

Romans Session 51

How Christ Died for God 5

Romans 3:29-30 (NASB77)

²⁹ *Or is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also,*

³⁰ *since indeed God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith is one.*

THE CROSS REVEALS GOD'S UNIVERSALITY

Pagan religions almost invariably have many gods.

Frequently there is a supreme god who is more powerful than the rest, but he shares with them a common form of deity.

The fundamental truth of Judaism, however, has always been "***The Lord is our God, the Lord is One!***" (Deut. 6:4). That truth is repeated in one form or another throughout the Old Testament.

Through His Prophet Isaiah, God Himself declared, "***I am the Lord, and there is no other; besides Me there is no God***" (Isaiah 45:5)

There is only one God, the Creator, Sustainer, and Lord of the entire universe.

There are no "*lesser gods*," only false gods that have been created by man's imagination and often are demonically inspired and empowered.

Yet despite the central truth of their faith that there is only one God, many Jews in biblical times believed that Gentiles somehow were outside the domain of "*their*" God.

Instead of considering themselves as belonging to God, they virtually considered God as belong only to them.

Jonah resisted going to Nineveh not because he thought his witness might fail but because he feared it would succeed. He confessed to the Lord, "***Please Lord, was not this what I said while I was still in my own country? Therefore in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that Thou art a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness***" (Jonah 4:2)

He tried to flee to Tarshish because he knew his preaching might cause the pagan Ninevites to trust in God and become acceptable to Him.

So what he was confessing was that he belonged to God, he knew that, but he was saying even though I belong to God and am his servant, he did not want to be like God in His love and grace.

From their own Scriptures the Jews knew that many Gentiles had found favor with God.

They knew that Rahab, not only a pagan Gentile but also a prostitute, found favor with God.

They knew that Ruth, a Moabites, was a great grandmother of David, their greatest king.

They knew that the prophet Elisha graciously volunteered to heal Naaman, captain in the army of Syria, of his leprosy.

Yet many Jews persisted in their deep prejudice against, and often hatred of, Gentiles.

Probably having had such prejudice and hatred himself before his conversion, Paul anticipated the question many Jews would ask in regard to justification by faith.

So he asks rhetorically, "*Or is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also?*"
The obvious answer, even for a prejudiced Jew, would have to be, **yes, of Gentiles also.**

If there is only one God, then He had to be **the God of Gentiles** as well as Jews.
If there is only one God, He has to be the God of everyone.

As far as men's religions are concerned, there are of course, many "*so called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords,*"

Paul says however,

1 Corinthians 8:5-6 (NASB77)

***5 For even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords,
6 yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things, and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him.***

Having established that the Jews had God's law given through Moses, that the Gentiles had His law written on their hearts and consciences;

Romans 2:11-15 (NASB77)

***11 For there is no partiality with God.
12 For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law; and all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law;
13 for not the hearers of the Law are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified.
14 For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves,
15 in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them,***

And now that there is only one true God, Paul then makes his argument irrefutable:

Romans 3:29-30 (NASB77)

***29 Or is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also,
30 since indeed God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith is one.***

So just as there is only one God, there is only one way of salvation, and that is through faith in Jesus Christ.

Paul writing to young Timothy says;

1 Timothy 2:3-6 (NASB77)

***3 This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior,
4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.
5 For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,
6 who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony borne at the proper time.***

Just as all men are equally condemned by God for their sin;

Romans 3:19 (NASB77)

¹⁹ *Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, that every mouth may be closed, and all the world may become accountable to God;*

They are equally offered God's gracious salvation through faith in His Son.

Romans 1:16 (NASB77)

¹⁶ *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.*

Paul later demonstrates in this letter, salvation by faith has always been the only way of salvation, under the covenant of Moses and before that, even for their first and greatest patriarch, Abraham.

Romans 4:1-3 (NASB77)

¹ *What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found?*

² *For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about; but not before God.*

³ *For what does the Scripture say? "AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS."*

Hebrews 11 makes clear that God's way of salvation by faith alone extended back to the Fall, when the need for salvation began.

THE CROSS CONFIRMS GOD'S LAW

Romans 3:31 (NASB77)

³¹ *Do we then nullify the Law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Law.*

The next question Paul knew his readers would ask was, **Do we then nullify the Law through faith?**

This is a good question?

If men have never been saved on any other basis than faith in God, they would argue, then the law not only is useless now but was always useless.

Again Paul responds with the powerful repudiation, **May it never be**, a thousand time no is the idea here.

The Cross of Jesus Christ, through which justification by faith was made possible, not only does not **nullify the Law** but confirms it.

On the contrary, Paul says, **we establish the Law**.

This is an area where many Christians still struggle, especially those who have never studied Romans.

As far as salvation is concerned, the gospel does not replace the law, because the law was never a means of salvation. The law was given to show men the perfect standards of God's Righteousness and to show that those standards are impossible to meet in man's own power.

The purpose of the Law was to drive men to faith in God

In the sermon on the mount, Jesus declared God's perfect standards to be higher even than those of the Old Covenant.

A person breaks God's Law, Jesus said, not only by killing but even by hating (*Matt. 5:21-22*) not only by committing adultery but by having lustful thoughts (*Matt 5:27-28*)

If it is impossible to fulfill perfectly the Mosaic Law, how much more impossible is it to keep the standards set forth by Christ in His earthly ministry.

The Cross establishes, or confirms, the law in three ways.

1. **The Cross establishes the law by paying the penalty of death, which the law demanded for failing to fulfill perfectly and completely its righteous requirements.**
When Jesus said that He had come not to abolish the law or the prophets but to fulfill them, He was speaking not only of His sinless earthly life but of His sin-bearing death.
2. **The Cross establishes the law by fulfilling its purpose of driving men to faith in Jesus Christ.** Paul had already declared that, "*by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified*" (*Rom 3:20*)
James says, "*Whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all*" (*James 2:10*)
Paul told the Galatians, "*the Law has become our tutor, to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith*" (*Gal 3:24*)
3. **The Cross establishes the law by providing believers the potential for fulfilling.**
Romans 8:3-4 (NASB77)
³ *For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh,*
⁴ *in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.*