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Sermon Notes

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The Glowing Heart of the Gospel, part 3: Demonstration Through Christ

Romans 3:21-26

The sun came up over Durham this morning... were you scandalized?

I. Lenient Judges, a Sense of Injustice

A. "That's Outrageous" *Reader's Digest*

B. Romans 3:25-26 answers deep questions **most humans AREN'T wrestling with**

- God "must" vindicate His righteousness if He judges anyone and sends them to hell
- BUT it is just assumed that God should let people like us into heaven
- NOT BY GOD it isn't!! Our salvation presents a MASSIVE PROBLEM for heaven

How can God be both just and the one who justifies people who merely have faith in Christ??

C. Isaac Watts: "When I survey the wondrous cross"... (Survey = long, careful gaze)

- When you survey the wondrous cross, what do you see?

The love of God... certainly

Romans 5:8 "But God demonstrates His love for us in this, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

BUT here, the demonstration is quite different: the JUSTICE OF GOD

II. The Central Concern for the Glory of God

A. Massive problem these verses seek to address: repairing damage to the glory of God

B. Sin: despising the glory of God; Romans 3:23

C. BUT God despisers were let into heaven!! (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David)

D. Solution: One who deeply loves the glory of God willing to absorb God's wrath and restore His glory... transaction between Father and Son

John 12:27-28 “Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? It was for this reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.”

III. Explaining the Verses

A. The Acropolis of the Bible: understand Romans 3:21-26, you'll get Romans!!

B. Context: 1) Justification; 2) Propitiation; 3) Demonstration

C. The Flow of Argument

1. Justification: legal righteousness before God... the “asbestos robe” of Christ's righteousness, bought at great cost through Christ blood, given simply by faith!
2. Propitiation: God's wrath against those who despised His glory poured out on Christ
3. NOW: demonstration

III. Demonstration? Six Probing Questions

vs. 25-27 “God publicly set him forth as a propitiation through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Christ.”

Demonstration by whom? Demonstration of what? Demonstration why? Demonstration how?
Demonstration when? Demonstration to whom?

A. Demonstration by whom?

vs. 25 “God publicly set [Christ] forth as a propitiation through faith in his blood.”

1. God made the demonstration... it was God who wanted this demonstration done
2. Christ was sacrificed by God the Father ON PURPOSE... NO ACCIDENT
 - a. so many people grieve the death of Christ inappropriately
 - b. “Christ was just simply too good for the world; they conspired against him, he was caught in a web of circumstances beyond his control; next thing anyone knew, he was dead... this is just the way it goes in this tragic world!!”

c. NO NO NO NO NO!!!

John 10:17-18 “The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.”

Isaiah 53:10 “Yet it was the Lord’s will to crush him and to cause him to suffer, and ... the Lord makes his life a guilt offering”

[Peter on Pentecost] Acts 2:23 “This man was handed over to you by God’s set purpose and foreknowledge, and you with the help of wicked men put him to death by nailing him to the cross.”

3. God made a public display of Christ (Greek of vs. 25)

Everyone look at my servant... everyone in the world, study the death of my Son, my Son, my only Son, whom I love... stare and be amazed; gaze and be silent before this awesome scene... I put him high for all nations to see; I publicly display Him

B. Demonstration of what?

vs. 25 “He did this to demonstrate his justice...” vs. 26 “He did it to demonstrate his justice”

1. God’s justice is the focus here... love is the focus elsewhere

Romans 5:8 “But God demonstrates His love for us in this, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

2. The cross demonstrates God’s justice clearly

3. Problem: same Greek word as vs. 21

a. “But now a **righteousness** from God apart from Law is made known...”

b. “God did it to demonstrate his **righteousness**...”

c. same work, two different meanings

4. Righteousness in vs. 21: imputed righteousness which will cover us on Judgment Day

5. Righteousness vs. 25-26: God’s holy determination to uphold His glory in the face of evil and transgression... the zeal of a holy judge to make sure the Law is honored

- a. discerning between right and wrong
 - b. as a judge, meting out prescribed penalty for any transgression of the Law
6. God is a righteous judge

Deuteronomy 16:19-20 Do not pervert justice or show partiality. Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the righteous. ²⁰ Follow justice and justice alone, so that you may live and possess the land the LORD your God is giving you.

Psalm 9:8, 16 “[The Lord] will judge the world in righteousness; he will govern the peoples with justice.... The Lord is known by his justice.”

Psalm 89:14 “Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne.”

7. Every single transgression of the Law dealt with perfectly
- a. doesn't ignore anything
 - b. every law upheld
 - c. no partiality, no bribes accepted, no favoritism

Illus. Laws of Medes and Persians... once written, it can never be revoked... are they more concerned with justice than God??

Again, the pressing concern... God seems to wink at all kinds of sin!

8. The Cross God's greatest demonstration of JUSTICE
- C. Demonstration why?
- 1. God's forbearance toward Old Testament believers

vs. 25 “He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had passed over the sins committed beforehand.”

Psalm 103:10 “He does not treat us as our sins deserve.” [Jews and Gentiles alike!!]

- a. “forbearance” = God's self-restrain & tolerance

Romans 2:4 “Or do you show contempt for the riches of God's kindness, tolerance, and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance.”

b. “passed over” Greek word is only used once in NT, never in OT

Illus. Reading of a will, everyone mentioned but one person who is passed over

c. overlook, pass over without comment

i) worldwide

[Paul talking in Athens about idols] Acts 17:29-31 " In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. ³¹ For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead."

Image also from “Passover”... angel of death saw blood and did not kill Israel’s firstborn... clear implication is they deserved it too (“There is no difference, for ALL have sinned...”)

ii). best example: King David

2 Samuel 12:13 David & Bathsheba: Nathan’s visit ***"Why did you despise the word of the Lord?" "I have sinned against the Lord." "The Lord has taken away your sin. You shall not die."***

Here Nathan sounds like the serpent in the Garden!! God said, “You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.” The serpent said to Eve, “You will NOT surely die!”

Imagine you are Bathsheba’s father... or Uriah’s mother

This is a crisis in heaven! If a Federal judge behaved like this, he would be evicted from the bench... thus its also a question not just of God APPEARING righteous, but also of BEING righteous!

2. God’s righteousness in justifying all sinners

vs. 26 ***“He did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time so as to BE JUST and the one who justifies one who has faith in Jesus.”***

a. implication: God would actually be UNJUST in allowing us to heaven without the cross

- b. it would be unrighteous for God not to pour out His wrath on us
- c. God's actual righteousness is on the line: He has clearly said

Ezekiel 18:4 "The soul who sins will die."

Galatians 6:7 "Do not be deceived, God cannot be mocked; a man reaps what he sows."

- d. if God were to allow sinners into heaven without Christ's death on the cross, He would have broken all His own words... He would be despising His won glory!

D. Demonstration how?

vs. 25 "God publicly set [Christ] forth as a propitiation through faith in his blood."

1. The death of Christ on the cross demonstrated God's perfect justice
 - a. see the death penalty decreed by the judge Pontius Pilate... this is what a lawbreaker deserves
 - b. see the Romans whip Christ's back until it hung in shreds... this is what a lawbreaker deserves
 - c. see the heavy cross laid on Christ's back and the humiliating march through the crowds of the city... this is what a lawbreaker deserves
 - d. see the blood flow from Christ's hands and feet... the tracks mark God's zeal for justice, for this is what a lawbreaker deserves
 - e. see the final breath exhaled from Christ's mouth as he sinks in death... this is what a lawbreaker deserves
2. The active pouring out of God's wrath on His Son demonstrated God's perfect justice
 - a. see the skies darken with the thunderclouds of the wrath of God... this is what a sinner deserves
 - b. see the terror in Christ's eyes as He cries out "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me??"... this is what a sinner deserves
 - c. see the wrath of God pour down on His Son, His only begotten Son... this is what a sinner deserves
3. This is the immense cost of the demonstration
 - a. at the cost of His Son's life, God showed Himself just

- b. God crushed His own Son to demonstrate how much he loves justice, proper punishment of every sin
 - c. EXPENSIVE!!!! God said it was worth it
4. You will say... but Christ wasn't a sinner; He never broke the Law... no, but He stood in the place of everyone who would have faith in His blood
- a. the cross is only just if there was a transfer of guilt from us to Him
 - b. Jesus accepted our guilt and suffered our wrath
 - c. thus was the cross fair, right, just... if Jesus had not our guilt, then the cross was a GROSS MISCARRIAGE OF JUSTICE... THE UGLIEST IN ALL HISTORY... for the only perfectly holy man who ever lived drank the bitterest cup of wrath ever poured out

2 Corinthians 5:21 “God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

Isaiah 53:5-6 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. 6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

E. Demonstration when?

vs. 21 “But now, a righteousness from God... has been made known...”

vs. 26 “He did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time...”

1. In space and time, outside the walls of Jerusalem, probably 29 A.D.

Acts 26:26 [Paul to King Agrippa] “These things were not done in a corner.”

2. Every time the gospel is preached properly based on Scripture

Galatians 3:1 “You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified.”

1 Corinthians 2:2 “I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”

F. Demonstration to whom?

1. To impersonal creation

Isaiah 1:2 “Hear, O heavens, listen O earth, for the Lord has spoken.”

Isaiah 48:11 My own hand laid the foundations of the earth, and my right hand spread out the heavens; when I summon them, they all stand up together.

Jeremiah 2:11-13 Has a nation ever changed its gods? (Yet they are not gods at all.) But my people have exchanged their Glory for worthless idols. ¹² Be appalled at this, O heavens, and shudder with great horror," declares the LORD. ¹³ "My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.

- a. God summoned the heavens and the earth to a court trial
- b. so also would He vindicate his justice before the entire creation

2. To holy angels... the “heavenly assembly”

Psalm 89:5-8 The heavens praise your wonders, O LORD, your faithfulness too, in the assembly of the holy ones. ⁶ For who in the skies above can compare with the LORD? Who is like the LORD among the heavenly beings? ⁷ In the council of the holy ones God is greatly feared; he is more awesome than all who surround him. ⁸ O LORD God Almighty, who is like you? You are mighty, O LORD, and your faithfulness surrounds you.

Hebrews 12:22 But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly

- a. the heavenly host is holy and hates wickedness
- b. they observe everything God does
- c. God demonstrates his justice before their watching eyes

3. To Satan and his demons

Colossians 2:14-15 “...having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.”

Ephesians 3:9-10 His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, ¹¹ according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Zechariah 3:1 Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right side to accuse him.

Romans 8:33-34 “Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns?”

Revelation 12:10-11 For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. ¹¹ They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb

4. To sinful people from every nation

- a. that all nations may know that God is righteous and hates evil
- b. that sinners may see the frightful cost of disobedience to God’s Laws
- c. that every tribe and language and people and nation may see clearly the perfect justice of God

Matthew 12:18 “Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations.... A bruised reed he will not break and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out until he leads justice to victory. In his name the nations will put their hope.”

John 12:31-33 “Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. ³² But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.” ³³ He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.

IV. Are You Included? Three Points of Contact

A. This is the Gospel

- 1. Justification
- 2. Propitiation
- 3. Demonstration

B. BUT Are you included? Three points of contact

vs. 22 “This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ.”

vs. 25 “God presented [Christ] as a propitiation through faith in his blood.”

vs. 26 “...so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.”