyone else. Yet we have this platform--this heart change that makes us completely different from the world. Embrace it, exalt Christ in the midst of it!

*Copyright, Bob Hallman, 1996-2021, All Rights Reserved.
Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the
New International Version ©1984 by International Bible Society.*