

THE PROBLEM GOD FACED

Intro: Our subject tonight is taken from Rom. 3:26.

For the past several Sunday nights we have been looking at salvation. We have seen that the finished work of Christ includes:

- 1) Propitiation -- toward God.
- 2) Reconciliation -- toward man.
- 3) Redemption -- toward sin.

Two of these words are found in the classic statement of salvation which is found in Rom. 3:21-26; the other is found in Rom. 5:6-11.

In concluding this series tonight I want to speak about the problem God faced in the salvation of men. Stated simply it is this:

How could a righteous God justify unrighteous sinners?

If He simply overlooked man's sin, then He is no longer righteous. But, if he gives man what man deserves, man would be eternally banished from the presence of God.

A. T. Robertson (IV, 348) says of Rom. 3:26,
"Nowhere has Paul put the problem of God more acutely or profoundly."

Godet (p. 158) states it this way:

"It was a great problem, a problem worthy of divine wisdom, which the sin of man set before God -- to remain just while justifying (declaring just) man who had become unjust. God did not shrink from the task. He had even solved the difficulty beforehand in His eternal counsel, before creating man free . . ."

When we considered the word propitiation we saw that the prime requisite for salvation is that it must satisfy God. But it must satisfy the character of God as well as the heart of God. There is no doubt but that God loves, and always has loved the sinner. But God is righteous and therefore must devise a plan that does not jeopardize that righteousness in any way.

And so, as we come to our text, we have first of all

I. A BASIC TRUTH ABOUT GOD: God is just, or righteous.

John declares this in 1 John 1:5,

"This, then, is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all."

We must never lose sight of this distinctive feature in the character of God.

This is why He could not overlook what Adam and Eve did. He could not have overlooked their sin without being unjust Himself.

But there is another vital part of the divine nature. It is stated twice by John in his first epistle: "God is love" (1 John 4:8, 16).

This is

II. AN IMPLICATION OF OUR TEXT.

Paul does mention it in Rom. 5:8.

See also how it is stated in Eph. 2:4-7.

The only reason He could possibly care for man in man's sin is due to His "great love with which He loved us." His heart yearned for our justification -- that is, that we might be pardoned and restored to God's favor and yet do it in such a way that He would remain just.

Now let us be perfectly clear at this point: It is impossible for God to be anything but righteous. He cannot sin. But it is important that this righteousness be preserved before men and angels. Therefore, we speak of this as a problem.

III. WHAT GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS DEMANDED.

That was made clear back in Gen. 2:16, 17.

Paul states it in Rom. 6:23. There can be no compromise with this truth without jeopardizing the righteousness of God.

Therefore, if God is going to be just in dealing with sinful men, they must die.

But if death in its full extent is executed against men, there would be no hope because that includes eternal death.

And since all men are sinners, if God is to be "just" then this means that the whole human race is to be doomed eternally. No man in any generation has ever been found to be without sin.

Remember what you have recently read in Psa. 53:1-3.

In evaluating the human race, this is what the Psalmist said in that day:

"Corrupt are they, and have done abominable iniquity; there is none that doeth good. God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God. Every one of them is gone back; they are altogether become filthy. There is none that doeth good, no, not one."

Paul, in Gal. 3:22a, has written,
"But the scripture hath concluded all under sin."

Therefore, to look at God, and then to look at man, the righteousness of the One and the sinfulness of the other, we must recognize that there is no answer to the problem.

But let us look at our text again. GOD HAS FOUND AN ANSWER. Let us see what it is.

IV. GOD'S ANSWER TO HIS PROBLEM.

It is "Jesus"!

How accurate the Word of God is! This is His human name.

But He is referred to twice before in this passage (from v. 21). Who is He? See Rom. 1:1, 3, 4.

What did He do? He died. He shed His blood. He came as a Man to die as a substitute for all men. His sacrifice was infinite in its value because of Who He is. The full penalty for every man's sin was paid to satisfy fully the righteousness of God.

Does this mean, then, that all men are declared righteous before God? NO! See our verse: God is
"the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus."

What does it mean to believe?

We have many illustrations of this in Scripture. Let me close tonight by giving one: John 3:14, 15,

"And, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

And you remember the important verse which follows (John 3:16). How did they believe in that serpent?

Let me read for you Num. 21:8,

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent (meaning, of bronze), and set it upon a pole; and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live."

Charles Haddon Spurgeon, that great English preacher, was saved as a boy when one Sunday he made his way to church when the weather was so bad that not even the preacher got there. One of the men in the church spoke that morning on Isa. 45:22,

"Look unto me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else."

And Spurgeon said in later years, "I looked, and was saved!"

Concl: It is wonderful to see how God has solved the problem so that, without changing Himself, He is able to change us!

Count Zinzendorf who was born back in 1700 wrote the following words which capture the thought of our passage tonight. We sing it often. Let me read it for you tonight. It is #67 in our hymnal.

"Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress;
'Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head.

"Bold shall I stand in Thy great day,
For who aught to my charge shall lay?
Fully absolved through these I am,
From sin and fear, from guilt and shame.

"Lord, I believe Thy precious blood,
Which, at the mercy seat of God,
Forever doth for sinners plead,
For me, e'en for my soul, was shed.

"Lord, I believe were sinners more
Than sands upon the ocean shore,
Thou has for all a ransom paid,
For all a full atonement made."

Do you know Him as your Savior? Make sure that you do. This is the only answer to the problem which existed between God's righteousness and His love. It is "Jesus"!