



Series: Exploring Christianity: The Foundations of Our Faith

Title: Why Did Jesus Have to Die and Rise to Life?

Passage: Romans 3:21-31

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Introduction:

- As we continue looking at the foundations of the Christian faith, today, we're going to be looking at Romans chapter 3, verses 21 to 26.
 - Bible scholar Leon Morris states how this passage, is possibly, the most important single paragraph ever written. (Morris, 1988, 173)
 - Martin Lloyd Jones writes, "There are no more wonderful words in the whole of Scripture than these." (Lloyd-Jones, 21, Romans)
 - In Romans chapter 3, we're given a glorious picture of the cross of Christ.
 - And this is important for us to understand, because the cross of Christ is central to our Christian faith.

- Now, to understand these verses, we first need to understand, that verses 21 to 26 are giving a solution to a problem.
 - And it's by seeing the problem, we can clearly see the solution.

- So, here's the problem:
 - No one is good enough to escape judgment from sin.
 - That's basically a summary of Romans 1 to 3.
 - No one is righteous, not even one.
 - And because no one is righteous, we need to pay the penalty for our sins.



- In other words, because we're sinners, we're all declared guilty.
- And because we're guilty, payment needs to be made.
- And here's what makes the problem worse.
 - Not only are we guilty of sin.
 - But there's nothing we can do, to fix the problem.
- Some people believe, if they do enough good, they can escape judgment for sin.
 - But it doesn't matter how much good you do.
 - You could never pay off your debt of sin.
- Imagine you're speeding down the highway at 100 miles per hour.
 - And you get pulled over.
 - The officer would say to you:
 - "You were going 30 miles over the speed limit!"
 - "I'm giving you a ticket, and you're going to need to pay a fine."
 - What if you said:
 - "Well, I want you to know, that I give a lot of money to help those in need."
 - "I volunteer at the senior center."
 - "I even mow my neighbor's lawn."
 - The officer would say:
 - "Well, that's great, but none of that erases what you did."
 - "Sorry, but you still need to pay the fine."
- We're all guilty of sin, and there's nothing we can do.
 - Romans 3 verse 20 states:



- **“For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight...”** Romans 3:20
- No one can justify themselves before God.

- And I want to remind you, this isn't just a theological issue.
 - This isn't just about those bad people out there.
 - This is about you, and about me.
 - We can't pay for our sin.

- So, if no one is righteous.
 - If we're under judgment.
 - If there's nothing we can do?
 - Is there any hope for us?

- The good news is that, in Romans chapter 3, God shows us, how we have hope in him.
 - God shows the glorious hope of the gospel.

Point 1:

- First, we see from our passage how God has revealed a righteousness you could never produce.
 - God has revealed to us, a righteousness, that doesn't come from the law, but from him.
 - Listen to Romans 3, verse 21.
 - **“But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.”**
Romans 3:21-22



- The Apostle Paul is teaching us, that we can be declared righteous, apart from obeying the law.
 - In other words, it's not by living a perfect life, or doing good, that we're made righteous.
 - Rather, there is a righteousness that comes from God, apart from the law.

- In the Bible, when you see the word, righteous or righteousness, it could mean, righteous living.
 - When you fight against sin, you're being righteous.
 - When you obey God's word, you're being righteous.
 - When you grow in godly character, you're being righteous.

- But in our passage, Paul isn't talking about how to live.
 - He's NOT saying, once you believe in God, you're going to start living a perfect life.
 - Followers of Jesus Christ will continue to struggle with sin throughout their lives.

- Rather, the Bible is speaking about our status before God.
 - In other words, the righteousness of God in this passage isn't about righteous living, but righteous standing.
 - This means, you're no longer guilty of sins.
 - There's no record of wrong.
 - You're no longer under judgment.
 - You're declared righteous in Christ.

- When you become a Christian, it means your status is changed from unrighteous to righteous.
 - There's no in between status.



- There isn't an, almost righteous, or getting there righteous, or just a little bit more, and then righteous status.
- Once you become a Christian believer, instantly, you become perfectly righteous in your standing before God.
- That's why Paul writes in Romans 8:1
- **“There is therefore NOW no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”** Romans 8:1
- It's not later, it's now.

- On Facebook, you can change your status from single, to dating, to marriage.
 - I think there's more options now.
 - But the last time I checked, in 2011, that's what I remember.
 - But if there was a status for your standing before God on Facebook, for Christian believers.
 - It wouldn't say, almost righteous.
 - It definitely wouldn't say unrighteous.
 - Rather, it would say:
 - Righteous in Christ.

- In this passage, the righteousness of God, is your righteous status before God.

- And what we see in our verse is that God planned to show this righteousness, since the beginning of history.
 - Paul says that the **“Law and the Prophets bear witness to it.”**
 - It's like Paul is saying, “The revelation of God's righteousness is now fully made known in Jesus Christ, but even in the Old Testament, it clearly shows this was God's plan from the beginning.”



- In other words, God's plan A wasn't:
- "Let's see if they can follow the law."
- "Well, that didn't work."
- "Okay, Jesus, time for plan B."
- "Looks like you're gonna have to go down there."
- Even before time began, God planned to give his righteousness to those who believed in him.

- Do you see what this means?
 - This means, you can rest secure in the righteousness that Christ has revealed to you.
 - Because this was his plan, from the beginning.

- If you've been struggling with sin, if you feel discouraged by failure, remember that God always planned, from before time began, to make you righteous, not by what you do, but because of what he planned.
 - And so, rest in God's plan.
 - Rest in the righteousness of God.

- Think about, Noah, and Moses, and Abraham, and David.
 - They all failed to live up to God's standard.
 - Noah got drunk.
 - Moses blew up in anger.
 - Abraham lied.
 - David committed adultery.
 - Yet they were all declared righteous, not because of that they did, but because they believed in the promise of God.
 - They didn't stop because of failure, they kept looking to God's plan of salvation.



- Despite your failures and sin, rest in the righteousness of God, that God has revealed to you.
- We see from our passage how God has revealed a righteousness you could never produce.

Point 2:

- Second, we see from our passage a righteousness that is available to all, without distinction.
 - Take a look at verses 23 to 24:
 - **“For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift...”** Romans 3:22-24
- Because everyone is a sinner, we all need grace, because we all fall short.
 - It’s not like, someone only needs 90% of God’s grace, and another person 50%.
 - No one is able to add anything to their salvation.
 - We all need 100% of God’s grace.
- And the good news is that God’s righteousness, is available for all.
 - It doesn’t matter what your background is.
 - It doesn’t matter what your status is.
 - It doesn’t matter if you’re single, or divorced, or married.
 - Even if you’ve committed many sins, God’s righteousness is available for you.
 - There’s no distinction.



- Over the years, I've spoken with several people who know this truth, but still have a hard time accepting this truth.
 - When I say that God accepts all who come to him.
 - They respond with, "I know, but Pastor Tom, but you don't know what I've done."
 - And they feel that they need to get their life into order before God would accept them.
 - Or they come to church, but keep their distance, and don't get involved.
 - Because they're not as good as the other people at church.

- But do you see what God is saying?
 - He's saying if you're struggling with shame and guilt.
 - You're precisely qualified to come to him.
 - It's not the healthy, but sinners who can receive the righteousness of God.
 - Because Jesus came to seek and save the lost.

- Listen Mark 2, verses 15 to 17.
 - **And as he reclined at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?" And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."** Mark 2:15-17

- If you're struggling with shame and guilt.



- If you feel overwhelmed by your sin.
 - It's true, I don't know what you have done.
 - But God does know.
 - And he's speaking directly to you today.
 - And he's saying to you that his righteousness is greater than your sin.
 - The only people who are excluded from God's righteousness, aren't those with many sins.
 - The only people excluded from God's righteousness, are those who insist on fixing themselves.
- All have sinned, and fall short.
 - So, come to him.
 - There's no distinction.
 - All are welcome.
 - We see from our passage a righteousness that is available for all without distinction.

Point 3:

- Third, we see from our passage, how God has provided Jesus, as the only way to the righteousness of God.
 - **“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.”** Romans 3:23-25
- There are two words in these verses that explain how God is able to save us.



- These words explain what Jesus did for us, so that our sins could be forgiven, and so that we could be declared righteous.
- The first word is the word redeemed.
 - Jesus Christ is our redemption.
- This word is closely tied with redemption from slavery.
 - In the ancient world, if you ran out of money, or you couldn't pay off your debts, you could sell yourself as a slave, and work off your debt.
 - But if a relative paid off your debt, they could redeem you and buy your freedom.
- And that's exactly what Jesus Christ did for us.
 - When Jesus died on the cross, he paid off our debt of sin and redeemed us.
- Imagine as a child, you were given a credit card.
 - And for all your life, instead of racking up debt by buying stuff, you racked up debt every time you had a sinful thought, or you disobeyed God.
 - And you had no way of paying it down.
 - Every month, you'd see your balance get bigger and bigger.
 - Could you imagine a credit card of all your sins?
 - That would be very discouraging to see.
 - But do you see what Jesus has done for you?
 - When you come to Christ, he pays off your debt, and all future debts as well.
- The bill for your sin may seem big.



- But Jesus Christ is your redeemer, and he pays the price for your sins.
- Furthermore, not only does Jesus pay our debt, he also credits us with his perfect life.
 - You're not saved on the basis of what you do.
 - But on the basis of the life of Christ.
 - The perfect life you couldn't live, was lived out by Christ, and that life is now credited to you.
 - Christ's righteousness, becomes your righteousness.
- This past year, I had the chance to fly over to Korea with our worship leader, Dan Chung.
 - And we had the privilege of working with North Korean in South Korea.
 - But before flying back to Chicago, I got an email congratulating me on becoming a Morning Calm member of Korean Air.
 - And it said that I could check in early, and enjoy the Korean Air lounge, and board early, and it listed a few other benefits.
 - I thought it was a mistake, because I haven't flown on Korean Air for ages.
 - But when I got to the airport, I was able to skip the long lines.
 - After passing security, I was able to enter the Korean Air lounge, and eat free food.
 - I stocked my bag with a bunch of soda cans.
 - And when it was time for boarding, I was able to board before others.
 - And when I checked my account, I realized what happened.



- Several years ago, I set my account up where miles that were earned by family members would be credited to me.
- All their miles became my miles, and that's how I was able to enjoy all the benefits that I was given.
- All their miles, were given to me.

- And this is what Christ has done for us.
 - He credits our lives.
 - Yes, we are far from righteous.
 - But the righteous life of Christ, is given to us.
 - And so, we're made righteous in him.

- Not only is Jesus is our redeemer, who pays.
 - He's the redeemer who credits his righteous to us.

- The second word we see in these verses is the word, propitiation.

- Propitiation has the meaning of removing God's wrath.
 - In Romans chapter 1, the Bible says that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness.
 - And so, God's wrath is against all sinners.
 - But propitiation is the act of Jesus, removing God's wrath.
 - The wrath of God was satisfied on the cross.

- Now, I want to clarify, that God's wrath isn't rage, or torture, or revenge.
 - It's not fire and lightning.

- Rather, God's wrath is, his hatred for sin.



- Think about a woman, and her husband is addicted to alcohol.
 - And she says, “I hate what alcohol has done to my husband.”
 - “I love my husband, but I hate what he’s become.”
 - “I hate what alcohol has done.”

- That’s God’s wrath.
 - It’s God hating, and opposing what sin has done to us.
 - It’s God’s hatred for sin.

- And think about this, if the wife didn’t hate what her husband became, that’s the day, the wife would stop loving her husband.
 - If the wife stopped hating alcohol and its effects, that would be the most unloving thing she could do.
 - That would mean she stopped caring for her husband.

- In the same way, if God stopped caring about your sin, and my sin, that would be the day that God stopped caring for us.
 - If God just said to me, “Don’t worry Tom, a sacrifice isn’t necessary for you, just keep living in sin, everything is okay.”
 - That would be the day, God stopped loving me.

- That’s why you can say that God’s wrath is actually an extension of his love.
 - God’s love and God’s wrath aren’t opposed to each.
 - They’re actually connected to each other.
 - That’s why love and hatred for evil, are often connected in the Bible.



- Romans 12:9 states, **“Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil.”**
- Sincere love isn’t love that just says, “Well, you’re doing evil, but it’s okay, I forgive you. Just keep doing what you’re doing.”
- Sincere love is love that hates what is evil.
- And so, God’s wrath isn’t rage, but his hatred for evil.

- But the other part to God’s wrath, is his act of punishing what is evil.
 - It’s his act of justice.
 - Because God is good and just, God’s wrath requires that evil is punished.
 - In fact, the Bible says that God’s wrath is being stored up against all the evil in the world.
 - If God only hated evil, and didn’t punish evil, he wouldn’t be just.
 - And so, God’s wrath is the just punishment for sins.

- And one way, God punishes people for their sins, is by giving them up to their sins.
 - It’s God, allowing people to continue down the path of sin.
 - Romans 1:24 states:
 - **“Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts...”**
 - Chapter 1 verse 26 states:
 - **“God gave them up to dishonorable passions.”**
 - Verse 28 states:
 - **“God gave them up to a debased mind...”**
 - The punishment for our sin is that God allows us to live with our choices.
 - He gives us up, to live our own way.



- But when Jesus died on the cross, all our sin was put on him.
 - And he received the punishment for our sins.
 - Jesus received the wrath of God.
 - Listen to what it says in Romans chapter 8.
 - **“He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?”** Romans 8:32
 - Do you see what it says?
 - God did not spare his own Son, but gave him up.
 - God gave up Jesus, and he was shattered.
 - He was punished.
 - So that we wouldn’t have to receive the wrath of God.

- (Grab Vase)
 - Let me ask you this, what would happen if I gave up this vase?
 - Gravity would pull it down.
 - It would shatter and be destroyed.
 - That’s the punishment for our sins.
 - God gives us up.

- (Drop the vase and catch it.)
 - Just like how I caught the vase.
 - That’s what God does for us in Jesus Christ.
 - We should’ve been shattered.
 - But Christ was shattered for us.
 - Jesus Christ was brought down.
 - So that, we could be lifted up, and not destroyed.

- Jesus Christ is not only our redeemer, but he’s also the propitiation for our sins.



- He takes our place, and he removes the punishment that we deserved.

Application:

- As we close, let me leave you with three applications:
- First, ask the Lord to help you show grace to others.
 - When we achieve our goals.
 - When we feel that we're fighting our sin.
 - When we feel that our knowledge surpasses others, we may be tempted to judge others, and look down on others.
 - And so, let's ask ourselves?
 - Do you find yourself judging other Christians?
 - Do you find yourself judging those who don't know Christ?
 - Do you find yourself judging the church?
 - Or perhaps, co-workers, or other parents, or even family members?
 - When I was single, I'm ashamed to say it, but I found myself judging parents.
 - "When I become a parent, I'll never parent like that."
 - "How could they do that."
 - After becoming a parent, I realized how hard it is, and why parents did what they did.
 - Now of course, if there is wrong that needs to be corrected, we should speak up.
 - But let's remember that we all fall short of the glory of God.
 - And so, let's ask God to help us show grace, and to be patient, and to be understanding.



- The grace that God gave to you, is the grace that others need as well.
- Second, if you're struggling with sin, remember that you're righteous in Christ.
 - Remember your status.
 - You're not almost righteous, but you're declared righteous, through the blood of Christ.
 - There's a movie I watched many years ago called, "Blood Diamond."
 - And in that movie, a child gets captured by evil men, to mine for diamonds.
 - And they brain wash this kid, to hate, and to kill, and to forget his family.
 - And the movie is about his father, looking for him.
 - And finally, when the father finds his son, the son can't even recognize his dad.
 - In fact, he's about to kill his dad.
 - But the father says to his son:
 - "You are Dia Vandy. Of the proud Mende tribe. You are a good boy who loves soccer and school. Your mother loves you so much...I know they made you do bad things but...I am your father...who loves you. And you will come home with me and be my son again."
 - And the son lowers the gun.
 - He begins to remember.
 - If you're struggling with sin today, do you hear the voice of God?
 - He's saying to you:
 - You're my child.
 - Jesus was crucified for you.
 - You believed in me.
 - And so, you're righteous, and clean, and forgiven.



- And so, let's remember who we are in Christ.
- Third, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - It's not by doing good, that you can be saved.
 - It's not by your achievements that you can be saved.
 - It's by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, and his work on the cross.
 - It's by making a decision to follow him and live for him, that you can be saved.
 - If you've haven't made decision to put your faith in God, I want to encourage you, trust in him.
 - And when you do, your status will be changed from unrighteous, to righteous, righteous, righteous, by the blood of Jesus Christ.

Prayer:

- Father, help us to find our security and hope in you.
 - For those who struggling with sin, for those feeling discouraged by failure, help us to remember that your blood is greater than our sin.
 - And for those who've never trusted in you, for those who've been coming to church for years, but have been keeping their distance, open their hearts, and help them to see the power of your cross.
 - Help them to trust in you.
 - And for all us, help us to look, not to ourselves, but in the righteousness that comes from you.