

ROMANS

Session_6

3:21 - 4:8

Two Paths

Although the world may believe that there are a multitude of religions, in God's eyes there are only two. *"There is a way that seems right to a man but its end is the way to death"* (Prov 14:12; 16:25). As we have reviewed before, Cain offered to God the "sacrifice" of his own efforts, whereas Able offered the sacrifice of faith. All religions of the world; even the religion of atheism or humanism, seek to justify themselves in their own minds. Whatever the self-professed virtue, the fact remains that God has only one way for human beings to be justified and that is through His provision.

One of the "I Am" statements of Jesus is that He is the door (Jhn 10:7,9) to being saved. He also claimed that *"narrow is the gate that leads to life and few there be that find it"* (Mat 7:13,14). Paul has spared no detail in making sure that God's case against humanity is clear with summary statements like "all are guilty" and "they are without excuse". He quoted from the Psalms to conclude that there is *"no one righteous; no not one"* and that in fact there are none who even seek after God.

In conclusion Paul has made the case as to how the wrath of God and His righteousness have been revealed through the law; whether it be His written revealed law or the law of conscience. All humanity deserves God's eternal wrath and those that endure it will never repent according to the Word; such is the state of the fall. This leaves us in a seemingly hopeless place, yet we come to the point where one simple conjunction on the pages of scripture changes everything. And at this point in Paul's great court case, humanity needs some good news!

God's Righteousness Revealed Apart From The Law

3:21-22) "But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it-- the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction:"

But now - Paul gives the light of hope in this one simple phrase indicating that while the indictment of humanity is severe beyond comprehension, there is something that will be revealed in what he is about to say that brings a change of news. That good news is that the righteousness we need ***has been manifested apart from the law***. God's righteousness, while visible in the law, cannot be obtained through it. But the Son fulfilled the law in the flesh, offered Himself up as a perfect sacrifice for sin, and was resurrected in order to demonstrate the Father's satisfaction with that sacrifice. God's gracious provision through His Son is the manifestation of the righteousness of God apart from the law. Phaneroō (manifest) means to "bring something about visibly", or to "make visible". Jesus visibly lived out the law and righteousness of God and obeyed the Father to the point of death on the cross (Php 2:8).

Paul adds that for those who have studied the ***law and the prophets***, since they indeed ***bear witness*** to this revealed righteousness of God, should already know that God intended to provide a Savior. The Old Testament is saturated with the promise that while Israel (and humanity) is constantly demonstrating their sin,

ROMANS

Session_6

3:21 - 4:8

God forgives the repentant, and would bring about the Deliverer that would make a permanent cleansing. This would include the eventual reality that while Israel and humanity would face God's discipline, He would bring about a New Covenant that will eventually have the result of the law of God written on the heart (Jer 31:27-40). So what is hinted at in the Old Testament is now in Christ Jesus made clearly visible **for all who believe**. And **there is no distinction** in the offering of this righteousness through faith for whom it can be received whether it be Jew or Gentile. This display of His Servant is expressed in Isaiah:

"Listen, O coastlands, to Me, And take heed, you peoples from afar! The LORD has called Me from the womb; From the matrix of My mother He has made mention of My name. And He has made My mouth like a sharp sword; In the shadow of His hand He has hidden Me, And made Me a polished shaft; In His quiver He has hidden Me." "And He said to me, 'You [are] My servant, O Israel, In whom I will be glorified.' Then I said, 'I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing and in vain; Yet surely my just reward [is] with the LORD, And my work with my God.' " "And now the LORD says, Who formed Me from the womb [to be] His Servant, To bring Jacob back to Him, So that Israel is gathered to Him (For I shall be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, And My God shall be My strength), Indeed He says, 'It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob, And to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, That You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.' " Thus says the LORD, The Redeemer of Israel, their Holy One, To Him whom man despises, To Him whom the nation abhors, To the Servant of rulers: "Kings shall see and arise, Princes also shall worship, Because of the LORD who is faithful, The Holy One of Israel; And He has chosen You." " (Isa 49:1-7 NKJV)

Here Isaiah writes of God's appointed Servant Who will be born of a woman, indicating His humanity. While "testified to" throughout the Old Testament, Isaiah says that He was "hidden" in God's plan as a "polished shaft in his quiver". God the Father (Holy one of Israel) has chosen Jesus as His Servant to be the restoration of Israel and a light to the Gentiles. Paul wrote to the Galatians that God had kept the Savior "hidden" until the determined time:

"But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons." (Gal 4:4-5 ESV)

The Great Equalizer

3:23-24) "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,"

All can come to Christ for salvation because all have sinned. This is a final summary comment on the case he already made against humanity. Yet looking to the manifested righteousness of God made visible in Jesus, believers can be **justified**. The Greek *dikaioō* (to render or declare righteous) in this form or other variations is used 30 times in Romans; most occurrences from 2:13 to 5:1. While righteousness cannot be obtained through keeping the law, the righteousness of God's Son can be imputed or "assigned" to those who look to Him and His completed work on the cross.

ROMANS

Session_6

3:21 - 4:8



God has made His Son “manifest” on the cross. Jesus said “as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up” (Jhn 3:14). God gave the typology of the Christ and His sacrifice in the wilderness when His people were wicked in their rebellion and He sent vipers as a plague. He commanded Moses to make a bronze serpent and raise it up on his staff and for those who looked on it in repentance and faith, were delivered from the curse of the poisonous snake bites (Num 21:1-9).

In this typology the brass represents the purifying judgment of Jesus. The alter and its utensils were made of brass and in Rev 4 Jesus is depicted as having brass feet as He stands on His right to judge and purify. The serpents poisonous bites represent the poison of sin that curses us from God. Jesus who became our sin was raised up on the cross and all who gaze upon His atoning work in faith are declared justified and our purification has been accomplished!

The means by which justification comes is His **grace** meaning “to be given freely without cause”. There is no cause from humanity to bring about this **gift** of God. Paul writes in Ephesians concerning this grace:

"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast." (Eph 2:8-9 ESV)

This gift from God that is our faith comes through the redemptive work of Jesus. **apolytrōsis** or **redemption** means to “release by payment of ransom”. Our sin debt holds us in ransom to the wrath of God, but for the believer, faith in Jesus’ sacrifice releases our sin debt and we are no longer held ransom.

3:25-26) "whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."

PROPIVIATION

Relating to an appeasing or expiating, having placating or expiating force, expiatory; a means of appeasing or expiating, a propitiation:

- A. used of the cover of the ark of the covenant in the Holy of Holies, which was sprinkled with the blood of the expiatory victim on the annual day of atonement (this rite signifying that the life of the people, the loss of which they had merited by their sins, was offered to God in the blood as the life of the victim, and that God by this ceremony was appeased and their sins expiated); hence the lid of expiation, the propitiatory.

As Paul has made the case that the force of the law is to only magnify our sin, Jesus’ blood poured out is the expiatory “force” against God’s wrath on our sin. The author of Hebrews writes concerning the ceremonial sprinkling of blood that was offered up continually by the Levitical priesthood sacrifices to “keep up” their

ROMANS

Session_6

3:21 - 4:8

part of the bi-lateral Mosaic covenant (Heb 9:16-22). The animals needed to die continually as the author says “without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” (v.22). At the same time it is stated that “it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins” (Heb 10:4), thus the perpetual need for the sacrifices in order to stay within the favor and blessing of God. The writer also says:

"Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, 'Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.' " When he said above, "You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings" (these are offered according to the law), then he added, "Behold, I have come to do your will." He does away with the first in order to establish the second. And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." (Heb 10:5-10 ESV)

Divine forbearance... passed over former sins - In His holiness, God cannot ignore sin or He would not be just. But He can and does exercise patience in order to bring about His sovereign plan to display His righteousness. It was displayed through the “shadows of things to come” and all those who, through faith, delighted in the law and ceremonies looked forward to the promised deliverer. What was established as a witness against the sin of Israel through the law and ceremonies has found its remedy in God’s gracious gift.

Just... justifier - God is just in that He has always and will always punish sin. This happens in terms of immediate results (the law of sowing and reaping), through God’s direct intervention; etc. But it also will ultimately be demonstrated in the day of the Lord and the second death. Since the sin debt of the redeemed was propitiated through the blood of Christ, the Father’s justice is left unstained when He calls His children “justified”.

No Room For Boasting The Flesh

3:27-30) *"Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law. Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since God is one--who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith."*

Law of works vs. law of faith - Paul has already established that “by the works of the law no flesh will be justified”(v.20) and also says so here. God is the giver of the law since He is the creator. He gave the law that renders all flesh dead in trespasses and sin (Eph 2:1). Paul notes that through this law the flesh wants to boast since the motive behind any law keeping for means of justification is “self-serving” and by definition is sinful. So it is not this law that removes boasting.

But the law of faith - also given by God; not man - is human beings made alive to Christ as a gift from God and since there is not one ounce of human intuition, wisdom or effort that can bring this about (there are none who seek after God) it is then this “law” that excludes boasting because faith is entirely the power of God; it is supernatural, not natural.

ROMANS

Session_6

3:21 - 4:8

3:31) "Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law."

Overthrow vs. Uphold - As noted previously, Jesus claimed that He had not come to abolish the law but rather to fulfill the law. This is because He is the law; its source and enforcer and when He took on flesh He lived from a child to the age of priesthood, and through His 3 year public ministry without sin; performing all the works of the law. When John the Baptist questioned Jesus concerning His request to be baptized, Jesus responded with *"it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness"* (Jhn 3:14-15). The law given to Moses displays God's holiness, perfection, purity, justice, righteousness, wrath; etc.

The law of faith is the same in its source and power while different in nature as it displays different attributes of God to man. Through it God displays His mercy, grace, forgiveness, compassion, pity; etc..

Repentance (granted by God - Act 11:18; 2Tim 2:25) - one agrees with the law that it is good and serves to demonstrate God's holiness by pointing out sin and has with it genuine sorrow (from God) over sin. Jesus describes the fruit of repentance in the beatitudes (Matt. 5:3-9). Paul describes the repentance that comes from God this way:

"For the sorrow that is according to [the will of] God produces a repentance without regret, [leading] to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death." (2Co 7:10 NASB95)

According to what Paul is saying, the flesh (natural man) has plenty of guilt, but unless God grants repentance that earthly sorrow, or guilt only produces death.

Faith (gift from God) is a supernatural work of God through the Holy Spirit that grants spiritual eyes to the blind in order that Jesus Christ becomes more than just an historic figure. It is through faith in Jesus' fulfillment of the law that the law is upheld as it recognizes Jesus as being the only man who could have and did live out all of the laws requirements. When we trust in Him and not ourselves, we uphold the law.

Abraham Justified Through Faith

4:1-3) "What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? "ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS." "

According to the flesh - this is specifically referring to the Jew that is a blood descendant of Abraham. Since they venerated Abraham as their "father" Paul asks what did he find in God's sight? While Abraham did obey God, there is plenty of sin that can be witnessed concerning him. His obedience was based on trust in God; he believed. So he wasn't justified by his works of obedience, rather by the power of belief that brought about faithful works.

ROMANS

Session_6

3:21 - 4:8

4:4-5) "Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness,"

The one who works - this is speaking to the one who seeks to find justification through obedience. Since payment for works is an obligation, God through our works is always obligated to pour out His wrath since His standard is perfection.

The one who does not work - doesn't mean that good works do not come out of the heart of belief, rather that the one who believes is not seeking justification through works of the flesh, rather is seeking God's mercy and trusts that God will grant forgiveness. The author of Hebrews writes it this way:

"In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath, so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a [hope] both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil, where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek." (Heb 6:17-20 NASB95)

Jesus is "the oath" of the "promise" of the new covenant. He is the high Priest of the new covenant which He ratified with His own blood and entered into the real holy of holies in heaven thus securing the pathway for all who trust in His perfect work on our behalf; He is the anchor for our soul!

4:6-8) "just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: "BLESSED ARE THOSE WHOSE LAWLESS DEEDS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN, AND WHOSE SINS HAVE BEEN COVERED. "BLESSED IS THE MAN WHOSE SIN THE LORD WILL NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT. " "

Quoting from the penitential Psalm 32, Paul uses David as an example of one who found great hope in the forgiveness and mercy of God against the backdrop of His sin of adultery with Bathsheba and murder of her husband Uriah to cover it up. David loved God's law and sought it out for himself and his people, yet was proven to be a sinner over and over as all humanity is. But he found great comfort, hope and joy in knowing that the Lord's grace and mercy blot out transgressions for the penitent heart.

PERSONAL APPLICATION

If you have trusted in the anchor of Christ, you can indeed find the true rest that comes from hope in His forgiveness. This produces peace with God. If you have confessed sin that you are still feeling guilty over remember what Paul said *"But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus"* (Php 3:13,14).