

God's Gift of Righteousness

Scripture: Romans 3:21–25

Code: 80-344

We are, as you know, looking at the book of Romans and tonight we come in to chapter 3 at verse 21...Romans chapter 3 verse 21. Let me read verses 21 through the first part of verse 25...Romans 3:21 to 25, at least the first part of verse 25.

“But now, apart from the Law, the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the prophets. Even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe, for there is no distinction, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. 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.”

Now as we approach this, a little bit of an introduction. Job, that very early book, no doubt describing a man who lived in the patriarchal period, the period of the Pentateuch, Job that righteous man, that man who was commended by God for his faith, asked the most important question that any person could ever ask. It is posed in chapter 9 of Job and verse 2. And this is the question that Job asked, “How can a man be right with God?” That is the most compelling question. How can a man be right, or be in the right before God?

And then he goes on to show why this is such a dilemma. Verse 3, “If one wished to dispute with him, he could not answer him once in a thousand times...wise in heart and mighty in strength, who has defied Him without harm? It is God who removes the mountains, they know not how. When He overturns them in His anger, who shakes the earth out of its place and its pillars tremble, who commands the sun not to shine and sets a seal on the stars, who alone stretches out the heavens and tramples down the waves of the sea; who makes the bear, Orion and the Pleiades, and the chambers of the south ; who does great things, unfathomable, and wondrous works without number. Were He to pass by me, I wouldn't see Him. Were He to move past me, I wouldn't perceive Him. Were He to snatch away, who could restrain Him? Who could say to Him, ‘What are You doing?’ God will not turn back His anger. Beneath Him crouch the helpers of Rahab. How then can I answer Him and choose my words before Him? For though I were right, I could not answer. I would have to employ the mercy of my judge. If I called and He answered me, I could not believe that He was listening to my voice, for He bruises me with a tempest, and multiplies my wounds without cause. He will not allow me to get my breath, but saturates me with bitterness. If it is a matter of power, behold, He is the strong one! If it is a matter of justice, who can summon Him? Though I am righteous, my mouth will condemn me; though I am guiltless, He will declare me guilty.”

This is like Paul saying, even when I know nothing against myself, herein am I not justified? I can't bring my case before God. Here is a man, namely Job, with a sense of his lostness, with a sense of his smallness, with a sense of his guilt, his emptiness, his meaninglessness, fearing death, dreading punishment at the hands of a holy God who cannot successfully make his case, even when he says I've searched out my life and I can't see anything of continuing sin, I know that I am not by my own perception thereby justified because my own perception is so limited.

How should a man be in the right with God? How do you become right with God? God is holy and God is a judge and God punishes sinners and God punishes the guilty who are sinners. How can that change? How can a man be right with God and particularly a God like this? A God who is so vastly beyond me?

And, of course, as you heard, Job goes through the litany of all the things that are true about the massiveness of God. How can I, this frail, meek, unimportant individual establish righteousness before such a great and glorious and holy God? How can I therefore escape His judgment?

That, by the way, is the basic question that every religion tries to answer. That is the basic question that every religion tries to answer. Every religion is trying to answer the question...How do I escape the judgment of God and get into the place of favor from God, whatever God is the God of that religion, and end up in the right place when I die? That is the universal question which religion universally attempts to answer.

And so many suggestions are made. But all religions of all types and all kinds basically give the same answer. You achieve that rightness. You get it by your attention to being a good person and performing the necessary religious rituals and rites and practices and ceremonies. In every case you get in the right with God by something you do.

Now they will all admit that God is kind to some degree. At least He will allow you the opportunity to try to do that. And in varying religions, the kindness of God is more or less a large part of our efforts and in the end, all human religions come up with the same thing, you work your way in.

But the Bible clearly demonstrates and confirms that nobody will ever be made right with God like that...no one. No one is going to escape judgment and enter into blessing. No one is going to go from being under the disfavor of God into the favor of God by their own efforts, by his own effort or her own effort.

So if we are to find a way to be right with God, it isn't going to be found in us. It isn't going to be found in the religions that we invent. If there is a way to be right with God, then God's going to have to determine that way as He's the one who has been offended. And therein lies the dilemma which all religion attempts to answer. Paul has clearly shown, starting in chapter 1 all the way through chapter 3 verse 20, where we ended last time, that no one can be right with God on the basis of human effort. That's how verse 20 ends that whole section by saying, "By the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight." Nobody will be right with God by means of the deeds of the flesh. That is keeping of God's moral law, or any kind of ceremonies. In fact, all the human race fall short, they are all under sin. Chapter 3 verse 9, Jews and Greeks are all under sin. And Romans 1:18, "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness." So all are unrighteous, all are under sin and therefore all are under judgment and no one has the capacity in himself to change that situation, no matter how moral he may attempt to be or how religious. That's the condemnation of the opening chapters.

So there is no way then for a man to achieve righteousness on his own. Now this is particularly devastating to religious people and the Jews were the most religious of the religious and they believed that they could attain a right place with God, a right standing with God, acceptance with

God, favor from God including eternal life in heaven by meticulously keeping the Law. Well that's exactly what Paul wants to dispel.

Well you ask, "What use is the Law then if you cannot by the Law be made righteous?" Well Paul has already answered that, hasn't he? We're not made righteous by the Law, back to chapter 3 verse 20, rather through the Law comes the knowledge of sin. You wouldn't fully know what sin was unless the details were spelled out. So the purpose of the Law is not to save anybody, it is to condemn everybody. The purpose of the Law is not to show you how good you are but show you how evil you are. And, of course, the Law makes maximum demands, "Be ye holy for I am holy. Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect." The standard of the Law is never lessened, it is never lowered, it is always the same, it demands perfection. Galatians 3 says if you break one part of the Law, you're guilty of it all.

So Micah asks the penetrating question in the sixth chapter of his prophecy, verses 6 and 7, "With what shall I come to the Lord and bow myself before the God on high? Shall I come to Him with burnt offerings? With yearling calves? Does the Lord take delight in thousands of rams in ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I present my firstborn for my rebellious acts, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? Does God want animals? Should I give up my baby, will that satisfy God? Will that earn a relationship with Him?" The way to God is not by the most extreme human religious sacrifice, animal sacrifice all the way to human sacrifice, offering the fruit of your body, your own child as if somehow that would pacify God as was claimed, you'll remember, by those who worshiped Molech.

So all sinners, and that means all humans, are under judgment. All sinners are equally unable by their own efforts, morally and religiously, to earn favor with God, the standards of true religion are divine perfection. That's the only thing God accepts and we can't attain that. That is why we have been learning that the opening of chapter 3 is intended to silence the whole world. Go back to verse 19, whatever the Law says, it says to those who are under the Law, "So that every mouth may be closed, every mouth stopped, there is no defense, you have nothing to say. And all the world may become accountable or guilty before God."

Earlier in that chapter, Paul according to the Old Testament said there is none righteous, no not one. So the plight of men is dark, it is dismal, it is despairing. In himself he has no hope. In his religion he has no real answer. He is bound for divine judgment and there is no remedy. The Law will only condemn him. The Law will not help him. The Law will curse him. The Law will pronounce death sentence upon him. What hope does he have?

Then you come to verse 21 and the first two words are a welcomed and hopeful transition. "But now...but now." We've had enough of the ugliness of the opening three chapters. Now we need some hope. "But now..." literally at this very time, a very crucial moment in redemptive history. This is the fullness of time. "And in this time, apart from the Law, the righteousness of God has been manifested." Just when man needed righteousness, it appeared in the fullness of time, at this present time, now. Speaking of New Testament era and the arrival, of course, of the Lord Jesus Christ, a righteousness...the righteousness literally of God has been manifested. The righteousness of man is inadequate. If we're going to be made right with God, we need another righteousness other than our own since we can't be righteous by anything done on the human side. The only way we can be righteous is by something given to us from the divine side. We need a righteousness equal to the righteousness of God. The only righteousness equal to the righteousness of God is the righteousness of God. Good news, apart from the Law which can only condemn you, the

righteousness of God has been manifested.

This is the only solution. A righteousness has to come down to us, a righteousness that is alien to us. God has to come Himself to our rescue. God has to give us a righteousness that is outside of us, above us and beyond us. The very one who gave the Law to condemn us must also give the righteousness to save us. This is the light of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ shining to us. The righteousness that you need and that I need to be saved, Paul says, "Comes from God, it is the righteousness of God Himself."

I'm reminded of Isaiah 45:8 that says, "Drop down you heavens from above, let the skies pour down righteousness." The verse goes on, "Let the earth open, let them bring forth salvation, let righteousness spring up together." And then it closes, "I the Lord have created it."

This is righteousness from God that comes down to us. It is, as I said, an alien righteousness. Remember the testimony of the Apostle Paul in Philippians 3 which, of course, is very much like this. In verse 8, "I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, count them but rubbish that I might win Christ and be found in Him...listen to this...not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith."

This is the simple, clear, New Testament teaching on the necessary righteousness for salvation that was lost for literally a millennia or more in history and recovered by the Reformation. It didn't completely disappear, there were faithful believing people who understood this all through that era, but the dominant Roman church was built and still operates on the basis that men have in them enough goodness along with the grace of God to achieve a satisfactory righteousness with God that saves them. This, however, is not that. This is the righteousness that belongs to God that comes down from God and is given to us.

It is further described in Daniel 9:24 and Psalm 119:142 as an everlasting righteousness. It is Isaiah 61 that says, "My righteousness shall be forever." It is an eternal, ever-lasting righteousness that transcends anything in the world of human experience. It is the kind of righteousness that fulfills the Law. And in the life of Jesus it is manifest. Jesus being God was perfectly righteous. He manifested that perfect righteousness in His active obedience, in His active obedience He was perfectly obedient to the Law. He never violated the Law. He was without sin. So He was the living model of righteous perfection in His active obedience.

He also perfectly fulfilled the penalty of the Law on the cross in His passive obedience where He could pay the infinite price, suffer death and suffer the experience of hell and rise from the dead. So Jesus is the perfect model of righteousness in the sense that He lived a perfectly righteous life, and He even models righteousness as it exacts a penalty and He fulfilled that penalty by dying on the cross. The kind of righteousness then that is exhibited in the active righteousness of Christ in His perfection is the kind of righteousness that is required and since we cannot achieve it, it has to come down from heaven. That is why it is so staggering to think of Hebrews 10:14 which says that when you put your life in the hands of God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, when you are regenerated, born again, you are perfected forever, you are perfected forever. Sanctification is...we think of it only its progressive sense, but sanctification is a bigger word than that. The verse says, "Be perfected...we are perfected forever who are being sanctified."

So sanctification is a word that does have a progressive aspect, but it also means something beyond that, taking us all the way to perfection. So when we think about a righteousness, we're thinking about a perfect righteousness, divine righteousness, that which is true of God and that which was manifest in Jesus Christ, a kind of righteousness which is perfection itself, a kind of righteousness that is eternal.

We are told in the New Testament that in the new heaven and the new earth dwells righteousness. It is that very righteousness that belongs to God that is eternal. This is what is required. This is what we have to have. We cannot obtain it, it has to be given to us and it has to be given to us by grace, right? You can't earn it, it is a grace gift. And that's the glory of the gospel. That is why it was so thrilling in chapter 1 verse 16 for Paul...oh in verse 15 to say, "I'm eager to preach the gospel. I'm not ashamed of the gospel. It is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also the Greek, for in it the righteousness of God is revealed." It is the gospel that brings the righteousness of God to us.

Now, we've been talking in this chapter last week about the fact that there's a courtroom scene. A man is on trial, there is no defense. On trial before God we are declared guilty. Yet God is loving and gracious and desires to justify the sinner, to declare the guilty sinner righteous. Paul even says, and we'll get to it later, chapter 4 verse 5, that God justifies the ungodly. How can He do it? How can He do it? How can He justify the ungodly, or make the ungodly right with Him? How can He do that?

That's a shock to the legalists. That would be a shock to the Jew because Proverbs 17:15 says, "He that justifies the wicked is an abomination to the Lord." Exodus 23:7, God says, quoting God, "I will not justify the wicked." Paul turning the table and saying, "God does justify the wicked, He justifies the ungodly. He manifests His righteousness apart from the Law." That is to say, to be right with God depends not on you, but on God. Not on what you earn, but on what God gives. This is the majesty of the gospel. Everything depends on God. Everything depends on God.

Now, as we look at the righteousness of God, I just want to kind of break it up a little bit and give you some ways to work through the passage because this is at the heart of our Christian gospel. You need to know this for the richness that it brings to your own heart as a believer, you need to know it so you can declare it to others with clarity and accuracy. So let's just break it down a little bit. Several elements appear.

The righteousness of God, first of all, is apart from legalism, okay? Number one, it's apart from legalism. That's the very beginning of verse 21, "Now apart from the Law....apart from the Law." This is in the emphatic position, whatever comes first in the Greek sentence order is emphatic, "But now, apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested." While the main subject is the righteousness of God, the emphatic position is apart from the Law. This needs to be in the emphatic position because it is characteristic of all false religions, whether Judaism or any other religion, that you are made right with God by keeping some law. This righteousness has nothing to do with keeping the Law. As we read back in chapter 3 verse 20, "By the Law only comes the knowledge of sin, not righteousness." Over in chapter 5 verse 20, "The Law came in so that the transgression would increase...would increase. It doesn't help, it inflames sin, it insights sin, it brings a curse. The Law gives you no help.

So this righteousness is apart from the Law without the cooperation of any legalistic effort. Chapter 4 verse 15, "The Law brings about wrath." All it does is produce wrath. In chapter 2 he said, "As long as men live, they keep piling up wrath against the day of wrath." It just gets worse and worse and worse the longer they live and God keeps a record of every single sin.

So if anybody is going to be right with God, it is going to be all together independent from anything any man can do. It can't happen. Robert Haldain wrote, "To that righteousness is the eye of the believer ever to be directed, that righteousness which is the righteousness of God." The righteousness on that righteousness must be rest, on that righteousness must be life, on that righteousness must we die. In that righteousness must we appear before the judgment seat. In that righteousness must we stand forever in the presence of a righteous God. We have to turn ourselves completely away from anything of human righteousness. The greatest error on the planet is made by religious people in following after salvation in heaven based on their own righteousness. This righteousness which is required is apart from the Law.

Secondly, it is built on revelation. It is not something that's heretofore unknown, verse 21, "Being witnessed by the Law and the prophets." The Law and the prophets is a euphemism for the Old Testament. The Law and the prophets simply means the Old Testament. The Old Testament never promised that salvation would come by law keeping. That was not the message of the Old Testament.

Drop down to chapter 4 verse 3 for a moment. "For if Abraham was justified by works," verse 1, "He has something to boast about but not before God." Verse 3, "For what does the Scripture say? What does it say?" This is quoting Genesis 15:6, "Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness." He was given a righteousness by God on the basis of faith. Verse 7...verse 6, rather, David speaks of the blessing on the man to whom the Lord credits righteousness apart from works. "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds have been forgiven, whose sins have been covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account."

So this is not a New Testament deviation from what the Old Testament taught, as if the Old Testament taught salvation by Law keeping. You know, if you do enough of the moral requirements of the Law and if you do enough of the ceremonies enough times, you're going to earn favor with God. That is never what the Old Testament taught. The ceremonies and the practices of the Old Testament could not give life. Second Corinthians 3 says, "The letter of the Law does...what?...kills, but the spirit gives life."

So the witness of the Old Testament was to a righteousness that comes by faith and not by works. And that leads us to the third point. The righteousness of God is apart from legalism, built on revelation and acquired by faith...acquired by faith, verse 22. "Even the righteousness of God...he says it again repeating from verse 21...through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe for there is no distinction."

Again the righteousness is not the righteousness of man, but is the righteousness that belongs to God. It cannot be attained through works because no man has the capability of performing the righteousness of God. It can't come through works. If it is God's righteousness, it cannot come by anything we do and this is reaffirmed here, it comes through faith...through faith.

Go down to chapter 4 verse 5. "To the one who does not work but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness." Chapter 5 verse 1, "Therefore, having been justified by faith.." Ephesians 2:8 and 9, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, that not of yourselves." Faith is the instrument by which we receive the gift of God's righteousness. It is simply by believing...by believing.

Speaking of Abraham, in chapter 4 verse 20 it says, "He didn't waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God and being fully assured that what God had promised He was able to perform, that was credited to him as righteousness." That defines faith for us. What is faith? It's not unbelief but it's a strong belief that gives glory to God. And how do you do that? By believing that what God promises He does. What God promises revealed in Scripture, revealed in the gospel. When you believe the gospel, you're believing the promise of God. How do you receive the righteousness of God? By believing in the promise of the gospel that He will give you His righteousness if you put your trust in Christ. Simply believing. That was true of Abraham, that was true of David, it's true of everyone. That is why salvation is called the gift of God, not of works, Ephesians 2:9. Having believed we received as a gift the righteousness of God given to us. Believed what? Believed God's promise, God's promise in the gospel is a promise in Christ. That's why Romans 10 says faith that saves comes by hearing the message concerning Christ. And then Romans 10 says that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.

This is why we as Protestants always say salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, Sola fide, sola Christus, sola gratia, those are the solas of the Reformation. Sola Scriptura, the Bible being the only source of gospel truth.

And we also know there's such a thing as false faith, don't we? We heard it repeated in the baptism tonight. People have a false faith. It's exhibited in the New Testament by people who have a superficial interest in Jesus and eventually walk away. Disciples, for example, in John 6 who walked no more with Him. Or His words in John 8, "If you continue in My Word then you're My real disciple." Or 1 John 2:19, "They went out from us because they were not of us. If they had been of us they would have continued with us. But they went out from us that it might be made manifest they were not of us." Or the parable of the soils. The parable of the soils, so familiar to us in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew where there is seed thrown into the ground and it goes into the ground and starts to germinate a little bit and it pops up out of the soil and then it dies. There is false faith. That is not true in saving faith. True in saving faith remains. True in saving faith grows and flourishes and manifests itself in evidences of a transformed life.

I think saving faith is probably most clearly defined in its pure sense over in chapter 6 of Romans and verse 17. "Thanks be to God. Though you were slaves to sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed. And having been freed from sin you became slaves of righteousness." There's the evidence of real salvation. That's the real thing. You...you were slaves of sin, verse 16 says that. Si resulting in death. But thanks be to God that you were formerly slaves of sin, now you became obedient from the heart. So here you have obedience rising from a transformed heart, demonstrated and not only knowing the teaching but in being committed to that teaching and obedient to it.

Now go back to Romans 3 for a moment, and remember that this is not faith in anything nebulous but the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ, faith directed at Him, who He is. That's why

we said faith comes by hearing the truth about Christ. You can't put your faith in the one about whom you do not know. How shall they hear without a preacher? How shall they preach unless they're sent?

Now each builds on the other. It is essential then that we proclaim that righteousness is available to those who believe God's promises in Christ and therefore believing God's promises in Christ put their trust in Christ. And for all those who believe, there is no difference, Jew, Gentile, religious, irreligious, whatever background, male, female, bond, free, there's no difference. Paul makes that clear repeatedly, certainly in Romans and also in the wonderful book of Galatians.

So the righteousness of God then is apart from legalism, apart from personal achievement in law-keeping. It is built on revelation. It's not something new, it's the same old message all the way back to Genesis 15:6. It is acquired by faith. And then we saw here it is provided for all, for all who believe. There is no distinction because all are in the same situation, verse 23, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." It is for all who believe because all are in the same tragic situation.

Not everybody is as bad as everybody else. But everybody's in the same situation of utter inability. I used to illustrate it many years ago when I was talking to young people by saying, we don't all jump equally well, either high or far. I used to do the broad jump and the high jump when I was in high school and college, and I could jump further than some people and not as far as other people. That's why it wasn't a very long career for me. I could jump higher than some people and not as high as other people. But if we all sort of lined up at the shore of the Pacific Ocean and jumped, none of us would end up in Japan. None of us would get to Hawaii. Nobody would even get to Catalina. That's just way beyond our capability. Or if, perhaps, even more dramatically we decided to stand on the edge of the Grand Canyon and the objective was to jump to the other side, we would all be in different spots on the bottom...all equally dead. Or if you wanted to make the same analogy from the standpoint of height, not all of us is the same height, some of us are shorter and taller than others. But in relationship to the nearest star, we are relatively an infinite distance apart.

Not all have sinned to the same degree but all have no capability of getting anywhere near the standard that God has established. And that has already been clearly delineated in this book already. Verse 23, "All people have sinned and fallen short." We all fall at different levels, at different heights, but all fall short. We come short of the glory of God. The glory of God is simply a way to define the righteousness of God, the perfection of God, the absolute holiness of God. We don't get anywhere close, not even close, not even close.

So all being in the same predicament, we have a provision that all need. So being right with God is apart from legalism, built on revelation, acquired by faith, provided for all. And then fifthly, given freely through grace...given freely by grace, verse 24, "Being justified...that is the same as the word righteous, righteousness from *dikaiois*, or *dikaioo*, the verb, being justified or declared righteous as a gift by His grace."

That, folks, is the heart of the gospel, right there. There's no way around this. Any religion that says you make any contribution to your salvation is a false gospel. And anybody who preaches it, Galatians 1 says, should be damned, let him be anathema.

What Paul means by using the verb *dikaioo* here is simply to have someone righteous before God.

And the only way it can possibly happen is as a gift and a gift is used...the word is used to distinguish from something you earn, it's not a wage, it's a gift. To establish us as righteous before God is purely a gift. It is a gift of grace and what is grace? Undeserved favor, unearned kindness. It means that though we don't deserve it, though we haven't earned it, God treats us as if we are righteous.

How does He do that? By granting to us His own righteousness. This is a stunning reality, this is THE distinctiveness of the Christian gospel. Any equivocation on this and you have cut the heart out of Christianity. And it is done as a gift by His grace. Some of the older translations say freely by His grace. It actually, literally is a gift..no payment, no human merit. And again if you want a witness from the Old Testament, remember Isaiah 55:1, "Come by salvation," in the metaphor of food and drink, without money and without price...it's a gift, not of works, Ephesians 2:9, lest any man should boast...freely as a gift.

This same word, gift, is used in John's gospel, talking about Christ without being punished without a cause. It's used in Galatians 2:21 to refer to Christ dying without a reason. That's exactly what it means. We are given righteousness without a cause in ourselves, without a reason in ourselves, purely by His grace. Paul uses the term charis a hundred...over a hundred times in his epistles. It's by grace.

But it wasn't cheap. While this salvation, this righteousness with God is apart from the Law, built on revelation, acquired by faith, provided by all, given freely through grace, it required a great price. That's the sixth point...required a great, great price. Look at verse 24, "Through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith." Redemption means to ransom by the payment of a price. We don't pay, it's a gift. But somebody pays, somebody buys the gift. When you receive a gift, you don't pay. You know, I may be one of the most gifted people, not in the sense that I am speaking of myself as being gifted, but in the sense that I'm speaking of other people gifting me. I get so many gifts. I mean, I get all kinds of gift. Just this morning I was given a handful of gifts, which is a typical Sunday for me. I received a beautiful badge that I could iron on clothes, a jacket or something, that is the insignia of the military forces that operate Guantanamo Bay. As one of the men was in our services this morning and listens all the time to me preach through his computer, whatever, and he wanted to thank me by giving me this badge.

Somebody else came up to me this morning and said, "Take a look at this. This is...he said...a 70 million year old vertebrae." And then he laughed and said, "At least that's what they told me and I'd like you to have it." It clearly looked like vertebrae...70 million years old...no, and so I added it to my tusk collection, I have tusks from mastodons dug up at the north part of Russia in the Tundra against the Arctic Circle. And when they dig up the mastodons there, they open them up and in their stomach are tropical plants. Why? Because that was a tropical paradise, like the rest of the world, before the Flood. And they drowned in the Flood and the frozen tundra up by the Arctic Circle, what was in their stomach is still there. That's kind of neat. I've got a tusk from an animal that was around at Noah's time.

By the way, a man up there wanted me to have it and he carved the tusk into the form of a mastodon. So it's a mastodon carved from a mastodon tusk from before the Flood. Pretty cool gift.

I get a lot of really cool gifts. I get a lot of really useless gifts as well. But...I get beautiful art work and all kinds of things that people give me and they're all expressions of love. Somebody pays for these.

The friend who gave me the tusk got it from a guy in a hut by the Arctic Circle. I know somebody pays a price for the gifts. We can understand that, right? It's free to me but the story of how it got to me sometimes is far more interesting than the gift itself, far more intriguing. Sometimes the price is very high.

I received a gift during the Shepherds' Conference that was a bit long box. And I opened it up and it was a stick, I mean a really big stick and a really heavy one. Just as thick and heavy as a big baseball bat about eight feet tall and it was carved all the way down, all the way around, everywhere all kinds of carved Bible verses and my name and carving, carving, carving. Unbelievable amount of work as an expression of love.

Now the compelling question is, what do I do with this big stick? I could walk softly and carry it. But I decided that if I took a hike and carried it around I'd be...I'd be worn out in about five minutes just by carrying the thing. But you understand. We're all graced with many, many gifts, but somebody pays a profound price for the gifts.

And here we find what that price is. There had to be a redemption. We had to be ransomed. We had to be bought because, in effect, we receive a gift and become a gift from the Father to the Son. Redemption is such a beautiful word, *apolutrosis*, appears about ten times in the New Testament, always carries the idea of deliverance by payment of a ransom. In this case, we're delivered from God. It's an interesting concept. God literally pays a price to redeem us from Himself in the sense that He redeems us from His wrath to His mercy. It was Boaz, the kinsman redeemer, you remember, who paid the price to redeem Ruth. Who would pay for us? Who would pay the price for us? Well he tells us. The redemption which is in Christ Jesus, the Greek can even allow which is by Christ Jesus. So it was the price that was paid by Christ on the cross that redeemed us.

How could it do that? Verse 25, "Whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood." What does that mean? What does propitiation mean? To propitiate someone means to satisfy them. When we say God is propitiated, we mean God is satisfied, His justice is satisfied. It's a beautiful word, *hilasterion*. It really is the idea that sin can be blotted out because justice is satisfied. Its common use was to refer to the *kapora*(?) which was the Mercy Seat which covered the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies where the blood was splattered on the day of atonement.

And so, God chose a price. The price? Sacrificial blood. The blood would be the blood of His own Son, the Lord Jesus. That is what He would require. And so Jesus goes to the cross, according to 2 Corinthians 5:21, He became sin for us. That is God treated Him as if He committed our sins and punished Him fully with all His wrath. We talked about that, didn't we, in the gospel of Luke that in a matter of hours, Jesus because He's an infinite being can take an infinite amount of punishment and He bore all the wrath of God for the sins of all who would ever believe in a few hours on the cross. And God was propitiated...God was satisfied. God displayed publicly Christ as His propitiation and we receive the gift, he says it again, through faith.

This is the Christian gospel. This is what launched the Reformation. This is the truth that saves. You receive the gift by faith, you can't earn it. We don't have to wait until we die to know whether we're going to get to heaven. Roman Catholics think it's presumptuous to think you're going to go to heaven. We won't know until we die. And, you know, 90 percent of us aren't going to go right to heaven anywhere, we're going to Purgatory and then everything in Purgatory depends on how well we do there and how well people do here, praying for us to get us out, and how much treasury of

merit can be shifted over to our account.

That's not what Scripture teaches, that you have to earn your way to heaven in this life and then maybe earn your way to heaven in the next life. You don't earn your way to heaven at all. Put your faith in Jesus Christ and God is satisfied with the sacrifice of Christ on your behalf and on my behalf.

Horatious Bonner(???), Scottish preacher, wrote, "Not what my hands have done can save my guilty soul, not what my toiling flesh has borne can make my spirit whole, not what I feel or do can give me peace with God, not all my prayers in size and tears can bear my awful load. Thy grace alone, O God, to me can pardon speak. Thy power alone, O Son of God, can this sore bondage break. No other work saved Thine, no other blood will do. No strength saved that which is divine can bear me safely through." This is the good news that follows the bad news in the opening chapters.

There's so much more to be said about the glory of this gospel and it will unfold for us as we continue next time.

Lord, again we thank You for Your Word. It's just so encouraging to us. We understand these things, many of us do. There are some who don't for many tonight is the first time they really understand this and we're so grateful for that. The clarity of the Scripture which speaks to us with such magnificent purity, thank You for the understanding built into the Scripture and the double understanding that comes by the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. Thank You for the glory of the gospel, this gospel in which we stand by which we are saved, to which we cling with an everlasting hope. Save...save sinners tonight, Lord, who have thought perhaps to themselves that their goodness can earn them a place in Your Kingdom. They shall only find that all their goodness got them was an everlasting hell because they fell so far short. Bring them to grace and salvation by faith, we pray in Christ's name. Amen.

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