

## **Romans 3:19-28 - “Our Justifier”**

Pr. Kurt A. VanFossan - Reformation Day (Observed) 2023

If you read the first two chapters of St. Paul’s letter to the Romans, you’ll see that Paul goes to great lengths, using the Law of God, to make it clear that (as he summarizes in our text), *“all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”* Even if you’re the greatest teacher of God’s Word in the world today and one of the best at living according to God’s Word, like Paul was in his day, you still *“fall short of the glory of God,”*—you’re still a poor miserable sinner.

Thankfully, Paul was well aware of his sins and his need of the salvation that comes only through Jesus Christ (Romans 7:24-25), and he wants us to know and believe the same. For, the moment we start thinking “I’m good,” or “I’ve got this,” that’s the moment we fall into some of the same thinking of the religious leaders of Jesus’ and Luther’s day who thought that they were good.

The truth is we’re not good and we don’t “got this.” That’s why we desperately need to hear both God’s words of Law, which shows us our sins and fills us with the fear of God’s judgement, and His words of Gospel, which relieves our fears and fills us with the joy of knowing and believing that we are justified before God by the “*grace*” of God, *“as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”* Jesus has “got this.” He is our “Just Justifier.”

To say that Jesus is “Just,” in this context doesn’t mean that “He’s just the best!” Instead it means that He is a just, impartial Judge who must punish sin. In His justice, He treats everyone the same when it comes to His perfect law.

Some of you have been hearing me say recently that God is a realist, and Satan is a perfectionist. While this is true, it does not mean that God doesn’t demand perfection when it comes to keeping His perfect law. He does demand perfection. He says, *“You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy”* (Leviticus 19:2), which is why we all stand condemned. But that’s where Satan wants to leave us, condemned like him.

What Satan doesn’t want us to know, and believe is that God’s Law was perfectly fulfilled on our behalf by the God/Man, Jesus Christ. And Satan especially doesn’t want us to know and believe that Jesus also fulfilled God’s just judgement against our sins when He died on the cross, also on our behalf. Jesus did all this because He is a realist and knows that because of our sinful nature we can never be perfect in this life. That’s why He was born, to be our perfect substitute in obeying God’s Law and paying for our sins. As a result, Satan, who tried to use God’s Law to condemn us, was thrown out of court, so to speak, when Jesus, the perfect God/Man, fulfilled God’s judgement against our sins when He was condemned in our place. But then Jesus rose from the dead in victory over our sins, death, and the devil.

So, while *“the wages of sin is death...the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Romans 6:23). Jesus, our “Just Justifier,” is the final Word of God. And as the acronym on the front of our bulletin reminds us, *“The Word of the Lord remains forever”* (1 Peter 1:25, VDMA), both the Law and Gospel.

As a result, through the gift of faith in Jesus Christ as our Savior from sin, death and Satan, we can thank God for our complete salvation. We can also do good for the right reasons, knowing that our less than perfect good works have nothing to do with our already perfect standing before God in Jesus Christ, but that God can and does work through them to lead others to Jesus Christ.

God enables us through Jesus Christ, to be a realist about ourselves and others. While God still wants us to do what He says in His Word is good, and to flee from the evil that is contrary to God's Word, don't expect that you, your children, or others are ever going to be perfect. If we could be perfect in this life, we wouldn't need our perfect Savior, Jesus Christ.

Remember Satan is the OCD perfectionist who wants you to despair of your imperfections by focusing only on God's Laws and judgements, instead of rejoicing in God's perfect Gospel promises of forgiveness in Jesus Christ—that Jesus is our “Just Justifier” whom God the Father “*put forward as a propitiation*”—as the sufficient payment and atonement for our sins. That sufficient payment was the blood of God in Jesus Christ, His death for the sins of all mankind—for our eternal salvation!

All glory be to God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

[Children's Sermon]). What is this coming Tuesday, the 31st of October, known as? (expect Halloween response) It's also Reformation Day, which we're also celebrating today. The good news that Martin Luther reminded people of over 500 years ago is that we are saved from our sins, death and the devil not by the good things we do, but by the good things Jesus did for us through His life, death and resurrection from the dead.

To help illustrate why this is such good news, I would like some of you to help me build a human pyramid (four children at the bottom, three, two in the middle). Now, who would like to be on the top of this human pyramid? Why is being at the top of this human pyramid scary? The reason it's scary is because it's built on people like ourselves, who are weak and can easily fall.

Now, think how scary it would be if our eternal future depended on people like ourselves! That's what a lot of the pastor's in Martin Luther's day were telling the people—that our eternal future in heaven or hell depends on what we do. That's very scary because we know how often we fail to do all that God and our parents want us to do.

Who's the only person who was perfect—who never did anything wrong? Jesus! But the best thing He did was to allow Himself to suffer the punishment of death that we deserve because of all the bad things we do. Then He came back to life again. He could do all this because He was not only a human being like you and me, who could die, but He was also God who is stronger than our sins, death and the devil. When we trust in **Jesus** to take us to heaven instead of ourselves and other people like ourselves, we don't need to be afraid. His death and resurrection assures us that He can do what He promises as our Savior, now and forever.

To help you remember this good news I have a special penny for each of you. A lot of people believe that if they work real hard and save up a lot of pennies, they will be free from all their troubles. But we know that's not true.

Who is the only one who can free us from all of our troubles, especially our sins and death? Jesus! This penny is also called one cent, but the only one cent that can save us is the one sent by God, Jesus Christ, who died on the cross and rose from the dead so that He can be with us now and forever.

So, here's a special one cent with a cross in the center of it to remind you of the one sent by God to save us.