

Sent: Wednesday, November 15, 2017 10:37 PM  
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on Romans 3:21-31

Last nite we covered Romans 3:21-31--a passage that Douglas Moo calls "one of the most theologically important passages in Scripture...where Paul (the apostle) weaves together many of the key threads in the biblical view of salvation! And the result is a tapestry of awe-inspiring intricacy and beauty...a passage that should inspire us to think deeply about the way God has arranged the salvation of His rebellious creatures"!

Wow! Sounds like we need to re-read, and walk through this great passage again (slowly!) -- which begins with a big "but now," and a whole new section in Paul's great epistle! Hear the Word of the Lord!

"But now! Apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets--even the righteousness of God through faith in Christ Jesus for all who believe..." And then Paul adds the parenthetical statement: "...for there is no distinction; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (which just happens to be our memory verse for this lesson!) Then he picks up (in verse 24, from verse 22a,) by describing "all those who believe" as "being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly (on the cross) as a propitiation in His blood through faith!" And Paul then explains that it was done to "...to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed!" And he says it again! "For the demonstration, I say, at the present time, so that He would be Just and the Justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus!"

And so, the "key threads" Moo is referring to in these verses are linked together, with other Scripture--in explaining His way of salvation--using such words and phrases as "the righteousness of God," with "grace" and "faith," and "believe," and "being justified," and "redemption," and "propitiation," and the "forbearance of God," and He "being Just and Justifier!"

And all of this, according to Paul, has been "manifested...apart from the Law" and yet is "witnessed by the Law and the Prophets"--referring to Old Testament history--"even the righteousness of God through faith for all who believe...being justified by a gift of His grace through the redemption" which is in Christ Jesus...!" Paul's making his case that although God's way and plan for making people "right," or "righteous," and "justified" before Him, took place outside the parameters of the Old Testament writings, they somehow looked forward to, and actually predicted and fulfilled, what has become part of what Moo likes to call "salvation history"! God's way of salvation, fulfilled in New Testament theology!

Galatians 2:16 says: "...knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus; even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified!"

Galatians 3:11--"Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for the righteous man shall live by faith!"

Philippians 3:9--"And be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith!"

II Timothy 1:9--"Who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity!"

And Ephesians 2:8-9--"for by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God, not as a result of works, so that no one can boast!"

Let's review some of these "key threads"!

God's "grace," as we know, is defined as "unmerited favor," and thus a "gift" of God! But so too, is "faith," MacArthur notes, since the "that" in Ephesians 4:8 speaks of both the "grace" that God gives, and the "faith" that we receive when we believe! Romans 10:17 says, in this regard, that "faith come from hearing, and hearing by the Word of Christ!"

But what about "being justified as a gift (or freely!) by His grace" (Romans 3:24)? It means to be "declared righteous"! And it's from this that we learn about the great doctrinal truth of so-called "imputation" of God's righteousness! God declares a man (or woman) righteous solely on the merits of Christ's righteousness! Apart from the Law!

And the meaning and implications of "redemption in His blood"? Here the imagery behind the Greek word is that of a "slave market," where the payment of a "ransom" is necessary to obtain the prisoner's release! I Peter 1:18-19 says: "Knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver and gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with the precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ!"

"Propitiation" (3:25)? It's actually the Hebrew equivalent of a word in the Old Testament used to describe the "mercy seat," which covered the Ark of the Covenant--and where, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest sprinkled blood of the sacrificial lamb--to make an "atonement"--which "covered," for a limited time (another year), the sins of the people!

And this ties into verse 26, where Paul writes that God, "in His forbearance, passed over the sins previously committed..."--in effect "suspending" (temporarily!) the ultimate punishment for the sins committed, which is still in effect to this day! II Peter 3:9 says that "God is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient (long-suffering!) toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance!" And through all this He has become both "just" and the "Justifier" of all who believe! Someone has said that the wisdom of God's plan (think "salvation history") allowed Him to punish Jesus in the place of sinners, thereby justifying those who are guilty without compromising His justice! And the offer still stands!

II Corinthians 5:21 says: "He (God the Father) has made Him (Christ the Son) who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him!" And thus the "imputation" of His righteousness!

All of which gets us to the closing verses of our text (vs. 28-31) --which basically "nullify" any boasting on our part (to claim acceptance before God based on our own righteousness!) But it does not nullify God's standard for righteousness as shown by Old Testament law! Moo notes that "justification by faith upholds the Law "by bringing people into relationship with Christ so that Christ's own perfect fulfillment of the Law might be applied (imputed!) to us!"

And so, our opening round with perhaps the "most theologically important passage" in all of Scripture! Which, as Moo noted, "should inspire a new depth of worship and devotion"! And also noting that "all true theology should lead to doxology"! And, this being the Thanksgiving season, is a great time for special thanksgiving and praise for God's mercy and grace! And His great plan of redemption!

Well, much more to discuss, and learn, and apply, and share--as we continue to pursue these "key threads" in God's way of providing salvation, through our study of Romans!

See you all in two weeks--November 28th--as we consider "The Faith of Abraham"--and try to connect his story with the great theological teachings of Romans!

Happy Thanksgiving, men!

Lowell