

Session 3 Walking in Confidence before God

Please refer to the teaching notes for this message.

INTRODUCTION

We're continuing in the series on the grace of God: "The Gospel of Grace." We're on Session 3. We'll do twelve parts. It's a bit theological for a few weeks, but soon we'll be getting into really practical subjects.

Father, we thank You in the name of Jesus for this most remarkable passage in Romans 3, that we can walk in confidence before You in Jesus' name. Amen.

Tonight we'll be giving our third message on the subject. It will be a little theological tonight, but this passage—these eleven verses—are the premier verses on understanding the gospel of grace. It's a bit technical, but there are about three or four main terms and you can get them. And then there's another passage that's a little technical in Romans 5-6. I want to lay out those theological passages, and then the rest of the series will mostly be practical issues, "What about this?" "What about that?" and we'll be addressing quite a few issues, some of which are being brought up each time during the question-and-answer sessions.

And so put on your theology hat and don't be afraid of the word *theology*; all that means is the study of God. However, these eleven verses, Romans 3:21-31, are critical. I can't overestimate their value in terms of understanding the grace of God. There's so much distortion on the subject of grace. And one reason is the lack of living understanding on these eleven verses.

We'll begin as we begin most sessions, with just a short review of the last session.

Here's a quick review of the second session. The gospel of grace is distorted in two main ways. First, people are trying to earn the grace of God, the love of God, and that's our focus tonight. The second way it's distorted is by people responding in half-heartedness, because the gospel of grace is free, but when it's understood it motivates a radical giving of our self to God. With all of our strength we go after Him if we really understand it. Both of these are a real burden of my heart, because if we get the revelation of the freeness of it, it creates confidence in our spirit. And when we have confidence before God, even in our weakness, then it completely changes the way we relate to God.

Many born-again believers know they're saved, know they'll go to heaven when they die, but they live with a low-grade condemnation and a sense of guilt all the time. And they know the Bible a bit. They've been in the kingdom for a few decades, some of them. However, they can't get free from this nagging sense of guilt and shame, or condemnation. They're a little confused by it, and they never have this vibrant confidence that's critical to walking in the grace of God.

THE NUMBER ONE CRY OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT

Paragraph B. Now the number one cry of the human spirit in my opinion is the assurance that we're enjoyed by God. I've written a book with Deborah Hiebert, and in this book I talk about the seven cries of the human spirit. And the number one of these seven cries that are in every human heart, the absolute most important one, in my opinion, is to have the assurance not just that we're forgiven and one day everything will be OK. That's good, but it's not good enough. It's to have the assurance that God actually enjoys us while we're maturing. And when people shift in their thinking from the standard approach of, "I know I'm forgiven, but boy, I feel bad

now,” to this assurance that God has not only forgiven them but actually enjoys them, it’s the emotional dimension of receiving the gift of righteousness.

Tonight we’ll talk a bit on the legal, but I want to mention also the emotional dimension. The legal dimension is that everything that would hinder God from fully embracing us has been paid for, answered, and removed. There’s nothing from God’s point of view to hinder Him from fully receiving us; all of the legal dilemmas have been answered and settled forever.

However, there’s more than a legal acceptance when we’re made first class-citizens of the kingdom. There’s an emotional dimension where He actually enjoys us. He accepts us as first-class citizens in His family, with all of the rights and privileges of a first-class citizen in the family and the kingdom. Say it any way you want, but it’s more than that; He actually enjoys us. If I was mapping out a person’s spiritual life, just graphing it out and showing how they grew—“Well, they were a bit dull for a year or two there...”—I could guarantee you that when they understood that they were enjoyed, that’s when the great growth begins.

YOU CAN’T SKIP ROMANS 3 ON THE ROAD TO ROMANS 6

We’re on our way to Romans 6, and I’ll give the general themes of Romans 6 in the next couple of sessions, how to walk in victory over sin, but we can’t approach Romans 6 with any real hope of succeeding in Romans 6 without understanding Romans 3. Therefore, what I’m doing in this introduction is bringing you to a point where you’re so convinced of the value of Romans 3:21-31 that, even though there’s some legal language in it, you say, “This is mine. This is my inheritance. I can understand it. I will understand it and, more than that, I will apply it.”

How do we apply it? We get the truth of these eleven verses into our mouths and say them before God. And when the devil comes to accuse us we renounce his lies and before God we declare the truth about what God says about us. Until we understand these truths in a general way—and you can understand them in a general way in one evening—but until you do, and until they get into your mouth where you actually say them before God, they won’t move you. And if we don’t have a foundation of Romans 3, we’re never going to successfully walk in the victory over sin in Romans 6. You can’t skip Romans 3 on the way to Romans 6. Romans 6 is where we want to go.

When we have this assurance not just that we’re forgiven but that He enjoys us, we run to God instead of from God when we stumble, when we sin. Because the way the human spirit is created, we have to have acceptance or we guard ourselves and run the other way.

If you’re going to have a meeting with someone, even a friend, and you know they’re angry and they’re just going to rail at you; you’ll try to avoid the meeting, or you’ll go in with your spirit guarded. You aren’t going to go in relaxed and you aren’t going to enjoy the dialogue. You’ll go in guarded or you’ll run the other way. And you might even kind of rev up to tell him what the real truth is about him. You might want to retaliate or get defensive, but the point is you can’t receive in an enjoyable way when you feel you’ll be rejected and it injures the relationship. And so when we get this truth clear and our spirit opens, we run to the One who understands the most and who paid the price fully and who enjoys us.

And I tell you, beloved, when that connects in our heart and we actually run to Him because it's the place we feel safest because we understand these truths, it will be the time in your spiritual life where the great growth will accelerate more rapidly than at any other time in your life.

The opposite of confidence is condemnation. Condemnation is the fear that God is rejecting us. Now God can disapprove of something we're doing but still accept us. When God is disciplining us, when God disapproves of an area in our life, that doesn't mean that He disapproves of us as a person.

It's the same way with earthly parents. They can say to their six-year-old son or daughter, "This area of your life has got to change"; but they aren't rejecting the child when they're challenging that area.

And so God can discipline us; God can correct us, and He does, but there's no rejection in the correction. There's no driving us out of His presence when He disciplines us. As a matter of fact, the Bible says He disciplines us because He enjoys us because He loves us.

THERE'S NO REJECTION WHATSOEVER IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD

Now where this is going is the great crescendo of Romans 8:1: there is no condemnation, none whatsoever, in the presence of God. That doesn't mean He doesn't correct us. That doesn't mean He doesn't highlight some issues and say, "That issue in your character needs to change." That's not the same as condemnation; that's conviction. He's saying, "I want to bring you into greater unity with My heart; but there's no rejection at all in My presence, not at all. I delight in you. I like you. You're Mine. I see who you are to Me forever. And I see who you are to Me even right now through what My Son, Jesus, did for you."

And of course there's that great passage where we have no condemnation in Romans 8. And that needs to be a verse that we all speak to God all the time when the devil lies to us. There's no rejection; instead of *condemnation* put the word *rejection*. There's no rejection before God because of Christ Jesus. He doesn't reject me at all; even when He corrects me there's not an element, not one degree, not one ounce, not 1 percent of rejection in it.

Now the reason this is so challenging is because most of us grew up in a context where our parents or our authority figures, when they corrected us, rejected us. When they said, "Stop, don't do that again!" they also said something like, "I don't like what you're doing!" And they had anger, so they were rejecting while they were correcting. Therefore most of us are so familiar with correction meaning rejection that when we come under the leadership of our heavenly Father, it's hard to get this thing clear, that there's no condemnation and there's no rejection at all.

THE FOUNDATION OF THE GOSPEL: A REVELATION OF THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

Paragraph D. The foundation of the gospel. Romans 1:16-17. The foundation of the gospel is the revelation of the righteousness of God. That's the key truth on which our confidence is built. When we understand the righteousness of God and how God in His righteousness judged Jesus so that He could righteously give us His righteousness, so that He could justly justify us; when we understand that, then we know that the debt is fully paid and God will never, ever charge the same debt twice. Jesus paid it. It's impossible that He would ask you to pay it after it has been paid. That would be injustice. When we understand that, then it can never be judged again; it's impossible. It has already been judged.

When we get that, that revelation of righteousness, that it's because of God's righteousness that He righteously judged Jesus and gave us Jesus' righteousness because Jesus took the penalty, then we can't ever be in a place of rejection before God, ever again. Even when an issue in our character comes up short with sin and darkness in it; the Lord will discipline us, and He will correct us, but there will be no rejection whatsoever. His heart will be so comfortable with us in His presence. We won't be comfortable in His presence, but He's comfortable with us. In our un-renewed mind we will be rejecting it, and the spirit of conviction will be so preoccupied with the issue He's pointing out, but He's saying, "It's not Me rejecting you; it's your own thinking, because you can't connect with My Word if you aren't living in obedience with Me."

However, here's the point I'm trying to make: Romans 1:16-17 is the theme verse of the whole book of Romans. And the book of Romans is the premier doctrinal book in the whole Bible. There's no book more important for a New Testament believer than the book of Romans in terms of understanding who we are before God, in our legal position, and how we're to live in our condition. There's no book more doctrinally complete than Romans.

If I had to pick one other book in the New Testament as the companion to Romans I would make it the book of Ephesians. If you have Romans and Ephesians together you have so much of the Pauline revelation in the New Testament. Those two books together will just about take care of it. Granted, that's slightly exaggerated, because those other books are important as well. However, those other books mostly expound on the foundation laid in these two books.

THE POWER TO WALK FREE FROM SIN

Let's look at this foundational theme verse; it's loaded with dynamic ideas in short phrases. In verse 16, we see that the gospel is the power. Receiving the gospel is the way that we experience the power of salvation.

Now when we say the word *salvation*, it's the freedom from the penalty of sin and the power of sin. When we talk about salvation, it's not just being forgiven; it's also the way to walk free from those vices or addictions that held us in bondage in the past. And so Paul is making this big statement which many believers can't really relate to. He said, "If you've received the gospel, you're in the position to experience the power of God, to be fully forgiven."

They say, "OK, technically we get it, but we still feel rejected."

It's the power to walk free from sin. It doesn't mean sinless perfection. It means we now have victory over past bondage to certain vices. I'm not saying we never stumble, but the rule of our life is victory over that area once we understand how to appropriate it. And when we receive the gospel, we actually have the power to be used by God to minister to other people. Even when we're feeling badly, His power is still administered through us.

Now he goes on in verse 17 and says, "Let me tell you how this works," because everyone is excited about the power of God. It's the power to be forgiven; the power to walk free from former bondages of sin in our character, and the power to be used by God to minister to other people.

Everyone wants verse 16. He says, "Let me tell you how verse 16 operates. It's based on verse 17, the revelation of the righteousness of God." If you don't understand that revelation, you aren't going to experience the same measure of power, because you'll end up being short-circuited with condemnation and shame, and

you'll have a guarded spirit in your walk with God when you stumble. You'll run from Him instead of to Him. You'll hide away from God for a while until you feel a bit strengthened, and then you'll come back and relate to Him.

And without the revelation of righteousness of verse 17, you won't walk in the power of verse 16. Then, having laid that foundational point, he takes the next four chapters, Romans 1-4, and says, "Let me explain the righteousness of God to you. Let me lay it out to you clearly"; and so that's what he's doing here.

THE MOST COMPLETE PRESENTATION OF THE GOSPEL OF GRACE

Paragraph E: Romans 1-8 is the most complete presentation of the gospel of grace. I'm not going to go through it again, but I just wanted to remind you of that. And I want to urge you to learn it and then read these four chapters. I remember when they were new to me, and I thought, "What on earth is he talking about?" But you get a few of the foundational ideas clear, and then it clears up the mystery. You don't have to know all of the details he's talking about, but you need to know the main themes that he's presenting.

And so don't feel like until you understand it all you can't understand any of it. No, pick the low-hanging fruit. You can understand the four or five main themes really quite quickly without understanding all of the little technical points that he's making.

THE CLEAREST STATEMENT IN THE BIBLE ON THE GRACE OF GOD

Top of page two. Let's look at the revelation of God's righteousness. Again, Romans 3:21-31 is the most foundational passage in the whole of the Book of Romans. The rest of Romans is built on these eleven verses. These eleven verses are actually elaborating on the passage we just looked at in Romans 1:16-17, about how the gospel is the power of God, for in it the righteousness of God is revealed.

And so now Paul is taking eleven verses and developing that theme verse of Romans 1:16-17. He's developing a bit more, and then in Romans 4, 5, 6, and 7 he's going to develop it even more. It's the clearest statement of our salvation or the grace of God. You can use those terms interchangeably. You can say it's the clearest statement on the grace of God right here in these eleven verses. The whole of the Book of Romans is built on these eleven verses.

Now the challenge of these eleven verses is that Paul uses legal language. He doesn't use street language, but legal language. He uses words we don't use a lot: *justification*, *propitiation*, *redemption*. We might say, "Hey, I want to justify myself," but mostly we don't use these terms in everyday life. They were terms used in a legal context.

Now the reason Paul uses legal terms is because, before the throne of God, when Jesus offered His blood and paid for our debt, that was a legal exchange in the throne of God. That's why Paul uses legal terms. So don't be tripped up by the legal terms. Again, there are only three or four of them.

However, there was a legal exchange at the throne of God. I'm using the terms *sin* and *debt* synonymously. If my debt isn't paid, I can't have a relationship with God. My debt or my sin is so big I can't pay for it. Jesus, the innocent One, because guilty so that the guilty one, me, became innocent as a free gift. That was a legal exchange.

It's like the Father said, "Jesus, if You'll pay for him, he's free! I'll never charge him again. If You'll pay for him, I'll never charge him again, ever, if You'll pay the debt."

And Jesus said, "I'll pay with My own, perfect, innocent life. I'll become the guilty One and I'll pay his sentence. I'll go to prison for him, but in this sense: I'll bear the wrath of God, the penalty due to him, so that he doesn't have to go." And so there's a legal exchange: God's presence, our life, and Jesus' blood. There was an exchange of our debt, our sin.

Now to the degree we understand that we had a legal problem before God and that God offered a legal solution to our problem, when we understand that, we end up with great confidence. As we all know, Jesus legally paid the debt that I owed in order to relate to God. He paid my prison sentence, if you want to use a popular modern analogy. He went to prison for us. It didn't exactly work that way, because He bore the wrath of God, and He bore it for a short time. However, He paid the penalty for us, and when I get that and I know that it has been paid, when I'm in a bad mood or I'm not doing well, I don't relate to God based on how I'm doing. I relate to God according to what He did and the fact that He paid my debt. Understanding the legal exchange gives us confidence before God.

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD APART FROM THE LAW

Paragraph B. It's this startling truth, the righteousness of God apart from the law. Now Paul uses the term "the law" four or five times in the book of Romans. You could lose your way if you don't have a bit of a foundation. And some people mix up the way he uses the phrase. He uses it several different ways, and without a bit of training you can lose your bearings.

However, in this context in Romans 3, when he says, "The righteousness of God is revealed apart from the law" (Rom. 3:21, paraphrased), it means, in a practical way, apart from you earning it. And so you can put that phrase in there, "Apart from me earning it, the righteousness of God was revealed." Or you could say, "It was made available and given to me." The righteousness of God was accessible to me without me earning it.

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS YOU'VE BEEN GIVEN CAN NEVER BE IMPROVED UPON

Now the stunning part is the quality of the righteousness. I mean, it's too good to be true. I was talking to Wes Hall and he said, "When I first encountered this doctrine a few years ago it was too good to be true."

I said, "The amazing thing is, it's better than we can imagine. When we go to the extreme limits of imagination, it's even better than that." It really is. It's the righteousness of God. Let that sink in. It's the very quality of righteousness that God Himself possesses. I mean, it's just staggering. The righteousness you received the day you were born again can never, ever be improved upon, ever. It can never be improved. God's own righteousness isn't superior to the righteousness you receive. I mean, think of the holy, righteous God. It's impossible to improve upon it. The righteousness He has isn't superior to the righteousness He gave you. It's the exactly the same thing.

Beloved, that's staggering to our minds. Not even He can increase its quality. Even if He wanted to He couldn't give you a superior righteousness; it doesn't exist and it never will. That's the measure of your security and your confidence before Him. If you want to walk that out, you have that reason to have confidence in His presence.

A million years from now when you've had a resurrected body for a million years, you won't have a righteousness superior to the righteousness you received the day you were born again when your mind was filled with wrong thoughts. Your standing, your legal position before God, is as dynamic and full the day you're born again as a million years from now in the resurrection.

"It's too good to be true!" is what Wes said as a young man, but it's better than what we could ever imagine.

GOD'S DILEMMA, OUR CRISIS

Paragraph D. Now here's the dilemma. God is holy and we're sinful. Because God is holy, or righteous, and we're sinful, we can't be in relationship with Him until the sin is paid for. It's a very important phrase here. And if you get this, even when you share with other people and you help them understand the truth, this is a very important phrase, so underline it. God didn't overlook our sin; He paid for it.

There's a big difference. God didn't look at our sin and say, "I'm so kind; I'll overlook it." That's not how He said it. He said, "I'm infinitely kind, but I'm also infinitely righteous and infinitely just." He's 100 percent righteous, 100 percent kind, and 100 percent just.

God can't overlook His righteousness because He's kind and just make you righteous. "And so I like you so much I'll just make you righteous." He had to make us righteous in a just way—in a way that didn't violate any of the justice around His throne.

So God has this dilemma from our human point of view. He says, "I love you, but you have to be as righteous as I am for Me to relate to you; and you can't do it." There's no amount of prayer, fasting, or obedience that can erase all of our sin. "I love you, but you have to be righteous to relate to Me because I'm infinitely righteous, infinitely kind, and infinitely loving, and I can't give you righteousness without upholding justice in the way I give it to you."

And so He looked at His right hand and said to His Son, "The only way I can justly give them righteousness, because I love them, is if the innocent One, You, Jesus, becomes a man and lives innocently and bears the penalty due to them. If You'll do that then I can express My love for them"—or *kindness*, whichever word you want. "I can make them as righteous as I am, so there's no impediment, there's no hindrance. And I don't violate My just ways around My throne. I uphold justice 100 percent; I do it the right way." The innocent One became guilty.

WHERE DO PEOPLE GO WHO DON'T BELIEVE?

Again, paragraph D is a very important few sentences in the practical sense. If you learn these few sentences, these ideas, you can put them in your own words; you'll be able to minister to unbelievers and explain things to them a lot better.

Because, as you know, we have this news group coming in next week, and I'm talking on the phone, and this is where this discussion is going next week when we talk. And so the executive producer of the program is telling me, "This is where we're going." So we talked for a while and then she said, "Well, we hear your Christian point of view and it's kind of interesting." And she says, "Now you'll say these things in the interview, right?"

I said, "Yes."

“OK,” she said, “where does it all end up for people who don’t believe you believe?”

I said, “Well, let me phrase it differently. Is there another way of salvation besides one way?”

She says, “Yes.”

I say, “There’s not.”

She’s quiet. It’s a conference call and there are others there around the table and I can imagine them thinking, “He’s one of those guys.”

I said, “Let me tell you why. Christianity isn’t superior in the sense that we have a religion, they have a religion, and ours is a better one. That’s completely the wrong concept.” I say, “Number one, it’s a relationship and not a religion. Number two, and even more importantly, there was only one innocent Man, and He became guilty, and the guilty can now become innocent. If the other world religions can produce an innocent man, then we can talk about another way of salvation. It’s an issue of justice, not the superiority of our religious traditions.”

And she said—she actually said this—“That actually makes sense!”

Now I don’t know if people will say that in another setting, but I said, “If any of the world religions produces a perfect man who will take the wrath of God for the others, now we have another way of salvation.” I say, “But none of them even claim there’s a perfect man. They don’t even claim it. It’s not an issue of love; it’s an issue of justice.”

Who is going to pay for the debt? God can’t in His kindness overlook the debt. He can’t just give His righteousness in an illegal way. He has to give His righteousness in a right way.

IMPUTED AND IMPARTED RIGHTEOUSNESS

Paragraph E. Now this is the central theme, the critical theme: the righteousness of God. We receive imputed righteousness that relates to our legal position before God. It’s like you’re legal citizens in the nation. You may not feel very patriotic; you may not be a good citizen. You may even sin against the country, but if you’ve a legal citizenship you have rights, no matter what you feel or what you’re doing in that moment. You’re still legal. That’s what I mean by our legal position.

Now the Scripture makes it clear, and you can find all of the places in the New Testament, particularly in the book of Romans, where the word *imputed* is used. It’s used a number of times. That’s a legal term. It’s an accounting term.

Another term for *imputed* is “accredited to your account.” Jesus’ righteousness is accredited to your account because He was willing to pay the debt. And so it’s counted to your benefit, credited to your account, imputed to you. Again, it’s an accounting term.

Now there’s another expression of the righteousness of God: it’s “imparted righteousness.” That’s the righteousness that we walk out in our everyday character. We have imputed righteousness; a legal position. One hundred percent righteousness is given to us the moment we’re born again. And so that righteousness is 100

percent intact; it can't be improved. It's God's own righteousness. It could never increase, even a million years from now in the resurrection. It's instantaneous.

Now God's desire is that when He imputes righteousness to us, now we can relate to Him. And in our relationship we experience more power in our thinking and in our emotions, and then we walk out imparted righteousness. In other words, our character becomes righteous. The point of imputed righteousness is to lead to imparted righteousness. *Imparted* means we actually walk out righteous with our speech, with our character, and with our motives.

Here's my point: one is our legal position and one is our living condition. Those are just terms that are used by many. One of them is instantaneous and the other is progressive. Put the word *progressive* there next to "living condition" or "imparted righteousness." It's progressive; little by little we grow in it.

IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS EMPOWERS YOU FOR IMPARTED RIGHTEOUSNESS

Here's the bigger point I want to make: some people think of the grace of God and they say, "I get imputed righteousness; I get a legal position. Now I can just go live in sin." The point of the imputed righteousness is to empower you for imparted righteousness. That's the point of the gospel of grace. The gospel isn't a kind of a free covering to deny our relationship with God in our lifestyle. You can't live in immorality and steal money, and live in covetousness, bitterness, and slander and claim grace without repenting.

We're still in the grace of God, but the Lord says, "Your lifestyle is violating the whole reason I gave you grace. I love you. You're still Mine, but you aren't living in the fruit of why I gave you the grace of God." The free grace of God is always to lead us to righteous character.

Paragraph F. When God looks at me, He sees my debt paid. It's imputed or credited. Now here's the dynamic thing: He relates to me based on what He credited to my account. When He looks at me in order to embrace me, He's a holy God. In and of myself I'm an unholy man. He wants to embrace me.

A holy God can't embrace an unholy man, but He says, "Aha, on your account is My Son's perfect righteousness. There's nothing hindering the relationship from My point of view."

Now if I live in compromise, when I stumble in sin it doesn't hinder God from embracing me, but it hinders me from enjoying the embrace. His arms are still wide open, and He says, "No, the debt is paid; you're Mine!" But we have un-renewed thinking; we have guilt and condemnation because we don't repent of it. The Spirit is convicting us. We can't enjoy the open embrace that's fully offered to us.

"ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS ACCOUNTED TO HIM FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS"

Let's turn to Page 3. Look at Romans 3:21. The word is *now*, not in the future. Paul says, "Now the righteousness of God apart from earning it is made available, accessible to you" (Rom. 3:21, paraphrased). And Paul then goes on to make this very amazing point. He says, "It's witnessed by the Old Testament Law and Prophets" (ibid).

Here's what he means. He says, "This righteousness by faith, this free gift, is no different from what was taught in the Old Testament." Some people have this confused idea that in the Old Testament they were saved by works, but in the New Testament they're saved by faith. That's complete confusion.

Paul says, “No, no.” When he talks about the Law and the Prophets, he means the Old Testament. You can just write the phrase, “The Old Testament,” when he says “Law and Prophets.” He means the Old Testament scriptures testify; they preach this message.

As a matter of fact, in Romans 4, which we aren’t going to spend a lot of time on in this series, Paul explains that Abraham lived 400 or 500 or 600 years before the Law of Moses. Before Moses ever gave the Ten Commandments, Abraham was saved by faith. Six hundred years before the Ten Commandments, Romans 4 tells us, a man was saved by faith. Then King David, 400 years after the Ten Commandments, was also saved by faith. On both sides of the giving of the Ten Commandments His people were saved by faith. It’s exactly the same way they’re saved in the New Testament.

And so get that clear: that’s what that means when it says this righteousness was witnessed, or proclaimed, or verified, or validated. It was set forth by the Law and the Prophets, by the Old Testament scriptures.

Here’s the point: it’s not a new idea. God didn’t change. It’s not like in the Old Testament it was works, and in the New Testament it’s grace. No, Abraham and David, on two sides of the giving of the Ten Commandments, were both saved by grace.

In verse 22, he says, “It’s the righteousness of God, and the Jewish people were trying to attain it through this rigorous obedience. No matter how obedient they were, they could never attain it. The only way it could be received by human beings is by faith in Jesus” (Rom. 3:22, paraphrased). When it says *faith*, you can write *confidence*. We put confidence in the fact that Jesus paid the debt.

And so when we come to God, we say, “Father, my only chance is that He paid the debt. And I have total confidence that He did.” That’s what it means that we have faith in Jesus. And we have confidence in that, but faith doesn’t stop with confidence in the fact that we’re forgiven. Faith always means a commitment to come under His leadership. To have confidence that He would save us is the same theme to God as having confidence in His leadership over our life. So if He says, “Live this way, not that way,” we have confidence in His leadership. We have confidence in His salvation. We have confidence that His way is the right way. We resolve to live that way because His way is the right way.

We aren’t earning it. We’re declaring our confidence in His wisdom, His leadership, and His salvation. Some people think faith means confidence in forgiveness only, when faith always means confidence also in God’s leadership and God’s ways of life. And so our flesh doesn’t always want God’s ways, but we have confidence that they’re superior to anything we could come up with in our flesh.

Then Paul goes on in verse 22 and tells us there’s no difference. What he’s saying here is quite amazing. Go on down all the way to point six. “There’s no difference” (Rom. 3:22, paraphrased), he’s telling the Gentiles, who were typically perverse people. At least in theory, the Jews were moral people. They weren’t so moral, but in terms of their ideology they would say, “We’re a moral culture.” You know how people say, “Our culture is based in morality.” Again, it wasn’t true but they had the right idea.

However, the Gentiles were open about worshiping demons, and orgies, and immorality, and murder. They had no scruples about them. They said, “Hey, not a problem. We want to be as immoral as we want to be. We want to worship any false god.”

Therefore, when the Bible contrasts Gentiles and Jews in the book of Romans, not always, but many times it's contrasting those who are moral and those who are perverse. Now again, the Jews weren't so moral but they thought they were.

So when Paul says here in verse 22, "There's no difference," he means, "The most religious and the most perverse, the most moral and the most immoral, are saved on exactly the same basis: by receiving the 100 percent righteousness of God as a free gift."

JUSTIFIED FREELY THROUGH HIS REDEMPTION

Now look at paragraph two. In verse 24, Paul says, "We are justified freely through His redemption" (Rom. 3:24, paraphrased)—freely! We receive it free in one moment. We receive it fully, the full righteousness of God, and we receive it instantly. And we receive it forever; we don't lose it. We still have it a billion years from now, and it never wears out.

Paragraph four. We're justified freely through redemption. *Redemption* was a term the Greeks used commonly to describe releasing a prisoner if someone paid the price of ransom. Slavery in those days was based on someone owing a debt. One of the ways people were brought into slavery is that one nation invaded another nation and took their people as slaves in a really evil way. However, there was another type of slavery where if you owed a debt and didn't pay the debt you were an indentured servant for seven years. You had to be a slave for seven years to pay that debt off. If someone came along and paid the debt for you, you were out of slavery. They ransomed you from your debt. You were a prisoner; you were a slave, an indentured servant because you owed a debt. Another guy came and gave the \$100,000, for example, and the man you were enslaved to would say, "You're free now; your debt has been paid!" That's what *redemption* meant.

"SUCH A GREAT DEBT! WHO CAN PAY IT?"

I remember hearing the story of Peter the Great. It's a moving story. I'll give the short version. There's a long version of it. He was the Czar of Russia in around 1700, and this is written up in his journals, and he was out in a military operation one night with tens of thousands of soldiers. They had those vast military campaigns.

And it's late at night and he sees a light burning in one tent; the lantern was still lit. It was around 3:00am. He said, "What is that man doing over there? We have a battle tomorrow." Peter the Great was just surveying the camp of these thousands of soldiers and he was curious, so he went over there and peeked in there.

And there was this man, and this man was over one of the main accountants of the army. And this man had embezzled, stolen thousands of dollars according to our currency. And he had been caught. And he was going to be executed with open shame the next day. And he was in so much turmoil, he wrote down all of the money he stole and confessed it. Who could ever pay such a vast amount? I don't remember the exact amount.

Well, through the fatigue of the night in the midst of this military campaign he fell asleep before he killed himself. I mean, he fell asleep out of fatigue. Peter the Great walked in, looked over his shoulder, and saw this huge amount written out, and underneath, "Such a great debt; who can pay it?"

And he was moved with compassion and wrote his own name: "Peter the Great."

The man woke up the next morning and his debt was paid. He wasn't executed and there was no charge against him. That was written up in his journals of his life story, the journal of Peter the Great. I think, what a perfect example: "Such a great debt! Who can pay it?" Jesus writes His own name and we're liberated when we're about to be executed.

Paragraph five: We're justified. Do you know what *justified* means in essence? You've heard the phrase, and it's popular, but it's true: "Just as if I'd never sinned." It's as though we stole \$100,000 and we don't have to pay a single penny. There's no debt. We're declared just in God's court, just as though we never sinned.

WE HAVE BECOME THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IN CHRIST

Paragraph J. We'll look at this in more detail, that we're a new creation, but here's the verse I want to lock into: verse 21. We'll really develop this passage that we're a new creation, and old things have passed away; all the old judgment is gone, 100 percent. The judgment is gone.

But it's more than that. It means more than judgment, but in tonight's context we're talking about confidence before God. The judgment is gone, 100 percent. Verse 21. This is staggering: we become the righteousness of God. What?

You're made up of three parts: body, soul, and spirit. Your body isn't righteous yet, but it will be. Your soul, your personality, your thinking, and your emotions aren't righteous yet, but they're growing in it little by little. However, your human spirit was made righteous. You can't even feel the presence of your human spirit, but it was made as righteous as God was.

Your spirit has actually been, as one preacher says, "recreated in righteousness." I don't know the best way to say it, but our born-again spirit is as righteous as God is. Now the problem is this: we can't feel it, because our five senses can't measure or discern our spirit because it's of a different order. But your spirit is as righteous as God is. And we'll develop that more when we get to Romans 6.

A SACRIFICE TO SATISFY GOD'S JUSTICE

Top of Page 4. In verse 25, Paul is talking about Jesus. God sent forth Jesus as a propitiation. It's hard to say *propitiation*; at least it is for me. Here's what that word means: it's a sacrifice to satisfy God's justice. Jesus was sent forth as a propitiation, as a sacrifice to satisfy the claims of justice.

Again, that's a word we don't use, but in the Greek culture they were really familiar with it, because they would have these propitiatory sacrifices that would appease the gods in their culture. It didn't really work, as it was all demons that they were worshiping. However, Paul borrowed it and said, "That's what I'm talking about." The only true God, the God of Israel, was satisfied entirely, 100 percent.

"IN HIS FORBEARANCE GOD PASSED OVER THE SINS PREVIOUSLY COMMITTED"

There are two more phrases I want to look at, yea, and three. "In His forbearance God . . . passed over the sins . . . previously committed" (Rom. 3:25).

What does that mean? When Abraham and David in the Old Testament came before God, they would offer the blood of a slain lamb. I don't know whether they fully understood it; they probably understood it a bit better than we think they did. They would kill a lamb and offer God the blood. And that blood was like a promissory

note of sorts. That blood was like a statement saying, “When Your Messiah, Your Son, sheds His blood, then we cash in on all of these offerings we have offered to You.” They were like promissory notes.

And so when Abraham and David and all the Old Testament people died, they went down into the righteous compartment of Sheol. Sheol in the Old Testament is just the place of the dead. The word *Sheol* is used in the Old Testament many, many times. It had three different chambers. They had the chamber for the unredeemed. They had the chamber for particular demons. I don’t want to get into it all right now, but they had a chamber for the redeemed, Abraham’s bosom. It’s down in the center of the earth, somewhere down there.

And so all of the righteous ones in the Old Testament offered the slain lamb, the slain bull, and their spirits went down into the righteous chamber of Sheol, waiting for Jesus to become man and pay the debt for sin. Then the Scripture says that when Jesus rose from the dead, He descended and took with Him these guys in Abraham’s bosom.

I’m making this part up, but He could have said, “I’m cashing in on the promissory notes. You’ve killed lambs for several thousand years. I am the Lamb. I’m cashing it in! Come on, we’ll go to the Father!” and then He brought them all to the Father. However, He couldn’t bring them to the Father until He actually cashed them in. Because if He hadn’t died, those slain lambs in the Old Testament would never, ever have resulted in salvation.

I mean, this is impossible, but just for the sake of the concept; if Jesus somewhere in it had said, “Father, I’ve changed My mind; I’m not going,” those slain animals in the Old Testament would have resulted in nothing and all those guys down in Abraham’s bosom would have ended up judged for their sins. It’s not a perfect analogy, but they were like promissory notes proclaiming their confidence that the Lamb would come, that a man would come, that the innocent One would take the place of the guilty and make them innocent. And when Jesus rose from the dead He brought all of them up, but they couldn’t be saved until He did it.

That’s the forbearance of God. He restrained Himself in not wiping out Abraham and David, because all Abraham and David had was a slain bull, a slain lamb. They couldn’t get anyone saved if it wasn’t the true Lamb of God, Jesus, who was going to make it real. Boy, they were excited.

I can just picture the Mount of Transfiguration in Matthew 17. Moses and Elijah came to Jerusalem right before Jesus died and spoke to Him of His death. Now let me just throw in my own made-up conversation. Moses and Elijah said, “Jesus, there are a whole bunch of us down there. We killed lambs and we’re really counting on You not backing off, because we’re totally excited because You’re about to cash in our promissory notes!” It didn’t happen like that in any way, but you get the idea. They spoke to Him about His departure, about His death.

Verse 26. Here’s the biggest point of the entire teaching. God is “just and the justifier” (Rom. 3:26). In other words, He justified us, making it just as if we’d never sinned. We’re justified. That’s what that means. He paid the debt but He did it in a just way. That’s the point. He didn’t break the rules of justice when He gave us the gift of righteousness. An innocent man became guilty and really paid. God says, “I was 100 percent just when I provided justification for you. I didn’t suspend My justice because I loved you so much.”

And so that’s why when someone says, “How could a God of love send someone to hell?” it’s because the God of love can’t forgive them except through an innocent one who became guilty. And if they reject the innocent

One who became guilty, there's no way for them to be saved even with love. And so God has justified you and me, but in a totally just way: that's the point.

Here's the final point, in verse 27. "Where is boasting?" In other words, "Where's condemnation?"

God provided a salvation so that a billion years from now I'm still saying, "I love You! Thank You!" There's no boasting even in eternity. No one can boast. We're saying, "I love You. Thank You! Worthy is the Lamb! Thank You!"

There's no boasting, but there's also no condemnation—none. We have no right to boast or to tell God, "Well, we sort of deserve this!" and we have no right to receive condemnation, because if God judged Jesus He will never judge the same crime twice, never, and our crime has been judged.

When we take condemnation, we're taking the judgment of our crime, and Jesus could say, "My blood paid for that! How dare you walk in condemnation after what I did for you?" He doesn't really say it that way, but how dare us in our religious pride try to pay the penalty that His perfect blood paid fully for us?

Amen and amen!