

96-04-05a

As we prepare to continue our study in Romans this evening, let's take a moment to pause and clear our minds and prepare our hearts and seek the ministry of God the Holy Spirit to ensure that we are in a position in our relationship with God to receive these things and to have them become a part of the spiritual resources in our soul. Father, we thank you as always for the privilege we have of fellowshiping together, of gathering and concentrating on you, taking a portion of our week to set aside everything else and be nourished up from the manna that we find in your Word and be ministered to directly by God the Holy Spirit as we seek to improve our understanding, not only of the Scriptures, but through them of your plan and of your person and of our Savior Jesus Christ. We pray that tonight as we follow the teaching of the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Romans, that God the Holy Spirit will help us to understand these things rightly, that it will build on the solid foundation we have in our souls and that as a result, we will be better equipped and better motivated and encouraged in our spiritual lives and that as a result, our Savior Jesus Christ will be glorified in everything we think and everything we do.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Okay, we resume our study this evening in Romans.

And you recall that several weeks ago, we began by establishing in very strong terms the audience for this book that Paul is addressing believers and that Paul has as his purpose in talking to these believers the fulfillment of God's plan in the life of a believer. That's why he's writing the letter. And this is the place, I said that down the road, we're going to refer back to this.

Well, this is it. This is the place where it's critically important to keep that in mind. And I will tell you ahead of time that we are going to, I am going to present to you an understanding of Romans chapter 3 that is definitely different than anything I have ever heard.

Whether you have heard Romans interpreted in this way or not, I have no idea. But I know that in my experience, this chapter is traditionally presented in the context of unbelievers and salvation. And I'll tell you ahead of time that based on the addressees, based on the purpose of the book, and based on the thread of the argument of Paul's logic as he's worked through chapter 1 and chapter 2 and the first part of chapter 3, that is the only conclusion that I can draw is that he is continuing to be consistent with those things.

We won't review the substantiation for the fact that Paul is addressing himself to believers. And we won't address ourselves to the fact that he's talking about the Christian life. What we will do is briefly review the thread of the argument as far as it has taken us.

And I think that that will help us to stay on track as we progress through the remainder of chapter 3. We started in the second half of Romans chapter 1 with the doctrinal portion of the book. We had the introduction and then Paul began talking about the gospel. He said, I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.

It's the power of God and it's the power of God with a view toward deliverance or salvation for everyone, the Jew and the Greek and so forth. And then he began talking about the reception that the truth has received in the world. And he says the wrath of God has been revealed against people who, when the truth is revealed to them, they don't accept it.

They don't respond to it. They exchange it for a lie. And we went in detail through the last half of Romans chapter 1. And he says that that is the great sin.

That's the great evil that causes the wrath of God to be revealed from heaven is this rejection of the truth. All of the other things that happen, all of the immorality and the sin and evil that are listed in there is a result of the fact that these people have rejected God's revelation of himself. And rejection of the truth leads to them being turned over to the power of their sinful desires.

And they exchange the natural for the unnatural. They exchange the incorruptible for the corruptible. They exchange the divine for the mundane.

And that's where Paul began his argument. Why is he talking about that? He's not trying to evangelize a group of unbelievers primarily. We've already seen that he's trying to get a point across to believers.

And we start to see what that point is in chapter 2 because in chapter 2, he says you believer, you especially Jewish believer, you have no excuse if you are looking around and judging people and looking down your nose and finding fault with all of these people because it's a case of the pot calling the kettle black. You're doing the very same thing. What's the immediate response going to be in the mind of a Jewish believer? That's not true.

I'm keeping the law. I'm offering sacrifices. I'm circumcised.

I observe the rituals and I don't work on the Sabbath and so forth. And so, Paul has to find a way to puncture that false sense of righteousness and that false standard of righteousness. So, he says you're doing the very same thing and they draw up in shock and they say, wait a minute, we're not doing all of this unnatural acts and these terrible crimes and so forth.

And he says you are doing the very same thing and you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of judgment. And this is a believer. And one of the ways we know that this is believers is first of all, when it comes to salvation, how can you quantify not being a believer? It's an absolute, isn't it? It's a switch.

In computers, you've got binary. It's either a zero or a one. There's no in between.

There's not degrees of zero and there aren't degrees of one. It's an absolute. And when it comes to our traditional concept of salvation, you're either saved or you're unsaved.

And there's no additional penalty for being way unsaved or just being barely unsaved. It's the

same thing. Rejection of Christ carries the penalty of eternity in the lake of fire.

Cut and dried, no degrees. But what does Paul say in this section, chapter 2, verses 6 through 11? He says he will render to every man according to his works. And works is an entirely different context.

We know that believers will be judged according to their works at the judgment seat of Christ. To those who by patience and well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, He will give eternal life. So, he's talking to Christians about the Christian life.

And he says, if you by patience and well-doing, and this is what we are called to as believers, God has foreordained good works that we should walk in them. There is a Christian life after salvation that we are called to. And if we by patience and well-doing, being motivated by a desire for glory and honor and the imperishable things, that thing that says immortality is a word that means the imperishable, those things that pass not away.

It's what Jesus talked about when He said, don't lay up for yourself treasure on earth. Lay up for yourself treasure in heaven where the moths don't corrupt and the thieves don't break in and steal. That's what this is talking about, glory and honor and imperishable treasure in heaven.

These are the fruit. These are the reward. These are the things that reflect the glory of Jesus Christ for eternity.

And that is a part of the life of a believer. Salvation is not in view. So, he says, if you by those who by patience and well-doing, they're motivated by this desire for glory and honor and the imperishable, they maintain their patience and well-doing, God will reward them with eternal life.

And the parallelism in the passage tells us what he means by that phrase eternal life. Because down in verse 10, he says, glory, honor and peace are the reward of those who do this good. So, that eternal life, that's glory and honor and peace.

These are above and beyond the basic package of salvation that is the inheritance of every believer in Jesus Christ. Every church age believer has the basic package that goes with eternal life. It's resurrection.

It's eternal life with God. It's a resurrection body. It's the opportunity to have that status of union with Christ throughout the millennial kingdom and so forth.

There are certain basic things just by entrance into the body of Christ, everyone gets. But then there are those things that come to the overcomers that are spoken of in Revelation 2 and 3. And if you have the desire for glory, the glory of God, the honor that comes from God, and those imperishable things that are the gift of God that are over and above the basic package that are part of rewards, part of glorifying Jesus Christ and fulfilling the purpose that God has for us, that is going to motivate us to be patient in pursuing well-doing in the doing of good. And that's the

Christian life.

So, I'm overemphasizing the fact that we're not addressing the issue of salvation. We're addressing the responsibility of believers, the calling to which we have been called. So, he says, this is going to be the distinction between believers.

Now, in Romans chapter 2, verses 6 through 11, some of us by patience and well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, and he will give eternal life. And that doesn't mean that if we don't maintain patience and well-doing, we don't have any eternal life at all. This is the package called eternal life.

Those who are factious and do not obey the truth, but obey wickedness, there will be wrath and fury. There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek. And this is the context because the Roman church has a mixture of Jewish and Gentile believers.

And what is the issue? Why did Paul write the book of Galatians? Why is Paul writing this book of Romans? Because the Jewish Christians are saying the way to get that approval of God and the way to be declared righteous by God as a believer is to keep the law. That's spirituality for a believer. And Paul is saying, no, look, it doesn't matter as a believer if you're a Jew or a Greek.

It's your patient continuance and well-doing or your obedience to wickedness and disregard of the truth that is going to determine where you stand on that day of judgment for believers. So he's addressing the issue of spirituality. He says, and this is why it's works-based.

And he says there will be tribulation and distress for everyone who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek for God shows no partiality. It doesn't matter if you have a Jewish background or a Gentile background. As a believer, your calling is patient continuance and well-doing.

And your reward if you pursue that is glory, honor, and peace, which is a synonym for glory, honor, and the imperishable, that eternal life package up in verse seven. So we're on track. The letter's written to believers and he's using this reference to the unbelievers and the great wrath of God against their suppression of the truth.

And he's saying, if you as a believer suppress the truth, there is a corresponding principle that applies. God expresses his wrath against the unbelievers because they've suppressed the truth that God reveals. If you as a believer suppress the truth that you're supposed to be living by as a believer, you will also experience wrath and indignation.

It isn't going to be on the scale of the unbeliever. We don't end up in the lake of fire, but there is loss of those things that are potential for us. We can have those things that are spoken of for the overcomers.

So then he continues this in the next section, which is verses 12 through 16 of chapter two. He says here, it doesn't matter if the law is present or absent. The Jewish believers are going to argue, but how can you know what righteousness is if you don't have the law? You've got to be Jewish and be keeping the law to know what this spirituality for a believer is.

And Paul says, no, it doesn't matter if you have the law or not, because your conscience as a believer is what judges you. Your conscience is what communicates to you what's right and what's wrong, what pleases the Lord and what doesn't. Now, does that mean that at the point of salvation, we suddenly have a conscience that instinctively knows the things that please God and the ones that don't? It does not.

Our mind, our conscience is transformed by the washing of water and the renewing of the Holy Spirit. We are transformed by the renewing of our minds. And it's the ministry of God, the Holy Spirit, and the ministry of the Word of God in the hands of the Holy Spirit that educates our conscience and enables us to put on the new man that is renewed in knowledge.

So he says, if you sin outside the law, you'll perish outside the law. And this perishing is the wood, hay and stubble fire. He says, it is not the hearers of the law in verse 13, it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified.

If there is a key verse in chapter 2, this is it. It is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law. Now, is this the righteousness that determines whether or not you're saved? Is this the positional justification that takes place? It's not, because this is the distinction between being a doer of the Word and not a hearer only like James talks about.

James isn't trying to get people saved, is he? James is saying, as a believer, it's not enough to sit there and hear the Word. It's not enough to sit there and know the Word. It's got to be put into practice.

If you look into the perfect law of liberty and you see your reflection and you're changed by it, you're going to be producing righteousness. If you look into the perfect law of liberty and you walk away and straightway forget what you saw, you're a hearer and not a doer. And judgment comes on believers for that kind of disobedience, for suppressing the truth and unrighteousness.

So, we're still talking about the Christian life in this section. He says, these Gentiles who don't have the law, they don't have the Scriptures that you were trained up in and memorized when you were a Jewish boy of 11 or 12, but they do by nature what the law requires. And that's the new nature that's created in there by the Holy Spirit and it's nourished up by the Word of God.

I remember over in 1 Timothy when it talks about, in 1 Timothy 4, and it talks about in the latter days it will come up these ones who abandon the faith. You can't abandon something unless you... You can't abandon a ship unless you started out on the ship. And he says in 1 Timothy 4, in the latter days, there will be these teachers who abandon the faith.

They're believers who fall for a false Christian life, who fall for a false system of teaching. And he says their conscience has been seared with a hot iron. It's the very same word.

Their conscience quits functioning. Their conscience is literally our guide in this Christian life. And our conscience has to be nourished up by the Spirit and the Word.

The Gentiles who have not the law do by nature what the law requires. They are a law to themselves even though they don't have the law per se, the written code that the Jews grew up with. They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts.

Paul says this teaching that we've done you are an epistle written in our hearts. The Word of God has been written on your hearts. It's an internal thing.

It says their conscience bears witness and their thoughts either accuse or excuse them on that day when God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus. So, what's Paul's message here? If you boil it down, what is he saying? He's saying, look, you can't argue that as a Jewish Christian, keeping the law is what's going to impress God and what's going to justify you on the day when your Christian life is measured. It is based on what happens in the heart.

And the Gentiles don't need the law of Moses to tell them what's right. Their nature, their conscience under the ministry of the Word and the Spirit will accuse or excuse them as they live their Christian life. And they will either stand or fall on the day of judgment before God, the judgment seat of Christ, based on that.

God's not going to drag up a copy of the Mosaic Law and say you didn't dig a pit and then put a fence around it to keep your neighbor's ox from falling in and so forth. He's going to judge the thoughts and intents of the heart. And that's why the Word of God is a judge of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

So, that's why he continues in the next section of chapter 2 and he says in verses 17 through 24, if you call yourself a Jew and you're relying on the law, you've decided to suppress the truth and you're going to go with this false system of spirituality, the false system of Christianity. You're going to boast and say that you're a teacher of others and you count yourself righteous, you measure yourself as righteous, and you want to pass this on to others. Paul basically says in verse 21, you who are teaching others, why don't you teach yourself? If you look closely at the law, the law says it's not the sacrifices and the offerings, it's the doing of justice, the loving of mercy, the humility of walking with God that is the measure of your righteousness.

The law and the prophets bear witness to this righteousness that comes by faith and not by works. And he says if you're so schooled in the law, why doesn't the law teach you that it's your faith that counts and not your works, that it's the thoughts and intents of the heart, not your external actions that justify you. That's the whole point of this section.

He says you're busy preaching against these overt acts and yet you're committing them in the heart and the name of God therefore is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you. So finally, chapter two concludes with this section 25 through 29. He says circumcision is a value if you obey the law, but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision.

And he's talking about what the law teaches. If you really understand the law, you understand that even in the Old Testament, God was looking at the thoughts and intents of the heart. David isn't praised because he never slipped and never failed to keep the law.

He broke the law time and again. He committed murder. He committed adultery.

He did a lot of horrible things, but his heart was measured before the Lord and found righteous because of his faith. And so he says, if a man who is uncircumcised, he's not keeping the written code, but he's keeping the precepts of the law, the principles of the law, will his uncircumcision not be regarded as circumcision? He's going to be counted righteous as far as the measure of the law is concerned. Those who are physically uncircumcised but keep the law will condemn you for having the written code and circumcision, but you're breaking the law in your heart.

He is not, and this is a second key set of phrases here in verse 28, he is not a real Jew who is one outwardly, nor is true circumcision something external and physical. He is a Jew who is one inwardly, and real circumcision is a matter of the heart, spiritual and not literal. His praise is not from men, but from God.

Notice again, if there's any doubt that we're talking about spirituality, the benefit of this obedience isn't salvation, it's praise. What's on the line is the praise of God, not salvation. That's what we have in verse 29.

This man who obeys inwardly from the heart receives praise from God because that's what we're looking for. Well done thou good and faithful servant. So now when we started chapter three, the natural question is going to come up.

Here's a Jewish believer in the congregation and he says, well, just for the sake of argument, suppose I agree with you and I say, okay, the law isn't a measure of righteousness and I shouldn't be worrying about keeping the law to please God as a Christian. Well then, what's the point of being a Jew? What's the plus? Should I take any pride at all in being a Jew? What should I do with the fact that I am a Jew and a Christian? And Paul says there is a plus because to the Jews have been entrusted the oracles of God. You've got the law.

You've got the information that can teach you the inner principles of righteousness. If you truly understand the law, you know that it's not a system of works. It's a system of faith.

The law teaches us about our sinfulness. The law shows us where we need correction. And you've got a plus there if you're schooled in the law as a Christian because you've got a lot of

additional information that a Gentile doesn't start out having.

And so he says you're entrusted with the oracles of God. What if some Jewish Christians were unfaithful? What if some Christians fall apart and don't understand genuine righteousness? They don't get the real message of the law. Does that mean that the law is worthless? That their faithfulness nullifies the faithfulness of God? Not at all.

And so he comes up with three basic false conclusions that one could come up with if you're a Jewish Christian. And you say, well, but the law doesn't seem to have done a lot of the... Courtney, if you believe Paul, the law hasn't done the Jewish Christians a lot of good because look at all these that are trying to keep their righteousness by works. And so you might draw the conclusion that God is unjust to punish His people.

They're saved and so why is God punishing them? Is God unjust to punish them? And not at all. That's a false conclusion. Is condemnation of God's people wrong after salvation? Not at all.

That's another false conclusion. The fact that God disciplines His own people is not a wrong thing. It's proper for God to judge His own people.

And this is where we start to bog down a little bit because Paul is addressing things that don't tend to come up in our mind. Most of us aren't Jewish Christians. We're not trying to transfer out of a law-oriented mentality per se.

And so these aren't the first things that creep up in our mind. And when we try to follow Paul's logic here, it tends to throw us a little bit off track. But Peter addresses this same thing.

You remember over in 1 Peter 4, verses 17. Let me pull that up where he's talking to believers and he talks about the judgment that starts in the house of God. 1 Peter 4, he's talking about suffering in verses 12 through 16.

And he says, the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God. And if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? He says, look at the righteousness of God. God is judging His own people first.

His eye of righteousness is on His own people and He's going to judge them first. Think about the upcoming events in human history. Which judgments come first? The believers' judgments or the unbelievers' judgments? It's all the judgments for believers.

The very next judgment that's coming up are those of us who are last in line. There were unbelievers a long time ago. There were Jewish believers and unbelievers a long time ago.

But the first judgment according to God's righteousness is going to be the judgment seat of Christ for the church. The last shall be first even when it comes to judgment. And we will be the first to stand before God and be judged on the righteousness that's in our lives.

Salvation is not an issue. The righteousness of Christ that was imputed when we believed in Christ is not the issue. It's the evaluation of our life.

How did you live after salvation? Did you suppress the truth? Did you obey unrighteousness? Did you lay up for yourself treasure on earth? Did you establish earthly goals? Did you worship things on earth and exchange the glory of the incorruptible God for corruptible things that are going to pass away? That's going to be the standard of judgment for believers. And that's our choice. We can either pursue earthly goals or heavenly goals.

And we will be judged first. Judgment will begin with the household of God. And Peter argues here.

He says, look, the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God. And if it begins with us first, what do you think is going to happen by the time God gets down to the unbelievers that suppressed every bit of the truth? They suppressed their knowledge of God. They suppressed the work of Jesus Christ.

God's judgment on us is going to be absolute according to His own righteousness. What do you think it's going to be like for those that aren't even in the household of God? He quotes a Scripture from Proverbs 11.31. If the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear? Therefore, let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good as to a faithful creator. God's going to be faithful to His own righteousness, so we need to be motivated the way Paul is encouraging us in Romans.

Okay, so he addresses these three false conclusions. Yes, these Jewish believers are going to say, well, if we're wrong in pursuing righteousness by works, why don't you just leave us alone? Because according to your teaching, God is glorified in judging us. Of course, this is kind of a sarcastic argument.

They're saying, well, if you find us to be so wrong in trying to keep the law, and you say God is going to judge us, and yet you say God's righteousness is revealed in judgment, well, then why don't you leave us alone and let God judge us and let us continue in sin? Because God's righteousness is revealed according to your teaching when He judges us. And they're basically saying, well, you know, why should we pay attention to you? If you're saying God's glorified when He judges us, we'll just continue on and let God's righteousness be revealed. And he says these people slanderously accuse us of teaching this principle and their condemnation is just.

So then we get to the crux, and this is what we covered last time in verses 9 through 20. What then? Are the Jews any different? You can translate this, are the Jews any worse? You can translate it, are the Jews any better? People who have the law and they have the oracles of God. Probably the best way to take it is what then in verse 9? Are we Jews any different? Are we better or worse than the Gentiles? And he says not at all.

I've already charged that all men, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin. Now, if your translation says under the power of sin, you can cross out the word power because the word for power is not there. It's Hupa, the Greek preposition, H-U-P-O, and then the word for sin, Hamartion.

And it's under sin because the power of sin is an entirely different issue. And this is talking about believers. When you see Paul talking about the Jew and the Greek, he's addressing a mixed group of believers.

And he's saying, look, all of us still face the issue of sin and righteousness after salvation. This is in the realm of experience. The issue the book is addressing is how do you live life after salvation? How do you deal with sin after salvation? How do you achieve righteousness after salvation before God? How can you stand on the day of judgment before God? And he says, look, it doesn't matter if you're a Jew or a Greek as a believer, you're still going to have the problem of sin.

You still have the problem of how to do the things that accord with righteousness as a believer. And then we saw those quotes last time that come from the Old Testament. And there was a mix there.

Some of those things that talked about all these vile, terrible sins of the tongue and feet swift to shed blood and paths of ruin and misery, no fear of God and so forth. Some of those passages referred to Jews and some of them referred to Gentiles. Well, what does he say in verse 18? He says, whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law.

Now, let me ask you a question. Who is under the law? Who is under the law? Is the whole world under the law? No. Are unbelievers under the law? No.

The law is for believers. The law was not a system of salvation, was it? God didn't say keep the law and you'll have eternal life. The law was for believers.

The law was for the nation of Israel that came out of Egypt under the blood of the Passover lamb. And it was the system of spirituality or the system of God said, if you want to please me and if you want to receive my blessing and my reward, this is what you do. But this was for the covenant people.

People agreed to this. They stood on Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim and said, all that you have said, we will do. This was an agreement between the people and God, between God and His people.

It's for believers. And that's a critically important thing to remember because we tend to come into the New Testament and the references to the law and we say, well, people were trying to be saved by keeping the law. That was never the issue.

People took their salvation for granted. It was how am I declared righteous before God? What is

the standard of righteousness? Is it the works of the law or is it the measure of my conscience? And so, we know that whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law. These things are being spoken to believers.

And when it says, you've all turned aside and done wrong, your throat's an open grave, your lips part to deceive, you've got the venom of asps in your lips, your mouth is full of curses and bitterness and so forth. What Paul is saying is, look, the Israelites in the Old Testament were believers and look what God said about them. They had a sin problem.

They had a lack of righteousness problem and so did the Gentiles. The Jews and the Gentiles all face the same issue. It isn't just because you're a Jew or just because you have the law that God's going to pass you by and not evaluate your life.

The fact that you're a believer doesn't mean that your problems with sin and your calling to righteousness are a given. Your problems with sin are over and your righteousness is a foregone conclusion. That's the battle we fight.

That's the calling that we have. And so he says, the law is speaking these things to believers. So you Jews don't be lording it over the Gentiles and saying, well, I'm Jewish and I have the law and I'm automatically righteous.

Read your own law. Your law says you've got venom in your lips and curses in your mouth and that you're very sinful. What is the result? The law speaks this to those that are under the law so that every mouth may be stopped.

If judgment begins at the house of God, what do you think is going to happen to those who are outside? The whole world will be held accountable to God for no human being will be justified in His sight by works of the law because through the law comes the knowledge of sin. Now, I am going to propose to you that this reference to justification in verse 20 is not justification at salvation. We've reviewed who Paul is writing to.

We've reviewed his purpose and we've followed this line of arguing all the way up to this point. And what is Paul addressing himself to? He's saying, look, you believers, if you're Jewish, don't assume that by keeping the feasts and being circumcised, you're going to be declared righteous before God. Look at what the law says.

Even to people who were law keepers in the Old Testament, their hearts were full of evil and with their sacrifices, God was not pleased because He was looking at their hearts. He says, no human being will be justified in His sight by the works of the law. He's saying no believer is going to be declared righteous simply because of external obedience to the law.

The law was given to believers as a system of obedience after salvation. And through that system, believers became conscious that even though they were believers, they were still sinful.

That's why there was provision to take a sacrifice to the tabernacle.

That's why there was the ritual cleansing that took place after bleeding or after contact with the dead and all of these. This was all to re-establish approach to God. The most faithful believer in Israel, if a dead person fell off the roof and struck them, they were unclean and they had to be cleansed.

And it was a picture of the need for experiential cleansing and renewal after salvation. This was the mechanics of how to live with God as a believer. That's what's in the law.

And through the law comes the knowledge of sin. My goodness, I'm saved and yet I've still got sin in my life. I'm saved, but I still have the need to produce that kind of righteousness that pleases God.

That's the issue. So what I would present to you here in verse 20 is no human being will be justified in His sight by works of the law that we're still talking to believers and we're still talking about the Christian life. And this is theologically speaking experiential justification.

This is your righteous living, not your righteousness that qualifies you for eternal life at salvation. Everything that we've seen keeps us on the track of an issue for believers. And Paul hasn't suddenly switched horses and now he's going to start talking about salvation.

It just doesn't make sense. Nobody thought that they could establish how can you be an unbeliever and keep the letter of the law? The law says, love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul. So there's no unbeliever that thinks he's going to be saved by keeping the law.

It just does not follow that this would suddenly jump to salvation. So this justification in Romans chapter 3, which is from the word *dikaioisune*, which simply means righteousness, and it's in the passive and it means to be declared righteous. This is talking about when we stand at the judgment seat of Christ as a believer, what's God going to declare us? Unrighteous or righteous? Are we going to receive reward or discipline? There is a great passage over in Corinthians that talks to us about the things that will happen at the point that we are judged before God.

We can receive good or we can receive evil at the judgment seat of Christ. And we'll look at that passage tonight. And verify the things that we've covered in our previous study, that there's the possibility of receiving wrath and tribulation like we saw in chapter 2 at the judgment seat of Christ.

This is an issue for believers. Paul is writing to believers and he's saying, please don't waste your life pursuing a false type of righteousness because you are storing up for yourself wrath. This is a quantifiable thing.

It's not an absolute like salvation. If you're storing up for yourself wrath, it means that every time

you suppress the truth as a believer, it's adding something to the wrath that's going to be revealed on that day. It's a measurable, quantifiable, changing type of thing.

Christ said, lay up for yourself treasure in heaven. You can lay up a quantity that is lesser or greater. There can be a greater or smaller quantity of gold, silver, and precious stones.

It's a changing quantity. And this wrath is a changing quantity. And that's another clue that tells us this is talking about the Christian life and not salvation.

Now, that's critically important. And it's a hard road to travel. But once we get to this point, it is amazing how clear the rest of Paul's argument in the book of Romans is going to be because we don't wind up facing puzzling questions where Paul seems to be talking about salvation by works.

We don't face puzzling questions about the theological cruxes that have come up in Romans and caused us so much confusion. The reason we have come up against these seemingly unsolvable puzzles in Romans is that we've started out with wrong assumptions. We've decided that Paul is talking about salvation, that he's talking about positional justification, that he's talking about the righteousness that's imputed at the point that we accept Christ.

And so then it doesn't make sense when it talks about judgment based on works and people have to say, well, that's a hypothetical and Paul wasn't really addressing himself to reality. We wind up with all of these contortions in gymnastics trying to get the book to make sense. Now, as we push on this evening, I think you'll start to see how keeping straight the argument of the book and the issues that Paul is addressing himself to will help us understand what's coming up.

So, for example, let's just look at the first part of this next section, starting in verse 21. He says, But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the law and the prophets bear witness to it. Now, if we were thinking along traditional interpretation of Romans lines, we would still be thinking that this is the righteousness that comes at salvation.

So now we have a puzzle. Now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law. So what we have to assume is that, well, in the Old Testament days, righteousness for salvation was manifested in the law and that somehow keeping the law brought about salvation.

Well, we know that's not the case. Salvation has never been by works, has it? Salvation has never been by how obedient you are. And the law doesn't bring about salvation.

You couldn't slaughter a bull and come in with that offering and achieve salvation. And so when we come to this, we start falling apart in our ability to understand Paul if we think that this is... But it makes sense if we remember that the law was for Old Testament believers. And he's saying, Look, there is a righteousness for a believer.

There's a way to be justified before God that's not tied to keeping the precepts of the law

anymore. It's apart from the law, although the law and the prophets bear witness to it. If you really understood the law and the prophets, you would have seen even in the Old Testament that the just shall live by faith.

This is the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. And again, this phrase, we've seen this and heard it so many times that we immediately think, Well, righteousness by faith in Jesus Christ, this is salvation. But I would offer you the thought that in keeping with the context, Paul is talking about living faith.

That Paul is talking about the righteousness of God, which is daily righteousness by daily expressing faith in Jesus Christ. The patient continuance and well-doing that we saw in the last chapter through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. And when it says through faith in Jesus Christ for all who are faithful, the two words come from the same root.

They're both from *Pistis* or *Pistuo*. This righteousness comes by faith for those who are faithful, for those who are believing. It's in the present tense.

Those who are living by faith have this righteousness that comes by faith. And recall that many times in the New Testament Scriptures when we talk about the faith that accomplishes salvation in the sense of deliverance from the lake of fire, it's in the aorist tense, isn't it? We believe once for all that Christ died, that Christ was the Son of God and that He is the propitiation for our sins. And we're saved.

This isn't an aorist tense. This is those who are believing. This is a participle.

It means the ones who are characterized by faith, the ones who are living by faith. They have the righteousness of God by that faith. And this is living righteousness.

This is the righteousness that stands at the judgment seat of Christ. He says there is no distinction. And now we come to Romans 3.23 and we're conditioned since childhood to quote this verse in connection with being unsaved, all have sinned and have come short of the glory of God.

But there's an interesting distinction here because it says, this says all sinned. It's just a simple past tense. All sinned and fall short, present tense.

This is on an ongoing basis. As believers, we continue to sin. We continue to fall short of the glory of God.

And then look at verse 24, being justified by His grace as a gift through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. It's the redemption that took place at salvation. Now, we don't have an experiential redemption.

Our redemption is something that takes place at the point of salvation. But it's redemption that is

the foundation for the declaration of righteousness. If we were not redeemed, we would have no ability to claim this righteousness by faith and to have this righteousness imputed to us by faith.

It's because we are redeemed, because we're in the family of God, the household of the body of Jesus Christ, that we even have this option to live by faith and to be declared righteous. And we are justified, we are declared righteous by His grace as a gift. Remember what it says in 1 John 1.9, if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1.7, if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we keep on having fellowship, each with the other, He with us and us with Him. And the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. Sin is an experiential problem that we have even after salvation.

And justification involves the cleansing of that sin and standing righteous before God. Scripture tells us that Christ desires to present a glorious church that doesn't have spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish. That's a potential.

We can stand before God at the judgment seat declared righteous. We can live a day today and tomorrow and the next day having fulfilled our calling to holiness by taking advantage of the cleansing that comes for experiential sin and the experiential righteousness that comes through daily faith, through living faith. This is what Paul is calling the Romans to.

He's saying, look, don't fall for this idea that because you're Jewish, you should keep the law to be righteous as a believer. If you're a Gentile, don't let the Jews talk you into that. They're leading you down the wrong track.

Your righteousness before God is based on what you believe, what you claim as a reality on a day-to-day basis. And when you in your heart, by your conscience, are motivated to make your decisions and perform your actions because you want to please God, that's righteousness. Your righteousness comes from faith, from acknowledging God and not suppressing the truth about God, knowing the things that come from the Word of God and the Spirit of God and the standards that are set up.

And the thoughts and intents of the heart are the issue. Don't be led astray into the false idea that your righteousness is the ministry that you're in or the works that you perform or the rituals that you engage in and follow or what other people think of you based on what you do. That doesn't determine your righteousness.

It's a message to believers about the Christian life. And Paul is buttressing that. He's going to refer back to salvation, but he's always going to do it in terms of redemption and reconciliation and propitiation.

Those are the three primary works that Christ accomplished on the cross. Redemption, the pain.

Potentially, there are still effects of sin that have to be remedied and that's what God gives us in daily justification.

In the erasing of that sin experientially, the restoration to relationship with God and closeness with God, fellowship with God that has been characterized and the ability to produce the fruit of righteousness, the fruit of the Spirit, love and joy and peace and patience. If we're engaging in sin, we're not going to have love, joy, peace, patience, and the other fruit of the Spirit. And so, that's what Paul is addressing himself to.

He's talking to believers about the Christian life. We're going to pause here.