**JUSTIFIED**

**ROMANS 3:21-4:3**

**PAIRS AND SPARES CLASS**

**FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, WAYCROSS**

**MARCH 22, 2020**

**PRAYER**

As I prepare this lesson, our nation and every continent on earth, except for Antarctica, are besieged by a virus known as COVID-19.

Almost overnight, nearly every facet of our lives has changed:

 Our church ministries and worship services have been curtailed;

 Businesses have shut down;

 Schools have closed;

 Streets in major cities and small towns alike are void of cars and people;

 Hospitals are filling up and face the possibility of being overwhelmed.

As of March 20, 2020:

 According to John’s Hopkins, worldwide there have been

 275,469 confirmed cases of the virus

 11,403 deaths

 88,262 recoveries

 According to the Georgia Department of Health, there have been

 485 confirmed cases in our state

 14 deaths

 In the U. S. alone, there have been

 19,624 confirmed cases

 205 deaths

From a mortal standpoint, we are facing

a deadly epidemic for which there is no known cure;

an epidemic which is evenly spread between both men and women;

an epidemic that desperately needs a solution.

But we as human beings also face another epidemic, a spiritual one, which is more devastating, more deadly, more damaging, more permanent than even COVID-19.

It is called sin, and it separates every man and woman from our righteous God and from each other.

Our sinfulness has not only mortal implications but also eternal implications.

But unlike COVID-19, there is a sure and certain cure, a solution, for our separation from righteous God.

**Romans 3:21-23**

In our study of Romans, we’ve discussed

 The righteousness of God

 Salvation through Jesus alone

 The reality of God

 The need for a Christian to have a Christ-like perspective

Today we’ll discuss the need for a person to be justified in the eyes of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

In the Bible verses leading up to today’s focal passages, Paul reminded his readers that God’s Law defines God’s righteous expectations for all people. (Romans 3:20)

In the verses we just read, Paul reaffirms that God, in the books of the Old Testament, has made very clear His own righteousness and His expectations, His requirement, for mankind’s living according to His expectations.

But now, Paul said, God has both proven His own righteousness and further revealed His righteousness as a result of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

The Old Testament Law described a righteousness that resulted from behaving.

But Paul said that the good news of Jesus’s death and resurrection described a righteousness that resulted from believing.

The Old Testament Law reveals God’s righteousness, His holiness, His justness, His goodness; but the Law could not provide a solution for mankind’s sinfulness.

In verse 22b, Paul made it clear that there is no distinction between a Jew and a Gentile.

In verse 23, he explained what he meant by this: “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

Both Jew and Gentile are held accountable for living by God’s righteous Law, and both Jew and Gentile have fallen short of living by that Law, thus resulting in both Jew and Gentile being sinners in the sight of God.

Both Jew and Gentile—all of mankind--have a life-threatening disease which needs a cure, a solution.

And God, in His righteousness, has provided that cure, that solution: belief in Jesus Christ; absolute faith that Christ has solved the problem of my separation from God.

Faith in anything is only as good as the object into which we place our faith. When I cross a bridge, I place my faith in the hope that the bridge is structurally sound and will carry to the other side.

In Christ Jesus, we have someone into whom we can confidently place our total faith for our forgiveness and for our salvation; that faith in Jesus can carry us to the other side.

Each of us must understand that believing in God does not save us.

James 2:19 says that even the demons in hell believe in God and shudder in fear. But their knowing that God is real neither saves them nor changes their relationship with Him.

But placing our faith in Christ as the Son of God who paid the penalty for our sin does save us and should result in our having a changed perspective and a changed relationship with God.

Romans 10:9 assures us that “…if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”

That is the hope we have in Jesus.

**Romans 3:24-31**

Every person who ever lived needs salvation because everyone has fallen short of God’s Law and God’s expectations for us.

But no one deserves salvation.

To have a right relationship with God, to be saved as we describe it, mankind must satisfy God’s holy standards as defined in God’s Law.

But only Jesus has been able to live a life that fully satisfied the standards of God.

So, because God loves mankind, God, in His grace, offers us a solution to our problem, our greatest need.

But the price for this solution required the sacrificial death of God’s righteous Son who spilled His blood to pay the price for my sin.

Although God offers salvation to me without cost, my salvation was certainly not free to God; my salvation cost God the life of His perfectly righteous Son, His only Son, and it cost Jesus to experience separation from God and indescribable physical and spiritual agony.

This act was foreshadowed in the Old Testament festival of the Day of Atonement.

Two goats would be chosen and brought to the High Priest.

The first goat would be slain, its blood sprinkled on the Mercy Seat which covered the Ark of the Covenant in which the tablets of the Law rested in the Holy of Holies, providing a temporary solution for the sins of the people under the demands of the Law; thus satisfying the needs of God.

The second goat would then be brought to the High Priest who would lay his hands on the head of the goat, confess the sins of the Jewish people, and the goat would be led into the wilderness and set free, symbolically demonstrating the temporary removal of the sin of the people; thus satisfying the needs of the people.

In His death and resurrection, Jesus took upon Himself both the eternal solution for the sins of all Believers and the eternal removal of every sin of every Believer. Jesus satisfied both the needs of God and the needs of the people.

My relationship with God is not a result of my living a good life nor working hard nor paying for it. My relationship with God is made acceptable to God because God chose to offer salvation to me out of His love for me based on my decision to believe that Jesus is the Son of God who God raised from the dead.

God did everything necessary for my salvation to be possible.

There is no other way in all of the universe to be justified in the sight of God except through our acceptance of Jesus as our Lord and Savior.

The doctrine of justification by faith was not new in the first century nor was it contrary to the Law.

Justification by faith actually establishes the Law.

God obeyed His own character AND His Law by creating His plan for our salvation.

Jesus lived a righteous, sinless life and fulfilled every single facet of God’s entire Law.

So God allowed a perfect, sinless man to die in my place to do for me what I can’t do for myself—redeem me, pay the price to free me from the penalty I deserve for my sins.

 If salvation were the result of my having lived a totally righteous life in every way, then I would have something to be proud of, something to boast about.

But I haven’t lived a righteous, Law-abiding life.

I am in desperate need of a Savior; I am in dire need of a cure for my sinfulness.

The only thing I can boast about is the sacrificial love of God and the sacrificial love of Jesus that demonstrated themselves in an exorbitant act of love on the cross.

And remarkably, all of this is in perfect harmony with God’s character, God’s righteousness, God’s love, God’s Law.

**Romans 4:1-3**

Paul knew that a lot of Messianic Jews in the church in Rome would ask, “but what about Abraham? Where does faith fit in with his relationship with God, his acceptance by God?”

The Jews held Abraham in the highest regard and were proud to be his children.

Paul assured the Jewish Christians that Abraham actually proved the validity of the doctrine of righteousness with God through faith.

Paul said that if Abraham was justified, acceptable, in the eyes of God as a result of the way Abraham had lived, then Abraham would have something to be proud of, to boast about.

But it wasn’t the way Abraham lived that made him acceptable to God.

It was Abraham’s belief in God, Abraham’s trust in God, Abraham’s faith in God that made Abraham righteous, acceptable, in the eyes of God.

Paul’s point was that having a right relationship with God has always been based on a person’s placing his faith in God, and not anything else.

Has God’s Law lost its purpose and meaning?

Certainly not!

God’s Law is as true, as necessary, today as it has ever been.

God’s Law is still God’s standard.

And because we love God and appreciate what God has done for us through Jesus, Christians should do all they can to honor the Law and live the Law.

But, thankfully, our salvation is not based on how well we live the Law.

Our salvation is based on our faith in Jesus, that He died for you and me; that His death paid every penny of the price to redeem me for my past sins, my present sins, my future sins; that his death secured for me an eternal acceptance by God—all because I have accepted God’s loving gift of salvation through my choice of placing my faith in Christ.

**Closing Comments**

The days in which we live are uncertain.

Cases of COVID-19 are increasing, and more people are dying each day.

Uncertainty abounds, and there is no proven solution to the healthcare challenges we face.

But in reality, the uncertainty of life has always been constantly with us; it’s just more evident right now.

Just as the virus is no respecter of persons, just as it is evenly spread between men and women, just as there is a need for a cure, so too is our sin.

But God in His love for us has provided that cure.

God sent His Son to live a perfect life under the Law of God and as a result to become the perfect sacrifice to be offered for the sins of every human being on earth.

What we could not do for ourselves, God did for us at the greatest cost imaginable for Him and for His Son.

Our salvation was purchased by Jesus and is offered to us freely if we will place our faith in Christ and dedicate our lives to Him.

Deciding what we will do with Jesus is the most important decision we will every make. It’s a choice that each of us can make; it’s a choice that each of us must make.

Is my, is your, relationship with God secure? Have I, have you, chosen to place our faith in Jesus and follow Him?

If not, why?

If not, when?

**PRAYER**