

“Who Shall Stand In His Holy Place?”

Romans 3:1-22

Berean Baptist Church

Pastor Skylar Bernick

INTRODUCTION

No one will go to heaven unless they are completely, perfectly, righteous. Jesus said, "That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven... but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire (Matt 5:20-21)."

We sinners need a way to obtain the righteousness of God if we want to go to heaven when we die. This passage shows us how sinners can be righteous in God's eyes. This passage has been called “the door to paradise and heaven's gate” because it shows how that we must...

Receive the righteousness of God by faith in Jesus! Know that He died for your sins, believe that God raised Him from the dead, and confess Jesus as your Lord.

Romans 3:1-8 Confronting Sin

The first two chapters of Romans show that all people from flagrant sinners to the subtly self-righteous are condemned by God. But some people still try to argue their way out of God's justice. In these eight verses, Paul destroys three arguments people might throw up to cover their sin. But first Paul clarifies that we should still have a high regard for God's people, Israel.

Vs 1-2 What advantage does Israel have? After the end of Chapter 2, we might think that Paul is antisemitic, but that is far from the truth! Paul affirms that physical Israel has many advantages and the Word of God is the greatest. Through Israel, the Word was preserved, and through Israel the Word in human form came into the world.

Vs 3 But so few of Israel received Him. And so few people in the world are faithful. Does this mean that God's promise to save His people and bless the faithful have been forgotten?

Vs 3-4 The First Argument: Won't God forget his promises if people forget Him? God Forbid! God is absolutely faithful and true. He fulfills His promises even if the entire world is swallowed up by lies. God does not depend on mankind, so God keeps his promises even when men lie!

So, as we consider the evil of the faithless world, let us keep perspective. Christians rely on One that is older than the world and live by promises that will endure long after the world burns. Do not be deceived about the evil in the world, it is very bad, but we have a sure hope outside of the world.

Remember that the evil of the world cannot touch the promises of God!

Vs 5-6 The Second Argument: If human sin highlights God's goodness, why does God punish sin? This bad argument starts from an encouraging point but takes a dark turn. "But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God..." So, God is always faithful, unlike the world, and the world's unfaithfulness highlights God's goodness. This is encouraging; a light shines most brilliantly in darkness. But then the dark turn: Why does God judge the wicked, if wickedness highlights God's goodness to the praise of His glory? If God is able to work everything, even evil, to His own glory, is He wrong to punish sinners?

Paul's answer is: "God forbid!" or "absolutely not!" because God must judge the World. Our sin does not only offend God, it is a crime against our fellow humans. And even though God works all things to His glory and the good of those who love Him, justice must still be done.

God turns evil to good, but know that evil is still evil and every injustice will be made right!

Vs 7-8 If God is able turn my sin to His glory, why not sin to the glory of God? Paul addresses the last, and worst, of these soft-headed arguments. Starting from the same point as the second argument, human unfaithfulness highlights Divine faithfulness, some people argue: "let's do evil so that God will be glorified even more!"

Paul does not have much patience for this argument. He calls the argument slander (an evil lie you tell about someone else) because noone really believes it. The argument is self-refuting: if you really believe God's Word, and really desire His glory, why not obey Him?

Paul's response to people who make this kind of argument is simple: their "damnation is just." We might expand on Paul's sentence by pointing out the arrogance of this argument. God does not need anything, He does not depend on anyone, and He is more than to able communicate His will to mankind. So, God is certainly not sitting in heaven hoping that someone is smart enough to disobey Him so He can do what He really wants to do.

You cannot weasel your way out of the consequences of sin! Even if everyone else is doing wrong, God is still faithful and will still judge sin as He promised (Vs 3-4). Even if your sin highlights the goodness of God, your sin still hurts people and justice must be done (Vs 5-6). And even if God is able to work some good out of your sin, you still deserve to be condemned (Vs 7-8).

Acknowledge the wrongness of your sin! If you will do this, there is a way to be forgiven.

But that way is not good works and religion...

Romans 3:9-20 Their Damnation Is Just, But "We" Are No Better!

Vs 9 "Are we better than they" (Paul's "we" refers to Jews and Jewish Christians who have grown up worshipping the one true God. His answer is very strong.) "No! Not at all!" The devastating statement at the end of Vs 8 applies to "church-going," "God-fearing" people as well; our damnation is also just!

Vs 10-18 "There is none righteous, no, not one..." This is a series of about nine quotations from the Old Testament (Psl 14:1-3, Psl 53:1, Psl 5:9, Psl 140:3, Jer 5:16, Psl 10:7, Pro 1:16, Isa 59:7-8, Psl 36:1). Some speak of evil people generally, and others speak of Israel specifically. The point is that the Old Testament consistently witnesses against all people.

The Bible has a high and hopeful view of what mankind was made to be, and what we can still be. But it has a very low, and honest, view of what mankind is now. Humanity is not basically good, but we have great potential for good if we will accept mercy and correction.

Vs 13-14 See how powerfully words work in man's wickedness.

Vs 19 One of the purposes of the Law is to show everyone in the world their guilt before God. There is

a real promise of life to anyone who keeps the law perfectly: “Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the LORD (Le 18:5).”

The Law perfectly shows us what is wrong with the human condition, but it cannot cure us. In fact, the Law makes us more miserable because we see our problem but cannot not see a solution.

Vs 20 the Law (the ten commandments and everything that flow from them) shows us our sinfulness but cannot save sinners. "by the law is the knowledge of sin." The Law is like a biopsy. It shows us that we have cancer, but by itself, it has no power to cure that cancer. The law is not bad but its limits must be acknowledged.

So, that's it, the way has been shut by our own bad decisions. Once we have committed sin, knowing it to be sin, we lose all hope of establishing our own righteousness or earning eternal life. And if that were the end of the story, we would have to confess that it is true and good; we would have no room for complaining when we get what we deserve.

But that is not the end of the story...

“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners...” 1 Tim 1:15

Romans 3:21-22 The New and Living Way to Have God's Righteousness

Because of His great love, and by His wisdom and power, God made another way for you to have His righteousness. What follows may be the single most important sentence ever written in human history.

Vs 21 “the righteousness of God without the law” This other way to have righteousness is without the Law. This righteousness is completely apart from the Law; it cannot not be mixed with the Law. Keeping the Law, or doing good works, contributes nothing to this righteousness. But it is not opposed to the Law.

“being witnessed by the law and the prophets;” The Law was not given to make us suffer, but to show us that we need another way of righteousness that does not depend on us. The “new” way of Righteousness is really not new!

Genesis 15:6 Abraham “believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.”

2 Samuel 23:3-5 David said “he that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation,”

And David sang: “He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him. (Psl 103:10-13).

Habakkuk 2:4 “but the just shall live by his faith.”

Vs 22 “Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them

that believe”

The righteousness of God comes by faith in Jesus. Faith is “belief” or “informed trust.” Faith is very simple, and it requires no works on your part; “if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved (Rom 10:9).”

Receive Jesus as your Lord, and trust the power of His resurrection!

Because righteousness is by faith, we can do nothing to earn or add to it. You can be saved through righteousness by faith, or you can attempt to have self-righteousness but you cannot do both. Christ must be your only hope for righteousness, or He offers no hope at all.

“...be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith. (Phil 3:9)”

Once you believe in Jesus and acknowledge Him as the master of your life, you will forever be righteousness in God's eyes!

CONCLUSION

If you are living trying to establish your own righteousness, trying to be a pretty good person, you must take a long hard look at your own life in the light of the Law. Admit your guilt and seek mercy! You can *know*, with certainty, that you are forgiven.

"He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life (1Jo 5:12-13)."

If you have trusted Christ's death and resurrection for the forgiveness of your sins, do not fall back into the traps of self-righteousness or self-pity. Live the righteousness of God by faith by

When you are tempted to be arrogant, judgmental, or self-centered, remember that all your hope in heaven and earth is in the charity and mercy that you could never earn.

When you are tempted to despair, fear, or discouragement, remember your sins are forgiven and by His love, God sees you are a perfectly righteousness person.

In Christ, justice and mercy kiss each other, and so confidence and humility come together.

Receive the righteousness of God by faith in Jesus! Know that He died for your sins, believe that God raised Him from the dead, and confess Jesus as your Lord.