

ROAMING THROUGH ROMANS

“Not Do But DONE”

Romans 3:19-31

Open your Bibles to Romans Chapter 3. We are going to finish the chapter this session. Let's read our text and then we will look at it one verse at a time. Romans 3, beginning at verse 19, Paul writes:

¹⁹Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. ²⁰Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.

²But now... the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, ²²even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵whom God set forth *as* a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, ²⁶to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

²⁷Where *is* boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith. ²⁸Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law. ²⁹Or *is He* the God of the Jews only? *Is He* not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also, ³⁰since *there is* one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. ³¹Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law.

One of the most difficult words in the English language to define is the noun “religion.” This is how Wikipedia defines it (and I don't recommend you go to Wokipedia often, because it will make your mind mush):

Religion is a social-cultural system of designated behaviors and practices, morals, beliefs, worldviews, texts, sanctified places, prophecies, ethics, or organizations, that relates humanity to supernatural, transcendental, and

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spiritual elements; however, there is no scholarly consensus over what precisely constitutes a religion.

Kind of an all-you-can-eat buffet, isn't it?

David Thompson, in his commentary on Romans, lists these five common denominators of all religions:

- 1) Belief in a deity;*
- 2) Some doctrinal system;*
- 3) Some code of conduct;*
- 4) Some historical religious stories;*
- 5) Some form of religious rituals or rites*

And not only do they share these things; all of these religions, especially from a spiritual sense, ask the same fundamental question.

What do you think that is?

What do you need to *do* to be saved?

In other words, what does one have to *do* to have a right relationship with God?

Or, how does one get to heaven, or whatever afterlife they believe in?

Of course, there will be many answers to this question.

The Christian Scientist would tell you that there is no such thing as sin, and that salvation is not necessary.

The Jehovah's Witnesses think that salvation is something we attain by dedicating ourselves to doing God's will by good works.

The Mormons say that man can only be saved by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel. Of course, it is their "gospel" found in "their" book, and not the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Worldwide Church of God says that salvation comes through self-effort, which includes water baptism and the keeping of the Sabbath.

And then you have the Muslims, Buddhists, and many other false religions.

Satan has so deceived the people of the world, earth dwellers as I call them, that they cannot understand the simplicity of God's plan. So they all either add or subtract from it — according to their own beliefs. But they all have one thing in common.

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They say that there is something you have to *do* to be saved, to be right with God. In other words, man has to *do* something to please God, who in return gives them salvation.

During this session, Paul is going to begin ripping this man-made understanding of redemption apart. He is going to replace the word *do* with the word *done*. And he begins by writing this (verse 19):

Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

For the better part of three chapters Paul has proven that there is nothing man can *do* by his good works to be right with God. Because of this, God is perfectly just in judging man. On all counts, man is guilty.

There is none righteous, no not one — so we learned last time.

But the Jews that Paul wrote to had many questions. So Paul, knowing this, has put all of their protests to rest. But there is one question left. And it is a big one. So Paul leaves it for last.

That question is, “What about the Law?”

God gave us the Law of Moses.

So if I can keep it, won't that save me?

And theoretically, they were right.

Unfortunately, it is impossible to keep the Law. In fact, it was never meant to be a get-out-of-jail-free card.

The Law was never meant to *save*.

It was meant to *show*.

The purpose of the Law was not to make us righteous. It was to point out our *unrighteousness*.

The Jew might have thought he was pious enough to keep the Law. As a Pharisee, Paul did. But all it did was prove they were guilty before God. The Law is for the lawless or the law-breaker. That is why Paul wrote this (verse 20):

Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

The “**deeds of the law**” was the outward obedience that it required — the “thou shalt not's.” It was meant to reveal a standard of righteousness that was impossible for men to

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achieve. J.B Phillips' paraphrase of this is striking. He translates the last part of this verse like this:

It is the straight-edge of the Law that shows us how crooked we are.

And Jesus took this understanding of the Law even further. He included the inward standard as well. He said that if you even hate your brother, you are what?

A murderer.

If you coveted something in your heart, you are guilty of ... theft.

And if you lusted in your heart, you are guilty of ... adultery.

The problem is good deeds are not a sufficient payment for the unrighteousness of the heart.

So no man can measure up. All the Law did was point this out. As we shall find out later in Romans, the Law is just a tutor to bring us to Christ. What it gives us is a greater knowledge of sin.

So the Law is not an instrument of *justification*.

It is an instrument of *condemnation*.

J. Vernon McGee puts this in a colorful light. He wrote:

To hold onto the law is like a man jumping out of an airplane, and instead of taking a parachute, he takes a sack of cement with him. Well, believe me, the law will pull you down. It condemns man.

So the whole human race is guilty as charged according to what Paul has written thus far. There is none righteous, **not even one**. And there is nothing man can do in his own strength or effort to rectify this situation. But we know that there is a solution. Remember this (Romans 1:16-17). It seems so long ago that we read this!

¹⁶For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. ¹⁷For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."

The only righteousness that an absolutely holy and perfect God can accept is His own. And if you are to have this righteousness, you cannot achieve it by faithfulness. It can only be received by faith.

Do you see the difference?

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God declares us righteous when we trust Jesus Christ alone as our Savior. The Bible uses a special word for this declaration: *Justified* or *Justification*. Listen to how the Bible Knowledge Commentary explains this doctrine:

Justification is a forensic declaration of righteousness as a result of God's imputing to believers Christ's righteousness, provided by God's grace and appropriated through faith.

Now I am going to give you Frank's take:

Justification means that, if you trust in Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, if you are saved by grace, through faith, God the Father sees you just as if you had never sinned. He sees you like He sees Jesus.

So for several sessions now, we have been talking about the bad news. We begin now to look at some good news. Look at verse 21:

But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,

Other than my favorite phrase from the Bible (But God...), this one comes a close second. Paul says, "**But now...**"

For three chapters mankind has been condemned. Every mouth is stopped, and the whole world is guilty before God — even God's special nation. But now Paul reveals something important to us.

There is a righteousness of God that is apart from the Law.

"**But now**" speaks of the newness of God's work in Jesus Christ. We were in a world of hurt, **but now...**

This good work is a New Covenant that He has made with man. But there is continuity with the Old Testament.

This righteousness Paul speaks of was witnessed by the "**Law and the Prophets.**" It is not something that Paul came up with. It was in the Bible all the time. The Old Testament said this righteousness was coming.

So justification by faith is not something new; in fact, Paul got the idea from the prophet Habakkuk. It is not a compromise or concession to sinners. It is and has always been God's way of salvation. And Paul will prove this without a doubt in chapter four.

But how does this work?

How does one obtain righteousness apart from the Law?

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That is where Paul heads next. And it is glorious. Look at verse 22:

even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference;

Here again is the Frank translation:

But now God has revealed a new thing apart from the Law. His righteousness is available to all that, through faith, believe on His Son Jesus. So come to Him now and then fly with us soon!!!

This is so important to understand. Salvation is not ours because we have some kind of great faith. It is ours through faith by simply believing God.

It is not about behaving.

It is about believing.

The behaving part comes *AFTER* the believing. William Newell in his commentary on Romans explains it like this:

Faith is not 'trusting' or 'expecting' God to do something, but relying on His testimony concerning the person of Christ as His Son, and the work of Christ for us on the cross ... After saving faith, the life of trust begins... trust is always looking forward to what God will do; but faith sees that what God says has been done, and believes God's Word, having the conviction that it is true, and true for ourselves.

And guess what the wonderful thing about this truth is?

This righteousness is available to everyone — Jew, Gentile, man, woman, child. Paul makes that abundantly clear in his letter to the Galatians (Galatians 3:28). All we have to do is believe. And that is important. This is why (verse 23):

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God

Remember last time when we talked about God's view of man?

God looks down and sees us all the same.

We all face the same predicament.

We all face the same punishment.

We all owe the same price for our ransom.

And no one can pay what is due.

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There is no way that we can glorify God by keeping the Law. *All, and that means ALL in the Greek*, have fallen short.

So what did God *do*?

He made the payment for us by sending Jesus to die in our place.

Justification is accomplished by the work of Jesus Christ on the cross. That is what Paul is going to look at in the next three verses. And in doing so, he is going to introduce us to one of the great doctrines of the Bible — redemption. Look at verse 24:

being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus

Because we all fall short of the glory of God, we cannot redeem ourselves.

If we are ever to stand before God, He must freely allow us in His presence. And He does this by giving us His grace. We all know Ephesians 2:8-10. It is by grace you have been saved, through faith. We believe on Jesus and God gives us grace, the free gift of salvation.

When we come to Christ, God freely gifts us His righteousness so we can stand in front of Him. Then, when He looks at us, He sees us in Christ. Pastor Jack Hibbs spoke of this work in a sermon I listened to this week. Listen to how simple and beautiful what God did is:

When we are born again God takes the world out of us. Then He places His world, the Kingdom, inside us. Last of all He sends us back into the world to serve Him.

That is wonderful; but here is the incredible part. While this was a free gift to us, it was costly to God. Look at verse 25:

whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed,

The way that God made this precious gift of redemption available to us was by the blood of His Son. The idea behind God redeeming us came from the slave markets.

Guess who the slaves are?

You and me.

And guess what we sold out to?

Sin.

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And what is the payment that is required to free us from that slave market?

Blood.

Jesus made this clear when He said this (Matthew 26:28):

For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

Remission means payment. Jesus shed His blood on the cross to pay for our sins. The writer to the Hebrews furthered this thought when he said that without blood, there is no what?

Remission.

So blood is the price that needs to be paid to redeem man.

Where do we get that idea from?

The Old Testament sacrificial system. That is where the intimidating word “propitiation” comes in. If you trace this word back to its Hebrew roots, it speaks of the Mercy Seat on the Ark of the Covenant.

The Ark rested in the Holy of Holies; it was God’s throne on earth.

Does anyone remember what was in it?

The Law (as well as some manna and Aaron’s rod).

On top of the Ark was a lid that had two cherubim stretched out with wings touching. This was called the Mercy Seat. Then, over the seat was God’s glory.

So how can a man come to the throne of God?

He has broken the Law, and God’s glory demands judgment.

Are you with me?

Well, God put a lid on the Law. Once a year the High Priest would come into the presence of God and sprinkle something on the Mercy Seat.

Blood.

This was done as atonement for sin. It covered the sins of Israel.

But now God *set forth* Jesus as our Mercy Seat.

This is important because it shows that the Father was not reluctant to save man. He actually initiated the process. He sent His Son to the cross to pay our debt. Jesus

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demonstrated the righteousness of God by heading to the cross. And so, at the very place that cried out for judgment, God extended mercy. But not only this.

This payment was a one-time payment for all sin. The sins that were “**previously committed**” were passed over. When Jesus cried out from the cross, “**It is finished,**” the payment due for the sins of man was paid. Every one of them.

Man struggles to believe this, because he does not believe that God is righteous. He does not believe that God judges sin.

But at the cross God demonstrated before the entire universe the rightness of His wrath. Jesus took upon Himself the punishment all men deserved for their sin. God poured out His wrath, the wrath we deserved, on His Son. And this is why He did it (verse 26):

to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

If this doesn't fry your bacon, it should. At the cross, when Jesus shed His blood, God demonstrated how He can remain “**just**” while offering man justification. If God does not punish sin, He is not just.

The penalty (wages) for sin is what?

Death.

And a righteous God must assess that penalty. He cannot just acquit the sinner, because he is guilty. He cannot pardon the sinner. A pardon ignores the righteous penalty of the Law. God must assess the death penalty.

The sinner, you and I, must die.

But when payment was due, Jesus took our place. And God put our penalty on Him. The wrath we deserved, Jesus accepted on our behalf.

That is how God remains just while justifying the sinner. The cross enables God to save face and save us at the same time. Listen to how Paul explained this to the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 5:21):

For He made Him (Jesus) who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Thank You, Jesus!

Justification comes through believing, by faith, that Jesus did this for you. And that is good, because this is what man would do if he had any part in his salvation (verse 27):

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Where *is* boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith.

Heaven would be such a boring place if we had anything to do with our redemption. The truth is we contribute NOTHING to our justification. There is nothing internal that we can boast about as having merited God's salvation. There is nothing external, no Law or good work, that will appease His wrath.

It is simply yours to receive by faith in Jesus Christ. That is the Law of faith. Look at verse 28:

Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.

After reading all of this, how could you come to any other conclusion?

Justification is God's provision of salvation for all who believe. And it is by faith alone — not of good works. Martin Luther translated this verse, "*since works of the law are barred out, faith alone is left.*" And so we have the idea of sola fide.

But this must have been a shock to Paul's Jewish readers. So he adds just a little bit more about the relationship of the Gospel to the Law. Look at verses 29-31:

²⁹Or is *He* the God of the Jews only? Is *He* not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also,³⁰since *there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.* ³¹Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law.

The doctrine of justification by faith is not against the Law. It actually establishes it. God obeyed His own Law when He worked out His plan to redeem man. Jesus, in His life and death, completely satisfied all the demands of the Law. So God does not have two ways of salvation, one for the Jews and another for the Gentiles. He cannot because He is ONE GOD. And because of this, He is totally consistent with His own nature.

Thus, salvation in the Old Testament is obtained in the same way as in the New. In chapter four Paul will look at the witnesses of Abraham and David to prove this. Look at verse three of that chapter, and you will see how Paul does this. It is as wonderful as it is simple.

So let's tie all this together and, in light of Christmas, put a bow on it.

In chapter one through three verse 20 we were condemned. We were declared guilty and worthy of punishment. But now...

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In Christ we can be justified by faith.

Because of what He did for us, we can be declared righteous. That word *declared*, or *reckoned*, will be important in chapter four. The righteousness of God, we will find out, will be placed on our account. And at the same time all of our sins will be placed on Jesus' account.

God's justice is satisfied by what Jesus did on the cross. And so, there are no grounds on which God can punish us who believe on Him. He took all the punishment for every sin ever committed and placed it on Jesus.

Can we praise Jesus for what He did?

So God remains just, having judged sin.

But He is also the Justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus Christ.

So the only question we have left is what about those who want to trust in what they do instead of what He did?

Justification by faith is not a process or a performance.

It is a pronouncement. God literally declares the sinner righteous.

If it were a process, it would take place gradually, over a period of time. During this time, you would have to perform certain commandments or sacraments.

Justification is a pronouncement from the Judge that you are "**NOT GUILTY.**" But it is by virtue of His Son's work on the cross. You are fully justified the moment you receive Jesus as your personal Savior, (as your propitiation) — by faith.

So there are only two choices:

- 1) Stand before God in your own righteousness and face the wrath of God.
- 2) Or stand before God in His Son's righteousness on whom His wrath has already fallen and enjoy abundant life here and eternal life in His presence.

The choice seems easy to me.

But the question is, What does this mean to you?

Have you made that choice?

Have you chosen Jesus?

If not, you can do that right now. That Child whom we just celebrated His birth came here to die for you. But be of good cheer. He is not dead. Three days later, the Father

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raised the Son from the dead. Because of this, you can have eternal life. All you have to do is believe.

Let's pray.

REVELATION SONG: HE IS COMING BACK AGAIN!

He is coming back again
He's coming back again
My Jesus He's coming back again

May be morning night or noon
I hope it's very soon
My heart tells me He's coming back again

He is coming back again
He's coming back again
My Jesus He's coming back again

May be morning night or noon
I hope it's very soon
God's Word tells me He's coming back again

MY JESUS, HE'S COMING BACK AGAIN!!!