

Romans 3: 20-26 -The Righteousness of God – 5 June 2011

If you have your Bibles, turn with me to the book of Romans 3, Romans 3 and we will consider verses 20-26, this morning. Romans 3:20-26.

I will read these verses slowly. I think it is helpful that before we preach, before you listen, that you ask God to even shed some light to you with the limited time that is ahead of us. Romans 3:20-26.

20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

21 But now the righteousness of God, without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;

22 Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:

23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;

26 To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

Well, we have been journeying through the book of Romans and I did a little check back, I did a little count of the number of sermons that we have heard from our series in the book of Romans. Would anyone like to have a guess, how many sermons we have gone through before we arrive at this point? Five, some say five, 11, some say 11, anyone else? I don't blame you, I myself had to count. Well, the answer is 10 and if I were to review the summary of the past 10 sermons, it might look something like this.

Sermon 1 : Bad News

Sermon 2 : Bad News

Sermon 3 : Bad News

Sermon 4 : More Bad News

Sermon 5 : Still Bad News

Sermon 6 : Bad News

Sermon 7 : Bad News

Sermon 8 : Bad News

Sermon 9 : Bad News

and even last week, we saw, it might sound like bad news, I think it is time isn't it, for Paul to switch gears and tell us today, the really good news.

Now of course, all those we called bad news, are not necessarily bad news because Paul has to reason with us with regards to our sins. It is only when man recognizes, his own sinfulness then would he be able to fully appreciate the good news that is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. You see, the problem with us, we are often enamelled and absorbed and obsessed, indeed with the idea that God is love. That is true. But we often forget that God is a God of wrath and that's why, Paul begins with the bad news. You are a sinner, you are a sinner, Jews and Gentiles alike, there is no difference, for we are all under sin. So, plenty of bad news and now Paul, switches the gears, turns a corner and tells us the good news about the saving grace of God.

And this good news is introduced to us in verse 21, with two beautiful words. But now, the righteousness of God, without the law, is manifested. What a beautiful turning point. Paul has been painting a very dark picture, man is helpless, man is hopeless, man is totally sick from head to toe with sin. Question is, what is God going to do about it? Is He going to leave us in the lurch, is He going to turn his back on us? What will God do? It is in the midst of such hopelessness that is painted, that Paul now says, "But now, the righteousness of God." On those two little words, hangs the difference between heaven and hell.

On these two little words, God is going to reveal to us, His grace indeed is greater than all our sins. And so, this is time for rejoicing, this is time for the good news and the good news here, is about the righteousness of God. It's a great theme isn't it? I think this is not hard to grasp, if you look at all the seven versus you have read, the

word righteous, righteousness, justice and justified, these words come from the same Greek root word, it is the word *Dikaios*, which means, to be right, to be acceptable, to be innocent, virtuous, guiltless, to be accepted, righteous with God.

Today's message is really a glorious one because it tells us about the righteousness of God. It happens, no less than eight times in these seven verses. So Paul, in a sense, turning from the sin of man to the salvation that is found in Jesus Christ, the righteousness of God, great text. In fact, some commentators like Leon Morris, says that this is possibly, the most important single paragraph ever written. And preachers, in days gone by, like, John Calvin and Martin Luther, I am not sure which one, but the reformers would say, this text, this passage we are going to consider, is the marrow of theology.

What is the marrow? The marrow is the good and the real stuff. I just had marrow. Well, what do you mean? Well, every Friday night, I seek to be with my parents, my sister and my brother-in-law. We have a family dinner as much as we could on a weekly basis. My dad loves to show his love towards us and he shows it not with words, nor with hugs but my dad loves to show his love by the food that he prepares, by the food he buys. Often times, he buys for us boxes of durians and once in a while, he would pamper us also with a very interesting dish, which you will see here. Maybe we need the light to be a little bit lowered, and this looks gruesome, this looks horrific, it looks like some dead carcass swimming in blood. (Laughter in the congregation). But be assured, it is not. This is the Indian dish called, tulang. Some of you are fans of tulang like myself. This is tulang, this is the bone, the leg bone of the lamb, especially the part that is around the joint. And they cloak it in the sweet savory gravy that is red in color. It would stain your fingers, your lips and even when you poo poo, it would be red. (Laughter in the congregation). But this tastes great, tulang is great and what you do with tulang is, you just pick up one of them with your hands, this is quite amazing that you can pick with a chopstick, but usually you pick it with your hands and you, like a carnivore, like a savage beast, you take the bone and you chew all around the joints here. I mean, this is where the meat, where the tendons, where the ligaments are and you contort your mouth, and you try to figure, to conform them to the shape of the bone, to lick up all that is there, it's juicy, it's nice.

But that is not the end of enjoying tulang. The next thing is the real stuff. What you do is take the tulang, you invert it and with that tip you knock it on a spoon or, on the plate, tock, tock, tock, tock, tock, tock, tock, tock, tock. After you tock and you think it's a bit better, loosened, you take that tulang and you take it to the mouth and you

whoosh, you suck it. (Laughter in the congregation). What do you look for? Well, you look for the marrow. Look at that (Laughter in the congregation), look at the whoa, the marrow, wow (Laughter in the congregation). Great huh? Hey, the marrow is the good stuff. My brother-in-law tells me that some fine dining in western fine dining, uses marrow as the part of the delicacy they have. But the Indians use it all along.

The marrow is the real stuff, the marrow is the good stuff. And you know what, Bible commentators, teachers, tell us, that Romans 3:20-26, is the marrow of theology, that's where the good and real stuff is and it is really centered around the righteousness of God, how God is going to give man a righteous, acceptable, innocent, guiltless, standing before Him. Friends, this is absolutely vital, this is the heart and core of your Christianity, of biblical Christianity and so let's consider the marrow of theology this morning.

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1. The Provision of the Righteousness of God

There are three things I want to share with you, with regards to the righteousness of God. First of all, we are going to consider, the provision of the righteousness of God. We are going to see that the righteousness of God is provided for men. It is given from the heavens unto sinful man like as we are. Throughout history, men have struggled with this question. "How can I be right with God?"

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And man, has sought to answer that question by his own religious acts. Some of them, slash themselves, some of them offer animal sacrifices, some of them set up altars, some of them go up on a pilgrimage. Man has always tried to answer the question how can I be right with God in his own strength. Man has also tried to answer that question by his own good deeds. He gives to charity, he helped the poor, he seeks to be a good man, as best as he can, according to some of the principles and moral values of life. Some may even seek to be right with God by obeying the Commandments of the Bible. But the Bible tells us, that righteousness with God is not what man can earn.

Paul, begins in verse 20

Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight. That's why, the righteousness that we need must be provided by God, because, there is no

righteousness that we can produce in our own strength. The law, is not given to save us, the law is given to show us our sins, because Paul says, "For by the law, is the knowledge of sin."

20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

Why do you need the righteousness of God? Because, there is no righteousness that man can produce in his own strength. That's why in verse 21, this is the turning point in the book of Romans, "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested", and this is without the law, it's apart from the law. Maybe, some of you would be familiar with this story, about a week or two ago, about the US Seal team, team number 6. What the seal team number 6 do? They successfully assassinated Osama bin Laden. These guys are highly trained soldiers, special forces. And similar to Seal team 6 or Seal team, would be the US Marines and that's a little advertisement about US Marines. They say, if you want to be a US Marine, this is what you need to know. Being a US Marine is always this, "Earned, never given." If you want to be a US Marine, you have got to train, you've got to sacrifice, you have got to be willing to go through hardship because no one is a US Marine by being given that title, but he is a US Marine because he earned it. So, they tell you, it is "Earned, never given."

But do you know, that a man that is right with God, a man that has a righteous standing with God, is "Always given, never earned." It is the direct opposite. You don't have a right standing with God because you earned it, but because God provided and gave it to you. You see, Paul says that in verse 21, "this righteousness of God is without the law." Meaning, it is apart from the obedience of the law.

21 But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets:

He says, in verse 24, "You are justified, freely by His grace." The word freely means, without a cost or undeservedly. We are justified, we have a righteous standing, because God gave it to us without a cost, even though we did not deserve it. The US Marines say, you are a Marine because you earned it, but the Bible tells us, you are a child of God because you are given it, it's never earned.

24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

Religions today tell you about two letters of the alphabet, the two letters are D & O. That's what all religions teach you by the way, do. How do you have a righteous standing with God? Do, do what those sacrifices, do those good deeds, do and earn your way. But Christianity, the Bible, it's not do, it's done. It's not about what we have done or what we could achieve but is what God Himself has done for us. Righteousness must be provided by God.

Many people today however, have the mindset of the Mohamed Ali. Well, this is what he used to say. He said, "One day, we all going to die and God is going to judge us, our good deeds and bad deeds. If the bad outweighs the good, you go to hell but if the good outweighs the bad, you go to heaven." Isn't this, the large majority of the thinking of people in the world today? How can you go to heaven? Well, I have more good deeds and bad. Sounds logical, isn't it? If you are in positive territory, you are in a better place, negative territory, you are in a worse place. It sounds so logical, but it is not biblical, because the Bible tells us, in Isaiah 64,

Isa 64:6

But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness are as filthy rags.

The word filthy, in the Hebrew, is the word "Ed", which literally speaking, is the word menstrual. Shocking, but it's true. You can go check it up in your lexicons, in your dictionaries, but this is exactly what the Word of God says. All our righteousness are as menstrual cloth. We do know isn't it, in the Old Testament that when a lady is going through menstruation, she is considered unclean and she cannot participate in the temple or religious rites. And what God is saying is this, what many consider as righteousness, in the eyes of a Supremely Holy God, is nothing but unclean menstrual rags. There is no good man can do on his own, there is no way our good deeds would ever outweigh the bad, because there will never be a time man can produce a single iota of good works, impossible. That's why, the Scriptures tell us, there is no way, by the deeds of the law, any flesh can be justified or considered righteous before God. And that is why, the righteousness of God is without the law, apart from obedience to the law.

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Why must men have the righteousness of God? Very simple because man cannot be righteous any other way. There are three little nuggets of truth that Paul gives us with regards to that provision of righteousness. He says, first of all, this righteousness is revealed. He says, this is witnessed by the law and the prophets. The law and the

prophets, refers to the Old Testament. Indeed, right from the beginning, God tells us, that the righteousness would come not by obedience but from Himself. Right from Genesis, you trace it throughout the Old Testament, God is saying, I have witnessed, I have told you, that I will give you a righteousness that is apart from the law. Looking at the sacrifices, and the teachings of the prophets, the examples of Abraham and David which Paul would explain later in Romans 4, it tells us, that the righteousness of God, is not something novel or new but it has been revealed in times past. That's point number 1. He tells us, the righteousness of God is first revealed. He tells us, number 2, the righteousness of God provided, must also be received. Verse 22

Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe.

How do you receive this righteousness of God, how is it credited to your account as it were? The Bible tells us, by faith, by believing. Nothing else, by faith by believing, nothing else. Verse 22 tells us so.

Verse 25 tells us so, through faith. Verse 26, tells us so, believers in Jesus. Verse 28 tells us so, that we are justified by faith without the deeds of the law. And so, a man receives the righteousness of God, not because he is a good man or because he is the better man but because he is a believer. He believes, he exercises faith without the deeds of the law.

22 Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:

25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;

26 To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

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I read a story about a man who just bought a new refrigerator and even though his old refrigerator is working well, he didn't want to have it anymore and so he decided to be gracious and kind and he placed his old refrigerator in the yard and put a sign that says "Refrigerator still in good condition, free for anyone who wants it." He places it there for three days, in the yard, but nobody wanted to take it. And so he took down that sign and he says "Refrigerator still in good condition, for sale at \$50." The very next day, the refrigerator was stolen away.

You know, that's the nature of man. We think that anything of value that is precious, that is good, cannot come to us for free. Ah, but friends, the righteousness of God comes to us, freely, without a cost. It is to be received by faith and faith alone. It is to be received by those who believe in Jesus Christ. It's faith alone that saves. But can I have a word or two, with regards to faith. We are saved, we are made righteous by faith alone, but be sure it is a true faith to begin with. Because we live in a day where people may say "I believe" but they don't really have the real faith that is scriptural or biblical. Now, does the Bible tell us about people who have false faith, does it? Absolutely, there are people in the Bible who are said to believe in Jesus, but did not continue with Jesus. Jesus Himself said it. He knew their hearts and they continued not with Him.

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The Bible tells us, the devil also believed and trembled, they are better than many people; they trembled. Many people when they hear about God, they don't tremble. But the devils are not saved, even though the Bible said they believed. There are people in the Bible who are like that soil that is very thin. In the beginning, there seems to be some signs of life, but when the sun of temptation comes up, it dries up and it dies off, the faith does not endure. These are false faith. You see, we are saved by faith alone, but it must be true faith. A faith that must originate from the workings of God when we hear the Scriptures, as we understand the Scriptures because faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. It must be a faith that is accompanied that springs from true repentance from sin.

Many people today believe in Jesus simply because they want to be healed from their sickness or simply because they want to get rich and be well. But true faith, according to the book of Romans, the progression of thoughts, must come from a genuine mindset change with regards to sin, there must be a repentance, a metanoia (pastor said the word like metanoia), a change of mind with regards to sin, that you see sin

not just as bad consequences on you, but you hate sin and abhor it as God does, only when we have the right repentance.

You see in the Bible, there are people who are said to believe, like Agrippa. Paul says, I know you believe, but it was not true faith in the sense of a saving faith. He knows some things about Jesus, but he never really had a true repentance of sin. True faith is accompanied by repentance. True faith, will be accompanied by the fruit of faith, the result of faith. Otherwise, your faith is dead, James says.

True faith, according to Scriptures is enduring, it lasts, there is that patience continuance in well doing. My friends, we are saved by faith alone, but it must be a true faith that stems from a renewed zeal with regards to sin, that continues and perseveres to the end and a faith that is not alone, in that the faithful manifest itself with works of righteousness. But look at what Paul says, " This righteousness of God, is given to those who would believe." Without the deeds of the law, simply believe, by faith, by them that believe.

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3. It is required by all

So here it is, the righteousness of God is provided, it is revealed in the Old Testament, for sure in the Scriptures, it is to be received by authentic faith alone and number 3, it is required by all. Why? Because he says in verse 22, all of us need the righteousness of God, why? For there is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

22 Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: 23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

Now, it doesn't matter whether you a nicer person, a kinder person, a more generous person than the other. You still need the righteousness of God, why? Because the Bible says, there is no difference, all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

Imagine today we have a little experiment, a competition and the competition is for anyone on stage here to be able to touch the ceiling. You all laugh, because you know this is ridiculous. But let say we try. I am a shorter man, so it is harder for me but if I get a taller man like David at the back, he is real tall. I say, David, stand with me and both of us, let's try and jump and I get more men on board here and we say, all jump

and try to reach the ceiling. First week we may not succeed, but next week we try again, we play this game every week, every Sunday, we play the game of reaching for the ceiling. And maybe David says, alright, I think I can reach the ceiling. So, he goes home, he eats less, he trims down, he exercises his legs muscles, every day he jumped to work and he hangs upside down from the ceiling of his house so that he can be taller, he can be stretched in his body and he eventually becomes taller and he's stronger and stand here and tries to reach for the ceiling. And now I say, the standards have changed, you're not going to reach the ceiling. Our goal is to reach for the sky. I think David will, slap his forehead with his hands and fall backwards, because he says, "Pastor, that is impossible." Absolutely, this is what the Bible says, no matter how good you think you are, there is none that is able to match up to standard that God wants. You have come short of the glory of God. Therefore, no man can be righteous in his own efforts and that's why, the righteousness of God is not only revealed, to be received by faith, but it is required by everyone.

This morning, when I was here, I was speaking to Pastor Paul, he was sharing that he has been to several churches, met with several church leaders in different countries. And he was shocked, that some of the meetings amongst the church leaders are questions with regards to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They have been so Christianized on the outside, that even the church leaders themselves don't understand the Gospel of Christ.

My friends, this morning, these words, helps us, helps us, because this is the marrow of theology, this is the righteousness of God in the first one we have considered this morning is that God's righteousness is provided for all of us, is revealed in the Scriptures, is to be received by faith and all, and none excepted, all will require the righteousness that flows from Him.

The second point I want to share with you, as we look at the verses written by Paul, is that we are going to consider the picture of the righteousness of God. Now, what is the righteousness of God given to us, like? What are the pictures and these are helpful words you see. These are big words, but helpful words, because Paul says in verses 24 and 25. Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God had set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood. The three words, we will consider in this section. Number 1, the word justified, number 2, the word redemption and number 3, the word propitiation. Now, these are big words. Maybe our, even our secondary 4, O Levels, never heard such words. But, in the biblical sense, we need to understand what these words mean. They are not

hard to understand, they are just represented by the English words. Now these three words take us to three different scenes.

The first, takes us to the court of law, the second takes us to a marketplace, the third takes us to the tabernacle or the place of worship. Let me show you, number 1, it takes us to the court of law, it refers to justification. The righteousness of God given to man is like a justification at a court of law. Number 2, the second scene is to bring us to a marketplace, where slaves are being traded. Of course, in context, we don't have it here in Singapore, but, it is a familiar scene to the people during the time of Paul and the second word here redemption, brings us to the marketplace where slaves are traded. And the third scene, is to bring us to the tabernacle of God where there is the Ark of the Covenant and the Mercy Seat and these three words, brings us to these three places. What do you mean pastor? Well, let me explain.

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Number 1. The righteousness of God given to man is like a just, it is indeed a justification. If there is a word you want to add on to your thinking about pictures of righteousness, is the word acquittal. The righteousness of God given to man is an acquittal. He acquits us of our guilt. The word justified here is a legal term, that declares someone innocent, guiltless, righteous and when God gives man His righteousness, He is saying, I have justify you, you are now declared innocent.

Amazing, we were all full of sin could be justified before God. But that's what the righteousness of God means to us. Number 1, is an acquittal.

Number 2. It's an acquisition. What do I mean by acquisition? It is taken from the word redemption. The word redeemed is to buy back in order to set you free. It is to secure the release of a slave, of a prisoner upon payment of a ransom. So, it is the buyback, to acquire in order to set you free from the previous bondage. The word redemption here in the Greek is ap-ol-oo'tro-sis. It's a different word, another word that could be translated as redeemed. The other Greek word is the word, agaratzo (pastor says a word that sounds like that). Agaratzo is a little bit shorter on meaning, in the sense, you just pay. But ap-o-loo'tro-sis, which is the word used here, means you pay, in order to set free. And it is a beautiful word, because you are reminded in Scriptures isn't it, in Romans 3:9, how man is under sin. We are dominated by sin, we are subject to sin and the righteousness of God given to us, sets us free from the bondage of sin.

Now, this is familiar to the Romans, because in those times, there are estimated 6 million slaves in those days. And ap-ol-oo'tro-sis is a common word used during that time, that they will pay a slave trader a certain amount of money, to free this slave in order to serve him. So, we are ap-ol-oo'tro-sis by Jesus Christ. Familiar word.

Years ago, I was in Washington DC, beautiful place, great museums, FOC (free of charge) when you get to the museum, nice museum, natural history museum and all sorts, dinosaurs and so on. But there was a museum that left a deep impression upon me and this is the museum. It's the Holocaust Museum. The Holocaust Museum reminds people of the grotesque atrocities during the Nazi's reign. The Holocaust Museum is a poignant visit if you go there, because it reminds you of the horrific genocide, where about 6 million Jews, a quarter of whom are children, are systematically exterminated by the Nazis under Hitler's reign. These Jews are packed into concentration camps where they are starved, where they are humiliated, where they are tortured and they are murdered.

But it is out of this grotesque atrocities that a man is made famous today, not by only what he did but by Steven Spielberg; Schindler's list. This is Oscar Schindler. Oscar Schindler, was the man who initially paid money to secure the Jews to work in his factory. But, by and by, he knew about their plight and took compassion on them and instead of paying in order for them to work in his factory, he's really paying the Nazis in order to secretly set them free. She said, that when Oscar Schindler died in 1974, he died a penniless man, no money at all, because, he has spent the last amount of money, the last bit of whatever he had, to secure the Jews, the last Jew he could set free.

Oscar Schindler, redeemed the Jews from the bondage of the Nazis and from death. In a sense, he reminds me of the ap-ol-oo'tro-sis that Jesus accomplished for us. We were in bondage, not to the Nazis, but to sin. We face not a bodily death but a spiritual death, an eternal death.

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And we cannot be broken free by money but only by the precious blood of the Lamb. But that's what Jesus did for us and that's what righteousness given to man looks like. It sets us free from the bondage of sin. It's an acquisition from our previous slave trader. We will sing a song later on, "And can it be," and in one of the stanzas, it reminds us of the redeeming work of Christ, the ap-ol-oo'tro-sis of Christ. It says:

Long my imprisoned spirit lay,

Fast bound in sin and nature's night;
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.

The saving grace of God, gives us an acquittal, the saving grace of God is like an acquisition, redeeming us from the bondage of sin and thirdly, the third picture here, the saving grace of God is like an appeasement.

Three words, acquittal, acquisition, appeasement, because he says in verse 25

25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood,

Another big word. In the Greek, is even bigger, hil-as-tay'-ree-on, I listen to audio that's how I know how to pronounce it. Hil-as-tay'-ree-on, but what is this word about? This word is taken from Leviticus 16, when we have an account of the mercy seat of God. Now, you must understand a little bit of Jewish worship. In those times, God tells them to erect a tabernacle and subsequently a temple and there's a specific way to arrange the furniture, there are specific compartments also to the tabernacle of God, there is a specific place called the Holy of Holies, that no one in the whole of Israel could enter, except the great high priest and the great high priest can only enter once a year at most. Indeed, he can only do so once a year as commanded by God, on the Day of Atonement. And even if he enters, alone, once a year, he must go in with the blood of a goat that is sacrificed.

This place is called the Holy of Holies, or the Most Holy Place. He removed the veil, he enters the Holies of Holies and the first thing, the great high priest, who can and do only once a year, under instruction by God, the first thing he has to do it, is to take that blood, shed by the goat that was sacrificed and sprinkle it straight away upon the Mercy Seat. The Mercy Seat, is that lid that is on the Ark of the Covenant. Inside the Ark, there are some items, like the Word of God, Aaron's rod that budded. But, that Mercy Seat, must be sprinkled by blood and it is a picture, that God's holy wrath, must be appeased by the blood of the sacrifice, before, he could even be accepted by God, before any man could be accepted by God.

And Paul is saying, that the righteousness of God given to man, is like an appeasement of the wrath of God. God not only acquits us, acquires us from sins bondage, but righteousness that is credited to us, appeases the wrath of God. Otherwise, how can sinners stand before a holy and angry God? There must be an appeasement. And those are the pictures of righteousness that is given to us.

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But finally, we come to the price of the righteousness of God. This is the reasoning given by Paul. God wants to redeem us, he wants to give us righteousness. It is like an acquittal, acquisition and appeasement. But that righteousness that God wants to give to man poses a problem theoretically speaking to God. What is the problem you say? The problem is this. If God is truly righteous and truly just, He should not forgive sinners, because, sinners deserve to be judged for their sins. But now that Paul says God wants to justify sinners, make sinners righteous, then that flies against the righteousness of God. How can the righteous God, forgive unrighteous man, that's not right. Someone has to pay isn't it?

Three days ago, June 2, I read in the news about this man and about this girl, familiar? Some of you are, some of you are not. This triggered my memory some two years ago in 09. This man's name is Philip Garrido. The girl's name is Jacyee Lee Dugard. Two years ago, Jacyee Lee Dugard was found. She was found after missing for 18 years. When she was 11 years old, some twenty years before this, she was on the way to school, walking to the bus stop in California, when she suddenly disappeared from the face of the earth as it were. 18 years later, it was discovered that Philip Garrido, who used to be a sex offender, at parole during that time, had kidnapped and abducted Jacyee Lee Dugard and forcefully imprisoned her for 18 years at his home, sexually assaulted her and even fathered two children with her. In 2009, somehow Jacyee Lee Dugard, managed to escape and subsequent investigation pointed to the fact that Philip Garrido is the offender, he is guilty.

He was put on trial for a long time and it was only on June 2, three days ago that the sentence was passed by the judge that Philip Garrido would now have to serve 431 years in prison. I do not know how that works out, but he is to serve 431 years in prison. Now when that sentence was passed, immediately, netizens started to air their views. I write down verbatim what they say. Some people said:

“what a vile evil man bring back the death sentence I say”

So they say, this is not enough, Philip Garrido should not just go to prison, he should die for his horrific crimes. Some others said:

“This man should be sentenced to death..... Why should decent people who pay their taxes have to pay to keep this useless individual alive? What can he possibly bring to anyone on the planet?”

“The judge should have ordered to decapitate him (Added by Pastor : chop off his head)

I feel sorry for the girl.....please if the punishment can be reviewed ...I will vote for even burn him alive.....”

You know, there is something even in the hearts of fallen man for justice to be served. No matter how sinful we are, there is somehow still that sense of justice in us, when we hear this horrific crime and we say, this man, Philip Garrido, deserves all that he receives. 431 years in prison is too easy for this man. Imagine, on 2 June, Philip Garrido stands before the charge and the judge says, "All the evidences point to the fact that you have committed atrocities, you had kidnapped, abducted, imprisoned forcefully, sexually abused this girl for so many years. You are guilty, but because I like you, I will set you free."

How do you think the world will react, how will the world react? Now I'm not sure, if there be anything Philip Garrido can do to repay or in the sense to make up to Jacyee Lee Dugard. But what matters with regards to justice, there'll be no man in this world who could say, Philip Garrido, set free is perfectly fine. The justice in us, the sense of justice in us, we'll cry, this is unfair, this is unjust, this is the unrighteous, sack the judge. Do you know what this problem poses therefore? Think about it, we are no better than Philip Garrido, lest we shake our heads at this man, let us realize, from the biblical point of view, there is no difference; for all have sinned, we are no better than this man. And for God to come and say, "I declare you righteous." It poses a theoretical problem, in a sense to God. Because, the whole universe would be perpetuating this scandal that God is unrighteous, that God is unjust, how could He just closed His eyes and let these sinners be saved. Isn't this a problem, isn't this the difficulty?

And this is what Paul says to clarify. He says in verse 25,

25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;

Let me start from the end. The word forbearance, is the word patience or tolerance. The word remission is not forgiveness, is not forgiveness. It is the word that means to pass over or to overlook. In modern language, it is to close one's eyes to. The sins that are past, refers to the sins that are committed before the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. He refers to the sins of Abraham, of Joseph, of Isaac and so, what this second half reads is this, "God passes over, closes one eye, overlooks the sins of the people of the past through his patience."

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And this is where scandal can happen- How can God do that, isn't Joseph a sinner, isn't Abraham a sinner, how can God simply overlook their sins? Paul says, "This is why I need to write this, I need to write this to declare God's righteousness. God is still righteous and just, to forgive, pardon, justify sinners. Why? Because there is a price, a heavy price that is paid. Yes, righteousness is given to us without a cost, freely. It is free to us in a sense, but it costs God in a sense, His Son, everything. And so the Bible tells us, God send forth Jesus to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness

25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;

Can I tell you something, the death of Jesus Christ we often think is for us. I think that's right, there is nothing wrong, He did die for us. But has it ever crossed your mind that the death of Jesus Christ is for God, in order to declare His righteousness. You see, this is what Paul goes on to say in verse 26, to declare, to make known I say at this time, His righteousness. He is not a cheap judge, He is not a corrupt judge, He is not an unfair, unjust, unrighteous judge. He is righteous, through the death of His Son, that He might be just and at the same time the Justifier of him which believes in Jesus.

The justice of God stands as a mountain that cannot be shaken. He is, as Spurgeon, you will read later on says, "inflexibly righteous." He is always righteous, He is righteous because that is Him, just as He is love. God is always righteous, yet God is also always love and how can the righteousness and the love of God meet. If God is

righteous, He must punish sinners, if God is love, He will save sinners. So, how can this two meet. My friends, that vertical and horizontal meet upon the cross, this is where it intersects, that the justice of God would be poured out on His Son, that He can then declare us righteous, that He might be both just and the justifier of him which believe in Jesus.

Spurgeon, says it best I think,

CH Spurgeon

“Ah, sinner, if God punish not thy sin, he has ceased to be what He has always been—the severely just, the inflexibly righteous...”

(Added by Pastor : If God is just, He has to punish us for our sins)

“Is it possible (Added by Pastor : If God is so righteous and just), then, that the sinner cannot be saved? This is the great riddle of the law, and the grand discovery of the Gospel.”

“Wonder ye heavens! Be astonished O earth! That very justice which stood in the sinner’s way and prevented his being pardoned, has been by the Gospel of Christ appeased;”

“by the rich atonement offered upon Calvary, justice is satisfied, has sheathed its sword, and has no not a word to say against the pardon of the penitent.”

The Gospel is profound and rich.

You know, if you do not have a typical mindset, it would not be a problem to you, isn't it? Man generally accepted this as no problem, but not to an awesome, righteous and just God, that must be solved and that is solved by giving us His Son. Spurgeon said in a beautiful way, but a song we sang said it in a simpler, but no less powerful way. These are the lyrics that appropriately explains what we have been considering.

Because the Sinless Saviour died

My sinful soul is counted free

For God the Just is satisfied

To look on Christ & pardon me

Let's bow for a word of prayer shall we. Father, we stand in awe and amazement at the words we hear this morning. Forgive us, for we have often failed to consider the depths of the meaning of the Gospel. We have failed to plumb its depths, with regards to the richness of the righteousness of God. We are amazed today God, that You, would give us the Gospel, that you chose to give Your Son, in order that sinners like us can be saved, we praise you God that you are just, you are righteous, you are holy, you are loving, you are merciful, you are gracious.

Lord, even as we reflect upon these words, our hearts fill with joy and awe, and appreciation of who You are. And as we consider these things, would you help us, to live more and more for You. Today I pray as well for, friends and loved ones who are gathered here, who need the Gospel, who have set about their lives, trying to attain righteousness on their own. May the Word of God today convict their hearts and convince them, of Jesus, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. Father, you have told us, it is by hearing of the Word that there will be faith. I pray, Spirit of God, that you will work in such hearts even right now, that faith would arise and faith would lay hold upon, the saving, atoning work upon the cross. God be gracious, to save souls today and draw all of us closer towards Yourself. Thank you for the Scriptures, thank you for the considerations You have given to us. We ask and pray all this now in Jesus name, amen. God bless.