

Justified  
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Romans 3:21-4:3

No one ever adopted the motto: "Good enough." You also wouldn't embrace the phrase, "really bad!" When it comes to the idea of a life after death, some people think: *"I'm not good enough to get into Heaven."* Others say, *"I'm not as bad as some people."* Then there are those who boldly say, *"I've been good enough I'll probably get into Heaven."* Let's set the record straight: No one is good enough!

- We're all familiar with the term "the human condition." What does it mean?
- There are many interpretations of the phrase "the human condition," but in general it speaks to the things we all have in common as human beings.
- Paul spent the first twenty verses of Romans 3 making the case that the human condition (spiritually speaking) is that no one is good enough.
- In verse ten paraphrasing the Old Testament: *"...None is righteous, no, not one; <sup>11</sup> no one understands; no one seeks for God. <sup>12</sup> All have turned aside;...they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one."*<sup>i</sup>
- Aren't you glad you joined us today! ☺ Stick with me; good news to come!
- *"Paul, teaching this will make people feel bad and lower their self esteem."*
- Before you can seek treatment you have to know you are sick!
- As we're seeing in our world right now, if you have a sickness you need to have it diagnosed. Sadly, with Covid-19 some have it and don't know it.
- How many times this week have you been a little concerned if you coughed or felt a little short of breath? *"Do I feel warm to you?"*
- To get well you have to sense that you're sick and seek treatment.

- When it comes to our spiritual health, there are times when we sense that something is just not right. We call that the conviction of the Holy Spirit.
- It's true that Paul "sets the table" with the bad news that we're all sinners. But we'll see that this passage is REALLY all about the GOOD NEWS.
- We're all totally guilty, yet we can be totally guilt free (justified.) Instead of suffering with the "human condition" we can have the "grace solution."

Big idea: The "human condition" is that we've all sinned. None of us is good enough to meet God's holy standard, but Jesus solved that problem and His solution is available to everyone.

- Let's look at the text to see what it says, what it means, and what it means for people everywhere. Beginning in verse twenty one:

<sup>21</sup> But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—

- Human beings have no righteousness of our own so we need the "righteousness of God." Paul was saying that "God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law"<sup>ii</sup>
- We don't have to earn the righteousness of God by good deeds, keeping the Ten Commandments, or other rules. We can't be "good enough!"

<sup>22</sup> the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.

- That's the good news of what Jesus did for all mankind!
- Anyone who believes (faith) that Jesus died to pay for our sins and trusts Him as both Savior and Lord receives God's righteousness.
- 2 Cor. 5:21 (NLT) <sup>21</sup> For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God...

- Jesus took our sin and gave us God's righteousness. (Great exchange)
- Verse 23 is a classic "stone" in the "Roman road" to salvation:
- We memorize verse 23 but the real context is 23 through 26.

<sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup> and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, <sup>25</sup> whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. <sup>26</sup> It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

- We've all sinned but we can be justified by His grace, which is a gift.
- Grace – God's favor that I don't deserve
- Redemption – Paying the ransom to set someone free
- Justified - *to show to be righteous* – Just as if I had never sinned
- R.C. Sproul: "...*what happens in justification is not a pardon; it is an act whereby God declares a person to be just...in his sight.*"<sup>iii</sup>
- Big word: "propitiation" which is related to another theological word, "atonement." Quoting the Life Application Study Bible: "*Christ died in our place, for our sins. God is justifiably angry at sinners. They have rebelled against him and cut themselves off from his life-giving power. But God declares Christ's death to be the appropriate, designated sacrifice for our sin. Christ then stands in our place, having paid the penalty of death for our sin, and he completely satisfies God's demands. His sacrifice brings pardon, deliverance, and freedom.*"<sup>iv</sup>
- We can only be justified by faith (remember Martin Luther's reaction to Romans 1:18?) If we trust Christ as Savior and Lord, one day when we stand before God (and we ALL WILL) He won't see our "human condition"(sin) but Christ's "grace solution" (Christ's righteousness draped over our soul like a robe)
- Verse 26: God is perfect and Holy so He cannot give a "pass" to sin. For Him to be "just" a price must be paid for sin. He is

also the “justifier” because He sent Jesus to die to pay that price for all who trust Him.

- Verses 25 and 26 make me wish we were in person in class today for a discussion question: **How were Old Testament believers saved if Christ had not yet come to earth to die and be resurrected?**
- Verse 25 says in his divine forbearance God had passed over former sins.
- Divine forbearance speaks to God’s incredible patience with sinners both today and in Old Testament times before Christ came to earth.
- Old Testament believers were looking forward in faith to the Messiah.
- When Jesus paid the price for all our sins moving forward from the cross, He also paid the price for ALL SINS going back to Adam and Eve.
- Old Testament believers trusted God for salvation without knowing Jesus.
- Unlike the Old Testament believers we DO know about the price Jesus paid for our sin. That should move us to trust Him as Savior and Lord.
- Since salvation is a gift we can’t earn, Paul asks the next logical question:

<sup>27</sup> Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. <sup>28</sup> For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.

- Paul was writing to new followers of Christ that had the tendency to “boast” about their heritage and how good they were at keeping “rules.”
- Some people say, *“I’m not so bad, in fact, I’m better than most!”*
- No one gets into Heaven because of our good deeds. We can only be justified (declared righteous) by faith.
- Then there are people who say, *“My grandparents were Christians, my parents were Christians, I’ve attended church all my life, I’m good!”*

- No one gets into Heaven because of our ancestors. Paul dealt with this mistaken pride and arrogance, over nationality beginning in verse 29.

<sup>29</sup> Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, <sup>30</sup> since God is one—who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. <sup>31</sup> Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.

- *“...if we emphasize faith, does this mean that we can forget about the law? Of course not!...when we have faith...we truly fulfill the law.”*<sup>v</sup>
- To really make this point Paul illustrated it by quoting what the Old Testament said about the patriarch of the Jews, “Father Abraham.”

**4** What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? <sup>2</sup> For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. <sup>3</sup> For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.”

- Any good Jewish student of the Torah would have known Genesis 15:6.
- *“So, that’s what it means!”* Abraham believed (faith) and it was counted to him as righteousness. (The “great exchange” by “imputation”)
- Our lesson text stops at verse three but in the next few verses Paul unpacked this point about Abraham:
  - Verse 4: If you work you earn your wages, they are not a gift.
  - Verse 5: People don’t earn righteousness it’s a gift from God.
- Then to strengthen the point Paul quotes King David in Psalm 32:1-2:

<sup>7</sup> “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; <sup>8</sup> blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin.” <sup>vi</sup>

- THAT’S that good news of the gospel.

So, What’s the Takeaway?

- This week we’ve heard a lot about the need for diagnosis.
- Paul had to begin by diagnosing our “human condition” (all have sinned) before he could prescribe the “grace solution” of salvation and justification by grace and through faith in Christ.
- You might say, *“I came looking for some hope in these difficult days and this passage it’s pretty negative (no one is good, everyone’s a sinner.)”*
- You’re looking at it the wrong way.
- This text is PACKED with hope. It’s all about hope.
- The Apostle Peter wrote about this in 1 Peter 1:3-9.
- In fact, Peter was writing to people who were facing incredible trouble (kind of like we are today!)

<sup>3</sup> Praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to His great mercy, He has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead <sup>4</sup> and into an inheritance that is imperishable, uncorrupted, and unfading, kept in heaven for you.

<sup>6</sup> You rejoice in this, though now for a short time you have had to struggle in various trials <sup>7</sup> so that the genuineness of your faith — more valuable than gold, which perishes though refined by fire — may result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

<sup>8</sup> You love Him, though you have not seen Him. And though not seeing Him now, you believe in Him and rejoice with inexpressible and glorious joy, <sup>9</sup> because you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

- What does this passage say to followers of Christ?
  - It’s a source of ENCOURAGEMENT to know that if you’ve trusted Jesus as Savior and Lord, you are as righteous as Abraham because you’re covered in Christ’s

- righteousness. What's even more encouraging is the reality that we don't earn it - it's a gift!
- This is also a launching pad for EVANGELISM. People need hope and the gospel is the source of "living hope" for eternity.
  - What does this passage say to those who haven't trusted Christ?
    - The bad news that's also good news: We're ALL sinners.
    - The good news: Christ died on the cross to pay the price for sin.
    - More good news: Jesus rose from the dead so we can live eternally.
    - The BEST news: It's a free gift you can receive by trusting in Christ as your Savior and giving Him the keys to your life as Lord.
  - What could be BETTER NEWS for times like these? As George Beverly Shea wrote: "In times like these we need a Savior" His name is Jesus!

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<sup>i</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version\*](#). (2016). (Ro 3:10–12). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

<sup>ii</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [\*Holy Bible: New Living Translation\*](#) (Ro 3:21). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>iii</sup> R.C. Sproul – St. Andrews Expository Commentary on Romans – c.2009

<sup>iv</sup> Tyndale. Life Application Study Bible NKJV (LASB: Full Size) (Kindle Locations 169800-169803). Tyndale House Publishers. Kindle Edition.

<sup>v</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [\*Holy Bible: New Living Translation\*](#) (Ro 3:31). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>vi</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version\*](#). (2016). (Ro 4:7–8). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.