

The Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ

Bible Reading – Romans 3 verses 21 to 31 AMP

²¹ *“But now the righteousness of God has been clearly revealed [independently and completely] apart from the Law, though it is [actually] confirmed by the Law and the [words and writings of the] Prophets.*

²² *This righteousness of God comes through faith in Jesus Christ for all those [Jew or Gentile] who believe [and trust in Him and acknowledge Him as God’s Son]. There is no distinction, ²³ since all have sinned and continually fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are being justified [declared free of the guilt of sin, made acceptable to God, and granted eternal life] as a gift by His [precious, undeserved] grace, through the redemption [the payment for our sin] which is [provided] in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God displayed publicly [before the eyes of the world] as a [life-giving] sacrifice of atonement and reconciliation (propitiation) by His blood [to be received] through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness [which demands punishment for sin], because in His forbearance [His deliberate restraint] He passed over the sins previously committed [before Jesus’ crucifixion]. ²⁶ It was to demonstrate His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the One who justifies those who have faith in Jesus [and rely confidently on Him as Saviour].*

²⁷ *Then what becomes of [our] boasting? It is excluded [entirely ruled out, banished]. On what principle? On [the principle of good] works? No, but on the principle of faith. ²⁸ For we maintain that an individual is justified by faith distinctly apart from works of the Law [the observance of which has nothing to do with justification, that is, being declared free of the guilt of sin and made acceptable to God].*

²⁹ *Or is God the God of Jews only? Is He not also the God of Gentiles [who were not given the Law]? Yes, of Gentiles also, ³⁰ since indeed it is one [and the same] God who will justify the circumcised by faith [which began with Abraham] and the uncircumcised through [their newly acquired] faith.*

³¹ Do we then nullify the Law by this faith [making the Law of no effect, overthrowing it]? Certainly not! On the contrary, we confirm and establish and uphold the Law [since it convicts us all of sin, pointing to the need for salvation].'

SERMON

Today, as we remember the fallen heroes of two world wars, some of whom, both men and women, will be known to many of us personally, I want to talk about the greatest personal sacrifice ever made by one person for the sake of others; and that of course was the death of Jesus Christ on the Cross.

I feel a desire in me, to remind you today, of the meaning of that event which, to born-again Christians was the most important act that ever occurred in the history of mankind; the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ on a cross.

Christmas is coming and it seems to me that for many Christians the **birth** of Jesus Christ was the most important day in the history of the world; their celebrations would certainly appear to indicate that, anyway, but as important as that event was, the death and resurrection of Jesus was infinitely more important for you and me in terms of what it achieved for us.

Why was it so important?

Well, sadly, many good people still believe they can only work their way into Heaven, by doing lots of good things. I'm sure I've told you before that when I was young, many was the time my dear mum would share with me, her ongoing worries about whether or not she had lived a good enough life to be allowed into Heaven when she died.

I wonder.... Do you have that struggle? Do you worry in case you are not 'good enough' to go to Heaven?

Well let me put you out of your misery – NONE of us are good enough!

Let me explain...

The Bible tells us over and over that human beings are tainted by sin and our sin makes us unworthy and unacceptable to God. The price we pay for our sin, in the eyes of our just God, is death. Throughout Old Testament Scripture the priests had to sacrifice a perfect, unblemished lamb in order to atone for (or

cover) the sins of the people, month after month, year after year. The sacrifices made the people 'right with God', until they sinned again!

Jesus was **without sin** and was the only perfect man who walked the earth. He alone was an acceptable sacrifice to God for our sins. His sacrifice brought to an end the need for the sacrifice of animals without defect.

Because none of us are good enough, God decided to make a way for us to be saved, **despite** our sin.

In the reading today, Paul explains to us in his letter to the Christians living in Rome the fact that in the past (that is prior to Christ) the way of salvation was achieved by adhering to every part of the law. And nobody was able to do that, hence the need for the priests of the past to sacrifice a spotless lamb regularly, to cleanse the people of their sin in order for God's wrath to be satisfied.

But, says Paul, now – as a result of the death of Jesus Christ – there is no longer the need for animal sacrifices, God had allowed something new to happen, as regards the way of salvation for every believer.

Paul calls it justification.

What does he mean?

Well if we look at dictionaries for the answer, we see some helpful definitions like...

'The declaring of a person to be just or righteous'.

'The act of making someone right with God'.

'It is a legal term signifying acquittal'.

'It is the opposite of condemnation'.

If we tried to combine those definitions, we might come up with something like 'A person is made 'right with God.' They are not condemned but acquitted (of their wrongdoing), on the contrary, they are found to be guiltless, and exonerated!'

I wonder, do you feel like that today?

If not, you **can do** if you simply believe in Jesus Christ as your Saviour and, confess and repent of your wrongdoings...

According to Verse 24 of today's reading, 'justification' means ***'[declared free of the guilt of sin, made acceptable to God, and granted eternal life]'***.

To better understand how we receive this 'justification' we need to read again five verses of today's reading (verses 22 to 26). This is what those verses say...

'The righteousness of God comes through faith in Jesus Christ for all those [Jew or Gentile] who believe [and trust in Him and acknowledge Him as God's Son]. There is no distinction, since all have sinned and continually fall short of the glory of God, and are being justified [declared free of the guilt of sin, made acceptable to God, and granted eternal life] as a gift by His [precious, undeserved] grace, through the redemption [the payment for our sin] which is [provided] in Christ Jesus, whom God displayed publicly [before the eyes of the world] as a [life-giving] sacrifice of atonement and reconciliation (propitiation) by His blood [to be received] through faith.

This was to demonstrate His righteousness [which demands punishment for sin], because in His forbearance [His deliberate restraint] He passed over the sins previously committed [before Jesus' crucifixion]. It was to demonstrate His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the One who justifies those who have faith in Jesus [and rely confidently on Him as Saviour].'

There is real and confident hope of eternal life for ALL of us here today ***'who have faith in Jesus [and rely confidently on Him as Saviour],'*** and, as it says in verse 22, ***'acknowledge Him as God's Son.***

This teaching is so key to Paul that he shares it with many of the other early churches that he wrote to, and which form part of the New Testament.

Listen to what Paul says to the Church in Corinth about justification:

'(God) made Christ who knew no sin to [judicially] be sin on our behalf, so that in Him we would become the righteousness of God [that is, we would be made acceptable to Him and placed in a right relationship with Him by His gracious lovingkindness]. (2 Corinthians 5 v 21)

This is how Paul explains the concept of justification in Galatians 2 v 16:

'...We know that a man is not justified [and placed in right standing with God] by works of the Law, but [only] through faith in [God's beloved Son,] Christ Jesus. And even we [as Jews] have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the Law. By observing

the Law no one will ever be justified [declared free of the guilt of sin and its penalty].'

The Amplified Bible adds this helpful note concerning the verse I have just read to you:

'Being justified is a legal or judicial declaration of righteousness. Justification has two parts: Firstly, being declared free of blame, acquitted of sin—not guilty. Believers are justified because Jesus Christ personally assumed the guilt for our sin on the cross;

Secondly, God declares the person righteous, that is, placed in a position of right-standing with Him. A person **cannot** be made righteous by his personal behaviour, no matter how good, or by the declaration of any other human being.'

If we look again at the last verse of the Galatians scripture I just read to you, it says this:

'By observing the Law, no one will ever be justified [declared free of the guilt of sin and its penalty].'

And if we look at what Paul wrote to the Ephesian Church, we read this in Ephesians chapter 2 verses 8 and 9...

'For it is by grace [God's remarkable compassion and favour drawing you to Christ] that you have been saved [actually delivered from judgment and given eternal life] through faith. And this [salvation] is not of yourselves [not through your own effort], but it is the [undeserved, gracious] gift of God; not as a result of [your] works [nor your attempts to keep the Law], so that no one will [be able to] boast or take credit in any way [for his salvation].'

Some 'Christians' have taken Paul's words concerning the inability of the law to save us, to - in effect - give them a licence to sin, claiming we are no longer under the Old Testament law.

And so, it is at this point I want to return to the Scripture I read out loud earlier on in this service – that is **Romans chapter 3**.

So far in Romans chapter 3 we have seen two key things...

Firstly, we are only justified (that is made right with God) by **faith in Jesus Christ as our Saviour**, and secondly that **the Old Testament law (in this case the Ten Commandments) is NOT nullified**.

Indeed, Jesus told us this in the Gospels, and he said in Matthew's Gospel chapter 5 and verses 17 to 19:

“Do not think that I came to do away with or undo the Law [of Moses] or the [writings of the] Prophets; I did not come to destroy but to fulfil. For I assure you and most solemnly say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke [of the pen] will pass from the Law until all things [which it foreshadows] are accomplished. So whoever breaks one of the least [important] of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least [important] in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever practices and teaches them, he will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.’

Now this is what Paul says, in Romans chapter 3, verses 27 to 31...

‘Then what becomes of [our] boasting? It is excluded [entirely ruled out, banished]. On what principle? On [the principle of good] works?

No, but on the principle of faith. For we maintain that an individual is justified by faith distinctly apart from works of the Law [the observance of which has nothing to do with justification, that is, being declared free of the guilt of sin and made acceptable to God]. Or is God the God of Jews only? Is He not also the God of Gentiles [who were not given the Law]? Yes, of Gentiles also, since indeed it is one [and the same] God who will justify the circumcised (the Jews) by faith [which began with Abraham], and the uncircumcised (us gentiles) through [their newly acquired] faith.

Do we then nullify the Law by this faith [making the Law of no effect, overthrowing it]? Certainly not! On the contrary, we confirm and establish and uphold the Law [since it convicts us all of sin, pointing to the need for salvation].’

Did you know that if you are a believer in Jesus Christ, and you regularly confess and turn away from your sins and obey the Word of God, you have been made right with Him?

It's true. To use the hymn writer's words 'The Bible tells me so.'

This is how that amazing early twentieth century Christian, Oswald Chambers puts it, in his book ***My Utmost for His Highest...***

“I am not saved by believing – I simply realise I am saved by believing. And it is not repentance that saves me – repentance is only the sign that I realise what

God has done through Christ Jesus. The danger here is putting the emphasis on the effect, instead of on the cause. Is it my obedience, consecration, and dedication that make me right with God? It is never that!

I am made right with God because, prior to all of that, Christ died. When I turn to God, and by belief accept what God reveals, the miraculous atonement by the Cross of Christ instantly places me in a right relationship with God.

And as a result of the supernatural miracle of God's grace I stand justified, not because I am sorry for my sin, or because I have repented, but because of what Jesus has done. The Spirit of God brings justification with a shattering, radiant light, and I know that I am saved, even though I don't know how it was accomplished."

To close, you and I are made right with God not because of any good works we might do, although He loves us doing good works for Him and for others, but because Jesus paid the ultimate price to give us eternal freedom; and I believe it is fitting to know that truth on the very day that we give thanks to God for the many men and women who gave their lives unselfishly during the course of the last 105 years, in order that we may live in peace and freedom.

God bless you deeply as He helps us all to give thanks in our prayers, not just for those fallen heroes of two world wars, but also for Jesus Christ, the sinless, perfect sacrifice, who died in our place, taking upon Himself, the punishment we deserve for our sins, so that we can be in right standing with God, because this will enable us to live in peace, joy and contentment on this earth, as well as enjoy eternal life in Heaven when our time here comes to an end...

AMEN

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