

“Righteousness Revealed” //

Romans 3:21–26 // Romans #7

WY1?

Summit, as you’ve heard several times by now, in 2019 we are all asking ourselves one question: “Who’s your one?”

- *Who is that one person you are praying for, seeking to build a relationship with, and asking God to give you an opportunity to share Christ with or invite them to church?*
- I’ve told you **if nothing else you can start praying about it** (and see who God puts on your heart) **and start listening for the 3 “not” statements**—and when you hear them, tell them you’re praying for them and invite them with you to church or your small group.

Just last week, I heard from one of our **members at our Brier Creek campus who had been praying for her one** when she showed up unannounced to help her move into a new townhome. They started talking about the gospel and our member asked if she wanted to receive Christ... and she bowed her head right there in between loads of boxes.

- I told our member that sounded like 2 acts of God...
- And that is just **1 of 243** people we’ve seen profess faith in Jesus this year.
- And today, as you’ve heard, **baptism weekend**. We’re going to offer you a chance to get baptized.
- **PUBLIC DECLARATION**
- **You think:** “I didn’t come prepared.” Fear not, we are prepared for you. I’ll explain at the end.

Introduction

So, open your Bibles to Romans 3:21 // p. 31 in Journal

I **hope you are ready** for today. If you’ve ever been to a Brazilian steakhouse... Green: Keep it coming. First time I went... Bottom line: I hope your listening rock is flipped to green this weekend because Paul’s got lots of great stuff for us today and he’s going to keep piling it on.

Listen--and this is not overspeak: *This might be the most important passage in Romans. Some scholars say the most important in the whole Bible.*

- Martin Luther said that Romans 3:21–26 is **“the chief point, and the very central place of the Epistle, and of the whole Bible.”**
- Leon Morris says it “is possibly **the most important single paragraph ever written.**”¹
- In this passage, Martin Luther said, is the **heart of the Reformation**—the central truth he believed the church had corrupted and that RCC and Protestants still disagree about today.
 - **(Some of you ask,** “What is the biggest difference between what Protestants and Catholics believe?” or, “What does TSC teach that differs from what I learned in Catholic church growing up?”
 - First, we’re grateful for anyone that taught you to love the Bible when you were a kid... but you’ll find out a major part of that answer for what we teach that is different today.)

Furthermore, **this passage answers a couple of questions** I get from people outside the faith a lot:

- The first is, **“Why do you Christians make such a big deal about Jesus? I get the emphasis on God--we should be connected to the divine. But why is the life of a migrant Jewish rabbi who lived 2000 years ago essential to my knowing God today?**
 - **And what’s the cross got to do with actually knowing God?**
 - **In fact, it seems primitive to say we can only know God through a sacrifice.**
- Which leads to a **second question I get a lot:** **WHY do Christians say Jesus is the only way?**

¹ Charles Cranfield

- People think, “I’m glad Jesus works for you--that he’s your missing piece, but why force that on everyone else? Why can’t we all just know God in our own way?”
- **Let me ask you:** If you are a Christian, how do you respond when you are asked that? Other than slowly backing out of the room and praying for the rapture...
 - You might **quote John 14:6**... And that’s fine.
 - **But here in Rom 3**, you get a more full answer—you get **why** he is the only way.
 - This passage is not just **declaration** that he is the only way, **it’s explanation** for *why* he is the only way
 - So, if you’ve **ever wondered** how to respond to that, this passage is where you turn...

Let’s **start where we left off last week in vs. 20** (because remember Paul is building an argument layer by layer)— **20 For no one will be justified in his sight by the works of the law, because (only) the knowledge of sin comes through the law.**

- Paul has spent **nearly two chapters explaining** why the law is an insufficient answer to the universal human problem of sin.
- **And the law** is basically what every religion puts forward. Every religion puts forward **some list--some law--**of things to do and say, *“Do these things, and if you do them well enough, you will live.”*
- I explained that religion works off of this premise: **“I obey, therefore I am accepted.”**
- The **problem with that is three-fold:**
 - First, that **you can’t change the substance of the heart** simply by giving it laws, any more than you could change my palate by commanding me to eat certain things.
 - I used the example of pigs eating pig slop. To keep a pig from eating pig slop you’d have to put a barrier between them and it. And the moment you remove it, the pigs will go hog wild.
 - But for the average human, you don’t have to command them not to eat it. It’s revolting. No law required.

- God doesn’t want spiritual pigs in heaven who only avoid the slop of sin because they are commanded. He wants people there who avoid sin because it’s revolting to them and who do good because they delight in it.
- ~~The second problem with the law is that doing good works in order to secure salvation are inherently selfish... remember the carrot story~~
- The third problem with the law, and **this is what Paul really focuses** on today: **Our sin leaves us legally guilty before God**, and no amount of good works can repair the damage we’ve done.
 - **Imagine someone broke** into your house and destroyed some of your most valuable stuff, and they get caught, and **when they stand before the judge** they begin to argue about how committed they have been at the PTA and otherwise a good person. You’d say, “That is great! **But that doesn’t restore** what they have destroyed of mine.”
 - **Sin violates—destroys—God’s glory** in the universe, and **overturns his justice**--a justice that God tells us is the **foundation** of his creation: **Psalm 89:14, “Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne.”**
 - For creation to remain good, sustainable, **justice has to be upheld.**

So, Paul explains, **no one can be justified in his sight by the works of the law, because the knowledge of sin comes through the law**

- **All the law can do is show us** how messed up our hearts are.

The law shows us, vs. 23, that **For all (Jew and Gentile alike) have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.**

- **“Fall short”** is a term you might use in archery. You **miss the mark**.
- **The law shows us how far** we miss the mark of what God wants.
- The law is a precious gift to us because without the law, **we end up thinking we’re not that bad.**

- You see, most of us **define sin as “doing wrong,”** and we admit that we do that sometimes, but most of us assume what’s in our hearts is pretty good.
- The law **disabuses us** of that.
 - **Without the law, we are like the man who comes home from shooting archery** and his friend says, “How’d you do?” And he responds, “I’m a pretty good archer. I hit the bullseye every single time.” His friend says, “Wow, how did you manage that?” And the man says, “After I shot my arrows, I found my arrow out in the woods and then drew the circles around each arrow.”
- **The law—particularly the 10 commandments—**show us the real target and reveal just how far our hearts miss the mark.

So “no one can be justified by the works of the law...”

- It’s purpose is to **diagnose**, not repair.
 - It is like **the thermometer that measures** the spiritual temperature of your heart; it’s not a thermostat that can adjust that temperature.
 - Or, we have said, the law is **like railroad tracks**, pointing us toward the direction to go, but powerless to move the freight along the tracks.

Reading Romans 2 and 3, where Paul weaves in and out of the law, is supposed to give you the feeling of **spiritually drowning**.

- **You ever have the feeling of drowning?** I’ve never almost died drowning, but I was trapped under the water for a while during a **white water rafting accident** once that left me in a panic...

This is **how we should feel re: our sin after Romans 2–3**. I am overwhelmed. Everywhere I turn I find more guilt and corruption. I look at my bad deeds and see they are full of **anger and selfishness and rebellion**. But then I look at my good deeds and see they are full of **pride and competitiveness and jealousy**.

- And we say with Paul, **“Oh, wretched man that I am!”** I am **stained through and through with sin**.

The big turn: ²¹ But now, apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been revealed, attested by the Law and the Prophets. ²² The righteousness of God is through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe, since there is no distinction. (We’re all sinners, you see)

And we ~~are~~ **They are justified freely** (some translation say ‘as a gift’) **by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus**.

- *Oh my, a bunch of important words here!*
- The first: **justified**: This is the word that **Luther said launched** the Protestant Reformation.
 - **You see, the RCC** in Luther’s day taught that justification was a process whereby God actually made you into a righteous person by infusing his righteousness into you by means of the 7 sacraments--baptism, the eucharist, confirmation, last rites etc.
 - Eventually, through observing the **sacraments and confession and doing good**, you would become a **righteous enough person** that **God would declare you justified**.
 - And if **by the time you died**, you weren’t righteous enough, you’d go to purgatory where your sin would be purged from you through fire and suffering. **Purge-atory**
 - This, they taught, was the **process of justification**.
 - But **Luther pointed out that that’s not what the word “justified” means** and not how . Justification means a **legal declaration** that happens **all at once**.
 - Justification **is not a process** whereby we become righteous. Justification is a **pronouncement** whereby we are **declared righteous all at once**.
 - Justification does not refer to that **transformation of the heart** (that is sanctification); **JUSTIFICATION** is a declaration of righteousness.
 - In justification, God’s righteousness is **not infused into us**, it is **imputed**, credited to us.
 - If I **get accused of a crime** and hauled into court and the jury decides I am innocent of all charge and the judge declares me not guilty, I’m **cleared all at once**. I

am JUSTIFIED. He's not given me a **7-step program** through which I can become innocent, but he declares me innocent all at once and I walk out a free man...
"Just as if I'd never sinned..."

- In the gospel, because Jesus' righteousness is credited--imputed--to us, we are declared justified.
- This where Luther's phrase **simul iustus et peccator** comes from.
 - It's **not that I become righteous enough that God declares me righteous** ("ok you are classified as righteous") but **while I am still sinful God declares me righteous** because of my faith in Jesus.
- **This was pictured in the OT process of sacrifice:** Once a year each believing family would bring a lamb: a perfect, unblemished lamb, and they would lay it on the altar and place their hand...
 - **In that moment, they were justified.** The lamb was held responsible for sin before God and they walked out free. GOAT
- **This is what was Jesus fulfilled.**
 - **When** John the Baptist saw Jesus, he declared, "Behold the lamb of God...!" **And on the cross**, the sins of the entire human race were laid on Jesus's head.
 - **Martin Luther said, "All the prophets foresaw that on the cross Jesus became the greatest murderer, adulterer, thief, rebel, and blasphemer that there ever was. Our most merciful Father sent his only Son into the world and said to him: Jesus, you will become Peter the denier; you will become Paul that persecutor, blasphemer and cruel oppressor; you will become David that adulterer; you will become Adam, that sinner which did eat the apple in Paradise..."**
 - YOU WILL BECOME THE **husband who has neglected** or abused his family.
 - The **immoral woman** who wrecked someone else's marriage
 - You will become **the drug addict**
 - The **teenage girl** lying to her parents

- The **hypocrite** living a double-life
- The **proud, the selfish, apathetic**
- He **became those things** and died for them so that I could be innocent of them
 - **Bearing shame, and scoffing rude**, in my place condemned he stood...
 - so that when I lay my hand of faith on him, my sin becomes his and his righteousness becomes mine.
- **Simul iustus et peccator Simultaneous.** It's not that I become righteous enough that he declares me righteous, but while I am still a sinner God declares me righteous because Christ's righteousness is given to me.
- *Simul iustus et peccator* (BTW: Like tattoos in another language? Use this one. **And that** is the heart of the Christian gospel.)

2nd word...

- **Redemption:**
 - **Redeem means to buy something back;** to bring it back from destruction; to restore it.
 - Remember **that great scene everybody knows from Dumb & Dumber** when Lloyd trades in their van for a moped for their cross-country journey and Harry says, "Lloyd, just when I think you couldn't possibly do anything any dumber, you go and totally redeem yourself.") **You are restored!**
 - People use the word **redeem** when they buy **something back at a pawn shop**. If you fall on really hard times economically, and have to hock your engagement ring, if you got enough money to **go back to the pawn shop** to buy it back, we'd call that 'redeeming' it.
 - **Or we use the word when we talk about coupons.** What do you call it when you trade in a coupon? You *redeem* it. You are given cash equivalent for it.
 - **So, you're at HT**, and the little receipt prints out and it says, "*Congratulations, you've been chosen to get a free ham. Present this coupon at checkout.*" So, you go back and get the ham, and you take it to the checkout

line, and the cashier says, “That’ll be \$23.” “Well, you think, maybe for your average schmuck it’s \$23, but not for me. I have a coupon.” And so you hand it to her and **boom, it’s redeemed. Free ham.**

- **What did you pay?** Nothing. What did the **manufacturer** pay? Full price.
- **The pig, of course, is the real hero** because the pig paid it all. Your coupon just connected you to that.
- **And that’s how you get saved.** You present faith in what Jesus did as yours and boom, it’s yours.
 - (Some of you will get that pig part next time you’re at HT picking out a ham. “Oh, I see... the pig paid it all so I get it for free.” So, when you get saved at Harris Teeter, you can thank me.)²
- Jesus **paid the full price to buy us back**—to redeem us—from condemnation to sin.
- He offered it to us freely, but it wasn’t free; it cost him everything.

²⁵ God presented him as an **atonement sacrifice** in his blood,

- hilasterion: some translation say: propitiation
 - It’s a word that means that **God’s wrath is assuaged**; his claim against you is settled.
 - There are a **number of more liberal theologians** who buck against this today saying,
 - “No, no... on the cross, **Jesus wasn’t paying for sin...** because God is **not a vengeful God** who is angry at sin trying to exact punishment for it.
 - **If anything, on the cross**, Jesus was just demonstrating the depth of God’s love for us.”³
 - A Christian song-writer named Michael Gungor, who wrote the really popular song “Beautiful Things” a few years ago that some of you may remember, said this: the idea “*that God needed to be appeased with blood is not beautiful. It’s*

² Adapted from Joby Martin, message on Romans 3:21–31.

³ Or, “Jesus was just absorbing the natural effects of our sin; God wasn’t punishing Jesus in our place.”

horrific.” He said, “*I would love to hear fewer Christian artists sing about a Father murdering his son... If you can’t think of anything to sing to God other than gratitude for taking your shame away through bloodshed, stop singing—*”

- Irony—guy who sings “Beautiful Things” could be blind to the most beautiful thing⁴
 - Not me: ***In the old rugged cross, stained with blood so divine, A wondrous beauty I see; For ’twas on that old cross Jesus suffered and died, To pardon and sanctify me.***
- Or **William Paul Young**, author of the *The Shack* said this in a book he published just a year or so ago called ***Lies We Believe About God***: “*Who originated the Cross? If God did, then we worship a cosmic abuser... Frankly, it is often this very cruel and monstrous god that the atheist refuses to acknowledge... And rightly so. Better no god at all, than this one.*”⁵

- **Listen: ‘Propitiation; (or, atoning sacrifice) means that God poured out on Jesus the righteous anger he had toward us.**
- And contrary to the author of *The Shack*, God’s righteous anger toward sin is not a contradiction with his love, but a necessary corollary it.
 - I’ve told you that **when you love someone**, you hate the things that destroy them. If you **love the cancer patient**, you hate the cancer that destroys them.
 - **That’s how God feels** about our sin: **Sin destroys his creation and the glory and righteousness** which are the foundation of that universe, and us. So **he hates**—is angry—at sin.

So, Jesus stepped in the way to pay for it. By so doing God **to demonstrate(d) his righteousness**, because in his restraint **God passed over the sins previously committed.**

- **Before we get to this first phrase** let me cover that last one **real quick...**

⁴ Thanks to Tony Merida, sermon on Romans 3:21–31, for this illustration

⁵ William Paul Young, *Lies We Believe About God*

- *in his restraint God passed over the sins previously committed*: The sins of all the OT saints had never actually been atoned—paid for—they had only been ‘passed over.’ Not resolved, just passed over.
- Why? The **lambs they sacrificed can’t actually pay for sin**. (The OT says that, Psalm 51: “The blood of bulls and goats cannot take away sin”). These were only symbols of what Jesus would do. It took a perfect man living the life we were supposed to live and dying in our place to pay for them. The lamb was just a symbol.
- So, throughout the OT, God forgave Abraham’s and David’s sins **on credit**.

But now that Jesus has come, God has **God presented him to demonstrate(d) his righteousness at the present time (after the cross), so that he would be righteous and declare righteous the one who has faith in Jesus.**

- **At the cross**, God was able to accomplish two things that seemed like they may be in contradiction: **God’s justice was satisfied (his righteousness was upheld)**, and we were **saved**.
- For **God to be righteous**, sin had to be punished.
 - People say, **“Why couldn’t God just forgive it?”** Why couldn’t God say, “Well, ok, I think we’ve all learned our lesson. Everybody back in the pool. All-skate going the same direction.”
 - It’s because **forgiveness, real forgiveness**, always requires a price to be paid.
 - Say you **borrow my car** and wreck it...
 - **Or to change the scenario... Say a competitor spreads lies about your business** and does you real harm... What are your options?
 - **Pay them back**: get in the boardroom and launch a counter-offensive
 - **Prosecute**: sue for damages, maybe even **take away their business** from them.
 - **But if you chose to forgive them**, and I’m not saying this is what you should do if you’re in that situation,

then you refuse to retaliate or even the score. You absorb the suffering for their sin.

- **Forgiveness always implies suffering.**
- **Which is what happened at the cross. God absorbed the consequences of our sin into himself.**
 - People say, “Well, I **just don’t think there needed to be a payment.**”
 - You’d **only say that if you never really suffered**. People who have experienced abuse or rape or discrimination or genocide understand this.
 - You know the **story of Uriah**? Uriah was Bathsheba’s husband...
 - When **Nathan confronted David**, and David broke, and Nathan said, “The Lord has taken away your sin,” if you were Uriah’s son, or his mother, perhaps you would have said, **“NO! it’s not that easy. There has to be justice on the earth.”**
 - Plus, Prov 17:15, “Acquitting the guilty and condemning the innocent-- the LORD detests them both.”
 - It **took a massive death** to make the wrong David committed right
 - And **Jesus experienced** it instead of David.
 - **Righteousness has to be restored for there to be peace.**
 - That propitiation can either be accomplished **by us in hell**, or poured out on Jesus in our place.

The cross was **not just Jesus showing us God’s love**. He was taking the place of our punishment. It’s why we say he **didn’t just die for you**, he **died instead of you**.

- And **besides, if Jesus wasn’t actually paying** for sin, how would the cross be a demonstration of his love? Liberal theologians love to say, “Oh, he was just showing us how much he loved us!”
- But **if by dying he wasn’t actually accomplishing something** for us, how **would that be love**?
 - Imagine I’m walking along with my kids and I look down at them and say, “Do you know how much I love you guys?”

“How much, Daddy?” And I throw myself into traffic... **It was only love if it was accomplishing something, or protecting from a threat.** If I was throwing myself in traffic to protect my kids from getting hit. Otherwise it’s just stupid.

- Jesus’ **death would only be loving if it was shielding us** from something. And it was. Jesus was paying for sin.

In the cross, (God was) **righteous** and (could) **declare righteous the one who has faith in Jesus.**

Let’s talk about that last phrase, “the one who has faith in Jesus.”

What is faith?

- Faith is the **hand on the head** that says, “Jesus is mine.” I believe he became *my* sin bearer--transfer of sin.
- The **Greek word “pistis”** means “to lean your weight on” or “join yourself to.”
 - **It’s not a blind leap into the dark.** We’ll get more into this in chapter 4, but faith is a **commitment of yourself** to someone based on what you know about them.
 - **Think of it like this:** When a guy and girl meet... they get to know each other, **fall in love**. They **want to join themselves** in marriage.
 - They don’t know everything there is to know about each others (sometimes they have all kinds of surprises awaiting them!) but they get to a point where they feel like they know enough to make the commitment,
 - and in that moment they unite themselves to become inextricably and irrevocably one: their debts become one; their assets become one; their futures become one. They even start to share a last name.
 - **That’s what happened with me.** In the summer of 1997 I met a girl named Veronica McPeters... I was totally taken with her (a lot more than she with me), but I am nothing if not persuasive, or relentless, so eventually she came around.

- And then, on the greatest day of her life, **July 28, 2000, she took the name Greear.** In that moment we became one. Our debts and assets and futures merged. Clearly, I got the better deal. We switched cars.

- **Faith is doing this with Jesus.** He takes your sin; you **get his righteousness.**
 - You commit yourself to him based on what you know about him.
 - The good news: he has already said “I do” to you. He waits on you now.
 - He takes your sin, shame, condemnation
 - You get his righteousness, position, reward
 - He gets the CRX of your corruption and you get the new Maxima of his sonship
 - People ask why I am sure...
 - **The price for your sin is paid!** Lifted up was he to die, it is finished it was his cry!
 - *Tetelestai...*

(MUSIC)

- **Corrie ten Boom**, the woman who survived a Nazi concentration camp, said: *In the cross God hurled our sins in the deepest part of the sea and then put up a sign there saying, ‘No fishing allowed.’*
- Many of you live with a dull, vague sense of guilt and disapproval and fear.
 - She said it’s because you aren’t nearly as vigorous in appropriating God’s forgiveness as God is in extending it.
- **Your sin was paid for by Jesus.** He became your sin on the cross.
 - **To not embrace full forgiveness** is to insult him and to say that his bloody death was insufficient. To declare, “Not enough!”
- And what Jesus offers you, by the way, is **more than forgiveness**. It is **justification**.
 - **Forgiveness** says, “You may go, you have been released from your penalty.’
 - **Justification** says, “I want you to stay; you are welcome to all my love and presence.”⁶

⁶ Adapted from Sir Marcus Sloane

And, contrary to **Michael Gungor** or the **author of the Shack**, this is the center of our worship. **When we've been there, 10K years, bright shining as the sun...**

It's why we sing,

- "I **need no other argument**, I need no other plea; It is enough that Jesus died, and that he died for me."
- Oh for a thousand tongues to sing...
- "Bearing shame and scoffing rude..."

A favorite: My hope is built on nothing less, than Jesus' blood and righteousness, I dare not trust the sweetest frame
But wholly trust in Jesus' name

And then the chorus:

Christ alone, Cornerstone, weak made strong through the Savior's love!

You see, **this justification, our standing before God**, has given us a new foundation, a new confidence in life.

- "Faith is a living, daring confidence in God's grace, so sure and certain that a man could stake his life on it a thousand times."
Martin Luther

Knowledge of my justification leads me to so much more confidence in life...

I've **got the approval...**

I've got a **God fighting for me...** who never slumbers or sleeps, knows when even a hair falls from my head, who has said he will prepared a table for me in the presence of my enemies and has told me that even if I made my bed in hell, even there would his right hand hold me.

I've got a **God who is so just that I know** he'll never break his covenant to me and he will fulfill all his promises, but is so gracious that when I had violated his justice sent his son to take the punishment for me

Because he's a God who was more gracious than my sinfulness, I know he's a God who won't leave me in my difficulties;

Because he was a God who came after me when I was his enemy, I know he'll take care of me now that I am his son.

People say, "**Well, I don't know why you sing...**" I do. It's the center of everything; the source of my peace for the past and my confidence in the future.

It is my foundation--

Invitation: 2 questions

- **Have you received Christ?**
 - **The gospel is different than religion.** Religion is built on the premise, "I obey..."
 - The gospel reverses that: "I am accepted..."
 - It's a **gift** you have to receive. It comes with great power; the power of new life.
 - Some of you have **been religious but never experienced** the power of the new birth.
 - That starts with faith, the hand on the head, saying "I do" to Jesus.
- Second, **have you publicly declared that through baptism?**
 - As I noted, baptism is...

Prayer:

- Receive Christ? Hand on head. Now lift up your hand...
- Baptism:
 - If you just prayed the prayer...
 - ...or you have in the last few weeks (243), and dozens of you are here today who have made that decision...

- ...Or maybe you received Christ a long time ago and but have never done this
- ...Maybe it's just been an assurance. "I wasn't sure before... I was so young, just not sure what I was doing..." Sometimes baptism helps complete that process.
- ...Listen to the HS. He's speaking now.

Excuses:

- **"I don't think it's that important."** Listen, it's a command of Jesus. Who are we to decide which of his commands we're going to obey and which we are not? Is that really how you want to begin your Christian life—by disobeying a clear command? **Many of you here who say you believe in Jesus** but you've never actually started to follow him; it starts with this first decision to be baptized. *I'm not asking you to fulfill a ritual, but to begin a whole new life of discipleship with baptism as your first step.*
- **"I have no clothes to change into."** Of course you don't. So, we have T-shirts; shorts; underwear; hair ties and swim caps. And a *bunch of our CH students wore gym shorts to church anyway,* so you don't even have that excuse.
- **"I am scared to walk out that aisle alone."** That's fine. *Ask your friend to go with you. Shoot, bring your whole row with you.*
 - If you think the person next to you might want to go, reach over and tap them and nod. That means, "I'll go with you."
- **"I was baptized as a child."** **Baptism is always** an expression of your faith. Whose faith was being expressed when you were baptized as a baby? Every time in the Bible... studying Acts: 27x we see a baptism in the book of Acts; all 27 times they believed first. **"I don't want to shame my parents."** You're not! You're fulfilling their hopes they expressed when they baptized you! They wanted you to become a Christ-follower one day, and you have! You get to call them later and tell them that!
- **"I need to think about it..."** *About what?*
 - *Whether he said it?* Acts 2:38
 - *Whether he meant it?* Of course
 - *Whether you are going to obey it?* Should have had that question answered before you became a Christian.

- If you are a follower of Jesus, you should be baptized?
- **Everybody look at their neighbor and say, "If you want to go, I'll go with you."**

Bullpen:

"It seems now that if trials and troubles should come, if I could but hold my hand upon this precious text (Job 23:13), I would laugh at them all. 'Who can turn him?'—I would shout—'Who can turn him?' Come on, earth and hell; come on, for 'who can turn him?' Come on, ye boisterous troubles, come on, ye innumerable temptations, come on, slanderer and liar, 'who can turn him?'" -Spurgeon

AND because true justice ALWAYS demands a price. In the words of Duke Kwon, "Justice repairs what was ripped, and returns what was ripped off." (If you wanted to add a little flavor up in here!)

BTW, I know I am **about to become the least popular** person in the room, but I read *The Shack* and it's a touching story but it is loaded with all kinds of unbiblical things. Heretical.

You can cut the edge of this swanky-grocery-store by adding a line like, "I don't shop at Harris Teeter. I'm a Food Lion or Walmart guy. Except on double coupon days. Or when they send a redemption code (like they did last Christmas) for a free ham. THEN I am a HT guy." Get saved!

Before we close, Paul returns once more in this chapter to the problem of religion. Remember, I told you, that practically in the book of Romans Paul is trying to address the division between Jew and Gentile that has grown up the church.

- Religion, he says, is the primary source of this division.

"How?" you say?

- Well, because religion is built on how well you do, it leads to pride, which leads to constant comparison, jealousy, hatred and hostility.
- For example, with religion, our goodness is determined by how we compare to others.
 - More important than how good we are is that we are better than others. So we are constantly in comparison mode. Am I

as good of a mother as _____? Am I better or more capable person than _____?

- And because we have to maintain our goodness, we live in denial about our flaws and become sensitive to anyone who points them out, or sometimes we just hate people who live in ways that make us look bad. They just remind us.
- And we are constantly having to maintain our status of goodness before others causes us to live with anxiety. Your law-keeping, your performance is your righteousness, and so you can't let it be threatened.
- **Don't just think of it in terms of formal religion, btw.** All people have a way of justifying themselves.
 - **I read this thing about Sydney Pollack.** He was was a famous movie maker who died in 2008. There was an article published about him shortly before he died. Though he was sick and dying, he couldn't stop working. Even when his family begged him to stop because it was shortening his life he refused. The article said, "Movie mogul, Sydney Pollack, says that although the grueling film movie making process is wearing him down he can't justify his existence if he stops. And he said, 'Every time I finish another picture I feel I have earned my stay, for another year or so.'" We all say *Here's how I earn my stay.*⁷
 - **I read about a writer whose career was not going anywhere.** Nobody was reading his work and he questioned his purpose in life. But then he said, "Then I look at my two little girls and I know that my existence is justified." They justify my existence. There's a lot of parents who believe their existence is justified by enabling their children to become happy and successful. But if your children are your justification, end up destroying the children, usually putting too much pressure on them. YO need them to succeed so that you will validated. Their getting in trouble or doing poorly is a deep devastating blow to your identity. Oftentimes, your passion for your children's success

⁷ From Tim Keller, "Justified by Faith," preached at Redeemer Presbyterian Church on Mar 8, 2009.

is utterly selfish; it's not about the kids, it's about you and your justification and your righteousness.⁸

- The **gospel changes** all of that.

See what he says?

²⁷Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By one of works? No, on the contrary, by a law of faith.

How?

- The gospel destroys pride: we were so bad he had to die to save us
- The gospel destroys exclusion: what is scandalous in Christianity is who is included, not who is excluded. Around Jesus's throne will be... Christianity is exclusive, but it is the most inclusive exclusivity there's ever been.
- It makes us less prickly when people point out our flaws. We don't have to deny them anymore.
 - In fact, the more you see your faults, the more precious God's love appears and the more you feel loved by him.
 - Furthermore, nothing can ever be uncovered about you that is not
- And that leads to no more anxiety. I place my worst fears into his hands into the hands of a loving Father who died for me at my worst and is sworn to use his sovereign power for my good so I can surrender my problems to him and leave them there.
- Pride, judgmentalism, and the like are not destroyed by a law: "Cease being proud and judgmental!" They are destroyed by the realities of the gospel settling deeply into your soul.

²⁸For we conclude that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law. ²⁹Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, ³⁰since there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.

⁸ Ibid.

³¹Do we then nullify the law through faith? Absolutely not! On the contrary, we uphold the law.

- **The gospel doesn't take us away from the law.** It creates in us a desire to fulfill it.
- **The Law reveals God to us. It shows us what** God's character is like, and shows us what a life pleasing to God looks like. And how far our hearts are from that.
 - **Again, the law is like railroad tracks:** it can point us in the right direction to go, but it is powerless to move us along the tracks.
 - The gospel is the **locomotive**. Power from God to change us.
 - And after we've been given the engine power to obey, the Law can still help us know the direction that we should go.
 - Jen Wilkin: **The Law drives us to grace, but grace drives us back to the Law.** The law drives us in desperation to grace, but an experience of grace drives us in devotion back the Law. **Having been justified by grace**, we now desire to please the God who saved us.
- And **we learn to do that** from the Law.
- Besides, if Jesus wasn't actually paying for sin, how would the cross be a demonstration of love for us? You say, "He was showing us just how much he loved us!"
- If by dying he wasn't accomplishing something for us, how would that be love? Imagine I'm walking along with my kids, "Do you know how much I love you?" "How much, Daddy?" And I throw myself into traffic... **It was only love if it was accomplishing something.** And it was. Jesus was paying for sin.

(Paul has established that both Jews and Gentiles alike are sinners. Religious sinners and irreligious sinners have the same anti-God frame of heart—one (the irreligious) expresses that heart through wild living, sexual sin, and casting off rules; the other (the religious)

expresses it through pride, feeling like they don't need God and his grace, disdain for others and usually greed.

- **Or people sometimes talk about drowning in relation to debt.** You ever had this happen? You were already living on the edge and then a series of things go wrong—medical bill or car trouble; losing your job; getting sued; get behind on mortgage—to remedy that takes money; you start living off a credit card and that multiplies debt

- A while back a very generous person gave me and my family a few nights at this really nice resort... charge food, everything there.

- When it came time to check out, they put down this enormous bill. I had a choice: I could pay it. I'm not even sure there was room enough on my CC for it, but I could announce to the kids that they weren't going to college and pay it.

- What I was able to do is say, "I think there is a credit card on file." Charge it to the account of another

- This is what we do... there is an atoning sacrifice that assuages God's righteous wrath against sin and satisfies our sin-debt.

- When we put faith in his blood we are declared righteous.

I don't have **a lot of great analogies** for you, but here's one:

- There once was a pioneering family out on the plain when they see an enormous brush fire headed their way. So the dad gathers the family into a little circle and sets the grass on fire. Then the family huddles in the burnt part as the fire comes by. The fire had already been burned, so they weren't touched. Jesus took the fire into himself so that we could stand on the scorched ground.

He stood in my place. The soul that sins is condemned to die.

Someone had to pay the penalty. You can pay for it forever by being separated from God in hell. Or Jesus can pay for it in your place.

Bearing shame and scoffing rude, in my place condemned he stood.

Sealed my pardon with his blood. Hallelujah, what a Savior!

Back to vs. 29: **"Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, since there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.**

He's your God. Whatever nationality; whatever condition of your heart.

He created you. You are in his image. Your heart is missing him in the center. He's the missing piece.

It's skewed by sin.

But he died for you!

If only you will come.