

Romans 3.21-26, « Righteousness That Rescues »

-SG - How do you learn your Bible? Lots of reading - but as well, intensive study of particular passages, both for doctrinal and pastoral ends; sounding the depths of passages or vv makes them memorable

-our psg: memorable for a number of reasons; says a great deal about God; about salvation; about Christ; about us; can even use it as an exegesis of the 5 solas, if you wish; it is helpful wherever we turn

-Pst. Joe Boot: Was asked: How does the crucifixion/resn of Jesus help me? Good for Jesus, but for me? Well, the greatest comfort the words & acts of God bring to a believer is when they reveal more of the depth of God himself; speaking of God as he reveals himself in Christ speaks loudly about us

-theological/existential struggle of Refmn, of everyone: How can one be righteous (before God)? How can a truly righteous God not be a destroyer of sinners?

-irrelevant? Look at today's social struggles: drugs, sexual dysphoria, identification w/politics...; all are attempts to define oneself, to put oneself in the right, secure, at peace: most discourse simply self-justification

-that they seek to do so w/o God only speaks to our culture's incomprehension of God & how he saves; puts us back into context of Refmn's major recovery: Following Luther, the glory & righteousness of God isn't displayed in destroying a sinner, but in saving him by grace thro' faith in Christ

-and ultimately, to know God more accurately in Christ is to know his love for us, thus to know ourselves

-let's consider this God whose righteousness is displayed as he saves freely by Jesus alone:

Righteousness that rescues

God's Righteousness Revealed: Sola scriptura, v21

God's righteousness is revealed by but not through the Law, v21

-common mistake of reader & preacher: imposing interpretive grid or dominant theme on psg; avoided if we hear the psg itself; here, repeated words or concepts joined: *righteousness of God & Jesus Christ*

-*But* (impt word!): Paul has just spent a couple of chapters defining what we all share : guilt & condemnation before a righteous God; law, no law, it doesn't matter – we're all guilty, convicted by conscience or by whatever law – even God's – we hold to

-*now*: God's righteousness – is revealed by the Law but not achieved by works of the Law (w/o); now both *temporal*, Gal 4.3-5 & *dispensational* (Old Cov't vs New)

-Law witnessed not to *our* own righteousness, but to that of *God*, which condemns us

-but this condemnation is our salvation: what the Law couldn't *achieve* - indeed, what misuse of the Law, legalism, undoes - it had always *announced*

-*righteousness of God*: picks up thought of 1.16-17; God's righteousness: that which reflects his perfection, but as brought to bear in our salvation by grace (Luther & Staupitz)

-will come to comfort us to see how, by God's gracious work alone, one can be counted righteous before him (subj) - but not before we see how God's gracious work in Christ reveals his true righteousness (objv)
-revealed: Ro 1.18 - as God's wrath is revealed so now - and in Christ - is his righteousness for & toward us
-not 'found': only thro' Bible do we discover this; Bible lays out both God's perfection & our condemnation; God's jdgmt & our guilt; God's mercy & our Saviour; God himself must define us, condemn us, & save us - & this he alone does according to the Bible alone
-man's genius & spirituality only hide this eternal truth; it is *realised* in Jesus & *recognised* "from faith for faith", 1.17, in him

God's Righteousness applied by faith in Christ: Sola fides, v22

God's righteousness is applied by means of faith in Christ, v22

-(Madoc med clinic); Bible doesn't particularly emphasise faith in itself; biblical faith always linked to its object, whose value determines whether faith is worthwhile; faith elevates its object, not its practitioner
-*sola fides*: good news & bad; bad, bec it puts paid to all my efforts, religious & o'wise; any security I might have had is dashed, emptied; but good, bec it replaces it by the substance of faith, Jesus Christ, who is its object & its originator, its Author & Finisher; and thus certainty
-*through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe* - redundant? No - the application of God's righteousness to our account is obtained only through faith in Christ; but it is obtained thus, and for all - Jew & Gentile, you - whatever your sin, your background - for all who believe
-thus there is no salvation in law – religious, social, personal; such law only insulates us from grace in the stew of our own false righteousness: "the faster I go the lofter I get"
-faith is the cable that joins us to the anchor of our hope & salvation: Jesus
We have an anchor that keeps the soul, steadfast & sure while the billows roll; fastened to the Rock which cannot move, grounded firm & deep in the Saviour's love.

Our Righteousness received by free grace: Sola gratia, vv22b-24

Our righteousness is received by free grace, vv22b-24

-we're all the same: Jew or Gentile, spiritually-minded or pagan: all have sinned; sharing one blood in Adam, we share his mortal disease, condemnation as rebels - & we live out this inheritance (GK Chesterton - Original sin as the only doctrine scientifically provable)
-so law or conscience, ritual or anarchy: we stand condemned & are short of God's glory
-this glory: it may be glory we owe God, or that we should receive as servants of God; perhaps that which we have forsaken in eternity by our sin

-but most probably, the glory of God is that we are to reflect as those made in his image - we have tarnished & ruined it, and are no longer fit to represent him

-sin elevates self: what we seek to earn is killing us; thus salvation must be of grace, & freely exercised by God alone, according to his sovereign election, *Ro 6.23*

-*by grace as a gift, through redemption* - RC Sproul: We are saved by works! Not our own, which only condemn us - but by Christ's finished work; God's grace is exercised freely thro' Christ; this grace cannot be earned, but neither is it given but through the sacrifice of Christ; it is a very particular grace, not a general category of forgiveness, a blanket pardon

-it is to Christ that he calls me for life, away from myself; to find myself is to find misery – to be found in Christ is life eternal; my own efforts only further distance me from God's righteousness, *Php 3.7-11*

-it must be of God's free grace

God's Righteousness Declared by the sacrifice of Christ : Solus Christus, v25

God's righteousness is declared by Christ's sacrifice, v25

-again, it is to Christ that the Bible witnesses; in him alone is my faith of any avail; in him alone God's grace is savingly exercised on my behalf, *1Jn 4.10*

-*1Tm 1.15*: God sent Christ to die for sinners; as a propitiation, God has atoned for our sin in Christ's death, and allayed his wrath toward us; the wrath revealed fm heaven, *1.18, 2.5, 2.8, 3.5, 5.9*, Christ bore in our place; not only is sin paid for, but the offence & broken relationship w/God has been mended; we are accepted in the Beloved, not grudgingly, but w/open arms

-you see, God doesn't accept us because we've changed – he has changed his outlook toward us in Christ, not seeing us as hell-deserving rebels, but as forgiven children in Christ

-Christ's death – by his blood, *Eph 1.7; 1Jn 1.7* – not his example, love, teaching – that saves

-thus God shows his righteousness: as righteous judge who punishes sin, Christ bearing our sin in our place; and as the shocking God whose righteousness is displayed not in getting even, but in forgiving, taking our punishment on himself in his Son

-*former sins*: those of the race that God has not punished, has seemingly overlooked: these bills come due "Now", eschatologically, with the coming of Christ;

-but as well: those sins that cause me to worry in the middle of the night, to doubt my security in Christ, to revisit past offences – these have been dealt w/by God himself in Christ; he's tied his own glory to this

God's glory in our good : Soli deo gloria, v26

God's glory is revealed in our good, v26

- only God defines his own righteousness; here defined in the judgement of world borne by Jesus Christ, maintaining God's justice as the Judge who punishes sin; but as well, his righteousness is seen in the forgiveness of sinners (Luther & Staupitz)
- Luther: Theology of glory vs that of Cross; in fmr, we seek to match God's glory, which threatens us; Cross : where God's glory is shown in forgiveness, *Ro 1.16-17*. It's that glory he calls us to, *2Co 5.21*
- God is just & the justifier of the sinner – not of sins (Bonhoeffer); religion seeks to justify our sins, to kind of wish their ill effects away; God condemns us in our sin, condemns our rebellion – but justifies me, a sinner, in the righteousness that is not mine, but is Christ's
- no “zero-sum gain”; presumes that we are somehow in competition with God for glory, for salvation; the glory of God is our chief good, our supreme benefit
- w/God in Christ, it's win/win : the act that at once shows God as the Judge of wickedness, pouring it his wrath on the head of Jesus the Son of man & Son of God, is that which shows his unique justice in passing over the sins of men that so deserve judgement – our sins
- and both these bring us joy & release in Jesus Christ; you see, we will either play down God's jdgmt or play up our goodness; this is both dangerous & disheartening
- only in God's judgement & mercy seen in Christ, salvation graciously offered & received only by faith, do we both find safety with God and satisfaction

Application

- so how can I be righteous before God? I can't; but I can be declared such in Jesus Christ; and in Christ I now grow into what God has declared me to be – a son of God
- How does the Cross help me? Gospel not ultimately about how I can be saved, get to heaven - any old religion will spin that out for you, even nominal Christianity; rather the Gospel is God, as John Piper put it - who he is, how he is, finally how he is for us in Christ; the proclamation of the Kingdom and its King, and that his righteousness alone counts - but that righteousness is good, and it is for us; the Cross accomplishes & displays this
- gospel msg: cease striving & learn forgiveness in Christ; such forgiveness releases me from my sin - but also from my own righteousness; it binds me to Christ, to grow to become more like him by the work of the same Holy Spirit by whom I was born again in Christ; this is the work of the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who will not let me go

O love that will not let me go, I rest my weary soul in thee; I give thee back the life I owe, That in thine ocean depths its flow may richer, fuller be.