

Our Problem; God's Solution

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[0 : 00] Romans chapter 1, verse 16 and 17.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.

To the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith as it is written.

The righteous shall live by faith. And then two chapters later in Romans chapter 3, beginning in verse 21.

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

[1 : 08] Even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all of them that believe.

For there is no difference. For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

Whom God have set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood. May God honor the reading of his word.

You may be seated. There can be no debate concerning the depth of depravity of the human race. We see it every day. We hear about it every day. And if I could make any statement concerning that, I would have to say that man's inhumanity to man is deepening.

[2 : 25] Fresh on our hearts is the horrible crime in Buffalo, New York, where ten people were murdered by one lone gunman.

What were they doing wrong? They were shopping for groceries. Last Sunday in a Presbyterian church in California, a lone gunman shot five parishioners.

At least one was killed. I haven't heard an update. The other four were critical. And a question often arises.

When tragedies of this magnitude strike our nation or the world, where is God? Where is God in all of this?

Where was God in Buffalo? Where was God in California? Where was God when the Twin Towers fell in New York City?

[3 : 33] Where was God when the Murrah building in Oklahoma City blew up? Where was God the night my detective partner was murdered by a drug dealer?

In 1978. I will tell you this morning where God was in each one of those events and others like them that happen every day.

Wrap your minds around this. God was precisely where people wanted him to be.

God was in their lives. For some, he was the center of their lives. He was on the throne of their hearts.

And even in sadness and tears, they could go to him. For others, he was far away. Having been rejected and spurned and mocked and denied.

[4 : 47] But mark this thought down. God is always precisely where he should be during all of life's tragedies. The problem we have in this wicked world is sin.

The human heart is deceitful and desperately wicked. Who can know it? All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

There is none who does good, not even one. All of our accumulated righteousness appears as a filthy rag before the eyes of God.

God. Permit me an observation this morning. I do not believe we have ever fully grasped the depth of the fall of mankind that occurred in the Garden of Eden in the third chapter of the book of

Genesis.

Genesis. We have never plumbed its depths. As a race called the human race, we were not merely wounded.

[6 : 05] We couldn't put a band-aid on the problem and see it go away. We, that is the human race, died in the very moment that our first parents chose the path of disobedience.

This death was spiritual and meant we became separated from God. He who is holy will not have communion with that which is unholy.

The separation occurred immediately with Adam and Eve. What's the first thing they did? They tried to hide from God. Where do you go to hide from God?

There was a time I wish I knew where that place was at. I'm not fearful now, but I used to be. And in their hiding, and they were ashamed, they didn't want God to see them because they discovered they were naked.

And in their shame, they hid from God. And they even created a human religion in hiding.

[7 : 24] They created a human religion based upon their own works righteousness, trying to work their way back into God's favor through their own efforts.

They sewed fig leaves together to hide their shame. I call that fig leaf religion. The first religion. They were further separated when banished from the garden. And in fact, the entire garden was removed from earth. The sin nature within the human family began to manifest itself in unimaginable ways.

When Adam and Eve had two sons, there was a murder. Older brother Cain killed younger brother Abel.

Within ten generations of Adam, God destroyed the entire human race on earth with a flood, sparing only Noah and his wife and his three sons and their three wives.

[8 : 38] Eight people out of every person on the face of this earth. And it was just a few generations later, after the ark, after the flood, we see God coming down and confusing the languages of the people.

Why would he do that? Because they were going to lift themselves up higher than God. They didn't need God. And they all spoke the same language. So God came down, confused their language. And now all these languages and people couldn't understand each other. And they began to separate, which is what God had commanded of the first. Go and populate the earth. And so it has gone down through the ages.

Our sin nature has touched everything. It has polluted the human race down to this very day. I see the atrocities going on in the Ukraine, especially with women and children and old people, and I just weep.

I tear up. It is safe to say that in the Garden of Eden, a war broke out between God and man.

[10 : 02] And this war has raged for generations and millennia is raging still. Billions have fallen in this war.

Billions. Examine what God has done for us. And this is a very limited list. He called out a people. We call them the Hebrews.

He called out this people for himself. And they sinned. He gave them his law and they sinned even more.

He sent prophets. And they killed them. He sent his son. And we crucified him.

And so it is gone. Does mankind have any hope? Can we extricate ourselves from this sin problem?

[11 : 05] That has been asked down through the ages. Down through the ages. And this was foremost on the mind of an obscure priest in the Catholic Church 500 years ago by the name of Martin Luther.

Luther. We now know him as the great reformer. And whether you know it or not, we, and that's this church, and every member of this church, is a product of God's work that he did through Luther.

Luther. Because what Luther taught, people took and came to this country, and it spread. Luther was going to be a lawyer.

Just what we need, another lawyer. I'm sorry if there's... Luther was going to be a lawyer. And God said, no, you're not.

So, one day Luther was out, and a storm came up with lightning. We're familiar with that, aren't we? A storm came up, and Luther was nearly struck.

[12 : 21] He went to the ground. He was shocked. But he laid there, and he began to pray, not to the Lord, but to one of the Catholic saints. And he said, if you'll spare my life, I'll become a Catholic priest.

Well, he kept his promise. God spared him, and he became a Catholic priest. And Luther was deeply disturbed by what he saw in the priesthood in his day.

It deeply troubled him. He struggled with the sin question and the fall of man, and Luther wanted to know, can a man be made right with God?

God, he even took a trip to Rome. This was the height for a Catholic priest in his day. I guess it is to this day. And he goes to Rome, and he thinks, they'll know in Rome if I can be made right with God. What's the first thing he sees in Rome? Brothels with prostitutes that are employed for the priests.

[13 : 37] And he saw priests going into these in their garb, and he couldn't believe it. Well, they had the ladder and stairs there, and I can't remember how many stairs, like 70 stone steps, and Luther said, if I go up on those steps on my knees and pray on every step, I'll have my answer.

And he went up on his knees to the very top, and when he got there, he wasn't right with God, but he sure had sore knees. He was very, very sore.

He went back to Germany, went to a small village, struggling. Can I be right with God? And he looks up on this mountaintop, and there's a monastery.

And he said, they will know. And he journeyed up, this time on his feet, journeyed up to that monastery, knocked on the door, they invited him in, and he became, I guess, a priest in training.

But this provided no solution for him. He continued to struggle with sin. Now at the monastery, Luther and the other young priests were expected to work.

[14 : 58] They had duties. They had to clean the monastery. They had to work in the garden. They had to mop the floors.

But primary was they had to attend confession once a day. Every priest had to go to confession.

Well, what were they confessing?

The previous 24 hours sin. Any sins they committed previous 24 hours, they had to go to confession. They were required to go. And they would line up, and they would go into the confession all alone with just the priest, father confessor inside.

And you know, I thought about those. What were they confessing? They were in a monastery in like 1525 on a mountaintop and I came up with a few.

Last night after lights out, I burned a candle under my covers so I could read my Bible. I wasn't supposed to do that. It was supposed to be lights out. But at least he came up with something and he confessed it and he was able to leave.

[16 : 13] Another priest came and he said, I couldn't help it tonight at supper I coveted Brother Ralph's mashed potatoes. I mean, how much trouble can you get into on a mountaintop in a German monastery in the 16th century?

You could get in a lot of trouble today in a monastery but that's not my theme today. But in 1525, no. But when it was time for Luther to enter the confessional, there was a groan that went out you could hear throughout the building.

It just reverberated. Luther would confess his previous day's sins for six hours, for eight hours, ten hours, and one time it was recorded that Luther confessed his sin, the previous day's sins, for 15 straight hours.

When he was through, he made his way back to his very modest room and before arriving he remembered a sin that he had left out and he went back and he found the father confessor because he was devastated and he said, can I start over?

He just confessed for 15 hours and the father confesses, no, no, you're not going to do that. The Catholic fathers running the monastery thought he was a malingerer. He's just trying to get out of work.

[17 : 48] He doesn't want to mop. He doesn't want to clean. They just thought he was trying to get out of work. But let me tell you something. They were wrong. Luther was at war with himself over the sin question and he kept asking himself, can a man be made right with God?

And a lot of people ask that today. And a lot of people don't care today. We know that, right? One evening in his room, I'm sure after lights out with a candle that he snuck in there, under his covers, they don't want to get caught, he was reading from a scroll of the book of Romans.

and he came to this passage which we've previously read. I'll read again. For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

For in it, the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith as it is written, the righteous shall live by faith.

And Luther paused. He couldn't believe what he had just read. He thought his eyes were playing a trick on him and he kept reading over and over the righteousness of God.

[19 : 23] The righteousness of God. And for Luther that night, the light bulb came on. For years, Luther tried to conjure up a self-righteousness that was sufficient whereby he could be made right with God, but he always fell far short.

And now he discovers the answer to his sin problem and to ours. It was not within us.

It certainly wasn't within Luther. The answer of the sin problem was not found in any man or woman. It is found only in God.

It's only in God. And specifically, the answer was that God has provided his own righteousness through faith in Christ Jesus by which to deal with sin.

That's the solution. William Tyndale, the great Bible translator, he worked on one Bible called the Matthew Bible in the early 1500s.

[20 : 40] Here's how he translated Romans 117. And he was a genius in Greek. for by it the righteousness which comes from God is unveiled from faith to faith as it is written.

The just shall live by faith. Do you hear that beloved? God does not build a spiritual house based upon our righteousness.

I don't know about you, but I'm sure glad. He does not look down and pick people found worthy of salvation. I'm glad again. We have no worthiness to offer.

Instead, He graces His children, the lost, and the depravity of sin with His righteousness and that righteousness was manifested in the life and death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus Himself told us in Mark chapter 2, I came not to call the righteous, but sinners. This is a righteousness that comes down from heaven and is bestowed upon those who will receive it by faith.

[22 : 02] So sure is this righteousness that it does not depend upon our faith, but rather upon the faith that God bestows upon us. It's His faith He graces us with.

Ephesians chapter 2, For by grace you have been saved through faith, that not of yourselves, not your faith. It is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

What do we know about this righteousness? Sadly, I must hurry through each of these, each point I'm going to make this morning is a message in itself.

Let me complete the passage we're going to look at today, because Luther, in reading that scroll, turned two chapters later, and this is what he read in chapter 3, but now the righteousness of God, and you could put in there from God, without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon them that believe, for there is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God have set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood.

Well, what is this saying? What do we know about this righteousness from the inspired word of God, from the Holy Spirit who cannot lie?

[23 : 49] What do we know about this righteousness? First, we know that it is a righteousness that is apart from legalism, but now apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been manifested.

The word but is interesting, it stands between human depravity and our inability to please God and God's own provision of a way to himself. He starts out, but the righteousness that saves is apart from laws and rules and regulations.

Dare I say this, it is even apart from the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments are still alive, it is the moral law of God, but they were not given to save us, they were given to show us our hopeless condition and our need for a Savior who has fulfilled them.

The righteousness is built on revelation, being witnessed by the law and the prophets. prophets.

This righteousness is apart from the law, but it is witnessed to by both the law and the prophets.

They spoke of the day of Christ and they longed to see it. The law is described as a mirror showing us our need for Christ.

[25 : 16] We look into the mirror and we see that person and he needs Jesus, he or she. In verse 23, the righteousness is acquired by faith.

We acquire even the righteousness from God through faith in Jesus Christ. Paul is speaking here of the absolute and perfect righteousness of God and not the imperfect righteousness of man. Human achievement can never rise to the level of being joined to God. It can only come through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is why human devised religion is such a depravity before God. Man imagines he is good enough to reach God with his own righteousness when all the time he has none.

Do you realize that in a recent poll of evangelical Christians in the United States of America 70% said they believe that people are basically good.

[26 : 31] What an affront to God. What an affront to God's revealed scripture. It says no one does good not even one. Romans 3 12.

God will be What is saving faith? It is a far cry from what is taught in many venues today. It goes beyond simple affirmation. It goes beyond reciting a prayer dreamed up by a man.

Saving faith is placing oneself totally in submission to the Lord Jesus Christ. It involves the complete person.

Your will, your emotions, your intellect. And Paul says several places it's also a mystery. It's mysterious. Saving faith begins with God to man and not man to God.

Jesus described it and he said you know what it's like the wind. No one knows where it starts. We don't know where it will end.

[27 : 36] But we sure know it blows. And Jesus went on and said particularly if you live in Oklahoma someday. In verse 22 and 23 this righteousness is provided for all who believe.

For all those who believe there is no distinction for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Anyone who believes Greek word pistou that means trust trust and commits their life.

It's stronger than English. Trust and commits their life will be saved. There is no distinction. Rich and poor may come.

Black and white and every race known to mankind may come. people will be here from every tribe and tongue and nation and those who come will in no wise be cast out.

There is no distinction. We all come with one thing in common. We've all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. And we learn in verse 24 this righteousness is given freely through grace being justified as a gift by his grace.

[29 : 04] I like to get gifts and I like to give gifts. I shop for Diane at Christmas every December 24th. But being justified speaks of the great doctrine of justification.

That is a legal declaration made by the judge of the universe by God that he makes concerning his children at the moment of rebirth the moment he saves us he declares us just one common phrase related to this is that God treats us in justification just as we've never sinned that's true but it goes so far beyond that when you were saved God made a declaration you are now just in me through my son Jesus Christ and I am going to treat you just like your Jesus that's pretty strong I don't know how to get any stronger than that that's why one of my favorite passages in the Bible is Romans 8 1 there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus what's there to condemn about

Jesus nothing we're in him that verse goes on who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit in Romans 3 24 we learn this this righteousness is accomplished by redemption now picture this Luther's reading this with his covers pulled up and a little candle it's accomplished by redemption through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus redemption carries with it the idea of delivering we have been delivered from the domain of darkness to the kingdom of light it also carries with it the idea of a price tag grace is free beloved but it is not cheap hear that this morning grace is free but it is not cheap if you want to see the price of grace look at the pile of blood at the foot of the cross it was very costly the term of redemption was commonly used to describe the freeing of a slave from bondage we have been set free from slavery to sin to become willing slaves to Christ

Jesus and we want to be a slave of Jesus don't we in verse 25 this righteousness was paid by an atoning sacrifice an atoning sacrifice verse 25 whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in his blood through faith years ago I was sharing the good news of Christ with a young young girl young woman and she said I could never go up there and be baptized because I would be so embarrassed and I said let me talk to you about embarrassment when the creator God of the

universe was nailed to a cross without clothes I know we dress that up a little bit with the master artists of Europe but without clothes and you could see even bones in his rib cage because of the beating that's something to be embarrassed about but he gave us propitiation in his blood why because we have no righteousness of our own

God graciously bestows his righteousness upon us and specifically he did it through the atoning sacrifice of his son that read the first chapter first John keep reading get into the second chapter couple verses it talks about the atoning sacrifice God displayed his son publicly as a propitiation nothing was done in secret and it was during Passover hundreds of thousands or millions of people were in Jerusalem now propitiation is not a word we use much anymore it means the appeasement or the satisfaction or the atoning sacrifice when God looks at you and

[34 : 34] I if he sees something in us he is satisfied he is satisfied he is appeased what is appeased his wrath the father's wrath for sin when God sees it he's satisfied well what does he see God sees the blood of Christ applied to your heart and to mine by the Holy Spirit he is satisfied because God himself said in the Old Testament without the shedding of blood there can be no forgiveness of sins someone had to shed their blood for our forgiveness and it had to be perfect blood sinless blood well that narrows it down doesn't it in this world remember when the angel of death visited

Egypt to kill the firstborn now the Hebrews had been instructed to apply the blood of an innocent lamb there's some symbolism there an innocent lamb on the doorposts and lintel of their homes we know what doorposts are there's a door up here maybe but the top piece is a lintel and they applied the blood of an innocent lamb on that and when the death angel appeared and he did that very night he saw that blood and he passed over that home guess where we get the word Passover he passed over he didn't enter in and kill the firstborn when God sees the blood of his dear precious son applied to your heart and to your life he is satisfied his wrath is quenched for eternity his wrath passes over you because the blood of

Christ has been applied to the doorpost and lintel of your heart if in fact you are one with Jesus and now the question we have to each answer am I covered by the blood of Christ if you and I were to stand before God this day would he say to you I am satisfied I have no wrath reserved for you my son has died specifically in your place and for your sins if you cannot say that this morning may I say to you with love and mercy and grace all that I can conjure up you are in grave danger you may well be in grave danger

I cannot understate that do not let another moment pass by that you don't cast yourself upon the mercy of God that is found only in Christ Jesus our Lord today is the day of salvation tomorrow is never guaranteed to anyone my good friend Dennis Nix was doing great on Friday felt poorly Saturday night and now may be dying or may be has died over at the hospital we don't have tomorrow guaranteed in John 6:37 Jesus said this all that the father gives me will come to me and whoever comes to me

I will never cast out so my question is have you come to Jesus Jesus and before you answer that are you displaying the evidence that you've come to Jesus well what's the evidence that I've come to him obedience to his word perfect obedience no we fail many times but there will be a pattern of obedience obedience to his word there's some 600 commands of the Lord in the New Testament what if we had a test and say let's write down 25 of those right now could we do it I couldn't I might be able to write a few don't let another day pass if there's any doubt you don't have to walk out of here doubting today you don't have to settle the issue settle the issue let's pray most gracious [40 : 28] God and father of the Lord Jesus Christ before whom one day we must all appear and give an account we bow both our heads in our hearts in your presence Lord you are the great God who has revealed himself to us in awesome and mysterious trinity the father the son and the holy spirit the one true God and Lord I know you are still in the business of saving people and I know that because you haven't come back yet for the church we are still here and we are supposed to be busy sharing the good news with the lost Lord

I read three things in the Bible about the church we are to worship you in spirit and truth we are to go to the uttermost parts of the world and take the message of the cross and we are to remember those in chains as if we were chained with them Lord you know that I was at the voice of the martyrs board of directors meeting yesterday I'm on their board and we got a rundown of all the pastors that are being killed throughout Africa and the Middle East and Asia and other parts of this world even in America where the church is being attacked what a time we live in Lord you're in the

business of saving souls if there's one here that needs to be saved today or a hundred we pray that you will do so and I ask all this in the blessed and holy name of Jesus Amen