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How Can I Be Right With God?

Romans 3:9-26

Introduction

1. All of us have problems in life.
 - a. Relationships (Siblings, Friends, Parents, Children, Co-workers, etc.)
 - b. Health (Childhood illnesses, Diabetes, Heart, Vision, Hearing Loss, etc.)
 - c. Finances (Enough income to pay bills, enough put back for retirement)
 - d. Tragedy (accident, fire, death)
2. There is one problem that is common to all of us — it is our greatest issue.
3. It is the question of how each of us can get into a right relationship with God.

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4. There are some facts which all of us must come to terms with:
 - a. God is real. There is no one else like Him.

“I am God, and there is no other” (Isaiah 45:22).

“I am the first and the last, and there is no God besides Me” (Isaiah 44:6).

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- b. He is Sovereign.

“Whatever the Lord pleases, He does, in heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps.” (Psalm 135:6, NASB95)

“But He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth; and no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, ‘What have You done?’” (Daniel 4:35b, NASB95)

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c. We will all stand before Him one day.

“For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God.” (Romans 14:10, NASB95)

“So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.” (Romans 14:12, NASB95)

5. So, we come back to our question: How can we feel at peace, at ease, at home with God?
6. The Law which God gave to the Israelites at Mount Sinai through Moses taught that a right relationship with God was maintained by faithfully keeping all the laws.

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7. James, however, points out that this is not possible.

“For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all” (James 2:10, NASB95).

8. This morning, as we look at what Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome, especially to the Jews among them, I want us to see two things:
 - a. The obstacle that lies before us: Our Sin
 - b. The provision which God has made for us: His Own Son’s Righteousness

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I. The Obstacle That Lies Before Us: Our Sin

A. OUR CHARACTER IS CORRUPT

1. “There is none righteous, not even one” (10a).
 - a. The “righteousness” of which Paul speaks is the righteousness of God.
 - b. It is a standard that none of us are able to reach.
 - c. Once, when asked what “is the great commandment in the Law?” Jesus responded,

“ ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” (Matthew 22:37–39, NASB95)

- d. Can any of us honestly say that we have faithfully kept both of these throughout this past week?
2. “There is none who understands” (11a).
 - a. Understands what?
 - b. God, and the depth of His character.
3. “There is none who seeks for God” (11b).
 - a. Do we spend our days seeking Him?
 - b. Is He constantly in our thoughts?
 - c. Sin’s goal in our lives is to dethrone God and enthrone self.
4. “All have turned aside, together they have become useless” (12a)
 - a. We turn aside because we don’t understand God, nor do we seek Him.
 - b. Sin affects every part of us — our mind, emotions, sexuality, conscience and our will.
 - c. As a result, we become useless to God.
5. “There is none who does good, there is not even one” (12b)
 - a. All of us would agree that there are times when we do good things.
 - b. But are we consistent in this?
 - c. Does the good we do issue from a heart committed to honoring God?

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B. OUR CONDUCT IS CORRUPT

1. Our speech.
 - a. “Their throat is an open grave” (13a) — full of corruption and infection.

- b. “Their tongues . . . keep deceiving” (13b) — instead of being dedicated to the truth.
- c. “The poison of asps (vipers) is under their lips” (13c)
- d. Their “mouth is full of cursing and bitterness” (14)

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- 2. Our approach to life
 - a. Described as an activity of the feet.
 - b. “Swift to shed blood” (15)
 - c. “Destruction and misery are in their paths” (16)
 - d. “The path of peace they have not known” (17)
- 3. In 1968, Will and Ariel Durant co-authored a book titled *Lessons From History*, in which Mr. Durant wrote “In the last 3,421 years of recorded history only 268 have seen no war.”

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C. THE CAUSE OF OUR CORRUPTION

- 1. Why are we so corrupt?
- 2. Paul tells us, “there is no fear of God before their eyes” (v. 18).
- 3. All of mankind is completely corrupt.
 - a. “All the world” is “accountable to God”
 - b. None of us can keep the commandments of God perfectly enough to be justified in God’s sight.
 - c. All the law does is make us aware of how much we sin.
- 4. All around us we are constantly being told that we are okay — to live our lives however we choose — to do whatever pleases us.
- 5. But God is telling us we are not okay.

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II. The Provision Which God Has Made For Us: His Own Son’s

Righteousness

A. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS WE NEED CANNOT BE FOUND BY KEEPING THE LAW

“But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets” (v. 21).

1. Jesus said, “be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:48).
2. But the truth is that all of us “have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (v. 23).
3. Paul had just stated a hard truth in verse 20 — it is that “no one will be declared righteous in [God’s] sight by observing the law” (NIV84).
4. However, God has revealed His righteousness “apart from the Law” (v. 21) — it is His gift to us.
4. God foretold of its coming 700 years earlier through His prophet Isaiah.

“They will say of Me, ‘Only in the Lord are righteousness and strength’” (Isaiah 45:24).

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B. IT IS A RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH REQUIRES FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST

“even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction;” (Romans 3:22, NASB95)

1. At Jesus’ baptism, God declared “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased” (Matthew 3:17).
2. John the Baptist saw Jesus coming to him one day and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).
3. On one occasion as Jesus was teaching at the treasury in the temple in Jerusalem, He said to the Pharisees “unless you believe that I am He, you will

die in your sins” (John 8:24).

4. Now, here in verse 22, Paul tells us “the righteousness of God” is “through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe” (Romans 3:22).
5. Later, in his letter to the saints in Philippi, Paul wrote that his chief desire was to “gain Christ and . . . be found in Him, not having a righteousness of [His] own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith” (Philippians 3:8b-9).
3. In verse 28, Paul made his point, “for we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law” (v. 28).

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C. WE RECEIVE THIS RIGHTEOUSNESS ONLY THROUGH JESUS’ ATONING SACRIFICE ON THE CROSS

“being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; 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;” (Romans 3:24–25, NASB95)

1. In verse 25, Paul uses a word to describe Jesus’ work on the cross — propitiation.
2. This same word is used 22 times in the Greek Old Testament as the name for the cover of the Ark of the Covenant, also known as the mercy seat.
 - a. It was here that God manifested His presence to the people of Israel (Exodus 25:22)

“There I will meet with you; and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, I will speak to you about all that I will give you in commandment for the sons of Israel.” (Exodus 25:22)

- b. It was also here that the high priest, once a year, sprinkled blood on the

mercy seat to make atonement for God's people (Leviticus 16:14ff).

3. On the cross, Jesus became not just the mercy seat, but the blood which was sprinkled on that seat for our sins.
4. In 1 Corinthians 1:30 Paul tells us that Jesus Christ "became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption."

Conclusion

1. Paul asks a question in v. 27 of Romans 3 — "Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith."
2. In 1 Corinthians 1:31, Paul tells us "Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord."

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3. *Rock of Ages* (Augustus Montague Toplady)

Not the labor of my hands
Can fulfill Thy law's demands;
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears forever flow,
All for sin could not atone;
Thou must save, and Thou alone.

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Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling;
Naked, come to Thee for dress;
Helpless, look to Thee for grace;
Foul, I to the fountain fly;
Wash me, Savior, or I die!

4. Without Christ, we are sinners, condemned to an eternity apart from God.
5. In Christ, we have a righteousness, which only God can provide.
6. Which will you choose?