

Romans Session 48

How Christ Died for God 2

Romans 3:25-26 (NASB77)

²⁵ *whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed;*

²⁶ *for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.*

We are still looking at Paul's writings concerning the Righteousness of God and how it was demonstrated by Christ and particularly His death on the cross.

We have learned that the Righteousness that saves man is not of the Law, and not of man's origination, but it from God through Jesus Christ His Son.

As we have seen already in the previous chapter, **righteousness**, *justification*, and their verb and adjective forms are from the same Greek root.

As those two English words indicate, the basic meaning relates to what is right and just.

A look at ethnology and the history of religion shows that, without exception, pagan gods were, as they still are, made in the likeness of men.

Their only difference from men is in their presumed power. Otherwise they reflect the same moral deficiencies and frailties.

They are capricious, inconsistent, and totally unpredictable.

In the Greek and Roman pantheons, the fabricated deities were continually competing among themselves and were jealous of one another and even of human beings who demonstrated unusual intelligence, skill, and power.

Some of the gods supposedly demanded a high standard of conduct from human beings but were themselves whimsical and often grossly immoral.

Now that is exactly what one would expect.

Man-made gods can never be more than larger-than-life images of men.

Many ancient men and women, in fact, lived on a much higher moral plane than their gods reportedly did.

Men would frequently accuse a particular god of unfairness and wrongdoing and appeal to another god or gods to rectify the wrong of the erring deity.

Men have even been quick to judge the true God in much the same way.

Unbelievers frequently point to what they consider capricious, unjust, and even brutal acts on God's part.

"If your God is so holy and just," they ask, "why does He let His own people suffer so much and let wicked people, including the enemies and persecutor of His people, get by with terrible sins? And why does He let innocent people suffer because of the wickedness of others?"

Many things that God is reported in Scripture to have done do seem from the human perspective, to be unjust and unrighteous.

Why for instance did God not let Abraham actually inherit the land promised to Him?

Why did He allow His people to stay and suffer so long in Egypt before He delivered them?

The Hebrews who were delivered were no better than their ancestors who came there in the first place. If anything, much worse, having picked up many pagan beliefs and practices from their Egyptian masters.

After God gave possession of the Promised Land to Israel, why did He frequently use ungodly and fiercely wicked pagan nations to conquer, persecute, and scatter His own chosen people?

The punishers were worse than those they were used to punish.

In human systems of justice, a judge or other high official in public office who commits a given crime often received greater punishment than would an ordinary citizen.

Their high office demands a higher standard.

"Why then, should the highest of all gods," people have wondered, "not Himself be held accountable to man's highest standards of righteousness and justice?"

The Prophet Habakkuk doubtless understood with Moses that the Lord is ***"The Rock! His work is perfect, for all His ways are just; a God of faithfulness and without injustice, righteous and upright is He"*** (Duet 32:4)

Yet the godly Habakkuk could not understand why the Lord would let His own people suffer while pagan nations prospered.

Habakkuk 1:13 (NASB77)

⁴³ Thine eyes are too pure to approve evil, And Thou canst not look on wickedness with favor. Why dost Thou look with favor On those who deal treacherously? Why art Thou silent when the wicked swallow up Those more righteous than they?

Certain Jews in Malachi's day were concerned about the same thing, but unlike the humble Habakkuk they presumed to judge God, saying impiously:

Malachi 2:17b (NASB77)

⁴⁷ Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and He delights in them," or

Others say;

, "Where is the God of justice?"

Anticipating such questions, the Holy Spirit led Paul to declare that, through the cross, God not only allowed but planned before the foundation of the world what would be the most unjust act that men could commit, then putting to death His own sinless Son for that act.

In doing so God through that heinous act on men's part, manifested His divine righteousness by offering His Own Son but also used the act of divine grace to demonstrate His divine righteousness.

Through that incomparable sacrifice, God provided punishment for sin sufficient to forgive and blot out every sin that would ever be committed by fallen mankind including the supreme sin of crucifying His Own Son, for which every unregenerate person shares the guilt.

Hebrews 6:6 (NASB77)

⁶ and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God, and put Him to open shame.

That greatest of all acts of God's grace was further demonstrated by His divine **forbearance**, as **He passed over the sins previously committed**.

God is not unaware of nor does He condone even the smallest sin.

His **forbearance** is therefore not a sign of injustice but of His patient and loving grace.

2 Peter 3:9 (NASB77)

⁹ The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

God's justice and grace are on a perfect and infinitely grander scale than human wisdom can perceive or comprehend. Because of His justice, no sin will go unpunished; yet because of His grace, no sin is beyond forgiveness.

Therefore, every sin will be paid for by the sinner himself in the form of eternal death and punishment in hell or it will be paid for him because he has placed his faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on his behalf.

Paresis (passed over) does not carry the idea of remission, as the King James Version renders it, but refers to passing by or overlooking.

In the context of **forbearance**, the meaning is therefore that of a temporary passing over sin and of withholding judgment on it for a certain period of time.

After the fall, when God could have justly destroyed Adam and Eve, and therefore the human race, He **passed over the sins** of fallen mankind.

Even in the Flood the Lord saved eight people, not because they were perfectly righteous but because they trusted in Him.

In the same way, the many subsequent judgments of God recorded in Scripture were never universal, but were rendered upon specific individuals, groups, or nations.

The Psalmist Asaph understood something of why God allows many wicked people to live and thrive, often at the expense of those who are less sinful.

He wrote that God;

Psalm 78:38-39 (NASB77)

³⁸ But He, being compassionate, forgave their iniquity, and did not destroy them; And often He restrained His anger, And did not arouse all His wrath.

³⁹ Thus He remembered that they were but flesh, A wind that passes and does not return.

In his discourse before the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers on the Areopagus (Mars Hill) just outside Athens, Paul said;

Acts 17:30-31 (NASB77)

³⁰ "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent,

³¹ because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."

From the beginning, God has demonstrated;

Romans 1:20 (NASB77)

²⁰ For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

Through the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ, God gave mankind the ultimate revelation of Himself---the ultimate demonstration, of His righteousness at the present time.

That is why the God of perfect holiness could be both **just** and the **justifier of the** sinful and unworthy **one who has faith in Jesus**.

Though he could not have known the full truth of what he wrote, the ancient psalmist beautifully pictured Jesus sacrifice on the cross;

Psalm 85:10 (NASB77)

¹⁰ Lovingkindness and truth have met together; Righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

The real problem, as it were with salvation was not the matter of getting sinful men to a holy God, but of getting a holy God to accept sinful men without violating His justice.

It was only through the cross that God could provide a just redemption for sinful men.

But of immeasurably more importance was that the cross demonstrates forever that God is both supremely just and supremely gracious.

First and foremost, Christ died that the world might see that neither God's holiness nor His justice have been abrogated. God has perfect and absolute integrity.

The cross was the ultimate vindication of God's justice and righteousness.

The most unfathomable of all spiritual mysteries is that of the holy and just God providing redemption for sinful men and in that gracious act, not violating any attribute of His nature. But bringing supreme glory to Himself.

Just as the primary purpose of salvation is to glorify God, so is the confession of sin by those who are saved. When God chastens His children and they confess their sin, they testify to their heavenly Father's justice and righteousness and therefore to His glory.

It is as if a person saw a father spanking his child and the child told the onlooker that he was being rightly punished for something wrong he had done.

Just as such a confession by a human child honors and vindicates his human father, so the confession of sin by God's children honors, vindicates, and glorifies their heavenly Father.

Joshua understood that truth, and when Achan's sin was exposed, Joshua told Him:

Joshua 7:19 (NASB77)

¹⁹ Then Joshua said to Achan, "My son, I implore you, give glory to the LORD, the God of Israel, and give praise to Him; and tell me now what you have done. Do not hide it from me."

We have two beautiful and beloved hymns that express something of the faithful believer's awesome awareness of God's justice, righteousness, and grace.

From the pen of the nineteenth century poet Elizabeth C. Clephane came, "The Ninety and Nine," which includes these lines:

"Lord, Thou has here Thy ninety and nine,
Are they not enough for Thee?"
But the Shepherd made answer, "This of mine
Has wandered away from me;
And though the road be rough and steep,
I go to the desert to find my sheep"
But none of the ransomed ever knew
How deep were the waters crossed;
Nor how dark was the night
That the Lord passed through
Ere He found His sheep that was lost.

Isaac Watts wrote in his famous hymn;

When I survey the wondrous cross,
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.
Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were an offering far to small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.