

**Not Ashamed
(Week 8)
Romans 3:1-26
“Give Thanks”**

Introduction

***Wonderful grace of Jesus, Greater than all my sin
How shall my tongue describe it, Where shall its praise begin?
Taking away my burden, setting my spirit free,
For the wonderful grace of Jesus reaches me!***

**Wonderful Grace of Jesus
(Haldor Lillenas 1918)**

This time of year, our minds turn to giving thanks. Unfortunately, Thanksgiving Day has become more about overindulgence at the dinner table, watching football in an easy chair, and passing out from a self-induced turkey coma. Not to mention the whole “Black Friday” insanity. But as believers, what should we really be thankful for? While it is perfectly acceptable for us to thank God for our spouses, children, health and wealth. I think that sometimes we fail in giving thanks for the greatest gift of all... the wondrous grace of God. For were it not for His grace, His finding a way to rescue us, then we would all be hopelessly lost. So, with this in mind, when is the last time that you stopped and thanked God for His grace? That is, in fact, what I believe that “Thanksgiving” should be all about.

In his letter to the church at Rome, Paul makes it very clear that no one deserves to go to heaven. We are all sinners, both the Jew and the Gentile. While we agree that The Law of God is perfect and good, we cannot possibly live up to its standards, and any who claim that they are able to do so are simply deluding themselves. We all, when left to our own devices, are hopeless. If you have spent any time in the *Old Testament*, you will find that some of the darkest days in history came about in the time of the “Judges” in Israel. In that book (*Judges*), you will find a phrase being repeated over and again:

“In those days, there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” **Judges 17:6 (NKJV)**

Nothing good will ever come of a person left to his own devices, we need to be governed, and no government of man will ever be sufficient. The only king that we truly need is King Jesus. The Apostle Paul longed for his Jewish brethren to see themselves the way that God saw them, as sinners desperately needing to be saved by His grace. But sadly, many Jews thought that they were already saved simply **because** they were Jews. Paul needed to convince them otherwise. He needed them to see that because they had The Law, while others did not, actually made them more accountable to keep its statutes.

In ***Romans Chapter Three***, Paul sharpens his argument that there are none righteous when measured according to the standards of The Law. And therefore, much more is needed for a person to be saved from God’s wrath. He needed for them to see, both Jew and Gentile alike, must have a Redeemer, if they were to have any hope for eternal life. Thanks be to God that there is such a Redeemer! Which brings me back to Thanksgiving. When we had no hope of saving ourselves by observing the commands of The Law, God made a way to rescue us. It was a way that would utterly save the undeserving, all the while not compromising God’s righteousness. It was a perfect plan. It was a beautiful plan, and our God deserves our highest praise for its implementation.

Paul, in ***Romans Three***, explains for us in great detail why we need a great Savior. So let us examine the very essence of both the root cause and the cure for this disease that we all have in common called sin. Our message today is simply this:

*The Word Gives The Way,
The World Goes Astray, but
God’s Wondrous Grace, Saved The Day.*

The Word Gives The Way

“So what advantage does the Jew have? Or what is the benefit of circumcision? Considerable in every way. First, they were entrusted with the very words of God. What then? If some were unfaithful, will their unfaithfulness nullify God’s faithfulness? Absolutely not! Let God be true, even though everyone is a liar, as it is written: That You may be justified in Your words and triumph when You judge. But if our unrighteousness highlights God’s righteousness, what are we to say? I am using a human argument: Is God unrighteous to inflict wrath? Absolutely not! Otherwise, how will God judge the world? But if by my lie God’s truth abounds to His glory, why am I also still being judged as a sinner? And why not say, just as some people slanderously claim we say, ‘Let us do what is evil so that good may come’? Their condemnation is deserved!”
Romans 3:1-8

Ok, there is a WHOLE LOT to unpack here. So, let’s just jump right in. To those Jews in Paul’s day who claimed to have an advantage over the Gentiles, Paul actually agreed with them in one regard. The Jews, unlike their Gentile counterparts, had received the very Words of God. They had been given The Law. But sadly, what should have given them the advantage actually only served to make them more accountable, for although they knew what to do, they just could not do it. The standards of The Law are simply too lofty for any mortal to reach. And therefore, the Jews would actually have **more** to answer for than the Gentiles. It was as if they had all the answers to the test, but still could not pass it.

The Jewish argument that Paul anticipates here is: “But what about all those promises that God has made to us in *The Old Testament*? If He doesn’t keep those promises, then He is not faithful as He claims to be.” It sounds like a good question, but it is an invalid one, for God did not make those promises to individual Jews, but to the nation as a whole. Therefore, Paul replies:

“What then? If some were unfaithful, will their unfaithfulness nullify God’s faithfulness? Absolutely not!”
Romans 3:3-4a

God would most certainly keep every promise that He had ever made concerning Israel, but that did not mean that the unbelieving Jew would find salvation. God can most certainly save a nation without saving an individual, who happens to be a member of that same nation. The same would be true for anyone who attends a church, but is not themselves a true believer. God has indeed promised in His Word that He will save The Church, but that doesn’t mean that lost people, who falsely claim to be a part of it, will not be left behind. He also promises to save Israel, but it doesn’t mean that every Israelite is saved.

The second argument that Paul fends off is from some of his false accusers that claimed he was teaching that becoming a Christian was a license to sin. Their charge against Paul was that he taught his followers since God is righteous and holy, the more that we sin, the better that we actually make God look! NOTHING could be further from the truth. Just because we are saved by grace, and not by works, by no means implies that we can then go out and live as we please, in willful disobedience. Both Paul and the James the Apostle make it abundantly clear that if a person has been saved, then good works will follow as a result. Even Jesus Himself tells us:

“If you love Me, you will keep My commands.”
John 14:15

Paul was not a big fan of being falsely accused, and the Jews, who were claiming that he was teaching that being a Christian gave someone a free pass to sin, was simply infuriating to him. He wanted to set the record straight once and for all. To be saved is to be free from sin. We don’t increase God’s holiness by living in ungodliness, but rather, we glorify Him by living according to His statutes. Although The Law is a picture of perfection, sadly, we can not fully live up to it. Therefore, we are in desperate need of forgiveness and grace. The Law most certainly showed us how to live, but try as we

may, we just don't measure up. While having The Law was certainly an advantage to the Jews, they were sadly unable to realize the benefits of such an advantage.

The World Goes Astray

"What then? Are we any better off? Not at all! For we have already charged that both Jews and Gentiles are all under sin, as it is written: There is no one righteous not even one. There is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away; all alike have become worthless. There is no one who does what is good, not even one. Their throat is an open grave; they deceive with their tongues. Viper's venom is under their lips. Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and wretchedness are in their paths, and the path of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes. Now we know that whatever The Law says, it speaks to those who are subject to The Law, so that every mouth be shut and the whole world may become subject to God's judgment. For no one will be justified in His sight by the works of The Law, because the knowledge of sin comes through The Law. Romans 3:9-20

Paul continues by quoting several *Old Testament* passages that reinforce his argument that no one is righteous, not even one. The list of quotes include, **Psalm 14:1-3, 53:1-3; Ecclesiastes 7:20; Psalms 5:9; Psalms 140:3; Psalms 10:7; Isaiah 59:7-8; Psalm 36:1**; to be exact. In short, Paul uses the Jews' own *Bible* against them. After all, it isn't Paul who is saying that no one is righteous, it's God!

I love what he says after all his quotations:

"Now we know that whatever The Law says, it speaks to those who are subject to The Law, so that every mouth may be shut and the whole world may become subject to God's judgment." **Romans 3:19**

I LOVE that verse! What Paul is saying is so good. He is reminding his Jewish listeners that whoever is considered to be "under The Law" (the Jews) are therefore subject to what it says. And He has just shown them several verses from The Law that tell them that NO ONE (including them) is righteous in the eyes of God! In other words, he shows them that The Law, the very same law that they claim has set them apart, has actually condemned them:

"For no one will be justified in his sight by the works of The Law, because the knowledge of sin comes through The Law." **Romans 3:20**

The Word of God has given us the way, but the whole world has indeed gone astray. Isn't it time we all stopped trying to justify ourselves before God and just shut our mouths and admit we are lost and undone without God?

Wondrous Grace Saves The Day

"But now, apart from The Law, the righteousness of God has been revealed, attested by The Law and the Prophets. This righteousness of God is through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe, since there is no distinction. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. They are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. God presented Him as an atoning sacrifice in His blood, received through faith, to demonstrate righteousness, because in His restraint God passed over the sins previously committed. God presented Him to

demonstrate His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be righteous and declare righteous the one who has faith in Jesus.” **Romans 3:21-26**

Well, the first part of this message was pretty bleak. Now for the good news! This is that “thanksgiving portion” I was speaking about earlier. In spite of our shortcomings, God made a way for us! I love it when Paul says, “But now”, which is reminiscent of when he says, “But God”, in **Ephesians Chapter Two (Ephesians 2:4)**. You just know that something wonderful is about to happen. And he doesn’t disappoint.

When we could not live up to the righteous standards set forth in The Law, God reveals another form of righteousness. A righteousness not of man, but of God Himself. God found a way to put His righteousness ON US. Think about that for a moment, God has offered you a way to trade in your filthy attempts at righteousness for His spotless, perfection. Sounds too good to be true doesn’t it? I’m sure that some of you are thinking, “What’s the catch?”. Well, that is even better news. There isn’t one. It is the grace of God FREELY GIVEN (**vs. 24**). And, all that you have to do to get it is stop trying to justify yourself before God and simply admit that you need it! These two verses pretty much say it all:

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. They are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” **Romans 3:23-24**

When I was a young boy they made us memorize **Romans 3:23** in Sunday School, so that we could lead others to Christ by sharing with them the “Romans Road” plan of salvation. Now that I am older, I cannot help but wonder why we didn’t memorize **verse 14**. After all, that’s the best part! We have been justified (just as if I never sinned) freely (cannot be earned) by His grace, because Christ has redeemed (bought us back) us. You can stop whatever you’re doing and offer up that prayer of thanksgiving now. No one else will ever give you a gift more wonderful than what God has done for you. So, it would be good to let Him know just how grateful you are. By the way, that is why we begin each service with a praise and worship time in case you were wondering.

Paul continues by saying that God showed “restraint”, when it came to giving sinful mankind what they deserved. Rather than punishment, God showed grace and by the blood of Jesus “passed over” the sins of those who believe. This, of course, is a reference to The Passover in the days of Moses. When the angel of death came to strike down the first born in all of Egypt, God commanded the Israelites to put the blood of the passover lamb on the doorpost. Those, who by faith in God’s promise, applied the blood of the lamb on their doorposts were “passed over” by the angel of death. Of course this was an *Old Testament* picture of what Jesus would one day do for us upon the cross. In **John 10:9** Jesus says:

“I Am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved...”

So you see, Jesus is the door represented at passover, and His blood was shed upon the cross (the doorpost) of calvary. In other words, the door was hung upon the doorpost covered with the blood of The Lamb of God! Those who place their faith in Him will be passed over in the day of judgment. So, praise the wondrous Name of Jesus.

So there it is, the reason to be thankful this season:

“For God loved the world in this way: He gave His one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life.” **John 3:16**

So let us all take a moment in this wonderful season to simply say... Thank you Jesus!

And let all the thankful children of the living God say... TRUTH!!!