

## Romans

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Romans 3:19-26



Vss. 19-20

- I recently saw an interview with the TV personality, Steve Harvey. He was asked with a tone of cynicism why he believed in God. He replied, "How could you not?". He went on to talk about the complexity of Creation and how it seems there is a moral law in the universe that could only come from God. Paul begins here with the same idea. Now that humanity has the Law, all the world is accountable to God.
- Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount is essentially bringing the same truth when He speaks as He does in Matthew 5:27-28 where if a man even looks at woman with lust in his heart he has sinned. So deep is the infection of sin in humankind that even our unconscious thoughts and our automatic responses are symptomatic. Indeed the infection is so advanced that it is utterly impossible for us to keep the Law. On our own we are completely without hope.
- But the Good News is that what we come to know in Christ is that God is not a God of Law but of Grace. Because of this we do not come before the throne of God trumpeting all we have done by our works, but rather we come on our knees empty handed, with nothing but the weakest, tiniest bit of faith to show. "...whoever **BELIEVES** in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life".

Vss. 21-24

- To drive home this point, Paul uses two metaphors. The first is a legal one: justification. At some point, we all stand before the Judgement Throne. The evidence is laid out and a verdict is required. But as we stand before the Throne, we stand guilty, everyone of us. "...for **all** have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (verse 23).
- Yet, for those who come on their knees, holding nothing but a scrap of faith, God shows Himself to be a God of Grace by offering justification "as a gift by His grace"

(vs. 24). Our faith makes this possible “through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus” (vs. 24).

- This is the idea that was a scandal to the Jews: the very idea that God would justify a sinner. Yet, that is exactly what God does. How do we know? We know because Jesus came to tell us that God loves us, bad as we are. He came to tell us that, although we are sinners as the Prodigal Son was a sinner, we are still loved by God our Father. As William Barclay puts it, “When we discover that and believe it, it changes our whole relationship to God. We are conscious of our sin, but we are no longer in terror and no longer estranged. Penitent and brokenhearted we come to God, like a sorry child coming to his mother, and we know that the God we come to is love.  
...That is what justification by faith in Jesus Christ means. It means that we are in a right relationship with God because we believe with all our hearts that what Jesus told us about God is true. We are no longer terrorized strangers from an angry God. We are children, erring children, trusting in their Father's love for forgiveness. And we could never have found that right relationship with God, if Jesus had not come” (and found us) and lived and died to tell us and show us how wonderfully He loves us.

Vss. 25-26

- The second metaphor comes from the Jewish practice of Sacrifice. “Propitiation” is no longer a word we commonly use. The word is a close synonym to “sacrifice”, but it means more, as in that which I am sacrificing carries with it something of myself, specifically my sins.
- But the Jews had long known that animal sacrifice was insufficient. Psalm 51:16 tells us “You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; You do not take pleasure in burnt offering”. And Micah 6:6-7 asks, “With what shall I come before the LORD and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of olive oil?” No none of that will ever take away my sin. Only the willing sacrifice of God's only Son can do that.