

The Picture of Gospel Grace

Romans 3:21-25:

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— 22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are **justified** by his grace as a gift, through the **redemption** that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a **propitiation** by his blood, to be received by faith.”

Prayer

Father, under the name and work of Jesus Christ, we come before you in the power of the Holy Spirit. We thank you for the meeting of your family and the unity of the Body- that you have saved so many of us from different paths of life.

These very words of yours bring life, hope and even empowerment to our souls this morning. Unite our hearts from being doubleminded and straying. Remind us of the gospels impact for our everyday living.

Do this to these things in the power and the glory of your name. Amen.

Warm Up

Last time we left Romans, Pastor Dan preached on the Dark Side of Christmas. He preached on the bad news **of our lives** in that we will never be good enough to meet God’s Holy Standard of getting favor and forgiveness.

But Dan also preached the Good news **for our lives** in that at Christmas, we recognize the arrival of God Himself coming to save and rescue us through Jesus Christ who is God incarnate. He is our only Hope and the true reason for the Christmas Season.

Getting into today’s passage Let me give you the :10 second context of where we are at:

Having argued and revealed for 3 chapters that all of mankind is unrighteous and sinful, Paul now expresses that God has provided a righteousness for mankind that will save them

In what is possibly the most important single paragraph ever written, Paul brings out something of the grandeur of Christ’s saving work. And he does this with three pictures that summarize God’s Gospel Grace.

Illustration:

I have brought up here one of my favorite gifts. It is an actual digital camera. Not on a phone. It was a gift to Melanie and I on our 25th wedding anniversary a few years ago so that we could take pictures. We were going to Door County for the first time and we only had flip phones. So there that reason. ☺

But also pictures play an integral part in experiencing life. As we took pictures that week we did it to enjoy and to remember this trip

I bring this up because we have three pictures or images of Gospel grace in today's verses We are going zoom in like a camera on a few of the verses and specific words to help us to understand the experience of salvation

THREE PICTURES OF GOSPEL GRACE

- Paul views this salvation through three images in this verse:
 1. imagery from the law court.
 2. imagery from the slave market.
 3. imagery from the averting of wrath.

All three of these are complementary to each other and contribute to the overall understanding of the fuller picture of Christ's saving work.

There are phrases that we hear in church all the time that perhaps we gloss over . In fact you maybe tempted to gloss over this very message because you have heard this before-- They can all sound the same.

- But for as rough and dark the previous two and a half chapters of Romans has been, Paul's next few words are the turning point in his argument to all who read this Book
- Both Jews and non jews.
- Both people at that time which is estimated around 57 AD and people today 2022 AD

These key pictures I would dare say is the key to beginning to treasuring, the gospel and fall in love with Jesus and worship more intimately than before.

My prayer is also these pictures will provide for you tools to explain the gospel -even just one segment of these pictures - better in your opportunities to witness to your friends and family about why you place your faith in Christ. Wht you are a Christian or how they can place their faith in Jesus.

Let's look at the first one.

1. Justification – the imagery from the law court

The word Justification is a legal term- so we have a picture here of a court room.

To be justified means to be declared a pardon (forgiveness) of sins.

There are three key phrases about justification that we are going to zoom in on this picture because they have nuances we need to meditate and revel in.

a. Justified by **His** grace (Rom. 3:24) this is the 1st phrase. Emphasis His Grace.

...”and are justified by his grace as a gift “ **Romans 3:24**

Self justification is impossible.

Illustration:

Before the judgement seat of God in his courtroom the very Law of God’s Holy Scripture will contend to charge all and every man with the guilt of falling short in righteousness living.

Look with me at Romans 3:19

“Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped,” Romans 3:19

- It says that every mouth maybe stopped or in other words- silenced. Every mouth is to be shut . That means all excuse making is ended.
- Do you know anyone in your witnessing attempts that just can’t shut there mouth?
- Excuse makers will continue to argue “ Yes But this” and No But that”
- Religious do gooders will say “True but I am this good deed “ Or “Yeah But I am not as evil as this person (insert name here)”

Shutting of the mouth signifies the situation of the defendant who has no more to say in response to the charges brought against him or her.

In evangelism the silence of the sinner is a vital sign of preparing a persons heart in the work of the Gospel. It is realizing that He or she cannot defend themselves.

They are standing in truth of what is being said about themselves and their state of their heart.

It is only in the silence of agreement with God's just sentence on sin and sinners that the gospel message can be heard.

When you are met with silence with

- either a believer you are lovingly confronting their sin about
- or an unbeliever who you are lovingly helping them see that they need saving-

that silence maybe indicating a work of the Spirit only God can do inside the heart... so you pray in that moment. And be led by the Spirit what to say or do next.

In the courtroom

- In that silence, what is heard and understood is a heart that knows its convicting guilt. Deserving punishment
- In that silence what is heard and understood is that we cannot and have not any ability or words to justify our sinfulness and fallen shortness.
- In that silence what is heard and understood is that we can neither please God with our good works nor makeup for our sins
- In that silence what is heard and understood is that only God pronounces justification freely by his grace- to those who put their trust in Jesus

God's grace of justification is a gift- that means it is without price (Not without cost – hold that thought)- But God's grace is a gift- You don't buy it- or plea bargain for it. In the back offices of the courtroom Nor is it a gift you need to pay back once you receive it.

Self-justification is impossible in the courtroom of God. .Justification is by His Grace

Grace is the source of Justification

The second key phrase:

b. Justified by his blood (Rom.5:9) this is the 2nd phrase.

“...we have now been justified by his blood,” Romans 5:9

Justification is not the same as amnesty.

- Amnesty is a forgiveness that overlooks wrongdoing and declines to bring to justice
- Remember when I said justification is not without cost. It cost the life of the Son of God. John the Baptist declared:
“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! John 1:29

- That John is calling out Jesus as the Lamb of God is a direct reference of the Old Testament sacrifices that the people of Israel performed in order to achieve forgiveness. The Blood of the lamb covered the sins- that is forgave the sins of the people
- Justification has to do with justice. Again a courtroom image-
- When God justifies sinners he is pronouncing them legally righteous, forgiven from the liability to the broken law... because He himself through the Son had endured the penalty they deserved...**by his blood.**
- When the sinner is justified, he is rescued from the consequences of sin. He is set free from the guilt of sin, the power of sin, the penalty of sin the pollution of sin **all because of the blood of Christ**
- **The Blood of Christ is the grounds of justification.**

The third key phrase:

c. Justified by Faith (Rom. 3:28) this is the 3rd phrase

For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law. Romans 3:28

- Make no mistake on this one:
- Faith is a trusting reception of God's gracious offer which saves us. It's a gift to be accepted
- The legal declaring of justification is a free act, a gracious act of God, one that flows from the work of Christ on the cross.

We are justified, by Grace alone through Faith alone in Christ alone.

Whatever we try to add to it doesn't save us more or make us more secure.

Faith- that is putting our trust in what Christ accomplished in his life , death and resurrection to be justified- is the only means by which we are united to Christ.

Faith is the means of Justification

So that is the first picture of Gospel Grace-the image from the law court in which silenced sinners stand before the judgement of God and are declared legally righteous by the gracious choice of God that was grounded in the work of Christ on the cross for those who put their trust in this work of Jesus.

All other religions send their founders and leaders to say "Here is the way. do this." Christianity reveals That God himself says "I'm the way trust in what I've done."

Let's look at the second picture

2. Redemption- the imagery of the slave market.

"...through the **redemption** that is in Christ Jesus" Romans 3:24

At its most basic meaning, to redeem mean to buy or buy back, whether as a purchase or ransom. Ransom is the correct term to use. It implies a price of release.

Illustration:

In the last few years worship songs have emphasized Christ as our Rescuer. It finally dawned on me late last year, that I wanted this to be a point of prayer and meditation in my life. When I came to Christ as a teenager, I needed Him to be my Rock. Through the years I've grown I've emphasized different attributed and character of God: my Rock, my Lord and King, My strength. Heavenly Father, My Savior My healer, God of Grace. So this couple year in my life and ministry to the body it has been God as our Rescuer-Has been the emphasis and I think I need to grow in this for a while not just myself but in my encouraging ministry.

Because if all the happenings of 2021 hasn't convinced us that we need to be rescued and freed by someone outside of ourselves, then perhaps some of us haven't thought deep enough or have been humbled by our true plight and difficulty that show us the need to be redeemed.

The redemption picture of Gospel grace emphasizes three things:

1. It Emphasizes why we need redeeming.

It is a picture of Our sorry state of captivity to sin and pride in ourselves, that shows it is necessary that an act of divine rescue needs to occur. :

There is no distinction for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God: Romans 3:22,23

A.L.L. MEANS all , everybody, no one is distinctively an exception all have sinned We can never rescue our selves.

- Let me give you a hint: The wrong answer on judgement day is "look at my goodness here... look at my good intentions there".
- You may have incredible gifts and abilities. You may have incredible confidence in yourself and your wisdom. You may have the charisma, the favor, and the looks that this world rewards. But all of that will never redeem you or set you free

Yes, the gospel says you're more loved than you ever could have dreamed, but it also says you're more sinful than you ever imagined Why ? because we are all enslaved to sin.. That is why you need to be redeemed.

2nd the redemption picture of Gospel Grace...

2. It Emphasizes the price of redeeming

“redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:24)

There is no doubt about the cost of our redemption: it was Jesus himself.

But let me help you see it differently under the slave market image rather than the court room picture I just explained

In Mark 10:45 Jesus says “ For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, **and to give his life as a ransom for many.**”

- The first cost was the cost of the incarnation, of entering into our condition in order to reach us. listen to this...

“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, **born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law....**” Galatians 4:4-5

- Paul is alluding here to the dramatic act of entering into slavery in order to redeem a slave.
- Think of the cost... our supremely glorious, all powerful all worthy all knowing God who created everything... depriving himself of the enjoyment of His divine status and identity... to taking the form of a slave entering into our human condition in order to redeem, rescue.. in order to free us.
- The second cost of course was the cost Jesus very own life.
The gospel says some things that people do not want to hear.
 - It announces how deep the sin goes, how profound the rebellion is
 - The horror of killing the Son of God points to the horror of our condition.

This realization of these 2 costs of our freedom alone should weaken our prideful knees to bow and open our mouths to confess that Jesus is Lord to the Glory of the Father God.

Third, the redemption picture of Gospel Grace

3. It Emphasizes the result of the redeemed

Very simply- the person of the redeemer has exclusive rights over his purchase.

Lets remember these verses in the Bible:

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, 20 **for you were bought with a price.** So glorify God in your body. 1 Cor 6:19, 20

Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, **which he obtained with his own blood.** Acts 20:28

Remembering that Jesus bought us with his blood and that as a consequence, we belong to him... should motivate us as individual Christians to loving holy obedience. We are to honor God in our lives and bodies by obedience and self control.

That is the second picture of Gospel Grace- the imagery of the slave market which as John Stott says: " The imagery implies that we are held captive from which only the payment of Ransom can set us free, and that ransom is nothing less than the Messiah's own life."

The final image-- is the Picture of Gospel Grace found in the word,

3. Propitiation- image of wrath being averted.

"whom God put forward as a **propitiation** by his blood, to be received by faith."
Romans 3:25

To Propitiate somebody means to appease (satisfy) or pacify his anger. In the Biblical sense we are speaking about the holy anger or wrath of God Being satisfied

Three questions undoubtedly come to your mind:

1st Why is propitiation necessary? Answer: Because sin arouses the wrath of God

We don't like to talk about it God's anger. You may triggers of angry parents, spouses or people in your life that are sinful- and rightfully so you may have issues. But let me assure you He is not a God that flies off the handle on little whims. His anger is not illogical or irrational. His anger is not spiteful or malicious.. In short God's wrath is not like ours. What provokes his anger, seldom provokes ours.

God's wrath is his personal divine revulsion to evil. And his personal vigorous opposition to it.

Sin arouses his holy justified, divine wrath.

2nd question: who makes the propitiation? Answer Not us-

God's word is clear in Romans 3:27:

:Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded." Romans 3:27

- As we said earlier, there is nothing we can do offer or even contribute to turn God's wrath away.
- The initiative to make propitiation has been taken on by God himself.

Paul continues in verse 25:

"This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. 26 It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be **just and the justifier** of the one who has faith in Jesus."

Romans 3:25, 26

3rd question: What was the propitiation sacrifice? Answer: a person

That person was God himself through his Son Jesus Christ. In giving His son, he was giving himself as we understand the divine mystery of Triune Godhead.

John Murray says "that God loved the objects of His wrath so much that he gave his own Son to make provision for the removal of this wrath...Making the children of wrath the children of God's good pleasure."

The atonement of Christ didn't obtain God's grace. Rather it flows from God's grace.

That is the third picture of Gospel Grace- the image of wrath being averted and when you put these questions together, you realize that God himself is at the heart of the answer of all three questions.

David Wells succinctly says it so well, I feel it leads us into that treasuring the gospel and can get us to worshipping God in love. Listen to this quote:

"In Pauline thought, man is alienated from God by sin and God is alienated from man by wrath. It is in the substitutionary death of Christ that sin is overcome and wrath averted, so that God can look upon man without displeasure and man can look on God without fear."

Isn't that wonderful? Sin is wiped away and God is propitiated.

These three Pictures of Gospel Grace: Justification, Redemption and Propitiation all point to unconditional work of God to save, because we couldn't save ourselves.

Illustration:

When we grab our camera to take a picture it is because we want to remember that moment. But inevitable every picture has a larger story than that moment of saying cheese. There is a whole experience that prompts us to remember the larger experience. And then tell stories.

For many of us, we suffer from gospel amnesia. Jesus has been boring. The pictures of Gospel Grace has not stirred your love and worship. And we forget the larger story

Fellow believers we must be careful in light of what God says in his word:

“I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God. Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent.” Revelation 3:1-3

Point is?

These three pictures of Justification Redemption and Propitiation set up our new identity in Christ that affects our everyday life. It should also affect our inner joy peace freedom and strength.

Let me explain

The picture of Justification declares forgiveness for sinners that we can now live and move and have our being in. It grants a refreshing security of transparency

- It is a forgiveness that covers your past and present and future moral failures. You don't have to doubt and wonder anymore.
- In fact forgiveness give you the security that God's grace and love is as far as the east is from the west that you are welcomed into his presence and can confess your sin every time!
- His patience is long for you. His love is everlasting with you. His mercy is new every morning with you
- God's word says you don't need to hide the failures, the sin or the shame you have. Don't deceive yourself and others to think you have no sin, rather confess it to him and securely and remember this: that God is faithful and Just to forgive your sin and to cleanse you completely of all unrighteousness.
- The reason why He is faithful and just to forgive you is because of Jesus Christ work of the Cross – that is why.
- The more we grow up in Christianity the bigger the Cross gets and heavier we lean upon its strength.

- Forgiveness also give you the security to grant forgiveness to those who have wronged you and to be free of the bitterness. And the pack of others sins that run with an unforgiving spirit.
- To grow toward being this gracious as to forgive others shows a deep understanding of how gracious God has been in forgiving your sin. Keep growing in that and if your repentance includes forgiving others than do so.

The picture of Redemption reveals a freedom from sin. It is Jesus who says he who the Son sets free is free indeed. In that freedom from the power of Sin, we as believers are empowered by His grace and trained by it to say no to ungodliness and worldly passion and to live self controlled and upright lives. (Titus 2:12)

- That means we are free to say no to being jerks to our husbands or wives
- That means we are free to say no to being a pain to someone at work
- That means we are free to say no to our prideful selfish sins

The Bible says that we are no longer to slaves to sin but we are now slaves to righteousness.

- That means we are empowered to love the hard to love people in our lives
- That means we are empowered to be patient with our selves and others
- That means we are empowered to resist temptation and be overcomers in Christ.

The redeeming empowerment of the Gospel's grace frees us from fear,

frees us to respond to His love

and frees us to come into his presence and lay down out our problems.

He will empower us to handle the burdens and stress in a Christ-like Christ-empowered manner.

The picture of Propitiation establishes a friendship with God.

Once an enemy and now God to be seated at his table. Jesus, Thank you. To be fully loved now By God as his children.

Unconditional love is hard to find in this life. Disappointment and frustrations are found in even the best human loving relationships.

But no one loves like God. When we were yet ugly unlovable sinners, God loved us first. That type of secure divine love, is pictured front and center on the cross.

“God took his own loving initiative to appease his own righteous anger by bearing his own self in His own Son when he took our place and died for us.” John Stott

Closing

Brothers and sisters in Christ, remember the Gospel and wake up. Remember the new identity you have in Christ celebrate Jesus' victory daily because it is your victory.

Are the Christian marks of grace and love to people, shining bright enough for you to boast about Jesus saving you when you couldn't save yourself?

Or maybe you haven't crossed that line of trust yet. Faith in Christ is foreign to you. Well today God is calling you to himself by His grace... by putting faith alone in Jesus alone. Take that step and receive the gift of a gracious salvation only through Jesus.

Let's pray.

Father through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, we remember who we are in Christ and we continue to remember our constant need of Christ. For us the cross is not something from long ago that we trusted in at one time. It continues to be what we trust in today. It looms larger than our bible knowledge, our good works in your name and anything else we could possibly boast in. Help us to boast in Christ alone for all we have is Christ. For He is enough.

Stir our affections as we worship this week in our work, in our relationships, parenting and marriages and private times and devotion, in Jesus name Amen

THREE PICTURES OF GOSPEL GRACE

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Romans 3:21-25

1. Justification – the imagery from the _____.

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2. Redemption- the imagery of the _____.

_____.

3. Propitiation- image of wrath

_____.

The picture of Justification declares _____ for sinners

The picture of Redemption reveals a _____ from sin.

The picture of Propitiation establishes a _____ with God.