

Sunday, August 24, 2008
Living Hope EFC

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Romans 3:25-31

The Cross: A Demonstration of the Righteousness of God

Illus: In the Iliad of Homer, there is a story of the great warrior Hector. He was eventually slaughtered by Achilles, according to Greek mythology. But before he went to battle, he said farewell to his wife and child – it would be the last time he would see them. He wanted to hug his little boy good by, but as he reached out, his fierce armor and helmet so terrified the boy that he cried and hid his face in his nurse's apron. So Hector took off his armor, and then reached out for him again, and instantly the boy jumped into his father's arms and hugged him.

In Romans 1-3, God approaches mankind as a Fierce Warrior!

- He is dressed in wrath against mankind because of sin, 1:18; 2:5,12-13, 16, 24; 3:9-20
- Sin: "unrighteousness" (ch.1), or self-r'ness (ch2); both are lethal.
- Sin in man has made God an enemy, 5:10.
- The prospects of a sinner facing a just & holy God are horrifying.

THEN... in 3:21-25 God takes off his fierce armor.

- Instead of coming as a Judge to render judgment upon the guilty, God's grace and love are revealed in the redeeming sacrifice of His own Son. **Christ stood in man's place in such a way that He bore sinful man's guilt & judgment.** The *cause* of wrath is gone!
- And now the loving Father reaches out his arms to us in complete acceptance through Christ. We run *towards* Him, not *away*.

This whole reversal in posture toward mankind calls into question one key attribute of God: His righteousness.

- The words "r'ness, just, justified: are used 13 times in chapter 3.
- Paul began His epistle by stating that **the gospel** is God's power for salvation, and that it **reveals God's Righteousness** (1:16-17)

On the one hand: In 3:20-24, a r'ness FROM God for the sinner.

- A way to make man righteous before God, giving a right standing.

On the other hand: in 3:25-31, The Gospel reveals the righteous character of God, Himself. –

Heb.1:8

THE ISSUE: *HOW can God declare righteous – the guilty? those who sin? And yet remain righteous Himself?*

- He has plainly stated: **Wages of sin = death!** He MUST judge sin.
- If God makes any exceptions to His Word/ Laws for any reasons, accepts any bribes, His integrity may be questioned at every point. *His throne is corrupt!* How can God judge some men & not others?
- If God is not righteous, just, true to His word; if He says one thing and does another – who will have anything to do with Him?
- In such cases the needy are always at risk! God becomes a tyrant.

Rom.3:25-26: Two ways the righteous character of God
is demonstrated in the Cross.

1: 3:25. On the Cross God dealt with all *pre-cross* sins.

A: V.25 – God had *passed over*, left the sins committed before *unpunished*. NOW Christ's atonement demonstrates God's justness.

παρεσις: "To pass by, overlook, tolerate or leave unpunished.

- This is the only time it is used in the N.T.
- The sins from Adam to Christ – had not yet been fully punished.

Q: How can God overlook "wink at" the sins of *some* men (and not others) & yet be just? - "**The soul that sins must die!**" Ezek.18:4,20.

- God's action toward former sin seemed to compromise his r'ness!
- Indeed, apart from Christ's death there is a stain on God's name.

ILLUS: ATHEIST TRACT

A number of years ago a society for the spread of Atheism printed a tract that accused God – if He exists – of just such a scandal!

The Pamphlet: Had sketches of six old men.

- Very ugly sketches, villainous looking. Each named for Bible character. Under each character certain statements to prove their point

ABRAHAM: "He was a coward who was willing to sacrifice the honor of his wife, Sarah, in order to save his own skin." (Twice!)

- They gave the Bible reference. Then they pointed out that the Bible called him "**the friend of God!**"
- Then asked: "What kind of God is the God of the Bible, who had such friends as this dishonorable man??"

Q: **HOW can God traffic with sin? Overlook sin? Not judge Abraham?**

JACOB: Called a cheat and a liar, with the supporting Bible references.

- Then: "God wrestled with Jacob & changed his name to Israel, 'A **Prince of God**'." What kind of a God would have such a prince?

You begin to see the dilemma! Consider an **earthly judge** doing this.

- What kind of an earthly judge imposes heavy sentences on some lawbreakers, & then seemingly for no good reason, lets a similar criminal go free? And later appoints him as his assistant?
- **How can God punish some men for *picking up sticks* on the Sabbath, and let these sins go unpunished? Even befriend them?**
- Any judge who acted this way...would certainly be *corrupt!*

MOSES: A murderer and a fugitive from justice. And yet, God seeks him out, makes him His personal servant, sets him up as leader of His people, and puts into his bloody hands the tablets of His Holy law which read: “Thou shall not kill!?”

- Even atheists recognize a murderer should be punished, not promoted! Are they not right? *How could God not exact justice?*

DAVID: A particularly repulsive drawing!

- We read of his adultery, then the murder of Uriah to protect himself! His guilt and shame and admitted condemnation.
- Then we read David is called: “**A man after God’s own heart.**”
- Q. “What kind of a God was this God of the Bible who had a heart that could find anything to praise in David?”

POINT: They are right! Aren’t they!

- If God is holy and these men are obviously sinners, *how* can God not punish their sin?
- Their conclusion “There is no such God!” (Or—*He is unrighteous!*)
- For hundreds of years there was a stain on the name of God. He waited patiently. If there were no N.T. —we would have no answer.

B: 3:25. Christ was the “Mercy Seat” for all pre-cross sins!

In the O.T. **Yom Kippur** was the annual day of “covering” sins, Lev.16.

- The High Priest, once/ year – sprinkled blood on the mercy seat.
- There was no adequate dealing with sin, no ground provided for complete “taking away, judgment of, payment for” sinners.

Jesus Christ is God’s Ultimate Mercy Seat for sinners!

The divine economy was based upon an anticipated death of God’s own Son: Eph.1:9-10; Gal.4:4-5; John 1:29.

- **ἱλαστηριον:** NIV—“Sacrifice for atonement.” Expiation. Propitiation. *Webster:* To pay the penalty for, put an end to. To make amends. “To atone” = To reconcile, supply satisfaction for.
- Used only twice in N.T. Here and **Heb.9:5** “Atonement cover” or “*mercy seat.*” **Christ fulfilled what the O.T. anticipated & predicted.**
- The blood of animals can’t take away sins. Jesus’ blood DID!
- **Heb.10:3-4, 11-12; 9:15 > Acts 13:38-39.**
- **ἱλασμος** — Same idea as ἱλαστηριον. Used twice in N.T.
- **1 John 2:2; 4:10** —Jesus is also the *Mercy Seat* for the Christian!

ILLUS: The Cross is retroactive!

So to speak...Paul is saying that the O.T. saints were **saved on credit!** (Never by Law or works).

- All their sins were put on the **Master’s Card.** The debt grew. Finally the Master came and settled accounts. **On the CROSS He wrote a check that paid the account in full – for all debtors!**

2: 3:26. On the Cross God also provided impartial salvation for **all** who believe in Jesus Christ today.

God is totally fair and just in how He deals with mankind and sin.

He deals with all men on exactly the same basis: Faith in Jesus Christ.

The same scandalous charges exist against God today – as in O.T.

- *How can God punish some for sin and let others off? All = sinners!*
- *“You Christians think God will forgive any sin you commit!”*
- Our salvation NEVER can depend on any “good” or “bad” we do.
- I Cor.6:9-10! Rom.3:23! We are no better than Abr., Isaac, etc.
- All is true! BUT **Christ paid our debt in full, too!**
- 1 John 2:2; 2 Cor.5:21; Col.2:13-14; 1:13-14; 1 Pet.3:18; 1Cor.6:11

Christ solved for God, the dilemma man’s sin created for God’s throne.

- God is just, and can declare every believe “righteous.”

THIS HIGHLIGHTS SEVERAL LESSONS ABOUT REDEMPTION

1- Christ’s death was predetermined, planned by God long ago.

- Acts 2:23. David spoke of it 2:27,31. Also Acts 4:28.

2- Who really put Christ to death? (Acts 4:27-28)

(1) Herod. (2) Pilate. (3) Gentiles. (4) Israel. (5) Satan - Gen.3:15. (6) The Father – Is.53:10; Rom.8:32. (7) The Son – Is.53:7; John 10:18; Eph.5:25; Mark 10:45. (8) The Spirit – Heb.9:14 “Who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God.”

POINT: Christ death was no accident, but in the eternal plan of God.

3- Christ’s suffering was primarily for sin, at the hands of the Godhead; secondarily physical, at the hand’s of men.

- Isaiah 53:6 “The Lord laid on him the sin of us all.” 1 Cor.5:21.
- It is not within the power of any man to lay his sins on Jesus!
- God alone, provides our sin-bearer!

4- God would be *unjust* to save any man, on any grounds, other than the death of His Son.

- **Rom.3:26; 1:16; Acts 4:12.**
- The only way He can remain JUST is to give eternal life in the name of the ONE sin-bearer who died for the sin of ALL men.
- Any other means of allowing a person into heaven – would be to overlook the seriousness of sin and it’s claim upon the throne of God. Sin demanded payment only Christ could pay!

5- No man can ever boast before God in heaven! Rom.3:27-31.

CLOSING ILLUS: Scottish Lady and Young Pastor.

A young pastor visited an aged, dying lady in his church.

- Recently out of seminary, the pastor was unsettled by her calm.
- He began to counsel her “to make her election sure!”
- “Don’t be presumptuous about this...”

Older Lady: had walked with God for years.

- “Young man. *If I should not be in heaven the good Lord would lose more than I could ever lose.*” - The pastor was flabbergasted!
- “If I should not be in heaven, all I could lose would be my own soul.
- But if I should not be in heaven, *the good Lord would lose His good name and honor.* For he has PROMISED to save to the uttermost those who believe in Christ. And that’s the way I have come.