

Romans: The Good News of God

Only One Way

Romans 3:29-30

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Only One Way

Scripture

During an exclusive golf outing for top business and entertainment executives on October 9, 2006 Tiger Woods was put on the spot by an evangelical guest of Nike.

That day, 30 people gathered at the Trump golf course in Los Angeles for the 2006 “Tee It Up with Tiger Woods” event, which included a private golf session and lunch with the living legend. During the lunch, there was a question-and-answer session with Tiger. Most people asked about their swings or golf questions.

However, one guest of Nike stood up and asked two questions: “Have you accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior? And if not, prayerfully, would you?”

A source present at the lunch said later: “You could have heard a pin drop. People were mortified. But Tiger was as unflappable as he is on the golf course.”

Tiger said, “My father was a Christian—of course Christianity was part of my life. But my mother is Asian, and Buddhism was also part of my childhood. So I practice both faiths respectfully.”¹

We live at a time in which people think that there are many ways to God. But, there is only one way. And that is what the Apostle Paul teaches in our text for today, which is Romans 3:29-30.

Let’s read Romans 3:29-30:

²⁹ Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, ³⁰ since God is one. He will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. (Romans 3:29-30)

¹ Elliot Harris, “Woods Takes Evangelical to Sunday School,” *Chicago Sun-Times* (10-19-06).

Introduction

About ten days ago, on Wednesday, December 5, 2007, Jenna Bush, the daughter of President and Mrs. Bush, was a guest on Ellen DeGeneres' talk show *Ellen* to promote her new book. After discussing the book, Ellen provided a phone and urged Jenna Bush to call her father while they were taping the show.

Jenna was tentative but cooperative. She said, "They're going to kill me. They may have wanted some warning."

Jenna picked up the phone, and dialed a number. The first lady answered and the audience could hear Mrs. Bush on the speakerphone say, "I'm sitting here with Daddy."

The President then got on the line and asked, "How's my little girl?"

Then Ellen said to the President, "She's scared she's going to get in trouble because I just said, 'Is it easy to just pick up the phone and call your dad anytime?'"

President Bush said he wasn't mad at all, and then added, "I do want to say Merry Christmas to your audience, and I want to tell my little girl I love her."

Jenna Bush made a phone call that none of us could complete because of her relationship to the President. His position makes him the most powerful man alive and one of the most inaccessible men in the world. Yet he's available for his daughter and was even glad to hear from her.

Jesus made a similar correlation while talking with his disciples at the Last Supper. In order to have access to the Father we need to have a relationship with him through his Son, Jesus. Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).

People think that there are many ways to God, but Jesus insisted that there is only one way. And that way is through him.

The Apostle Paul teaches exactly the same truth in Romans 3:29-30, our text for today.

Lesson

In today's lesson we shall learn that there is only one way of salvation for all people.

I. The Question

First, let's examine the question.

James Montgomery Boice, in his commentary on Romans (and from which much of today's material is taken), wrote, "When the world seemed larger than it does today and the peoples of the world did not have much contact with one another, the fact that there were many religions hardly troubled anyone."²

In the last century I remember studying the different "world religions." The major world religions were Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. These five were the classic "world religions."

Modern classifications typically list major religious groups by the number of adherents, not by historical or theological importance. So the modern classification is as follows (with the worldwide percentage of adherents in parenthesis): Christians (33.06%), Muslims (20.28%), Hindus (13.33%), Non-religious (11.92%), Chinese Universists (6.27%), Buddhists (5.87%), Ethnoreligionists (3.97%), Atheists (2.35%), Neoreligionists (1.68%), Sikhs (0.39%), Jews (0.23%), Spiritists (0.20%), Baha'is (0.12%), Confucianists (0.10%), Jains (0.07%), Shintoists (0.04%), Taoists (0.04%), Zoroastrians (0.04%), and Other Religionists (0.02%).³

With so many world religions today, the question that many people wrestle with is, "Which religion is right?"

Boice suggests that there are three ways of dealing with this question.

² James Montgomery Boice, *Romans*, Vol. 1, Justification by Faith, Romans 1-4, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991), 411.

³ http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/6/60/Worldwide_percentage_of_Adherents_by_Religion.png.

A. *All Religions Are More or Less Equal*

The first way of dealing with this question is to suggest that all religions are more or less equal—at least if they are pursued sincerely.

The image that is given by many is that God is sitting on top of a mountain. There are many different paths up to the summit. Some are easy; others are difficult. But, all paths lead to the top. And adherents of different religions are simply on different paths trying to reach the top. There is widespread acceptance of all religions, as it simply viewed as a different route to the same destination—God, at the top of the mountain.

This is the pervasive position of people in America today, and we call it “religious pluralism.”

B. *All Religions Have Some Value, but Some Are Better than Others*

The second way of dealing with this question is to suggest that all religions have some value (at least to their adherents), but some are better than others.

This view allows everyone to think that his religion is superior to other religions. There may even be one religion that is superior to all others. Nevertheless, each religion does have some value in the eyes of those who hold this view.

C. *Only Christianity Is Right, and All Other Religions Are Wrong*

The third way of dealing with this question is that only Christianity is right, and all other religions are wrong.

In this view there is only one way to God, and that is through faith in Jesus Christ. This is an exclusive claim.

Interestingly, Christians are not the only ones who make this claim. Some other religions also claim that their religion is right

and all others are wrong.

Muslims, for example, teach that “the true religion with God is Islam,”⁴ and therefore salvation is achieved only through submission to the teaching of Allah as described in the Qur’an.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints makes a similar claim. Earlier this fall I saw an offer in magazine to receive a free copy of the *Book of Mormon*. I went on the internet and requested a free copy. A few weeks later I received phone call from a Mormon missionary inviting me to visit him at the new Mormon Church on Fletcher Avenue and pick up the book. I was able to meet him this past week.

As I expected, the Mormon missionary wanted to “evangelize” me first before he gave me the *Book of Mormon*. So, I entered into a dialogue with him, his colleague, and a former Roman Catholic priest who had recently converted to Mormonism. It was a pleasant and respectful dialogue about Mormonism and Christianity which we hope to continue after the holidays.

At one point during our conversation, however, I asked the Mormon, “So, do you believe that all Protestant churches are wrong in their teaching about God, Christ, and salvation?”

“Yes,” he said. “We believe that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints is the only true church on earth today.”

Well, I commend the young man for being upfront and not trying to skirt around the issue, and tell me exactly what the Mormon Church teaches. He believes that there is only one way of salvation, and further, that only the Mormons have got it right.

As I said earlier, if you know your Bible, you know that Christ makes this exclusive claim to truth.

II. The Solution

So, what is the solution?

Our world does not like exclusive claims. We live in a plural-

⁴ A. J. Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted* (New York, NY: MacMillan, 1976), 75.

istic age, and any claims to exclusivity are viewed as narrow, bigoted, intolerant, hateful, cruel, and so on.

The teaching that there is only one way to God was taught by Jesus himself. Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).

The Apostle Paul expounded on Jesus’ teaching in his letter to the Romans. Paul showed that we do not live up to God’s standard of righteousness. Indeed, “none is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God” (Romans 3:10-11). We do not seek for God; rather we are in contemptuous rebellion against him.

But God himself has provided salvation to sinful men and women. God has provided salvation in the person of his Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus paid the penalty for all our sin. And he has credited to our account his righteousness. In grace, the Father has declared that we are “Not Guilty!” of our sin, and we are now justified by faith alone in Christ alone.

And so, in the paragraph we are studying today in Romans 3, the Apostle Paul provides three natural conclusions from his teaching, among which is the teaching that in terms of salvation there is only one way of salvation for everyone.

The three conclusions are as follows:

First, salvation by grace through faith excludes boasting. The Apostle Paul argues this conclusion in Romans 3:27-28. No one is going to get to heaven and boast that he got there because of his own work, effort, or ability. But rather, he is going to give thanks to God for the gift of salvation that has been granted to him.

The third conclusion, which we will examine next week, is that salvation by grace through faith upholds the law of God rather than subverting it, as some suppose that it does (Romans 3:31).

The second conclusion is that salvation by grace through faith means that there is only way of salvation for everyone. The Apostle Paul argues this conclusion in Romans 3:29-30, where he says, **“Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since God is one. He will**

justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.” These verses teach that the fact that there is only way of salvation follows from the fact that there is only one God. God is the God of all. So, the salvation he provides is but one salvation for all. And far from being narrow or unavailable to all, this truth actually swings the door wide open for everybody to be saved.

Now, someone may say that I have not proved my point. Why is Christianity right and Islam or Mormonism—or anyone else—wrong? The reason that Christianity is right is because Jesus actually came back to life again, thereby proving that all that he said and claimed was actually true.

There is no other religion in the world that makes the same claims as Christianity, namely, that Jesus is God, the second person of the Trinity, that he lived a sinless life, that he died, and three days later was raised back to life again.

Every other religion in the world denies the person and work of Christ in some way or another. All of them teach that salvation is achieved by some kind of works-righteousness, and that is why they are wrong.

Only Christianity teaches that salvation is received by faith in his finished work. And that is available to all. And that is good news.

III. The Application

Now, I want to apply the good news of God’s grace as developed by the Apostle Paul in Romans 3 as universally as possible.

This good news is for whoever you are or whatever you have done or wherever you are, because, while there is only one way to God, that one way is nevertheless open to everyone!

I want you to see that if you will come to God in the way that he has appointed for you to come—that is, through faith in Jesus Christ—he will receive you and never cast you out.

Let me ask three important questions and then answer them.

First, who may come?

The answer is: anyone may come.

The Apostle Paul said earlier in this chapter that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). There is no one righteous. No one seeks God. All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way (Isaiah 53:6a).

It is important to note that as far as God is concerned we are all at the same place. Some people think that they are better than others because they have more so-called “good deeds.” Some people even think that God will accept them because they believe that their good deeds outnumber their bad deeds. However, let me remind that God says through the Prophet Isaiah, “We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away” (Isaiah 64:6).

But Jesus said, “Whoever comes to me I will never cast out” (John 6:37). Jesus did not say that only certain people could come to him. He did not say that only Jews could come to him. He did not say that only Gentiles could come to him. He did not say that only “good” people could come to him. No. Jesus said, “*Whoever* comes to me I will never cast out.”

So, anyone may come.

Second, how may I come?

The answer is: you may come as you are.

Years ago there was a fad in the United States known as “come as you are” parties. People would get an invitation to a party occurring in a week or so later, but they were to come to it in exactly the state of dress (or undress!) they were in when they got the invitation.

If they were dressed for tennis, they were to come in their tennis clothes. If they were dressed for painting, there were to come in their painting clothes. If they were dressed to the nines, they were to come in their finest clothes. Whatever they were wearing at the time they received the invitation, that is the outfit they were to wear.

In the same way, you are invited to come to Christ in what-

ever mental or spiritual attire you may find yourself in.

Charlotte Elliott was born in Clapham, England, on March 18, 1789. As a young person she lived a carefree life, gaining popularity as a portrait artist and writer of humorous verse. By the time she was thirty, however, her health began to fail rapidly, and soon she became a bedridden invalid for the remaining years of her life. With her failing health came great feelings of despondency.

In 1822 a noted Swiss evangelist, Dr. Caesar Malan, visited the Elliott home in Brighton, England. His visit proved to be a turning point in Charlotte's life. In counseling Miss Elliott about her spiritual and emotional problems, Dr. Malan impressed upon her this truth, "You must come just as you are, a sinner, to the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world."

Throughout the remainder of her life, Miss Elliott celebrated every year the day on which the Swiss evangelist had led her to a personal relationship with Christ, for she considered it to be her spiritual birthday.

Fourteen years later, in 1836, Charlotte Elliott wrote the text of a hymn that has influenced more people for Christ than any other song ever written. Unfortunately, this hymn is usually sung as an invitational hymn, but it is a hymn that we should sing often as it teaches that our eternal standing and acceptance with God depends solely on Christ's merits and not our own.

Here are the words of "Just as I Am":

Just as I am! Without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

Just as I am! And waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To Thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

Just as I am! Though tossed about

With many a conflict, many a doubt,
With fears within, and foes without,
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

Just as I am! Poor, wretched, blind
Sight, riches, healing of the mind,
Yea, all I need, in Thee to find,
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

Just as I am! Thou wilt receive,
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
Because Thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

Just as I am! Thy love unknown
Has broken ev'ry barrier down;
Now to be Thine, yea, Thine alone,
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

And third, when may I come?

The answer is: now.

The Bible says, "Behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2). Don't delay. Don't put off until tomorrow what you can do today.

Some people think that they need to get their affairs straightened out before they come to Jesus. No, don't delay. The most important thing you can ever do is settle your eternal destiny.

Conclusion

Friends, there is only one way to God. And that is through faith in Jesus Christ. I pray that you will trust in Jesus Christ today, and receive the gift of eternal life. Amen.

Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ
and **membership** in his church family,
develop them to Christlike **maturity**,
equip them for their **ministry** in the church
and life **mission** in the world,
in order to **magnify** God's name.*

Sermons by Rev. Freddy Fritz

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PRAAYER:

O Lord, you are the God of the Jews. And you are the God of the Gentiles too. Since you are one you justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith.

O Lord, you are the God of Americans. And you are the God of Asians and Africans and Europeans too. Since you are one you justify the Americans by faith and the Asians and Africans and Europeans through that same faith.

O Lord, you are the God of Protestants. And you are the God of Catholics too. Since you are one you justify the Protestants by faith and the Catholics through that same faith.

O Lord, you are the God of the rich. And you are the God of the poor too. Since you are one you justify the rich by faith and the poor through that same faith.

O Lord, you are the God of the elderly. And you are the God of the children too. Since you are one you justify the elderly by faith and the children through that same faith.

O Lord, you are the God of anyone who will come to you in faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. Please grant that gift of faith to each person who cries out to you to grant it to him or her today.

And all of this we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

CHARGE:

Go and glorify God in all that you think, do, and say! And as you do, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and always. Amen.