

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO PAUL
Rom. 3:21-26

Intro: Tonight, and for the next three Sunday nights, I want to speak on the Gospel according to four NT writers. As I mentioned this morning, this does not mean four different Gospels. There is only one! But we are going to see, I trust, the inexhaustible character of the Gospel. It is like a precious jewel--regardless of how we may look at it we see new rays of glory shining from it.

From these NT writers we see that it is not only proper, but necessary, to preach the Gospel to believers. It is not that they need to be saved again, but we need to know this good news as thoroughly as possible for our own growth in the Lord. The child of God who is deficient in his understanding of the Gospel will be weak and unstable throughout his life as a Christian. This is why the NT epistles have so much to say about the Gospel.

Tonight we want to see what Paul says. I have chosen a passage which seems to be characteristic of his emphasis. It is found in Rom. 3:21-26. (Read.)

Perhaps the first impression one has as he reads a passage of Scripture like this is, "I can hardly pronounce some of the words. How do you expect me to know what they mean?"

Our answer to this should be, "Let's find out what they mean!"

First of all, let us notice that

- I. THERE ARE TWO PERIODS OF TIME WHICH OCCUPY THE APOSTLE PAUL HERE: the past (the OT times), and the present (the "now" of v. 21 which takes us back to the coming of Jesus Christ--and on down to the present time).

It seems that we can assume that Paul is speaking primarily about one who wants to know what he needs to do in order to get right with God. He is talking to one who has not only read 1:1-3:20, but one who is convinced that what he says about sin is true!

"As it is written, There is none righteous, no not one" (Rom. 3:10), referring to Psa. 14.

As we look back through the OT we see that man's greatest problem is SIN! Cf. v. 23.

- II. THERE ARE TWO POSSIBILITIES CONCERNING MAN'S NEED BECAUSE OF HIS SIN: either he must do something about his

own sin, OR HE MUST LOOK TO GOD TO HELP HIM.

Contrary to the way the Jews have interpreted the OT, and contrary to the way many Gentiles have interpreted it, GOD HAS NEVER INDICATED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT THAT MAN COULD ATTAIN SALVATION, COULD BE DECLARED RIGHT IN GOD'S SIGHT, BY HIS OWN EFFORTS.

In fact, after having stated the part that the Law has to do with our salvation in v. 19, he speaks lit. of a without-the-law-righteousness!

But the amazing thing is that this is "witnessed by the law and the prophets," the Mosaic law and the OT prophets. Read them. Never is it taught that salvation in the OT is by works.

If the Law is excluded, then all others systems must be discarded too.

Where, then, is the answer? How can a man become what he should be to be right with God.

III. THE ANSWER GIVEN IN THE WORD OF GOD.

Will you notice that the Lord is referred to in three ways in this passage:

- 1) "Jesus Christ" (v. 22).
- 2) "Christ Jesus" (v. 23).
- 3) "Jesus" (v. 24).

Although Paul was outstanding ⁱⁿ his knowledge of the Greek, he never is primarily concerned about literary style. He is writing under the direction of the Holy Spirit, and so his primary emphasis is the communication of truth.

So this change in names indicates a shift in emphasis. It points out who He was (and still is). (Explain.)

Then Paul goes on to speak of not only FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST (v. 22), but also FAITH IN HIS BLOOD (v. 25)--pointing unmistakably to His death on the cross!

And this is exactly the reason that you have God over-looking the "sins that are past," i.e., the sins of the OT. He could almost be charged with negligence. But He, lit., declared a truce because it was His plan to send His Son to die for all men so that those who lived before Christ came and those who live afterwards might be declared righteous BY FAITH!

What are

IV. THE RESULTS.

Paul mentions three here.

- A. The moment any person places his faith in Christ, he is immediately declared righteous in the sight of God. Cf. v. 22.

This does not mean that a Christian is perfect, or that he will never sin again, but it does mean that he through Christ has been brought to a place with God where his standing is perfect.

To be righteous means that his sins are removed, and he is what he must be to be accepted by God.

The moment a person receives Christ he is ready for heaven.

- B. Every believer is redeemed. Cf. v. 24. This is the basis of our justification. It means that man is released from all of the charges his sin has brought against him.

This has been done "freely by his grace," that is, completely undeserved, and through the goodness of God concerned about man's guilt.

The particular word which Paul uses here expresses the completeness of our release. It is one which will never again be followed by bondage.

Cf. John 5:24.

How can we be sure? This leads to the third word.

- C. The truth of propitiation. Cf. v. 25.

This is what God has "set forth" throughout the OT and "now" in the coming of His own Son. He was seeking to "declare" (2x in vv. 25, 26), i.e., to give a demonstration, a proof.

How quickly men lose sight of the prominence of the Lord Jesus Christ in the OT and in the NT! But where salvation is concerned, God gives all of the focus of attention to His Son.

This word propitiation means that God has been satisfied with the expiatory sacrifice of His Son

so that all who will come to the Lord Jesus Christ by faith, believing Him to be the Son of God who died for the sins of the whole world, and trusting Him personally for salvation, will be declared righteous in God's sight.

Concl: What does this mean for those of us who are here tonight?

First of all, for those of us who have placed our faith in Christ for salvation, we have a greater idea of what our salvation means, and that it cannot be changed.

God has been satisfied.. Christ has died for our sins--and for the sins of all men of all times. And we now have a place with God which could never be gained (and has never been) by our own efforts.

Secondly, for those who have not received Christ as Savior, here is your answer. If you understand this, you will quit trying to work for salvation. God offers you salvation as a gift--even though it was provided for us at the infinite price of Christ's death on the cross.

No wonder Paul writes as he did in Rom. 1:16.