
Jesus suffered and died...

Romans 3:21-25

Introduction

Tonight we begin a series titled “Jesus suffered and died”. For the next three weeks we want to make clear three basic reasons for Jesus’ death on the cross. Many have watched *The Passion of the Christ* by Mel Gibson. Many, therefore, have noticed how Jesus suffered and died. What we want to do in this series is understand why Jesus suffered and died.

You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. (1Corinthians 6:19c-20)

As you read the above passage and think about the life it describes, you may say to yourself one of three things.

1. That life is bitter.

You don’t feel as though Jesus bought you with His blood and that He owns you like a newly wed owning her diamond ring. You have tried to live a moral life. It hasn’t gone especially well. You feel forced; not free, when you hear His command over your life to glorify God in all the activities in your body and with your body. You have tried to apply this teaching to your marriage, job, bill-paying, doctor’s report and child-rearing. But nothing seems to change. It doesn’t work. You still look into your tomorrows and see a frightening future. This life cannot be better. It’s bitter.

2. That life is boring.

Or maybe you are sitting here tonight and thinking about the words up on the screen a different way. It’s not so much that it is bitter. It’s simply boring. You try to understand how people can be happy over these words but to no avail. They appear as soggy cereal. They have no zest about them. There is no appeal. These words have no relevance for your life. You don’t see how they could be joy-generating, meaning-making and power-producing. Rather, a 42” plasma TV in March Madness gladdens your heart. The latest trends or the fastest laptops or the most dazzling apparel get your attention. Barron’s report and Wall Street Journal carry more insights and hope than these verses. You look at these words and you think; “this is going to be boring”.

3. That life is better.

Tonight it is no coincidence that we are together. God has an agenda for each of us tonight. My counsel is that we all ask the Lord for help

to understand why Jesus suffered and died. And that the Bible will make clear for us the answer. And that this answer will be to us a life-style characterized neither as bitter nor boring but better. What I aim to do in these messages is to pray and preach in such a way that the truth and its corresponding life described by these verses will be sweet to your taste. Not bitter. Not boring. But better! (Pray)

This evening we will look at one reason why Jesus suffered and died. If we are to understand the awful brutality of the Cross, we must start with the awesome beauty of God. What I want us to think about this evening has to do with the honor and reputation of God. In other words, how God can find unrighteous people like you and me not guilty will be the topic for tonight.

To look at the righteousness of God let us look at one of the most important paragraphs in the Bible; Romans 3:21-26.

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it – the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. 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.

Hope-producing

vv.21-24

In vv.21-24 we come across hope-producing words. Up to verse 21 of Romans 3 the writer of the letter; the Apostle Paul, has shown that all people are under sin and accountable before God. In our text for tonight Paul turns his attention to the solution of their universal problem of sin and judgment. "But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law... the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe...[they] are justified by his grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus..."

To sense our guilt before God and know that our morality is wholly inadequate to win God's favor is threatening. But in these hope-producing words of vv.21-24 we see that God, in His great love, has made a righteousness available to all who find their confidence for forgiveness and everlasting life in Jesus Christ. We cannot work for

this gift so as to earn it. But it is there for everyone who hopes in Christ.

We see in vv.21-24 hope for sinners. Full and forever forgiveness is offered freely. Amnesty for treason-like sins is provided as a gift. These verses are to engender hope in us. We are ungodly and “[God] justifies the ungodly” (Rom.4:5). He forgives all sins and releases sinners from their due penalty.

Some of you think that you are too gone to be saved; that in the past you’ve sinned too much and too greatly. To you it seems far fetched to think that there is hope for you. All of you tonight listen and believe. The good news of great joy for all who believe in Jesus Christ is hope-producing words!

Great news but there is a problem. And we are forced to think about it as we move into vv.25-26.

Problem-creating

vv.25-26

I have a question for us. How can God justify the unjust without becoming impeachable? How can He acquit sinners while maintaining integrity? Is God righteous? Is He just? Should we question his honor?

Suppose our county judge found the guilty not guilty, would he be a just judge? If Governor Taft were to grant clemency to criminals, would that be fair? If the headlines tomorrow read “Martha Stewart set free by saying I’m sorry” what would you think? If the new Iraqi government this June sets Saddam Hussein free, calling him innocent how would the world respond? How would you respond?

The unrighteousness of man

Tonight, we are aiming to demonstrate one reason why Jesus suffered and died. To understand the message tonight we need to understand first a basic problem. The Bible commands that we all “love the Lord our God with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our might” (Deut.6:5). But when we take inventory of ourselves we recognize that we fall short of this basic command. We do not love Him with our whole hearts. Instead, we fall in love with creation (Romans 1:25). We exchange the glory of God for other things. We prefer His gifts to Himself. And the Bible says that this is appalling. (cf. Jeremiah 2:11-13) We forsake God in order to pursue other objects

that promise satisfaction. God is infinitely valuable. However, we find the stuff of this world more attractive. We treat the Almighty with contempt by not obeying by faith His commands. The net result, says the Bible, is that there is a penalty for this. The way of our hearts is not trivial. It is treason. Disloyalty to the King is punished by death according to Rom.3:23.

This is a problem. However, there is a more basic problem than this. And that is precisely what we find in vv.25-26.

The “unrighteousness” of God

Propitiation

In verse 25 we come across a strange word; propitiation. Propitiation means to appease or satisfy something or someone. The Bible says that “God put forward [Christ Jesus] as a propitiation by his blood”. When it says, “God put forward”, it means that God took the initiative to do something. He put forward Christ Jesus. God put Christ Jesus on the cross to die a bloody death. Why would He do something like that? “as a propitiation” the Bible says. In other words, God took the initiative to crucify Christ in order to satisfy something. Can you see what that is according to verse 25?

God’s righteousness

As we read on, we come to a clue. Verse 25 says, “This was to show God’s righteousness”. “This”, the crucifixion, was to make obvious something about God. He was demonstrating something of His character. If the cross-like death of His Son had not occurred, we would have no hope; for we would have an unrighteous God. As a keen theologian said, “Without the death of Christ as a propitiation for sins, the problem would not have been the false accusations of men but the real unrighteousness of God (J. Piper; The Justification of God; p.143)

Why is this so? What in this passage points us to make such claims?

The verse goes on to say, “because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins”. Down through the years since Adam and Eve God passed over sins. He did not attend to them in a way that their sins deserved. He overlooked, as it were, the sins of the past. He pardoned their sins without an immediate, corresponding payment. Because of this, His “forbearance” (or patience) could have looked to an onlooker as indifference to the claims of justice. Someone could look at God and conclude that His infinite worth did not matter to

Him. And if it were not for the blood-spattered death of Jesus, God would have been unjust to let the guilty go free.

To satisfy the justice of God

Here is the first and greatest accomplishment of the passion of Jesus Christ. Are you beginning to understand what is at stake? For God to condone or ignore the dishonor heaped upon him by our sins would be saying sin does not matter. More than this, if God closed His eyes to our God-mocking rebellion we might conclude that He does not matter to Himself. It is precisely here that we find the main problem and its ultimate solution. Jesus suffered and died to satisfy the justice of God. God openly demonstrates through the Cross that sin matters. And that His justice mustn't be called into question. **GOD IS RIGHTEOUS!**

Now follow me closely here. It was necessary for God to provide a means to satisfy His justice if He was to pour out freely mercy upon sinners. "Passing over" former sins could be understood as injustice. Is God righteous? Does He look the other way when sin is trampling upon His glory? Does He extend forgiveness to the very ones who commit treason simply by saying, "Oh, my glory does not matter. It's ok that you have shown contempt for my infinite worth. I'll just sweep your sins under the rug and act like nothing happened". Does that sound like a God you can worship? Does that sound like a God you would desire to spend eternity with? Does that sound like justice?

God is a God of justice and holiness. God is a God of forgiveness and mercy. How does He bring these two traits together?

Do you now value propitiation? Are you able to see how God brings His justice and love together in the Cross of Christ? God removes His wrath from us through a replacement-kind-of-death. Christ died for my sins. He put Christ on the Cross to propitiate or satisfy His fury for my sin. Jesus turned away God's wrath by dying for our sins! God accomplished this two-fold purpose in sending Christ. He upheld his own righteousness and yet justified the ungodly simply through faith. The glorification of God and the salvation of his people are accomplished together.

Here is the GREAT NEWS. God is just. He did not retreat His wrath. He spent it on Christ! We will never sense the love of God for us if we do not sense the love He has for His honor. We will never

sense the love of God for us if we do not sense the seriousness of our sins. We will not be broken over our sins and in awe over God's glory if we do not see what He did on the Cross. Jesus Christ suffered and died to satisfy the justice of God.

Conclusion

Is there anything for us to do? Is it enough tonight to say the truth and think about the truth? How does all this apply to our lives?






I desire to conclude this message by pointing at the last part of verse 26 to answer this final question: How are we to respond to such good news?

The one who has faith in Jesus

The end of verse 26 answers our closing question. All the benefits of what Jesus purchased on the Cross are for "the one who has faith in Jesus".

The good news is that there is free acquittal for the guilty who stop trying to impress God through ongoing works but instead rest in Jesus' completed work. This is what Rom.4:5 means. "And to the one who does not work but trusts him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteous".

There is no human drug or ointment or activity or strategy that can ease the guilty conscience and make one right before God. Your only hope is Jesus Christ crucified. O take this gift for yourself and set out from this place with Christ clean tonight. To do that we must do this¹.

-  Turn from the deceitful promises of sin.
-  Call upon Jesus to save you from the guilt and punishment and bondage of sin.
-  Start banking your hope on all that God is for you in Jesus.
-  Begin reading the Bible to find his precious promises.
-  Begin to worship and grow together at Clearcreek Chapel with those who treasure Christ above all things.

¹ The following 5-part response was adapted from "Quest for Joy" by J. Piper

Title

Text

Introduction

Heading

Conclusion



Title

Text

Dan Turner • The Chapel Pulpit • <date> Sunday Morning

Requests for tapes or questions about this message may be directed to the church office at (937) 885-2143 or e-mail. Dan Turner uses the *English Standard Version* in his preaching and teaching.

Heading

Personal Reflection and Application

- How does my understanding of this text affect my worship and my walk?
-