

Bible Basics Conference 2019

# God's Remedy

Romans 3:21-31

**Mark Grasso**

# Introduction

- Conclusion of session 2:
  - All the world is under judgment to God (Rom. 3:19)
  - Even the law cannot save: by works of law no flesh shall be justified before Him (v. 20)
- This is God's *righteous* conclusion

# God's righteous intervention

- 'But ...'
  - Man is set aside
  - When the fulness of the time was come (Gal. 4:4), God intervened
  - Man's extremity is God's opportunity (a general principle illustrated throughout the Bible)
- 'Now'
  - Not enjoyed in Old Testament times
  - Witnessed to by the law and the prophets (Ps. 32; Isa. 53; etc.) – yet not fully manifested
- Not connected with the law (or any other law)

# God's righteous intervention

- Here, '*righteousness of God*' ≠ His righteousness in judging sinners (Rom. 1:18)
  - Rather, it is His righteous salvation of sinners (v. 17)
- OR
- His righteousness as the basis of our salvation

# God's righteous intervention

- God was glorified at the cross (John 13:31) – we see many aspects of His character there:
  - He is rich in mercy (Eph. 2:4)
  - His love was manifested in His sending the Lord Jesus into the world (1 John 4:9)
  - We are saved by His grace (Eph. 2:5)
- Romans 3 emphasises righteous foundation on which God has acted (v. 21)
  - In particular, the righteous basis for our salvation
  - Without this, no confidence that our sins have been forgiven and put away forever (Ps. 32:1; Rom. 4:8-9)

# 'Towards' and 'upon'

- Old Testament believers understood '*atonement*': a covering from God's judgment
- New Testament presents propitiation and substitution – a distinction missed in many versions

# 'Towards' and 'upon'

- Paul refers to Old Testament type of the mercy seat\* (v. 25):
  - Lid of the ark, where God would meet His people (Ex. 25:22)
  - But above the tablets of the law (Deut. 10:2), which only condemned (2 Cor. 3:7-9)
  - And in between two cherubim, which speak of judgment (see Gen. 3:24; Ezek. 1; 10))
  - Also located in the most holy place (Ex. 26:34)
  - How could God actually meet the people there?



*\* The word for 'mercy seat' in verse 25 is derived from the word for 'propitiation'*

# 'Towards' and 'upon'

- Solution:

*Blood of the sin offering was placed on the mercy seat annually*



*God had a righteous basis for continuing to dwell among Israel (Lev. 16:15; Heb. 9:15)*

- I.e. mercy seat was where a righteous basis was laid for God to make Himself known
- Separate from the other goat
  - On which the sins of the people were confessed and borne away (Lev. 16:20ff)
  - Which made atonement for the people (v. 10)



# 'Towards' and 'upon'

- Every sin is an affront to God
- All the world is guilty before God
- How can God even open a way of blessing for any, let alone to all?
  - Only because of the propitiatory aspect of the work of Christ towards the world (1 John 2:2)
- Propitiation is more than placating God's anger
  - It provides a righteous basis for Him to offer His righteousness to all (Rom. 3:22; see also 1 Tim. 2:6)

# 'Towards' and 'upon'

- But while God's righteousness is *towards* all, it is only *upon those who believe* – this is the result of substitution (Rom. 4:25; 1 Pet. 2:24; Mark 14:24)
- Believing/faith is an individual matter (e.g. Rom. 9:8-10)
- Blood of Christ is again the basis (*'faith in his blood'*; Rev. 1:5)
- But:
  - Salvation is given to *all* who believe
  - Once we confess our sins, forgiveness follows on a just basis (1 John 1:9) – God is righteous in this too

# Justification

- Condition of all sinners is the same: *'all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God'* (Rom. 3:23)
- There is also no difference in the result of Christ's work for everyone who believes: *'justified'* (v. 24)

# Justification

- ‘Justification’ and ‘righteous’ come from the same Greek word
- To be justified means to be declared righteous (Rom. 4:5, 6)
  - And our justification is by God Himself
- Our justification is
  - Free – without a cause (consider John 15:25)
  - By virtue of God’s grace
  - Through the redemption in Christ (v. 24)
    - Not only the forgiveness of sins (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14)
    - Extends to the positive aspects of redemption (e.g. Rev. 5:9: *‘to God’*)

# Declarations of God's righteousness

- The 'passing by' of past sins (v. 25) does not refer to a believer's past sins
- Rather, God passed by the sins committed by those who trusted Him in Old Testament times



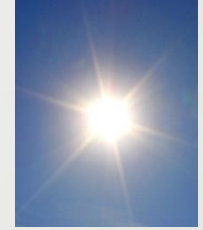
*The soul that sins shall die; the blood of bulls and goats can never take away sins; etc.*

*But it was already written in God's counsels: Christ will come to do His will (Heb. 10)*



- Even before He saw Christ's blood, God passed over the sins of Old Testament believers
- The work of Christ was so great, and so certain, that He was justified in doing so in anticipation of it

# Declarations of God's righteousness



- Today, God remains absolutely just in everything He does
- He is not only merciful in saving a sinner, or gracious in forgiving sins, but also just in justifying every single believer (Rom. 3:26)

# Conclusion

- No basis for anyone to boast (Rom. 3:27)
- Especially in law-keeping: again, no one is justified by works
- However, there is another law: of faith
  - I.e. what faith necessarily leads to
  - Again, because God is righteous, He must justify the believer
- God is the God of all, and He justifies all who trust in the Lord Jesus on the same basis: faith (vv. 28-31)

Notes re the law in verse 31:

<i>The law is not made void – the Lord Jesus came to fulfil it (Matt. 5:17)</i>	<i>It continues to convict (1 Tim. 1:9)</i>	<i>But its scope remains unchanged</i>
---	---	--