

A New Kind of Equal

Message 13

8.4.24

Romans 3:21–26 (CSB)

²¹ But now, apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been revealed, attested by the Law and the Prophets. ²² The righteousness of God is through faith in Jesus Christ, to all who believe, since there is no distinction. ²³ For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; ²⁴ they are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. ²⁵ God presented him as the mercy seat, by his blood, through faith, to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his restraint God passed over the sins previously committed. ²⁶ God presented him to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so that he would be just and justify the one who has faith in Jesus.

Romans 3:27–31 (CSB)

²⁷ Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By one of works? No, on the contrary, by a law of faith. ²⁸ For we conclude that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law. ²⁹ Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, ³⁰ since there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. ³¹ Do we then nullify the law through faith? Absolutely not! On the contrary, we uphold the law.

Introduction. We hold these truths to Be self-evident...

A. These were first the words of the Declaration of Independence, then Abraham Lincoln at the dedication of the Gettysburg Cemetery, and then Martin Luther King Jr.

1. That ALL men are created equal.
2. These words are powerful, memorable, and true.
 - a. We haven't practiced this well.

b. We still live in a day of elitism and prejudice.

c. But this is still the American ideal.

3. Jefferson, Lincoln, King weren't wrong.

a. In fact, they might not have fully grasped how right and true they were.

b. But not true in the sense that Jefferson or Lincoln had in mind.

B. Biblically, all people are created equal.

1. The Apostle Paul is hammering away at Jewish elitism in Romans 2 and 3.

2. The Apostle Paul hammered at Roman distinction, Greek learning, and other forms of separation and elitism.

3. By this point in Romans, it is clear.

4. Jews and Gentiles, Rich and Poor, Male and Female, all are sinners and fall short of God's Glory.

C. People who profess to believe that every one is naturally good sure hasn't lived much.

1. When I read Scripture and history, I come to the stark reality that no one is good.

2. All fall short of God's glory.

a. We cannot work ourselves to eternal life.

b. We cannot think ourselves to eternal life.

3. The wages of sin is death, and we have all worked for sin and have a paycheck coming.

a. To paraphrase the Apostle Paul, Thomas Jefferson, and Abraham Lincoln:

b We hold these truths to be self-evident... that all men are equal under sin.

1. A New Kind of Revelation.

A. Just as our forefathers thought it was obvious that all men are created equal, the Apostle Paul says it should be evident that all people are sinners and condemned.

1. The Law and Nature condemn us.
2. It is evident that all people are without excuse. Rom.1:20

B. But now, apart from the Law, the righteousness of God is revealed.

1. This was NOT obvious.
2. In Romans 1, Paul says the righteousness and the wrath of God are revealed.
3. But now, there is a new revealing...salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.
4. This word means that a new light is shined on the subject and put on display.

C. It isn't that God has changed, but He is now showing Himself differently.

1. Sometimes, we talk like the God of the OT is different than the God of the NT.
 - a. That isn't the case.
 - b. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever.
 - c. What does change is His revealing and the light he shines on the subject.
2. Example: Sometime in the next month or two, we are painting the church's exterior.
 - a. It's going to be black and gray.
 - b. The problem with gray is that some grays pull different shades.

1. Some pull blue.
2. Some pull purple.
3. Can you imagine driving by the church and, in the light, the whole building looks like Barney?

D. It isn't that the God of the Old Testament is a different God than we read about in the New.

1. It's more like the angle is different, the light is different, and now through Jesus, apart from the law but confirmed by the Law and Prophets, this side of God is now revealed.
2. God hasn't changed, but the incarnation of Jesus made all of the different.
3. This is really clear in verses 24-25.

2. Propitiation, Mercy Seats, and an Undeserved Gift

²⁵ God presented him as the mercy seat by his blood, through faith, to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his restraint God passed over the sins previously committed.

A. Many translations use a curious phrase, "mercy seat."

1. But the KJV and the ESV use a different word that I grew up with.
2. The word is "propitiation".

Romans 3:24-25 (ESV)

²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.

B. Simple definition of Propitiation is to turn aside.

Propitiation means "averting the wrath of God by the offering of a gift." It refers to the turning away of the wrath of God as the

just judgment of our sin by God's own provision of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross.¹

1. The picture is of God taking the wrath deserved for sinners and pointing it toward Jesus instead.
2. When Jesus was upon the Cross, He experienced the wrath of God poured out upon sin.
3. Even though He was sinless, perfect, and without blemish, He took upon Himself the punishment for our sins.
4. Because God's wrath was satisfied, those who believe upon Jesus receive forgiveness and salvation.
5. Not because of our righteousness or goodness, but because of Jesus' righteousness and goodness.

C. The other image put forth in these translations is that of mercy seat.

1. The language and grammar get confusing, but the picture is beautiful.
2. In the Old Testament, with all of its sacrifices, the most important was the Day of Atonement.
 - a. Under the Law, the priest sprinkled the blood of a sacrifice on the lid of the Ark of the Covenant once a year.
 - b. This lid was called "the mercy seat."
3. It was here, on the lid, that the blood of the sacrifice met with the Presence of God, and the sins of the Nation were covered for another year.
 - a. **The Mercy Seat is the place where God's wrath and grace meet.**

¹<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/propitiation/#:~:text=Definition,Jesus%20Christ%20on%20the%20cross.>

b. It's where a sacrifice, that does not deserve to die, is made for those who deserving to die.

c. The Mercy Seat is where sinless things are atonement for sinful things.

3. Sacrifices are not equal.

A. The blood of lambs, goats, and oxen NEVER had the power to free from sin.

1. All the sacrifices of old pushed forward the people's sins to the Cross of Jesus.

2. The saints of old were forgiven the same way we are:

a. Through faith in God's atoning work.

b. Their sins were pushed forward to the cross.

c. Our sin points back toward the cross.

d. But it is the Cross of Jesus that forgives, justifies, and makes us righteous.

B. The phrase "In his restraint, God passed over sins previously committed" explains this.

1. All are sinners, regardless of their relationship to the Law.

2. Jews and Gentiles all fall short of the Glory of God.

3. There is no room to boast, not in law or works, as Paul says in verses 27-31.

4. The only boasting we have is in what Jesus has done.

C. For example, it's a great time to be a Chiefs fan.

1. After the Chief's season, the fans get to celebrate, attend the parade, and wear the t-shirts saying Super Bowl Champion.

a. People will boast about being Chiefs fans and about what Mahomes, Kelce, and the team have done.

b. It's a great time to be a fan.

2. But the reality is this: you didn't do a thing to deserve the boasting.

- a. You didn't make any field goals.
- b. You never made a tackle.
- c. You never stepped on the field.
- d. But you get to celebrate vicariously through them and boast about being part of Chiefs Nation.

3. My friend, I can tell you that we do not deserve to boast in our eternal life or freedom.

- a. It was Jesus' blood, not mine.
- b. It was Jesus who shouldered the wrath of God.
- c. It was Jesus who turned aside God's wrath, what we call propitiation.
- d. It is through Jesus' blood that we are saved, healed, and transformed.

4. Is God just, merciful, or fair?

A. I would say that God is more than fair.

- 1. Because we all have sinned and because we all deserve death, whatever punishment we would receive is deserved and fair.
- 2. But I'm thankful that God is also merciful.
- 3. Mercy is not receive what we deserve.

B. When God sent His only Son to die for the sins of sinful humanity, that's not fair: it's mercy.

- 1. When God could not allow sin to go unpunished, but instead Jesus become the propitiation for our sin, that's justice.

3. The Apostle Paul is saying is that the cross shows us both: God is just and merciful.²

D. All along, it was never the Law or the sacrifices that brought salvation; it has always been faith in the God who forgives and atones for sin.

a. It has always been God, who loved sinful people enough to show them love by giving them mercy.

b. When God killed the first animal to cover Adam and Eve's nakedness at the Garden, we see a type or picture of Jesus.

1. We see God make the first sacrifice of a guiltless animal to cover the ugliness and nakedness of Adam and Eve.

2. And someday, God would send His Son to do the same for s.

c. When Abraham was tasked with sacrificing Isaac, and the Angel stopped and provided a ram instead, that was a picture of Jesus.

1. Salvation would not require the death of our sons or daughters.

2. We would not have to set aside a kid for the purpose of atonement.

3. God would send His Son as a Lamb in the thicket in our place.

d. When the Israelites were in rebellion, and the plague of snakes came upon Israel in Numbers, and Moses lifted a bronze snake upon a pole, we see a picture of Jesus taking the curse of sin and crucifying its power so that all who look upon Him will be saved.

² Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 184.

5. Where is your faith?

A. The Jews trusted their work and effort for salvation.

1. The Gentiles trusted their knowledge.

2. But the only faith that saves is faith in Jesus.

B. We live in a world that is far from fair.

1. We certainly do not treat people like we are all created equal and endowed by our creator with certain unalienable rights...

2. Yet three things are true for every person you will ever meet:

a. Truth #1: All are equal under sin: Apart from Jesus, all are lost and need a Savior.

b. Truth #2: You've never met a person that God doesn't love.

1. Scripture is clear, even in the Old Testament, that God does not delight in the death of the wicked but desires that all turn to him in repentance.

c. Truth #3: Eternal life is available to all who believe.

Apply:

A. For those who are far from God's love, stop running and believe in Jesus.

B. For those who are trying to save yourselves, stop working and start receiving the Gift of God that's eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

C. For those who are struggling, the same God who provides clothes to naked sinners, rams for struggling fathers, and miracles for rebellious Israelites KNOWS how to meet you where you are.

D. This morning, I invite us all to pray a prayer of faith in the Jesus who does all things well.