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**The Glory of the Gospel**

**Romans 3.21-26**

**Series: The Pure Gospel**

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**The Village Church**

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I. Introduction

- A. One of our parishioners sent me a very kind and encouraging note
  - 1. In that note she mentioned that she's keeping a list
    - a. Kind of like Santa Claus, I suppose – but not really that kind of list
  - 2. Her list is titled “Andy’s Vocabulary”
    - a. She said she adds to the list at least one word from most sermons
- B. I really have no idea exactly what words might be on her list, but I might guess
  - 1. You might imagine, for instance, what might be my favorite biblical words, or my favorite theological words
  - 2. Possibilities
    - a. Justification – God’s act of declaring us sinners righteous before Him on the basis of the work of Christ and our faith in Christ; good, and we’ll see it this morning, but not my favorite
    - b. Sanctification – process by which Christ, through the indwelling work of the Holy Spirit, and by our Spirit-filled obedience to Christ, works to transform us in the image of the Son of God; again, really good, and there is much in Romans about it, but not my favorite
    - c. Propitiation (that’s what you’re thinking, aren’t you!) – the sacrifice of Christ as having removed the wrath of God from us; also very good; we have fun with it, and we will see it again this morning, but not my favorite
    - d. Perspicuity (used in a recent message) – the inherent clarity of the Word of God; wonderful word, I like it very much, but again, not my favorite
  - 3. These are all certainly important biblical and theological words
    - a. And I don’t know whether my friend who sent me the note has them on her list or not
    - b. I love them all; deeply appreciate their significance
    - c. Don’t think you can really be a growing Christian without being acquainted with these words, and especially acquainted with their concepts, their meanings
    - d. But none of them are my absolute favorite biblical word
    - e. No, my absolute, favorite biblical word is not justification, or sanctification, or propitiation, or perspicuity

4. My absolute favorite biblical word is “But”
    - a. No, not “butt”; get your mind out of the gutter
    - b. It’s simply, “But”
    - c. Simply the greatest word of contrast in the Bible
  5. And it is the first word in our text this morning
- C. **Romans 3.21 – “But now...”**
1. Let’s see how this great word of contrast works in our study of Romans
    - a. For it is the great turning point in the drama of redemption as Paul lays it out for us in his magnum opus

## II. **The Gospel Parenthesis**

- A. This is the climax to this first portion of the book of Romans
1. It is the essence of the gospel
    - a. And you’ll recall that the idea of the gospel was introduced earlier
    - b. In the theme verses of the 1<sup>st</sup> Chapter
  2. **Romans 1:16–17 (ESV) —**
    - a. 16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel,
    - b. for it is the power of God for salvation
    - c. to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.
    - d. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith,
    - e. as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”
  3. When we studied it back then we indicated that the same essential statement was restated later
  4. **Romans 3:21–22 (ESV) —**
    - a. 21 But now the righteousness of God has been manifested
    - b. apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—
    - c. 22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe....
  5. Do you hear the connection?
    - a. V 17: ... the righteousness of God is revealed
    - b. V 21: ... the righteousness of God has been manifested
    - c. V 16: ... to everyone who believes
    - d. V 22: ... for all who believe
- B. **The Bad News: Human Need**
1. So those two sets of verses serve as a parenthesis around some important content
  2. Content – the actual need for the gospel
    - a. Summarized by human sinfulness
  3. Gospel is meaningless without an understanding of human need
  4. So what have we learned about human need so far in this section between these two sets of gospel verses?
  5. **Under the wrath of God**

- a. Suppression of the truth about God – unwilling to see in the creation itself the nature and character of God
  - b. Failed to glorify God as God
  - c. Failed to give Him thanks
  - d. We’ve been given over to our own sinful inclinations toward more and worse patterns of sin
- 6. We’ve also discovered that we humans are quick to protest such a dismal portrait of the human condition
  - a. We make excuses
  - b. Moral excuses – we’re really good people (at least above average!)
  - c. Religious excuses – we have a special relationship with God by virtue of our religion
  - d. Paul, of course, shatters those excuses
  - e. Moral – we violate our own laws
  - f. Religious – we violate God’s laws
- 7. Summary of the human condition reveals the universality and the pervasiveness of sin
  - a. (Did universality and pervasiveness make my friend’s list?)
- 8. **Romans 3:10–18** (ESV) —
  - a. 10 as it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one;
  - b. 11 no one understands;
  - c. no one seeks for God.
  - d. 12 All have turned aside;
  - e. together they have become worthless;
  - f. no one does good, not even one.”
  - g. 13 “Their throat is an open grave;
  - h. they use their tongues to deceive.”
  - i. “The venom of asps is under their lips.”
  - j. 14 “Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.”
  - k. 15 “Their feet are swift to shed blood;
  - l. 16 in their paths are ruin and misery,
  - m. 17 and the way of peace they have not known.”
  - n. 18 “There is no fear of God before their eyes.”
- C. That’s the bad news
  - 1. And it’s very bad news
  - 2. But unless you know the bad news, you cannot see the good news
    - a. Because the good news is most glorious
    - b. When like a diamond, it is displayed glistening against the black backdrop of a jeweler’s cloth
- D. You see, the glory of the gospel is that God meets every one of our needs
  - 1. What are our needs?
  - 2. **Guilty**
    - a. In a court of law, we find ourselves to be law-breakers
    - b. Need absolution
    - c. Can’t work off our own guilt

- d. Standard of conduct is the righteousness of God; we've already fallen below that standard
  - e. Don't need an opportunity to work harder or do better; indeed, the harder we work, the more sin we commit!
  - f. What we really need is mercy, not opportunity
- 3. Bondage to sin (slaves)
  - a. Left with a fundamental moral inability
  - b. **Romans 8:7–8** (ESV) — 7 For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. 8 Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.
  - c. **Ephesians 2:1–2** (ESV) — 1 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—
  - d. **John 8:44** (ESV) — 44 You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.
  - e. We need freedom from sin
- 4. Under the wrath of God
  - a. **Romans 1:18–19** (ESV) — 18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. 19 For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.
  - b. **Romans 2:5–6** (ESV) — 5 But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. 6 He will render to each one according to his works...
  - c. Need to satisfy God's wrath

### III. **The Glory of the Gospel**

- A. The glory of the gospel is that the gospel of Jesus answers every one of those needs
  - 1. And that's why this first word in our text looms so large, and is so important
    - a. And why it is my favorite biblical word
  - 2. "But now..."
- B. **Romans 3:21–26** (ESV) —
  - 1. 21 But now the righteousness of God has been manifested
  - 2. apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—
  - 3. 22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.

4. For there is no distinction: 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,
5. 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift,
6. through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,
7. 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood,
8. to be received by faith.
9. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.
10. 26 It was to show his righteousness at the present time,
11. so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

C. **Absolution**

1. V 24 – **justified**
2. Key theological term = justification
  - a. **Dikaioo (Gk) = to declare one to be just, righteous**
3. Legal (forensic) declaration
  - a. Setting is a court of law
4. How is it possible for genuinely guilty persons can be declared not guilty?
  - a. Particular legal transaction has taken place
  - b. **Romans 4:3 (ESV)** — 3 For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.”
  - c. **Counted (Reckoned) = elogizthe (Gk) (logizomai)**
  - d. Accounting term – to count or impute
5. **Imputation** of Christ's righteousness
  - a. That's another biblical, theological word – certainly in my top 20 (but not as wonderful as “but”)
  - b. 3:21-22 – the righteousness of God
    - (1) That's the kind of righteousness we need
  - c. God's righteousness has been made available for us in Jesus Christ
  - d. When we trust in Christ, His righteousness is transferred into our account
6. Scene is still a courtroom
  - a. Bankruptcy court
  - b. Judge won't be satisfied until our account is in the black
  - c. After this faith transaction, he discovers that there indeed is money in our account
  - d. Not Monopoly money, but real money; divine currency – the kind that counts in heaven
7. Not the only imputation in this transaction
  - a. What about our debts?
  - b. They've been transferred into Christ's account
  - c. **2 Corinthians 5:21 (ESV)** — 21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

- d. Judge looks at the books and sees that the debt that was formerly there, the liabilities in our net worth, are no longer there
- 8. Absolution has taken place
  - a. Not absolution by waving a magic wand
  - b. But by actually transferring debt or liabilities from our account to Christ's and assets from Christ's account to ours
- 9. What a blessing it is to be out of debt, not guilty
  - a. **Romans 4:8** (ESV) — 8 blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin."
- 10. The glory of the gospel
  - a. The great "But now..."
  - b. The guilty ones are declared not guilty
  - c. The guilty ones have been absolved!
- D. **Mercy**
  - 1. This legal transaction couldn't be accomplished by us
  - 2. **Matthew 18:23–35** (ESV) —
    - a. 23 "Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants.
    - b. 24 When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents.
    - c. 25 And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made.
    - d. 26 So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.'
    - e. 27 And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt.
    - f. 28 But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, 'Pay what you owe.'
    - g. 29 So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.'
    - h. 30 He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt.
    - i. 31 When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place.
    - j. 32 Then his master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me.
    - k. 33 And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?'
    - l. 34 And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt.
    - m. 35 So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."

3. V 24 – we are justified by his grace as a gift
4. Grace – another wonderful word! (Second only to “but”?)
5. Lloyd-Jones: There is no more wonderful word than ‘grace.’ It means unmerited favor or kindness shown to one who is utterly undeserving.... It is not merely a free gift, but a free gift to those who deserve the exact opposite, and it is given to us while we are ‘without hope and without God in the world.’
6. Wonderful word, but oddly enough, it is one of the hardest words to accept
  - a. We’re proud
  - b. Grace eliminates pride, any sense of sufficiency in ourselves
  - c. Natural inclination to reject grace
  - d. Don’t think in terms of grace, don’t expect it; don’t even expect it from God
7. Spurgeon
  - a. Story of a preacher from North of England
  - b. Visits a needy woman in his church
  - c. Takes money for her from the church to get her through a difficult period
  - d. Walks through poor section of town
  - e. Climbs four flights of stairs to her apartment
  - f. Knocks on the door – no answer
  - g. Sees her in church the next Sunday
  - h. Tells her he came to by to visit and bring some assistance
  - i. She asks when he came; he tells her
  - j. She says, “Oh, dear. I was home, and I heard you knocking. But I did not answer. I thought it was the man calling for the rent.”
8. Grace comes to us because righteousness is made available apart from the law
  - a. **Romans 3:27–28** (ESV) — 27 Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. 28 For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.
  - b. **Romans 6:23** (ESV) — 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
  - c. Wages are owed, earned; but eternal life is a gift, and comes by grace
9. We sing “Amazing Grace” – John Newton
  - a. Raised in Christian home
  - b. Mother died when 6
  - c. Went to live with a relative who mocked Christianity
  - d. Left home to join the British Navy
  - e. Wild life during those years
  - f. Reputation for being able to swear for two hours without repeating himself
  - g. Deserted the Navy off the coast of Africa

- h. Newton: “that I might sin my full”
  - i. Hooked up with Portuguese slavetrader
  - j. Treated cruelly
  - k. Even having to eat off the ground like dogs when master was away and his African wife, who hated white people, made him do it
  - l. Escaped through the jungle to the sea, managed to get on a British merchant ship
  - m. He was made a ship’s mate on the ship when it was discovered he had navigation skills
  - n. Wasn’t long before he ran into trouble
  - o. Broke out the ship’s rum supply when captain was on shore; got drunk
  - p. When captain returned, he hit Newton who fell overboard
  - q. Would have drowned if he hadn’t been rescued by another crew member
  - r. On the way to England, storm blew ship off course, took on water
  - s. Newton sent into the hold to pump water; terrified that the ship would sink
  - t. God of grace brought to him mind Bible verses his mother had him memorize when he was a child
  - u. Convicted of sin and his need of God’s righteousness
  - v. Born again, transformed
  - w. Back in England, studied theology, became a noted evangelist and preacher
10. Newton learned that the God of Grace finds even the worst of sinners in the most self-constructed circumstances, and graciously saves them
- a. William Cowper (friend of Newton): God moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform; He plants his footsteps in the sea, And rides upon the storm.
11. Newton
- a. Amazing Grace – how sweet the sound – That saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but now am found – Was blind but now I see.
  - b. ‘Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, And grace my fears relieved; Now precious did that grace appear The hour I first believed.
  - c. Through many dangers, toils, and snares, I have already come; ‘Tis grace has brought me safe thus far, And grace will lead me home.
12. We need mercy; salvation must come as a gift of grace or it doesn’t come at all
- a. The gospel gives us the mercy we need
13. That’s the glory of the gospel
- E. **Redemption**
- 1. Bondage to sin
  - 2. Belong to another master
    - a. He says, “Jump,” we say, “How high?”



3. Remedy for that is redemption
  - a. Three words
4. Agorazo (Gk) – an open marketplace
  - a. Implies a price paid to buy in the market
5. Exagorazo (Gk) – to buy out of a marketplace
  - a. Idea – object purchased never to have to return to the market again
  - b. Hard to think of a modern example
  - c. Slave market really captures the idea
  - d. When slave is purchased out of a market, he never has to return there
6. Lutrosis (Gk) – to free or to loose by the paying of a ransom price
7. Charles Wesley captured this notion of freedom
  - a. Long my imprisoned spirit lay
  - b. Fast found in sin and nature's night;
  - c. Thine eye diffused a quick'ning ray,
  - d. I woke, the dungeon flamed with light:
  - e. My chains fell off, my heart was free,
  - f. I rose, went forth and followed thee.
8. OT illustrations
  - a. Kopher (Heb) – ransom price
  - b. Paid by someone instead of dying
  - c. Ex: Animal, known to be dangerous, is let out by owner and kills another man
  - d. Under OT law, the man could be put to death for negligent homicide
  - e. Law also provided a way out: owner and the dead man's relatives could agree on a ransom price; if paid, the owner would be allowed to live
  - f. Illustrates quite well what Jesus did when he paid with His own death the ransom price for us instead of our dying
  - g. Go'el (Heb) – kinsman-redeemer
  - h. OT principle was that land would remain in the family
  - i. Through debt or other means, land may have changed hands into another family
  - j. It was the obligation of the near relative to buy the land back again
  - k. Hence, kinsman-redeemer
  - l. Sometimes this may involve the kinsman-redeemer marrying a widow who had no children in order to provide heirs for the property so it could remain in the family
  - m. Best OT example – Ruth
  - n. Kinsman-redeemer had to have three qualifications
  - o. Close relative
  - p. Willing to take on this responsibility
  - q. Had to be able to pay the ransom price

- r. Jesus fulfilled all those qualifications (in fact, He was the only one who could)
    - s. Incarnation made him our close relative
    - t. Willing to be our Redeemer – came from heaven to do it
    - u. Able to pay the price (death of perfect, sinless person in place of sinful men)
  - 9. We need freedom from sin
    - a. Gospel provides that freedom through redemption
  - 10. The glory of the gospel!
- F. **Propitiation**
- 1. Satisfaction of the Wrath of God
  - 2. V 25 – Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by His blood
    - a. NIV – sacrifice of atonement
  - 3. Word comes from ancient religion
    - a. Sacrifice made by worshiper in order to appease the wrath of an offended deity
  - 4. Objectionable dimension of the gospel to many people
    - a. How could a loving God require the shedding of blood in order to forgive sin?
  - 5. R.C. Sproul was speaking in a church many years ago
    - a. Man stood up and objected to his exposition of the atonement of Christ: “that’s primitive and obscene!”
    - b. Sproul agreed: “You’re absolutely right!”
      - (1) Primitive – even the very simplest of people could understand and relate to it
      - (2) Obscene – because sin against the holiness of God is by definition the most obscene act imaginable
  - 6. Wrath is where we began with all of this
    - a. **Romans 1:18** (ESV) — 18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.
    - b. Boice: Although God’s wrath is not like the capricious anger of the pagan deities, his wrath is nevertheless a true wrath against sin, and it is this true and proper wrath that must be dealt with.
  - 7. OT background for propitiation
    - a. Sacrifices made, blood applied to the atonement cover (Mercy Seat) of the ark on Day of Atonement
    - b. Priest made sacrifice for his own sin, and his family’s
    - c. Then made another sacrifice for sins of others
    - d. Boice: Now, as God looks down from between the outstretched wings of the cherubim, he does not see the law of Moses that we have broken, but instead sees the blood of the innocent victim. He sees that punishment has been meted out. Propitiation has been made. And his love goes out to save all who come to him, not on

the basis of their own righteousness or good works, but through faith in that sacrifice.

- e. **Propitiation = (Gk) hilasterion = Mercy Seat**
- 8. Only the sacrifice of Christ could have sufficiently satisfied the wrath of God
  - a. **Hebrews 10:4** (ESV) — 4 For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.
  - b. **Hebrews 10:10–14** (ESV) — 10 And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. 11 And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. 12 But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, 13 waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. 14 For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.
- G. The glory of the gospel is that the gospel has met our every need
  - 1. Absolution from guilt
  - 2. Mercy
  - 3. Freedom from bondage
  - 4. Removal of the wrath of God by Jesus' propitiatory sacrifice

#### IV. **The Even More Glorious Gospel**

- A. **God's Needs**
  - 1. The gospel not only meets our needs; it meets God's needs!
  - 2. What? God has needs?
    - a. God doesn't have needs in a sense
  - 3. In light of God's desire, He has needs
    - a. His chief desire is to display His glory
    - b. Manifesting His nature and character to His creation
  - 4. Problem – a conundrum, actually (is that in our sister's list?)
    - a. **How can a just, holy God tolerate sinful humanity?**
    - b. **How can a loving God avoid saving sinful humanity?**
    - c. Can you feel the tension?
  - 5. Solution
    - a. In the gospel, God solves both of His problems
    - b. Provided the payment for the penalty of sin
    - c. Provided the righteousness needed for sinners
    - d. All by Himself
  - 6. How?
    - a. Jesus Christ is the Son of God, 2<sup>nd</sup> person of the Triune God
    - b. Covenanted together in the Holy Council before the foundations of the earth to save a lost and sinful humanity
    - c. Jesus alone was willing and able to accomplish our justification and redemption

- d. Jesus alone was able to propitiate God's wrath
  - e. Jesus did it by grace – In concert with the Father whose love for us was great
- 7. So that by faith (not works) we might be saved
- B. **Just and Justifier**
  - 1. **Romans 3:26** (ESV) —
    - a. 26 It was to show his righteousness at the present time,
    - b. so that he might be just
    - c. and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.
  - 2. God is both the just and the justifier
    - a. Just – He punishes sin
    - b. Justifier – He declares righteous all those who have faith in Jesus

## V. Conclusion

- A. The glory of the gospel
  - 1. Every need of ours is met by Jesus
  - 2. Guilt is absolved
  - 3. We receive mercy through grace as our works are useless
  - 4. Set free from our bondage through redemption
  - 5. The wrath of God is satisfied through the propitiation
- B. The dark and dismal portrait of our depraved humanity is shattered, torn asunder
  - 1. "But now!"
  - 2. What God has done in the gospel is glorious indeed
- C. Do you believe in the glory of the gospel?
  - 1. Do you believe in this Jesus?
  - 2. Do you trust in the work of Jesus, His life of perfect righteousness, His death in our place, taking upon Himself the wrath we so genuinely deserve, and His resurrection having declared His sacrifice effective, having conquered sin and death once and for all for all who believe?
  - 3. If you don't believe
    - a. You're still guilty, and it is impossible for you to work your way out of your guilt
    - b. You're still in bondage to sin, still a slave to sin and selfishness
    - c. You're still under the wrath of God
  - 4. Do not let this morning pass without humbly casting yourself on the mercy of Christ
  - 5. "But now..."
    - a. Now is the time
    - b. God has done it all through Jesus
    - c. Only believe...