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# Romans

**...whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, Romans 3:25**

Continuing from the previous verse, Paul says that "...the redemption that is in Christ Jesus whom God set forth." This term in Greek is proetheto and signifies a public display of some sort. In the case of Jesus, it was the cross of Calvary where He was exposed to public humiliation and death. This wasn't done in a back alley where no one could witness it, but it was done in the public setting of the people of the law, the temple of God, and in the presence of the angels who ministered to Him. God set forth His own Son for all to see and understand the action for what it was - "a propitiation by His blood."

The term "propitiation" is of immense importance here. It is the Greek word hilasterion. It is a sin-offering or a "covering" of sin by the blood which is shed. Its purpose is to bring together parties at odds with each other and to restore a favorable relationship; to make things propitious again. This word is used only one other time in the New Testament, in Hebrews 9:5 where it is translated as "mercy seat" -

"...and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail."

It is the same word which is used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament in Exodus 25:17 (and elsewhere) when describing the Hebrew word kapporeth, or "mercy seat." The mercy seat is where the covering of blood was applied to the Ark of the Covenant on the Day of Atonement and which restored felicity between God and His people for another year. But the Day of Atonement, like all of the Bible, required something more than rote ritual. It required faith that it would accomplish what was intended. As a demonstration of that faith, the people were told to fast and confess.

Likewise, the propitiation God offers through Jesus' shed blood is "through faith." It is through faith in what God has done in this final sacrifice of which the temple sacrifices only prefigured. Jesus' life was given "to demonstrate His righteousness." This phrase is pointing directly to the voluntary giving of His life as the means of obtaining this propitiation. In this offering, the sins of the people are removed from them and they are also removed from God's presence. It is as if they never occurred. Complete and total restoration is accomplished through the cross of Jesus.

Now that the sin has been removed, the ungodliness of the sinner is remembered no more and God's wrath at the sin has been appeased in His punishment and death. The blood of Jesus accomplishes all of this; it is a suitable offering for the sins of the world. Because of this, Paul continues on by stating that "in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed."

What this means is that the sins prior to the cross are dealt with in the cross as well as those are that look back on it. Before Jesus' offering, God would punish sin in sinful man in various ways - at the Flood of Noah, for example. However, He didn't fully punish sin because if He had, then all humanity would have been destroyed. Instead, God "passed over the sins" and enacted a temporary system of offerings through the nation of Israel to temporarily atone for their transgressions.

This system, the rituals in it, the items used in the rituals, every detail of them actually prefigures Jesus. The entire picture of the Old Testament comes into focus when looked at through the lens of who Jesus is and what He accomplished. It cannot properly be understood apart from Him.

Life application: As you read the Old Testament, it may seem unnecessary and outdated. But every word and every detail is noted and has been selected specifically to show us the majesty of what God has done in and through the Person of Jesus. The New Testament does not stand alone and it must be evaluated based on what previously occurred. Take time to read and absorb the Old Testament so that you can properly grasp the significance of the New.

**...to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Romans 3:26**

As a demonstration of what has occurred in and through Jesus Christ, Paul says "At the present time." This is the Greek *en to nun kairo* and it establishes a link to what was said in the previous verse - "God had passed over the sins that were previously committed." The type of time Paul is speaking of is an on-going movement of time, such the running of a watch as it clicks forward.

As time progressed, God often passed over the sins of the people without bringing judgment on them. This doesn't mean that God "overlooked" them, but that judgment was merely withheld. All sin will be judged, but out of His mercy, and looking forward to the cross, He stayed His hand of judgment. During this time, as noted in the previous verse, God either didn't fully punish sin in men or He withheld punishment through an impermanent system of offerings. This was enacted through the nation of Israel as a temporary system of atonement.

Being temporary in nature they only looked forward to something far better. This is the propitiation mentioned in verse 25; it is the shed blood of Jesus. Christ's offering "at the present time" demonstrates God's righteousness - looking back on those of the past and forward from the time of Calvary.

This demonstration of His righteousness is that "He might be Just..." What Paul is saying here isn't speaking of His benevolence, but rather that the integrity of His nature is in no way violated. He remains Just though the sacrifice of Jesus; nothing is morally compromised. This is the very heart of the gospel. God's perfect character is maintained and yet fallen man is reconciled to Him in the process. It is the highest point of the turning of the universe and to which nothing in the continuum of time could ever compare.

The integrity of the law is maintained through Jesus because He fulfilled the law. Further, because the law already gave the precedent in the doctrine of substitution - an innocent animal in place of man's sin - the doctrine may satisfactorily continue on and be complete in the more perfect sacrifice of Jesus. All of the moral character of God is seen on display in this great act. Nothing is compromised, nothing is overlooked, and what occurred displays the absolute perfection of God's plan and the infinite wisdom He possesses.

And not only is He Just in this action, but He is also the "Justifier" in what occurs as well. The One who retains His moral integrity through the giving of Jesus, is also the One who has accomplished all things through Him. Apart from Him, there can be no justification and thus Jesus' words in John 14:6 can be more clearly understood -

"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

No other avenue is available to be restored to the Father because no other avenue can maintain His integrity. Thus what Jesus said about the narrow gate and the wide gate in Matthew 7:13 is easily seen to be true. Jesus is that gate and apart from Him there is only a wide highway to the narrow confines of hell. But through Him is the avenue to the splendid and wide expanse of heaven's glory. All of the majestic wonder of this paradise is available in only one way - to "the one who has faith in Jesus."

The gospel is so simple that people miss it time and time again. They trip over the stumbling block. The words of Paul today show the demarcation line. On one side are those who attempt to be justified on their own merits, and on the other are those who depend on faith alone in the works of Christ Jesus for their salvation. There is nothing we can add to it and there is nothing that can be subtracted from it. At one moment in the history of man, God did what was otherwise impossible and He reconciled us to Himself.

Life Application: God asks for faith in what He has done. Nothing else can satisfy our sin-debt because nothing else can meet His perfect moral standard. Take time today to reflect on the cross of Jesus. Understand that it alone is God's provision for your soul. Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord and in the glory of His cross.

**Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith.** Romans 3:27

Continuing on with his humbling line of thought, Paul shows us the greatness of God - both innate greatness and that which He bestows upon us. He asks, "Where is boasting then?" The term he uses (*he kauchesis*) indicates glorying in something or reveling in something. It is equated with "See what I have done!" Paul wants us to think it through. What will we glory in when we come before the Lord? This Greek term can be used in a negative way - achievements to glory in self, or in a positive way - gratitude for His work and thus glorying in the Lord.

So, where is our boasting? Paul says, "It is excluded." There can be no merit when something is accomplished by faith in something else or someone else's work. In fact, to make a personal boast in oneself when they haven't done anything would be the epitome of stupidity and arrogance. All boasting is excluded and to make sure we comprehend the reason we are given two more questions to ponder - "By what law? Of works?"

The idea of "law" here is one of economy. The Jew was under the economy of the Mosaic law. The gentile was under the economy of natural law. Is the Jew able to boast before God based on fulfilling the deeds of the Law of Moses? No. Paul has shown that the law only brought further condemnation. How can someone boast in salvation from something that condemned them? And the same is true with the natural law of the gentile. Can a philanthropist stand before God and say, "See what I did. You owe me big time."? No. All are bound under sin - both inherited and those committed in the body against the law.

Boasting isn't excluded by works. It is excluded by the law of faith. This law, or economy, says that in order to please God we must have faith in what God has done. If God has accomplished all the works, then how can we boast of having done anything at all? It is ludicrous to think that we somehow merit any favor in our salvation.

- 1) Jesus came from God.
- 2) Jesus was born without sin.
- 3) Jesus fulfilled the law that no one else could fulfill.
- 4) Jesus was crucified for our sins.
- 5) Jesus was raised for our justification.
- 6) Jesus will return for us and through Him we will be glorified.

Therefore -

7) To God be the glory.

Let our boasting not be in self but in the Lord. As Paul quotes in 1 Corinthians 1:30, 31 -

"But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption— that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the Lord."

Life application: When we came before the Lord, it was as poor beggars who had nothing to offer. And yet He crowns us with eternal splendor and glory - a gift fitting the highest noble or the greatest king. This is grace; this is God's unmerited favor to those who, by faith, reach out to Him. Make it your goal today to truly boast in the Lord and put aside any thought of having merited His favor.