

Monday 8/14

Related Verses**Rom. 1:1-4, 8-15**

1 Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, a called apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,

2 Which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures,

3 Concerning His Son, who came out of the seed of David according to the flesh,

4 Who was designated the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness out of the resurrection of the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord;

8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all because your faith is proclaimed throughout the whole world.

9 For God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of His Son, how unceasingly I make mention of you always in my prayers,

10 Beseching if by any means now at last I may be prospered in the will of God to come to you.

11 For I long to see you that I may impart to you some spiritual gift so that you may be established;

12 That is, that I with you may be encouraged among you through the faith which is in one another, both yours and mine.

13 And I do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, that often I purposed to come to you (yet was hindered until the present), that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles.

14 I am debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to foolish;

15 So, for my part, I am ready to announce the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

Related Reading

This gospel of God concerns a Person, Christ. Of course, forgiveness, salvation, etc. are included in the gospel, but they are not the central point. The gospel of God concerns the Person of the Son of God, Jesus Christ our Lord. This wonderful Person has two natures—the divine nature and the human nature, divinity and humanity.

Paul mentions Christ's humanity first, not His divinity, saying that He was born out of the seed of David according to the flesh (1:3). This is His human nature, His humanity.

Then Paul says that He was “designated the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness out of the resurrection of the dead” (1:4). This is a clear reference to Christ's divinity. Why is His humanity mentioned first and His divinity last?

Paul mentions Christ's humanity first because he maintains the sequence of Christ's process. Firstly, Christ passed through the process of incarnation to become flesh. Then He passed through the process of death and resurrection. By means of the second step of His process He became the Son of God out of resurrection. Christ has been processed in two steps: the first step—incarnation; the second step—death and resurrection. By these two steps Christ became two different things. He became flesh by incarnation and He became the Son of God through death and resurrection. His first step brought God into humanity. His second step brought man into divinity. Before His incarnation, Christ, as a divine Person, already was the Son of God (John 1:18). He was the Son of God before His incarnation, and even Romans 8:3 says, “God sent His Son.” Since Christ already was the Son of God before the incarnation, why did He need to be designated the Son of God out of resurrection? Because by incarnation He had put on an element, the flesh, the human nature, that had nothing to do with divinity. As a divine Person Christ was the Son of God before His incarnation, but that part of Him which was Jesus with the flesh, the human nature, born of Mary, was not the Son of God. That part of Him was human. By His resurrection Christ has sanctified and uplifted that part of His human nature, His humanity, and He was designated out of this resurrection as the Son of God with this human nature. So, in this sense, the Bible says that He was begotten the Son of God in His resurrection (Acts 13:33; Heb. 1:5).

Let us consider the example of a small carnation seed. When this seed is sown into the earth, it grows

and blossoms, a process which we may label its designation. When we behold a little carnation seed before it is sown into the ground, we may be unable to determine what kind of seed it is. However, once it has been sown, has grown, and has blossomed, it is designated. Its blossom is its designation. Therefore, everyone can say, “This is a carnation.” Both the seed and the blossom are the carnation, but the blossom is very different in form from the seed. If the seed should remain as a seed without blossoming, it is difficult for most people to realize that it is a carnation. But after it has grown and blossomed, it is designated as a carnation for all to see.

When Christ was in the flesh during His 33½ years on the earth, He was exactly like the carnation seed. Although the Son of God was in Him, no one could recognize this easily. By being sown into death and growing up in resurrection, He blossomed. By this process He was designated the Son of God, and by this process He uplifted the flesh, the human nature. He did not put off the flesh, He did not put off humanity. He sanctified it, uplifted it and transformed it, and had Himself designated with this transformed humanity the Son of God with the divine power. When He was the Son of God before His incarnation, He had no human nature. After His resurrection He is the Son of God with humanity uplifted, sanctified, and transformed out of resurrection. He is now both of humanity and divinity. He is both the seed of David and the Son of God. He is a wonderful Person!

Christ became flesh to accomplish the work of redemption. Redemption requires blood. It is certain that divinity has no blood; only humanity has blood. Nevertheless, redemption demands blood, for without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins (Heb. 9:22). Thus, Christ became flesh for the work of redemption. Redemption, however, is not God's goal. Redemption opens the way for life to be given. In the Gospel of John, Christ was first introduced as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). That was for redemption. Following this, John presents Him with the Dove who gives life (John 1:32-33). Firstly, Christ accomplished redemption for

us; then He became our life. Christ became flesh to accomplish the work of redemption for us, and He was designated the Son of God out of resurrection that He may impart Himself to us as our life. The first step of His process was for redemption, and the second step was for imparting life. Now we have the resurrected Christ within us as our life. The resurrected Christ as the Son of God is life to us. Whoever has the Son of God has life (1 John 5:12). [21]

The first section of the book of Romans deals with redemption accomplished by Christ in the flesh. Romans 8:3 says that God sent His Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin and condemned sin in the flesh. The second part of Romans deals with the imparting of life. Romans first reveals Christ as the Redeemer in the flesh and then reveals Him as the life-giving Spirit. In Romans 8:2 we find the term “the Spirit of life.” This is the indwelling Spirit. The indwelling Spirit is the Spirit of Christ, and the Spirit of Christ is actually Christ Himself within us (8:9-10).

Why does the book of Romans open the way it does? Every book of the Bible opens in a particular way, each one different from the others. Paul opens the book of Romans in the way he does because Romans has a goal, as seen in chapter 8, verses 29 and 30. This goal is to produce many sons of God. This goal of producing the many sons of God requires redemption, the imparting of life, and the living by this life. As fallen men and as sinners, we need redemption, we need the divine life, and we need to live by the divine life that we may be regenerated, transformed, and fully glorified as the sons of God. Eventually, we all shall be the sons of God in full.

God had only one Son, His only begotten Son. However, God was not satisfied to have just one Son. He wanted many sons to be brought into glory. Therefore, God used His only begotten Son as a model, as a pattern, to produce many sons. Do you realize that Christ has passed through the process to be designated the Son of God and that we also are passing through the same process to be designated the sons of God? Originally, Christ was the only Son of God. At a

certain time, this Son of God came into the flesh by the name of Jesus. The Son of God in the flesh was named Jesus. After 33½ years, Jesus was designated out of resurrection to be the Son of God. By this time, God had a Son with both divinity and humanity. Before His incarnation God’s Son only possessed divinity; after His resurrection this Son of God had both divinity and humanity. Hallelujah! Now humanity has a part in God’s Son. The Son of God today has both humanity and divinity.

What about us? We were born the sons of man, but we have been reborn the sons of God. Whether we are male or female, we are all sons of God. In a sense, God has no daughters. Although the Lord Jesus has many brothers, He has no sisters. In this sense, every sister is a brother. We are all brothers and we are all sons of God. We are sons of God because the Spirit of the Son of God has come into us (Gal. 4:6). Just as the Son of God came into the flesh by incarnation, so now the Spirit of the Son of God has come into so many of us who are flesh. Therefore, in a sense, each one of us is the same as Jesus. Jesus was a man in the flesh with the Son of God in Him. We also are men of flesh with the Son of God in us. Are you not a man of flesh with the Son of God in you? Certainly you are. But we should not remain as we are, should we? We are waiting to be designated. Oh, this man of flesh is going to be designated by sanctification, transformation, and glorification. Hallelujah! This man of flesh with the Son of God in him is under the process of sanctification, transformation, and glorification. The time will come when we will all declare, “We are designated to be sons of God out of resurrection!” If you tell the people in the street that you are the son of God, they will think you are crazy. Remember how they treated Jesus when He confessed that He was the Son of God: they put Him to death. But by death and resurrection He was designated as the Son of God. After His resurrection, it was needless for Jesus to claim to be the Son of God, since He had been designated. Today if we tell people that we are the sons of God, they will think we are mentally disturbed. Nevertheless, the day is coming—the book

of Romans refers to this day as the revelation or the manifestation of the glory of the sons of God—in which we will be designated in glory as the sons of God. There will be no need for us to make a declaration. Spontaneously, we will be designated as sons of God.

Romans 1:3-4 give us Jesus as the prototype. In Romans 8:29-30 we have the many sons as the mass production. In this message we are considering the prototype. With the prototype there is the Spirit of holiness, the flesh, and the designation as the Son of God. Praise the Lord! We also have the Spirit of holiness within, the human flesh without, and we shall be designated in full as sons of God.

(Life-study of Romans, msg. 2, from II. up to (not including) III.)

Tuesday 8/15

Related Verses

Rom. 1:16-25

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one who believes, both to Jew first and to Greek.

17 For the righteousness of God is revealed in it out of faith to faith, as it is written, "But the righteous shall have life and live by faith."

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven upon all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold down the truth in unrighteousness,

19 Because that which is known of God is manifest within them, for God manifested it to them.

20 For the invisible things of Him, both His eternal power and divine characteristics, have been clearly seen since the creation of the world, being perceived by the things made, so that they would be without excuse;

21 Because though they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God or thank Him, but rather became vain in their reasonings, and their heart, lacking understanding, was darkened.

22 Professing to be wise, they became fools

23 And changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the likeness of an image of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and reptiles.

24 Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to uncleanness, so that they dishonor their bodies among themselves,

25 Who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshipped and served the creation rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

Related Reading

Now that Christ has died and has been raised from among the dead, it is impossible for God to change His mind about forgiving us. Rather, we have the ground to say to Him, “O God, whether You love me or not, You must forgive me. Before Christ died on the cross, You could have changed Your mind. But because He has died and because You have raised Him from among the dead, You have no legal standing to refuse to forgive me. O God, You must forgive me now, for You have no right to change in this matter. You are bound by Your righteousness.” In this way, righteousness is the power of the gospel.

Both love and grace may change, but righteousness is solid and steadfast. God is free either to love us or not to love us. However, He is bound by His righteousness. Now that Christ has died to fulfill God’s righteous requirements, God has put Himself into a position where He is legally bound. Whether He loves us or not, He is bound by His own righteousness to forgive us. Thus, the foundation of our salvation is righteousness, not love or grace. Psalm 89:14 says, “Righteousness and justice are the foundation of thy throne” (Heb.). The very foundation of God’s throne is also the foundation of our salvation. Can the foundation of God’s throne be shaken? Certainly not. Likewise, the foundation of our salvation cannot be shaken, for this foundation is not love nor grace, but righteousness.

The Bible does not say that love is the power of the gospel; neither does it say that grace is the power of the gospel. But it does reveal that the righteousness of God is the power of the gospel. If we consider

ourselves, we shall realize that we are not lovable nor worthy of God’s grace. We simply do not deserve anything from God. But God is righteous. He put Christ to death on our behalf, and He has recognized the death of Christ as the full payment of our debt. Furthermore, the resurrected Christ sitting at God’s right hand is the receipt of payment. Since God has already issued this receipt, how could He righteously claim payment again from us? If He would do so, we could point Him to Christ and remind Him that He must take care of His righteous position, even the foundation of His throne.

We can boldly tell God, “If You don’t deal with me according to Your righteousness, Your throne will be shaken. The important issue is not whether I shall be saved or perish; it is whether or not You will allow the foundation of Your throne to be shaken. God, for me to perish is a secondary matter. The primary matter is the righteous foundation of Your throne. God, I remind You of Your righteousness. Christ has died for my sins, and He is now at Your right hand as proof that You have received His payment of all my debts. According to Your righteousness, You have no choice except to save me. Christ has died, You have accepted His death and have resurrected Him from among the dead, and now You are legally bound to forgive me. By resurrecting Christ You indicated that You were satisfied with His payment and You issued a receipt of payment. O God, if You were not satisfied with Christ, then You should have allowed Him to remain in the tomb. O Father God, I appreciate Your love and Your grace. But now I stand before You not so much in love or in grace, but in Your righteousness. Now, no matter what my condition is, You must forgive me.”

Have you ever prayed to God in such a way? It pleases Him whenever someone prays like this. This is a prayer that appeals to God according to His righteousness. The gospel of Christ is the power of God because the righteousness of God is revealed in it.

In 3:21 Paul speaks a further word about righteousness: “But now without law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being

witnessed by the law and the prophets.” To say that the righteousness of God has been manifested without the law means that the righteousness of God is not based on our doing; that is, it is not based upon our keeping the law.

God’s righteousness is shown forth, in the forbearance of God, in His passing by of the sins that occurred before (3:25). This means that in view of the redemption of Christ that was to come, God passed by the sins of many saints in the Old Testament, such as Abel, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, and David. During the Old Testament age, God neither condemned ones such as these to the lake of fire, nor did He forgive their sins. Rather, He passed by their sins. Their sins still existed, but they were covered by the type, by the blood of the sacrifices which typified the sacrifice of Christ. The Old Testament type in this matter may be likened to a promissory note. The type was not the actual payment of debt, but a sure promise that full payment would be made. Because Christ had not yet come to die on the cross, God gave sinners in the Old Testament a promissory note. The propitiatory or expiatory sacrifice, which foreshadowed Christ, satisfied all the requirements of God’s righteousness. Hence, He could pass by the people’s sin that occurred in the Old Testament age. Furthermore, in order to show forth His righteousness, He had to do this.

This is what 3:25 refers to. This verse reveals that the Lord Jesus is the propitiation place, the propitiation-cover, whom God set forth for showing forth His righteousness in passing by the sins of the Old Testament saints; for, as the propitiatory sacrifice, He has made the full propitiation on the cross for their sins and has fully satisfied the requirements of God’s righteousness. When the Lord Jesus died on the cross, He fulfilled all the types of His sacrificial and redemptive death. At that time, the promissory note was replaced by the actual payment.

By forgiving us God shows forth His righteousness. He makes a declaration to the whole universe that because He is righteous, He must forgive us of our sins. Because His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, was put

to death by Him on the cross on our behalf, He is legally obligated to forgive us. Whether He is happy with us or not, He must forgive us according to His righteousness. God knows that whenever a person points to the resurrected and ascended Christ as the receipt for the payment for sin, God must forgive that one. In this matter, God has no choice.

We should not look at ourselves, but look at the ascended Christ. Hebrews 1:3 says that after Christ made purification for sins, He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. The ascended Christ seated at the right hand of God is the receipt for the payment for our forgiveness. This is a matter of tremendous significance, for it is the foundation of our salvation. Whenever our conscience condemns us because of our failures, we need to remember to stand upon the foundation of God's righteousness. You may be fervent for the Lord today. But in the future, you may fail Him and therefore become very disappointed with yourself, unable to believe that God could ever forgive you. If you remain under this feeling of condemnation and disappointment, you will not be able to rise up. Instead, you may become subject to the subtlety and deception of the enemy. At such a time you need to praise God for His righteousness. Tell Him that no matter how much you have failed, Christ is still at His right hand as the receipt for payment for all your debts. Our experience may fluctuate, but God remains righteous. Whenever we claim the blood of Jesus and appeal to God's righteousness, God has no choice except to forgive us (1 John 1:9).

Our experience of Christ rests upon the foundation of God's righteousness. We should never have confidence in ourselves, thinking that we cannot backslide or fail the Lord. Do not be like Peter who said that he would be faithful to the Lord, even though everyone else might deny Him. The foundation is not our fervency or victory; it is God's righteousness, the unshakable foundation of God's throne. God has shown forth His righteousness by passing over the sins of the Old Testament saints and by forgiving us of our sins in the New Testament age. By doing these things God has proved that He is righteous. Now this very

righteousness is our foundation. The work of being designated sons of God is built upon this foundation. However, we must be clear that the foundation is not the process of designation; it is the righteousness of God. [604]

(Life-study of Romans, msg. 57, from "Impossible for God to Change His mind" up to (not including) "Christ, the End of the Law Unto Righteousness")

Wednesday 8/16

Related Verses

Rom. 2:1-4, 17-21, 28-29

1 Therefore you are without excuse, O every man who judges, for in what you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.

2 But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth upon those who practice such things.

3 And do you consider this, O man, who judge those who practice such things and do the same yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God?

4 Or do you despise the riches of His kindness and forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing that God's kindness is leading you to repentance?

17 But if you bear the name of Jew, and rest upon the law, and boast in God,

18 And know the will, and approve the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law,

19 And have confidence that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those in darkness,

20 One who disciplines the foolish, a teacher of babes, having the proper form of the knowledge and truth in the law;

21 You therefore who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach not to steal, do you steal?

28 For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh.

29 But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is of the heart, in spirit, not in letter, whose praise is not from men, but from God.

Related Reading

Now we come to the way of restriction, the way to restrict evil and wickedness. I like this part of Romans. All of us, especially the young people, need to pay our full attention to this way of restriction.

The first item in the way of restriction is knowing God by His creation (1:19-20). The invisible things of God, His eternal power and divine nature, can be apprehended by His creation. The heavens and the earth manifest the invisible things of God. Approximately 20 years ago, the brothers in Taiwan collected biographical material on the famous scientists of the past centuries. They discovered that only a small percentage of these leading scientists said they did not believe in God. The distinct majority of them believed in Him. I once read an article in which Einstein was asked whether or not he believed in God. He replied, "Your question is an insult to me. How could a scientist such as I not believe in God?" If you study science, it will tell you that there is a God.

Although I do not know science, I know a little about our human body. Many times, as I preached to people about God, I have asked them to consider their bodies. I told them, "Think how wonderful you are. Who made you?" All the hair on our physical bodies, both inside and outside, grows downward except for the hair in our throat, which grows upward. This is very meaningful. If the hair in our throat grew downward, we would die because phlegm could not be discharged. Who made us this way? Furthermore, consider the marvelous design of the human face. The mouth has been properly positioned. How awkward and how terrible it would be for our mouth to be placed between our eyes! Also, have you ever thought about the function of our eyebrows? They function as breakwaters, keeping the perspiration out of our eyes. Who designed us this way? Recently I had two operations on my right eye. The surgeon showed me an artificial eye, especially pointing to the lens and the retina. Immediately I saw that this was an exact replica of the best camera. No one can make a camera to match the human eye. Who made these things? Our

teeth are also marvelously designed. Our front teeth, the incisors, act like two knives, cutting whatever is placed in between them. Then the tongue sends the food back to the molars which are like grinding stones, grinding the food into a digestible substance. As the molars grind, saliva is secreted to liquefy the food. This is marvelous. Who made it? We must say, “Lord, thank You. You are my Creator. You have made me in such a wonderful way.”

When we behold creation in general and the human body in particular, how can we say there is no God? Even an atheistic medical doctor has to confess there is an Almighty One who created the human body. Therefore, by the things made we can apprehend the eternal power and the divine nature of God. When we see God in the beauties and wonders of His creation, we have to worship and glorify Him. Knowing God by His creation is the first aspect in the way of restricting evil.

We must hold the reality of God in righteousness, approving of keeping God in our full knowledge (1:18, 28). We need to glorify, thank, worship, and serve Him (1:21, 25). It is very important to practice these four things. As a grandfather, I say a word to my grandchildren who are attending this training. I do know what is human life. Believe me when I say that worshiping God can never be wrong. The first thing you teenagers need to learn is to worship God. Nothing is more important in your human life than worshiping God. I would hate it for my children to earn millions of dollars and yet not worship God. I do not want to see my second or third generation become wealthy and yet not worship God. I would rather see them come here to learn how to worship the Lord. The greatest blessing in human life is to be trained to worship our God. [38]

Next, we need to do things according to our nature (2:14). Some people are so spiritual that they condemn everything natural. They seem to feel that nothing natural can be good. In a sense, I agree with this almost completely. In another sense, however, I would caution you against forgetting our nature. Our original

nature, as created by God, was good. Everything created by our Father, including our nature, was good originally. Of course, our nature was poisoned by the fall. There can be no doubt about this. Nevertheless, as human beings, we have a nature which God created good, and we need to act according to it. We should take heed to this nature. Although you may argue that it is not wrong to steal from others, the nature within you protests whenever you are tempted to steal. Even bank robbers will admit that, as they rob banks, their nature tells them, “Don’t do this.” However, they will not listen. It is the same with every evil-doer. Whenever they do something wrong, their nature disagrees. We need to observe the requirements of the nature within us.

In Romans 2:14-15 Paul says that when the nations who do not have the law practice the things of the law, they prove that the function of the law is written in their heart. The law of God has a function in our nature. In other words, our nature corresponds to God’s law because our nature was made by God. God’s law was given according to God’s nature, for a lawgiver always enacts a law in accordance with his own being. God created man according to what He is. Therefore, the law given by God and the man created by God correspond to one another. Thus, we do not need an outward law because we have the function of the law written in our nature. We simply need to live according to our nature.

Along with our good nature, we also have a conscience (2:15). The conscience is a wonderful entity, and we should listen to it. Although medical doctors cannot locate it, no one can deny that we possess it. Our conscience protests continually. When you argue with your parents, the conscience says, “Don’t do this.” If you offend your parents, your conscience will trouble you for three nights. Every husband seeking to divorce his wife will also be convicted by his conscience. All men have a conscience. This is a great matter. In the normal Christian life we must all take care of our conscience in a suitable way.

In addition to our nature and our conscience, we have the reasonings in our mind (2:15). Do not be so spiritual to say that our mind is absolutely useless. In our mind we have the good reasonings. Sometimes these reasonings accuse and condemn, and other times they excuse and justify. Often, as we set out to do a certain thing, we experience a conflict in our reasonings, with some reasonings saying, “Yes, that’s right,” and others saying, “No, that’s wrong.” We have all experienced this. We need to take care of our nature, our conscience, and the reasonings within us.

We have seen the five items in the way of restriction: knowing God by His creation, holding the truth of God in righteousness, living according to our nature, listening to our conscience, and caring for our proper reasonings. If we observe all these things, we will be restricted from every kind of evil. Although we all are saved and are living somewhere in Romans 5 through 8, we still need to know the source of evil and the way to be restricted from doing evil. Hallelujah, we have found it! We need to know God by His creation and hold His truth in righteousness. We need to act according to our nature, heed the voice of our conscience, and care for the proper reasonings within us. If we practice all these things, we will be protected.

(Life-study of Romans, msg. 3, from “A. The Way of Restriction” through the end)

Thursday 8/17

Related Verses

Rom. 3:9-20

9 What then? Are we better? Not at all! For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin,

10 Even as it is written, "There is none righteous, not even one;

11 There is none who understands, there is none who seeks out God.

12 All have turned aside; together they have become useless; there is none who does good; there is not so much as one.

13 Their throat is an opened grave; with their tongues they practiced deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips;
 14 Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.
 15 Swift are their feet to shed blood,
 16 Destruction and misery are in their ways,
 17 And the way of peace they have not known.
 18 There is no fear of God before their eyes."
 19 Now we know that whatever things the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped and all the world may fall under the judgment of God;
 20 Because out of the works of the law no flesh shall be justified before Him; for through the law is the clear knowledge of sin.

Related Reading

Now we come to the section on justification, a most significant doctrine (3:21-5:11). Martin Luther was raised up by God to wage a fierce battle over justification because it is such a great doctrine in the Bible. Although Luther contended for the truth of justification, we have to understand how justification relates to propitiation, redemption, and reconciliation. In this message, we shall cover all these terms and seek to make them clear. However, we first need to consider the righteousness of God.

What is the righteousness of God? We may say that the righteousness of God is what God is with respect to justice and rightness (Rom. 3:21-22; 1:17; 10:3; Phil. 3:9). God is just and right. Whatever God is in His justice and rightness constitutes His righteousness. Furthermore, all that God is in His justice and rightness is actually Himself. Therefore, the righteousness of God is God Himself. The righteousness of God is a Person, not merely a divine attribute.

Many Christians say incorrectly that they have the righteousness of Christ. We should not say this. Our righteousness is not the righteousness of Christ; it is Christ Himself. Christ Himself as a Person, not His attribute of righteousness, has been made the righteousness of God to us (1 Cor. 1:30). Do not say

that the righteousness of Christ has become your righteousness. Instead you should say, "Christ is my righteousness. My righteousness before God is the living Person of Christ, not an attribute. The righteous Christ is mine." God has made Christ, who is the very embodiment of God Himself, our righteousness.

Second Corinthians 5:21 says that the believers are made the righteousness of God in Christ. Paul does not say that the believers are made righteous; he says that they are made righteousness. We have been made the righteousness of God in Christ. This is a deep matter. How can we become the righteousness of God? By having Christ wrought into us. We have seen that Christ is the embodiment of God, and that God, as a living Person, is righteousness. Therefore, righteousness, God, and Christ are one. The righteousness of God is God Himself. Since this God is embodied in Christ, Christ is the righteousness of God. Christ has been wrought into us, and we have been put into Christ. We have been mingled together with Christ as one. Thus, we become the righteousness of God. Paul declares, "For to me to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21). As Christ has been wrought into us, we can say with Paul, "For to me to live is Christ." Suppose we have a glass of water. Once tea has been blended with it, it no longer is plain water; it is tea. Likewise, once Christ has been wrought into us, we become one with Him.

The righteousness of God is not only God Himself in His justice and rightness, and it is not only the living Person of Christ; it is also we who have been made one with Christ. The living Person of Christ as God's righteousness has been wrought into us, and we have been put into Him. Therefore, we have been made the righteousness of God. We must proclaim, "I am the righteousness of God. I have been justified. God is righteousness, and I am too. I am the righteousness of God in Christ. I am what God is. I'm fully justified. God and I have been identified. I approve God, and He approves me. We mutually approve each other." This is justification by faith.

Some may think we should not say that we approve God. Nevertheless, we all must approve Him. God likes to be judged and approved by us (Rom. 3:4). Thus, we can say to God, "You approve us, and we approve You."

What is justification? Justification is God's action in approving people according to His standard of righteousness. His righteousness is the standard, not ours. Although we think we are righteous, our righteousness is only a quarter inch high. Regardless of how righteous we are or how righteous we think we are, our righteousness is just a fraction of an inch high. How high is God's righteousness? It is unlimited! Can you be approved by God according to your own righteousness? This is impossible. Although you may be right with everyone—with your parents, your children, and your friends—your righteousness will never justify you before God. You may justify yourself according to your standard of righteousness, but that does not enable you to be justified by God according to His standard. We need justification by faith. Justification by faith before God means we are approved by God according to the standard of His righteousness.

How can God do this? He can do it because our justification is based upon the redemption of Christ. When the redemption of Christ is applied to us, we are justified. If there were no such redemption, it would be impossible for us to be justified by God. Redemption is the basis of justification.

(Life-study of Romans, msg. 5, from beginning up to (not including) II.)

Friday 8/18

Related Verses

Rom. 3:21-31

21 But now, apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been manifested, witness being borne to it by the Law and the Prophets;

22 Even the righteousness of God through the faith of Jesus Christ to all those who believe, for there is no distinction;

23 For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

24 Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;

25 Whom God set forth as a propitiation place through faith in His blood, for the demonstrating of His righteousness, in that in His forbearance God passed over the sins that had previously occurred,

26 With a view to the demonstrating of His righteousness in the present time, so that He might be righteous and the One who justifies him who is of the faith of Jesus.

27 Where then is boasting? It is excluded. Through what kind of law? That of works? No, but through the law of faith.

28 For we account that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.

29 Or is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not of the Gentiles also? Yes, of the Gentiles also,

30 If indeed God is one, who will justify the circumcision out of faith and the uncircumcision through faith.

31 Do we then make the law of no effect through faith? Absolutely not! Rather, we establish the law.

Related Reading

As we come to the subject of the redemption of Christ, we need to consider the atonement in the Old Testament (Lev. 16:34; 25:9). [52]

The atonement in the Old Testament was an expiation (Lev. 25:9; Num. 5:8). Expiation means to appease God for us, to conciliate God by satisfying His righteous requirements.

The expiatory cover (rendered “mercy seat” by the King James Version) was the lid of the ark (Exo. 25:17-22; Lev. 16:14; Heb. 9:5). Under this cover was the law which was called the testimony of God (Exo. 25:21). Why was it called the testimony of God? Because the law testifies of what God is. God is fully testified and expressed by His law. Above the expiatory cover were the cherubim of glory, signifying the expression of God (Exo. 25:19-20; Heb. 9:5; Rom. 3:23). Therefore, under the cover was the testimony of

God, showing what kind of God He is, and above the cover were the cherubim of glory, expressing the glory of God.

The expiatory cover was sprinkled with the expiatory blood (Lev. 16:14, cf. 18). On the day of atonement, or, as is better to say, the day of expiation, the blood of the expiatory sacrifice was shed, brought into the Holy of Holies, and sprinkled upon the expiatory cover. That blood was a speaking blood. At that time, some problems existed between God and the people. Everyone had sinned against God and was short of God’s glory. Thus, two problems—the problem of sins and the problem of falling short of God’s glory—existed between God and the people, creating a separation between them. There was no way for them to come together. Although the people needed God’s grace, and although God had grace to dispense to them, there was no way for the two parties to approach one another. Expiation was the way. That was the way of atonement, of at-one-ment. In the Old Testament times, the way of atonement, that is of expiation, required a sacrifice in which blood was shed. This blood was brought into the Holy of Holies and sprinkled upon the cover of the ark. As we have seen, under this cover was the law exposing and condemning the people as they approached God, and above the cover were the cherubim of glory observing everything. As the blood of atonement was sprinkled upon the cover of the ark, it satisfied the righteous requirements of God’s law and it fulfilled the demands of God’s glory. Therefore, upon the expiatory cover of the ark God could meet with man, speak to man, and fellowship with man in a lawful way without contradicting His righteousness or glory. It was in this place that God and man were made one. That was the atonement, the expiation.

The expiation in the Old Testament was a type of the propitiation in the New Testament. Propitiation is mentioned at least five times in the New Testament. In 1 John 2:2 and 4:10 we are told that Christ, the Son of God, is Himself the propitiation for our sins. In both places the word propitiation actually means a sacrifice and should be rendered “propitiatory sacrifice.” The

Greek word in these verses is hilasmos, which means “that which propitiates,” that is, a propitiatory sacrifice. In 1 John 2:2 and 4:10 the Lord Jesus is the propitiatory sacrifice for our sins. Another Greek word regarding propitiation, hilasterion, is found in Hebrews 9:5 and Romans 3:25. Hilasterion means the place where propitiation was made. The proper reference books indicate that the word hilasterion in these two verses means the place of propitiation, and the King James Version renders it as “mercy seat.” In the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, hilasterion is the word for the term “mercy seat” in Exodus 25 and Leviticus 16. Thus, hilasterion is the place of propitiation. Furthermore, in Hebrews 2:17 is the word hilaskomai, the verbal form of the noun hilasmos. The King James Version translates hilaskomai as “make reconciliation for”; however, it should be translated “propitiate.” Christ propitiates for our sins. The matter of propitiation is mentioned five times in the New Testament in relation to Christ: twice it refers to Christ Himself as the propitiatory sacrifice, twice it refers to the place where propitiation was accomplished, and once it refers to the action of propitiation. [54]

In addition to these five references to propitiation in the New Testament, we find the same root used by the publican in his prayer in the temple (Luke 18:13). According to the King James Version, the publican prayed, “God, be merciful to me.” However, the Greek means, “Propitiate for me.” The publican actually was saying, “O God, propitiate for me. I am sinful in Your eyes. I need propitiation.”

What is the meaning of propitiation? How shall we distinguish it from redemption on the one hand and reconciliation on the other? If we read the New Testament carefully, we will discover that reconciliation includes propitiation. Nevertheless, there is a difference between them. Propitiation means that you have a problem with another person. You have either offended him or else you owe him something. For instance, if I wrong you or am otherwise in debt to you, a problem exists between us. Because of this problem or debt, you have a demand

upon me, and unless your demand is satisfied the problem between us cannot be resolved. Thus, there is the need for propitiation.

The Greek word *hilasmos* implies that I have wronged you and that now I am indebted to you. There is a problem between us that hinders our relationship. Propitiation, therefore, involves two parties, one of which has wronged the other, has become indebted to the other, and must act to satisfy the demands of the other. If the offending party is to appease the offended party, he must fulfill his demands. The Septuagint uses the word *hilasmos* for the word atonement in Leviticus 25:9 and Numbers 5:8 because this Greek word means to conciliate two parties and make them one. This is a matter of atonement.

The word atone is composed of two words, “at” and “one.” We may write the word atonement this way: at-one-ment. Atonement is at-one-ment. The meaning of atonement is to bring two parties into one. When two parties have been separated and seek to be in oneness, there is the need for propitiation. This is atonement. The action of propitiation is atonement. Propitiation means to make us one with God because there had been a separation between us and God. What was the problem that kept us from God, that made it impossible to have direct fellowship with Him? The problem was our sins. Our sins kept us away from God’s presence and hindered God from coming to us. Therefore, we needed propitiation to appease God’s demands. Christ accomplished this on the cross when He offered Himself as the propitiatory sacrifice. On the cross He propitiated for us and brought us back to God, making us one with God.

What is the difference between propitiation and redemption? The word redeem means to purchase back something which originally was yours but which had become lost. This hymnal belongs to me. If the hymnal becomes lost and I pay the price of buying it back, I would be redeeming the hymnal. Thus, redemption means to repossess at a cost.

We originally belonged to God. We were His possession. However, we were lost. Nevertheless, God did not give us up. He paid the price to have us back, repossessing us at a great cost. This is redemption. Even after we had become lost, He desired to regain us. However, this was not easy for God to do because our being lost involved us in sins and in many other things that were against His righteousness, holiness, and glory. Because we were lost we had many problems with God in respect to His righteousness, holiness, and glory. We were under a threefold demand, the demand of righteousness, holiness, and glory. Many requirements were laid upon us, and it was impossible for us to fulfill them. The price was too great. God paid the price for us, repossessing us at a tremendous cost. Christ died on the cross to accomplish eternal redemption for us (Gal. 3:13; 1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 10:12; 9:28). His blood has obtained eternal redemption for us (Heb. 9:12, 14; 1 Pet. 1:18-19).

The problem of being an enemy is even more serious than the problem that necessitates propitiation. If I am your enemy, propitiation is inadequate. I need reconciliation. Sinners need propitiation; enemies need reconciliation. Enmity is the greatest problem between man and God. When we were enemies of God, we not only needed propitiation, but also reconciliation. Propitiation mainly deals with sins; reconciliation deals with enmity as well as sins. Therefore, reconciliation includes propitiation. Romans 5 tells us that before we were saved we were both sinners and enemies. As sinners we needed propitiation and as enemies we needed reconciliation. Herein lies the difference between propitiation and reconciliation: propitiation is for sins; reconciliation is both for sins and enmity.

Reconciliation is based upon Christ’s redemption (Rom. 5:10, 11) and was accomplished through God’s justification (2 Cor. 5:18-19; Rom. 5:1, 11). Hence, reconciliation is the issue of redemption with justification.

In the previous points we mainly covered the definition of various terms—the righteousness of God, justification, propitiation, redemption, and reconciliation. Once we have the proper definition of these terms, we can understand what it means to be justified. Now we shall deal directly with justification.

(Life-study of Romans, msg. 5, from II. up to (not including) III.)

Saturday 8/19

Related Verses

Rom. 4:3, 7-13, 20-25

3 For what does the Scripture say? "And Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him as righteousness."

7 "Blessed are they whose lawlessnesses have been forgiven, and whose sins have been covered over.

8 Blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall by no means account sin."

9 Is this blessing then upon the circumcision only, or also upon the uncircumcision? For we say, Faith was accounted to Abraham as righteousness.

10 How then was it accounted? While he was in circumcision or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.

11 And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while in uncircumcision, that he might be the father of all those in uncircumcision who believe, that righteousness might be accounted to them also,

12 And the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had in uncircumcision.

13 For it was not through the law that the promise was made to Abraham or to his seed that he would be the heir of the world, but through the righteousness of faith.

20 But with regard to the promise of God, he did not doubt in unbelief, but was empowered by faith, giving glory to God

21 And being fully persuaded that what He had promised He was able also to do.

22 Therefore also it was accounted to him as righteousness.

23 Now it was not written for his sake only that it was accounted to him,

24 But for ours also to whom it is to be accounted, who believe on Him who has raised Jesus our Lord from the dead,

25 Who was delivered for our offenses and was raised for our justification.

Related Reading

The called race becomes the believing race. Abraham was first a called one, then a believing one. He had abandoned everything and had no way to go on except to trust in God. He trusted in God because he did not know where he was going. God had only told him to leave his country, his kindred, and his father's house. He did not tell Abraham where he was going, forcing him to trust in God. Abraham could say, "I simply trust in God. I go wherever He leads me." If we study the history of Abraham, we will learn that his life was a trusting life, a believing life. God did not expect Abraham to do anything. God seemed to tell him, "Abraham, you have been called by Me. Don't do anything. I'll do everything for you. Just stay with Me. When I move, you move. You must go wherever I go. Don't do anything for yourself or by yourself." This is what it means to trust in God.

Many people have the mistaken impression that believing in the Lord Jesus is simply saying, "Lord Jesus, I believe in You. I take You as my Savior." This is right, but the implications are far-reaching. It means that we must terminate ourselves, admitting that we are nothing, have nothing, and can do nothing. Every step and every moment we must trust in Him. I do not know how to do things; I only know how to trust in my Lord. I have been called out of everything that is not God and now I believe into everything that is God. I believe in Him and I believe in all that He has accomplished for me. I believe in what He can do for me and in what He shall do for me. I put my full trust in Him. This is the testimony of the called and

believing race. As children of Abraham, the believing father, we are a believing people (Gal. 3:7-9).

In what kind of God did Abraham believe? Who is the God in whom we believe? The God in whom Abraham believed was the God who calls things not being as being (4:17). The God of Abraham calls things not existing as existing, meaning that He creates things out of nothing. God is the Creator. Abraham believed in such a God and applied this God to his situation. In a sense, Abraham was unable to produce an heir. Nevertheless, God called Isaac into being. Although Isaac had no being, God called him into being. When Isaac did not exist and when there was no possibility for him to exist, God declared, "There shall be an Isaac." Isaac was born: God had called something not being as being. We must believe in the same God, for He is the almighty Creator who calls things not existing as existing.

The God in whom Abraham believed was the God who gives life to the dead (4:17). This means that God can resurrect the dead. Abraham experienced this when God asked him to offer up Isaac. Abraham obeyed. As Abraham offered Isaac, he believed that God would raise him from the dead (Heb. 11:17-19). He believed that God would give life to his son and that he would have his son again in resurrection.

We need to believe in the Lord Jesus in the same way. We believe in God the Creator, who calls things not being as being. We also believe in Him as the life-giver, as the One who can raise the dead. He can create out of nothing and He can give life to the dead.

We may apply this to the church life. You may feel that the situation in your local church is poor. Yes, it is very poor; in fact, it is nothing. You must say to the Lord, "Lord, come in to call things not being as being." Perhaps you may migrate to a certain locality and find that it is a place filled with death. That is the reason God sent you. You must believe in Him as the One who gives life to the dead.

In 1949 I was sent to Taiwan. I thought of that island as a backward region. I had been living and

working in Shanghai, the largest city in the Far East, where the Lord's work was strong. A thousand saints were meeting together. We had seventeen homes for meetings and four publications. Suddenly I was removed from mainland China and sent to the little island of Taiwan. When I surveyed the situation, I was deeply disappointed. I could not do anything and I did not want to do anything. I had no appetite to work in such a backward country with its poor people. I laid on the bed and looked at the ceiling, saying to myself, "What are you doing here? Why did you come here?" Then I turned to my wife and asked, "Why did we come? What can we do?" I was very troubled, and my wife had no word to help me. One day, the God who calls things not being as being and who gives life to the dead touched my heart, telling me not to be disappointed. After that, I was burdened for the work on Taiwan. In less than five years we grew in numbers from three hundred and fifty people to twenty thousand. During the first year we increased almost thirty-fold. Many who were saved during that time are now co-workers.

We must believe in the God who calls things not being as being and who gives life to the dead. Do not be disappointed by the situation in your locality. Do not say that everything is poor and dead. Such a place is the right place for you and the right place for God. Is it poor? You have a rich God who calls things not being as being. Is it dead? You have a living God who gives life to the dead. Your situation gives an opportunity for God to come in and impart life to the dead. Do not complain. Call on Him and believe in Him. Do not be disappointed with your family situation. Do not say that your wife is poor or that your husband is dead. The more you say that your wife is poor, the worse she is. The more you say that your husband is dead, the worse he is. You must declare, "My wife is poor, but my God is not poor. My husband is dead, but my God is not dead. The God in whom I believe is the God who creates things out of nothing and who gives life to the dead. My God does not give life to the living—He gives life to the dead. My situation is an excellent opportunity for God."

(*Life-study of Romans*, msg. 6, from II. up to (not including) IV.)

Lord's Day 8/20

Related Verses

Gal. 2:16, 20

16 And knowing that a man is not justified out of works of law, but through faith in Jesus Christ, we also have believed into Christ Jesus that we might be justified out of faith in Christ and not out of the works of law, because out of the works of law no flesh will be justified.

20 I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

Gal. 3:2-6, 22

2 This only I wish to learn from you, Did you receive the Spirit out of the works of law or out of the hearing of faith?

3 Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?

4 Have you suffered so many things in vain, if indeed it was in vain?

5 He therefore who bountifully supplies to you the Spirit and does works of power among you, does He do it out of the works of law or out of the hearing of faith?

6 Even as "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."

22 But the Scripture has shut up all under sin in order that the promise out of faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

Gal. 5:6

6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision avails anything nor uncircumcision, but faith avails, operating through love.

Eph. 3:12

12 In whom we have boldness and access in confidence through faith in Him.

Phil. 3:9

9 And be found in Him, not having my own righteousness which is out of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is out of God and based on faith,

Heb. 12:2

2 Looking away unto Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down on the right hand of the throne of God.

Further Reading:

Further Reading: *Life-study of Romans*, msg. 53

Hymns, #30

1 What love Thou hast bestowed on us,
We thank Thee from our heart;
Our Father, we would worship Thee
And praise for all Thou art.

2 Thy heart Thou hast revealed to us,
Made known th' eternal will;
Within the Son Thou hast come forth,
Thy purpose to fulfill.

3 Thou gavest Thy beloved Son
In love to come and die,
That we may be Thy many sons,
As heirs with Him, made nigh.

4 Through Him we have Thy very life
And Thou our Father art;
Thy very nature, all Thyself,
Thou dost to us impart.

5 Thy Spirit into ours has come
That we may "Abba" cry;
Of Spirit born, with Spirit sealed,
To be transformed thereby.

6 The many sons to glory brought
Is Thine eternal goal,
And to Thy Son's own image wrought,
Thou wilt conform the whole.

7 Throughout Thy transformation work
Thou dost direct each one,
From glory unto glory bring
Until the work is done.

8 What love Thou, Father, hast bestowed;
We'll ever grateful be;
We'll worship Thee forevermore
And praise unceasingly.

Churchwide Truth Pursuit of Romans

Level 1—Romans Sequential Study

Scripture: Rom. 3:1-20

Assigned Reading: *Life-study of Romans*, msgs. 33-34

Level 2—Romans Topical Study

Crucial Point: Our Interceding Christ

Scripture: Rom. 8:26-27, 34

Assigned Reading: *Life-study of Romans*, msg. 19

Supplemental Reading: *The Prayer Ministry of the Church*, chs. 1, 4-5

Hymn: 201

For study questions and additional materials, please visit the church website at churchinnyc.org/bible-study