

## 38. The Book of Romans 3:24

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### *Paul's Epistle to the Romans*

A message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier

(1-17-24)

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We have just entered into the second major section of the Book of Romans—a section that runs from 3:21-5:21. The first major section dealt with '**Condemnation**'—whereas this new section deals with '**Justification**.'

In the first section Paul told unsaved men and women they were lost—but in this new section he tells lost sinners how to be saved.

The first section of Romans ended with verse 20 of Chapter 3—"**Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.**"

Verses 21-23 are transitional—they are a bridge between the condemnation of a works/righteousness approach to God—and the justification that is available through the gospel of grace thru faith in Jesus Christ—which is what this new section is all about.

Verse 24 sets forth the theme of this new section—"**...being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.**"

This is the first time the word '**grace**' appears in the book as it relates to salvation.

Paul uses it twice in his opening salutation (verses 5 and 7 of Chapter 1)—but only as a part of his customary Christian *greeting* not as an important *doctrinal* concept. So, verse 24 introduces us to the grace of God as it relates to salvation.

#### **Ephesians 2:8–9 (NKJV)**

<sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, <sup>9</sup> not of works, lest anyone should boast.

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones—

*"There is no more wonderful a word than 'grace'. It means unmerited favor or kindness shown to one who is utterly undeserving...It is not merely a free gift, but a free gift to those who deserve the exact opposite, and it is given to us while we are 'without hope and without God in the world.'" (Ephesians 2:12)*

*"During a British conference on comparative religions, experts from around the world debated what, if any, belief was unique to the Christian faith. They began eliminating possibilities. 'Incarnation'?—other religions had different version of gods appearing in human form. 'Resurrection'?—again, other religions had accounts of return from death. The debate went on for some time until C.S. Lewis wandered into the room. 'What's the rumpus about?' he asked—and heard in reply that his colleagues were discussing Christianity's unique contribution among world religions. Lewis responded, 'O that's easy—it's grace!'"*

*After some discussion, the conferencees had to agree. The notion of God's love coming to us free of charge—no strings attached—seems to go against every instinct of humanity. The Buddhist eight-fold path. The Hindu doctrine of karma. The Jewish covenant and Muslim code of law—each of these offers a way to earn approval. Only Christianity dares to make God's love unconditional (on the basis of grace)."*

One well-known Christian counselor summed up his practice this way—

*"Many years ago, I was driven to the conclusion that the two major causes of most emotional problems among evangelical Christians are: 1) The failure to understand, receive, and live out God's unconditional grace and forgiveness; 2) The failure to give out that unconditional love, forgiveness, and grace to other people..."*

Pastor Chuck Smith in his book, "Why Grace Changes Everything" had this to say—

*"Without grace my relationship with God is never an established reality and it is impossible to enjoy peace. If my relationship with God were dependent on how I felt or how I was living or on my own righteousness—I would not be able to relate to God most of the time.*

*When my relationship with God is predicated upon His grace toward me, however—the door of blessing is never closed. God's blessings are bestowed on the basis of His grace, and on His unmerited favor. I never deserve or earn a blessing. The blessings that come into my life are always predicated upon God's unmerited favor to me. God loves me so much—He blesses me anyway. God is so good! The truest praise is that which rises spontaneously from our hearts as we recognize God's marvelous grace toward us."*

Yes, grace is pretty amazing!

But what's also pretty amazing is how we who have been the recipients of so much grace from God can turn around and show so little grace to others who are in sin or who have wronged us in some way.

Last year, many of us went to see the movie, "The Jesus Revolution" about how God's grace was poured out on a generation of young people back in the 60's and 70's who were hippies, druggies, drug dealers—a group of young people that society had written off—and unfortunately so did many in the church.

Author and pastor Gordon MacDonald—

*"The world can do almost anything as well as or better than the church. You need not be a Christian to build houses, feed the hungry, or heal the sick. There is only one thing the world cannot do—it cannot offer grace."*

In the Bible, often grace is associated with forgiveness—"...being justified freely [forgiven] by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." (Romans 3:24)

Grace and forgiveness go hand in hand—grace is the *attitude*; forgiveness is the *action* that results from the attitude—and forgiveness is what people need the most whether they realize it or not.

*"The story is told in Spain of a father and his teenage son who had a relationship that had become strained. So, the son ran away from home. His father, however, began a journey in search of his rebellious son. Finally, in Madrid, in a last desperate effort to find him, the father put an ad in the newspaper. The ad read: 'Dear Paco, meet me in front of the newspaper office at noon. All is forgiven. I love you. Your father.'*

*The next day at noon in front of the newspaper office 800 young men named 'Paco' showed up. They were all seeking forgiveness and love from their fathers."*

*"Forgiveness is man's deepest need and God's highest achievement"—Pastor and theologian Horace Bushnell*

The testimony of Scripture, a testimony that's repeated over and over again, is that God is by nature a *forgiving* God. The theme of forgiveness runs through the Scriptures from Genesis through Revelation.

Even as Moses descended from Mt. Sinai with the tablets of the *law*, God emphasized His willingness to *forgive*:

**Exodus 34:6–7 (NKJV)**

<sup>6</sup> And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, <sup>7</sup> keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin...”

Since grace can either mean ‘*getting what you don’t deserve*’ or ‘*giving to someone what they don’t deserve*’—we can see why God commands us to forgive those who have wronged us even if they don’t deserve it or even asked us to forgive them—because that’s exactly what Jesus did for us when He died on the cross.

The most common word for forgiveness in the New Testament is a word that means, “*to release, to throw away, to free yourself.*”

Unforgiveness can tie you up in knots and leads to *resentment* which literally means, “*to feel again*”—in other words, resentment clings to the past reliving the hurt over and over again—like constantly picking at a newly formed scab so that the wound never really heals.

When Peter asked Jesus how often he should forgive a brother who sinned against him—the Lord replied, “*seventy times seven*” (Matthew 18:21–22), a figure that represented an unlimited amount.

“To illustrate the principle, Jesus told the parable of the unforgiving slave. After being forgiven a huge, unpayable sum by the king, the man refused to forgive a fellow slave for a pittance and was handed “*over to the torturers*” by the irate king. “*So shall My heavenly Father also do to you,*” Jesus said, “*if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart.*”

Because God in Christ has forgiven each of us that great debt of sin we owed Him—no Christian has the right to be unforgiving, especially to a fellow Christians—

**Ephesians 4:31–32 (NKJV)**

<sup>31</sup> Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. <sup>32</sup> And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

So, once again, the passage before us (verse 21-31) deals with the righteousness of God—or to put it literally, “*The righteousness that comes from God.*”

When we talk about righteousness as it relates to man  
it simply means the state of being ‘*right with God.*’

Paul is now going to be dealing with how a person can be right with God (saved and heaven-bound)—which is what the gospel of Jesus Christ is all about (Romans 1:16-17).

I’m not overstating it when I say that—this is one of the most important, foundational passages in all the Bible—the very heart of New Testament doctrine and the Christian faith.

As we said last time—Job asked the question many years ago—“*...how can a man be righteous before God?*” (Job 9:2)

Well, Paul tells us how in this section of Romans 3 and in the process, he lists—10 characteristics of God’s righteousness:

1. God’s righteousness is—apart from the law (verse 21a)
2. God’s righteousness is—revealed and affirmed in the O.T. (verse 21b)
3. God’s righteousness is—received thru faith in Jesus Christ (verse 22a)
4. God’s righteousness is—available to all who will believe (verses 22b-23)
5. God’s righteousness is—acquired by justification (verse 24)

**Romans 3:21–24 (NKJV)**

<sup>21</sup> But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, <sup>22</sup> even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; <sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup> **being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,**

In verse 24 Paul mentions 3 extremely important words in Christian theology directly—and a 4<sup>th</sup> very important word is mentioned indirectly. Those 4 great theological words or concepts are: *Grace, Justification, Redemption, and Propitiation.*

We just looked at **Grace**—which then brings us to the second great theological concept: **Justification**. The word ‘**justified**’ isn’t just a synonym for *forgiveness*. It includes the idea of forgiveness—but to make the word only mean forgiveness is to lose the real meaning of the word. Also, the word justified doesn’t just mean to be *pardoned*.

You see, a pardon only takes away the *penalty* but leaves the guilt intact—which means it only deals with the negative.

But justification is where God not only takes away the penalty—but also the guilt and gives something positive in its place—the righteousness of Christ—and so in that regard it deals with both the negative and the positive.

Warren Wiersbe—

*“Justification is different from a “pardon,” because a pardoned criminal still has a record. When the sinner is justified by faith, his past sins are remembered against him no more, and God no longer puts his sins on record (see Psalm 32:1–2; Romans 4:1–8).”*

Justified is not a synonym for *amnesty* (from ‘amnesia’—‘to forget’). It’s not that God arbitrarily ‘forgets’ that we have sinned.

Some define ‘justified’ as—“*just as if we never sinned.*” They imagine God saying, “*I’m going to pretend that it was just as if you never did it!*”

One author—

*“God’s justice and righteousness would never allow Him to capriciously say to people, “Let’s just forget you ever sinned”—without some kind of legal basis for doing so.”*

You see, justification is an act of *justice*—a legal acquittal from guilt by God, the Judge, and the pronouncement that the believing sinner is now **righteous** in His sight—How, based on what:

**2 Corinthians 5:21 (NKJV)**

<sup>21</sup> For He made Him who knew no sin to *be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (i.e., ‘penal substitution’—the foundational truth of the gospel)

Donald Grey Barnhouse sums it up for us—

*“We have seen that man is not merely a forgiven criminal still suffering for his crime; and we have seen that man is not merely a pardoned criminal, forgiven of the guilt and of the penalty. There is more. Our text declares that the sinner is justified: that is, he is forgiven, pardoned, and declared to be essentially righteous. This is far more than being declared innocent. God does not proclaim that the sinner is innocent. It would have been wonderful if fallen men had been restored to the position of Adam before the fall, yet how precarious would have been that state, for the first parents were not able to maintain it. But when we are justified, we are lifted much higher than Adam. We are made higher than the angels through Christ who was made lower than the angels (Hebrews 2:7). We are made higher than the seraphs and the cherubs. We are made higher than Lucifer was before he became Satan. We are counted as one in Christ, and are given the position of sons with the Father, and are destined to share the government of the universe with the Creator. Righteousness now belongs to the justified one even as it belongs to God, for we have been made partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4), and are a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). This does not mean that we are sinless, but it does mean that we have been declared righteous.”*

**6. God’s righteousness is—bestowed freely (verse 24)**

Listen, just because it’s free doesn’t mean it’s cheap!

**Psalms 49:7–8 (NKJV)**

<sup>7</sup> None of them can by any means redeem his brother, Nor give to God a ransom for him— <sup>8</sup> For the redemption of their souls is costly...

It cost God a great deal to purchase our salvation and offer it to us—as a free gift (grace):

**1 Peter 1:18–19 (NKJV)**

<sup>18</sup> knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, <sup>19</sup> but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

**Revelation 22:17 (NKJV)**

<sup>17</sup> And the Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.

I don’t think most Christians realize how great a work of God went into our redemption.

We talk about the vastness of the universe God created with its billions of galaxies containing trillions of stars—truly a spectacular thing to behold. But look, as spectacular as the creation is do you realize—it didn’t cost God anything to create the universe.

In fact, as large and spectacular as the universe is—only 31 verses in Genesis Chapter 1 are devoted to the creation—and the rest of the Bible to redemption?

The Bible tells us that creation was the work of God's fingers—*"When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained..."* (Psalm 8:3)

However, when it came to redemption, the Bible says He—*"bared His arms"* (rolled up His sleeves)—because this is where the real work came in.

The work of redemption—or as Paul the apostle put it—the work of the *"new creation"* was far more involved and from a human standpoint, far more difficult to accomplish than was the original creation of the physical universe.

In the creation of the physical universe all God had to do was speak and everything came into existence—but when it came to the redemption of our souls the Lord Jesus Christ, God in human form—had to die! That was because—God couldn't just 'speak' our sins away—they had to be paid for (redemption).

**7. God's righteousness is—possible because of grace (verse 24)**

Someone has defined grace this way: **God's Riches At Christ's Expense.**

**8. God's righteousness is—acquired through redemption (verse 24)**

Redemption is not a word that's used in our society very much today—but in Paul's day it was a very common term.

Many people today have no idea what redemption is, especially when it is talked about in the pages of the New Testament—however, the first century Greco-Roman world knew exactly what redemption was all about—it was all about slavery.

You see, in the first century Greco-Roman world slavery was very much a part of their daily lives—in fact, it has been estimated that more than half the people you'd see on the streets of some of the great cities of the Roman Empire back then—were slaves!

These were people without rights—mere property existing only for the comfort, convenience and pleasure of their owners. As you can imagine—the life of a slave was often hard, hopeless, and downright terrible. They were bought and sold like tools or animals—and discarded just as easily by their owners.

The Roman statesman Cato said, *"Old slaves should be thrown on a dump, and when a slave is ill do not feed him anything. It is not worth your money. Take sick slaves and throw them away because they are nothing but inefficient tools."*

Juvenal wrote of a slave owner whose greatest pleasure was *"listening to the sweet song of his slaves being flogged."*

Now, the idea of being set free from slavery wasn't foreign to them—that was the whole idea behind redemption—a concept they were very familiar with. You see, the word **redemption** meant—*"to purchase by paying a price"*—and that was a concept everyone in the first century Greco-Roman world understood very well.

There were some 60 million slaves in the first century Roman Empire—and they were constantly being redeemed.

For example—in the center of every major city stood the **agora** (marketplace)—this was the main place where slaves (and many other commodities) were bought and sold—think of a modern ‘*flea-market*.’ Thus, one of the Greek words for the act of *redemption* (the purchasing of a slave) is **agorazo**—from ‘agora.’

There’s a second word for *redemption* that the Greek reader of the New Testament Scriptures would have readily understood and that was **exagorazo**—“*the act of purchasing or redeeming a slave who would never again return to the agora.*”

You see, oftentimes, a man would redeem (purchase) a slave, use him for the cultivating and planting of his fields or for the harvesting of his crops—and then return him to the marketplace to be sold again.

**Exagorazo** was the antithesis of this practice, in that it spoke of a man redeeming a slave—who would become the permanent possession of that master for the rest of his life.

The third Greek word for redemption is **apolutrosis**.

**Apolutrosis** speaks of a man going into the agora to purchase a slave for the purpose of setting him free completely—never to be a slave again. Granted, that was rare but not unheard of—especially if it was a *relative* who had become another man’s slave due to unpaid debt.

However, when the Lord Jesus along with the writers of the New Testament talked about *redemption*—they weren’t talking about being set free from physical slavery as sanctioned by the Roman Government—they had another slavery in mind.

When *they* talked about being *redeemed*—it was in reference to being set free from the bondage of *spiritual* slavery to sin and the devil. That was the context in which Paul used it in his writings—

**Romans 3:24 (NKJV)**

<sup>24</sup> being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

**Colossians 1:14 (NKJV)**

<sup>14</sup> in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins [i.e., “the payment of our debt”].

When Paul talked about our redemption thru Christ in Romans 3:24 and Colossians 1:14, he used the Greek word *apolutrosis* which speaks of Jesus’ blood setting us totally and completely free—never to be a slave of sin and Satan ever again!

If a person refuses to receive what Jesus Christ did on Calvary’s cross—His death which paid for all of their sins—then they will have to stand before God someday and be sentenced to pay for their own crimes in hell forever.

This will be a great tragedy since no person needs ever to go hell—Jesus has paid our debt in full—as He said from the cross “It is finished!” (the Greek is *tetelestai* and can be translated ‘paid in full.’)

**Colossians 2:14 (NASB)**

<sup>14</sup> having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, **having nailed it to the cross**.

When Paul says in Colossians 2:14 that Jesus took our sins out of the way—“*having nailed it to His cross*” he is referring to a practice back then by which guilty criminals paid their debt to society.

When he finished paying for his crimes they would take the piece of parchment and write across the bottom “tetelestai” which meant “**paid in full**” and give it to him as proof he had paid his debt to society for his crimes)

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