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Risen and Reigning: An Easter Series / Sin; Righteousness; Salvation; Justification / Romans 3:21–26

Introduction

This morning as we continue our series focusing in on preparing our hearts for the upcoming celebration of the resurrection of Christ we pick up right where we left off last week in the 3rd chapter of Romans. We were, at the conclusion of our time together last week, left with the weighty reality of sin in our lives. As we looked at verses 9–20 last week we were left with nothing but the pure and absolute truth regarding all of humanity, that we are sinners, and that as sinners we do not desire God, we do not seek God, and no effort that we make will ever be enough to bring us into a right standing before the Holy God.

So we are left with the question, the same question that has been asked through the ages; Job asked it in Job 9:2 “In truth I know that this is so; But how can a man be in the right before God?”; the multitudes asked it in Luke 3:10 “And the crowds were questioning him, saying, “Then what should we do?”; the 5,000 men asked it in John 6:27–28 “Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, set His seal.” Therefore they said to Him, “What should we do, so that we may work the works of God?”; the rich young ruler in Matthew 19:16 “And behold, someone came to Him and said, “Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?”; those who heard Peter’s message on Pentecost asked in Acts 2:37 “Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Men, brothers, what should we do?”; Saul, who became Paul, asked it in Acts 22:10 “And I said, ‘What should I do, Lord?’ And the Lord said to me, ‘Rise up and go on into Damascus, and there you will be told of all that has been determined for you to do.’”; Paul and Silas’ jailers asked it in Acts 16:30 “and after he brought them out, he said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

Which is exactly the question that Paul, under the guidance and influence of the Holy Spirit, expects at this point. This is the question that is answered for us in our text for this morning, Romans 3:21-26, however, in preparation we will pick up the text from last week and read from verse 9 through verse 26.

Text

Please stand for the reading of the Holy, Inerrant, Infallible, Sufficient, and Authoritative Word of God

Romans 3:9–26 LSB

What then? Are we better? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin;

as it is written,

"THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE;

THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS,

THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD;

ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME WORTHLESS;

THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD,

THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE."

"THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN TOMB,

WITH THEIR TONGUES THEY KEEP DECEIVING,"

"THE POISON OF ASPS IS UNDER THEIR LIPS";

"WHOSE MOUTH IS FULL OF CURSING AND BITTERNESS";

"THEIR FEET ARE SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD,

DESTRUCTION AND MISERY ARE IN THEIR PATHS,
AND THE PATH OF PEACE THEY HAVE NOT KNOWN."

"THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES."

Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are in the Law, so that every mouth may be shut and all the world may become accountable to God;

because by the works of the Law NO FLESH WILL BE JUSTIFIED IN HIS SIGHT, for through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin.

But now apart from the Law *the* righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,

even *the* righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction;

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;

whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith, for a demonstration of His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed;

for the demonstration of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Gracious Heavenly Father, Blessed be the name of your son, Jesus Christ, before whose cross we kneel and see the heinous nature of our sinful flesh, our iniquity that caused Christ to be made a curse, the evil that excites the severity of divine wrath. Show us the enormity of our guilt by the crown of thorns, the pierced hands and feet, the bruised body, and the dying cries of Christ. His blood is the blood of the Incarnate God, its worth is infinite and its value beyond all thought. Sin is our malady, our monster, our foe, our viper; it is born in our birth, alive in our life, strong in our character,

dominating our faculties, following us as a shadow, intermingling with our every thought, the chains that hold us captive in the empire of our soul. Sinners that we are, why should the sun give up light, the air supply our breath, the earth bear our tread, its fruit nourish us, its creatures serve our needs? Yet Your compassions, O Lord, yearn over us, Your heart hastens to our rescue, Your love manifested through Christ endured our curse, and bore our stripes. Let us walk humbly in the lowest depths of humiliation, bathed in the blood of Christ, tender of conscience, and triumphing gloriously as an heir of salvation. We ask all of these things in the precious name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, Amen.

As we have been doing each week for quite sometime now, this morning's prayer is adapted from the "Valley of Vision" which is a collection of prayers and devotions collected from the Puritans. If you do not have a copy, I would highly recommend you getting one. It is truly a treasure that can be used daily in your prayer life and in your study.

But Now

Coming out of the verses that we worked through last week we encounter a phrase that, properly understood, signifies for us a massive shift. Although the words are small, their importance and their meaning is great. Paul, who has been used by God to take us to the very depths of the truth of man, now uses a contrasting conjunctive to open up the next great truth that he is going to proclaim. What follows in the next few verses sets the stage for the entire life shift that is seen in a believer.

By divine influence, Paul is taking us from a place of deep despair, the logical conclusion of the preceding verses in which we learn that all of our efforts are in vain, a place of deep truth, a place of deep sorrow, and demonstrates in two words a glimmer of hope. Verses 9-20 brought us to the foot of the mountain with no hope of being able to ascend, verse 21 opens in such a way as to offer the merest glimpse of possibility with a small, yet powerful, transition.

Apart from the Law

Verses 19, 20, and 21 all contain a reference to the Law. In the New Testament there are multiple meanings when the word Law is used so when

we come to this word, we must seek to ascertain which of those meanings is in play. To do this we look to the context surrounding that word, this should not be anything new to any of you, this is a conversation that we have had before, we have to take into account, in the case of the letter to the church at Rome, who the letter is being written to and the purpose of the letter. We also need to take into context the information that we have in the immediately surrounding verses.

Here, because of what immediately precedes the term, we can know that what is in view here, in the narrow sense is the moral law given to us by God but it can also indicate the much broader truth of all of mankind's human efforts to be made right in the eyes of God, this is the very definition of the theological term, legalism. Keep in mind that there are two groups of people that Paul is addressing here, the Jews, who have been given the revelation of God that continuously points them forward to the coming Messiah, and everyone else, who even though they have not been given this revelation, still seek to obtain a right standing before God through their own efforts, John MacArthur elaborates:

Romans: The MacArthur New Testament Commentary Chapter 15: How to Be Right with God

Scripture makes clear that there is indeed a way to God, but that it is not based on anything men themselves can do to achieve or merit it. Man can be made right with God, but not on his own terms or in his own power. In that basic regard Christianity is distinct from every other religion. As far as the way of salvation is concerned, there are therefore only two religions the world has ever known or will ever know—the religion of divine accomplishment, which is biblical Christianity, and the religion of human achievement, which includes all other kinds of religion, by whatever names they may go under

What Paul says to the church here is the righteousness of God has been manifested, or made known, apart from the Law. What this says is that, there is hope, but that hope is NOT found in the law. That hope is not found in the efforts of any person, regardless of where they come from. Mounce is also helpful:

Romans 1. Received through Faith in Christ (3:21–31)

From a human standpoint—and by nature people are legalists—the plan was radical. It excluded anything and everything that people by themselves

might do to attain righteousness. The righteousness God provides has its origin in what God did, not in what people may accomplish. It is received, not earned. It depends upon faith, not meritorious activity. God justifies the ungodly, not the well intentioned.

In Romans 1:16–17 Paul writes: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “But the righteous will live by faith.”” Coming out of this statement, we have descended to the deepest and darkest place of men’s soul until this point.

Since verse 18 of Chapter 1, Paul has diligently worked under the direction of the Holy Spirit to draw out for us our guilt in the eyes of God, guilt that is worthy of the wrath of God. This is the truth of our condition. He would describe it later to the church at Ephesus in this way, Ephesians 2:1-3

Ephesians 2:1–3 LSB

And you were dead in your transgressions and sins,

in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience,

among whom we all also formerly conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

In verse 4 of Ephesians he transitions us, in a similar fashion as we are now being transitioned with the words, But God...

Seven Truths of God’s Righteousness

Although we desperately needed to understand the truth of our condition, God does not leave His people there, just as He did for Abram as he was living in the land of Haran, or the Israelites as they were in captivity in Egypt, or even Paul himself, while he was in the midst of persecuting the church, Paul now does for us. These verses identify for us seven truths regarding the righteousness of God. The first of which, that it does not come through any effort of our own, we have addressed, the remaining six

are unpacked for us in the verses that follow.

God's Righteousness is Revealed

Immediately after Paul tells us that God's righteousness has now been manifested apart from the Law, he then states that the Law is witnessed to by the Law and the Prophets, or for us the Old Testament. I want to pause here for just a moment and ensure that we are clear on a couple of terms here, those terms being man's righteousness and God's righteousness. In the context of the passage, and as we have already somewhat unpacked this morning, man's righteousness stems from our personal efforts to be made right in the eyes of God. God's righteousness on the other hand is a term that is used to denote an action taken by God for bring people into a right standing before Him. AM Hunter describes it this way " for Paul, it was a divine activity whereby God confers on men a new status or standing with himself".

As we work through the Old Testament we are continually pointed forward towards this righteousness. Over and over again we are shown, once again that our efforts are in vain, that our work is as Isaiah says "filthy rags". Even the Law given was never done so in an effort to provide that righteousness but in a way to point us forward to the way in which God, Himself, would provide that righteousness through the work of Christ. Jesus speaking in John says this to the crowd, John 5:39 ""You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that bear witness about Me;" and MacArthur helps our understanding with his commentary on this verse:

Romans: The MacArthur New Testament Commentary Righteousness Is Built on Revelation

In other words, the Law and the Prophets did not show men how to achieve their own righteousness but pointed to the coming Messiah, the Savior and Son of God, who Himself would provide the righteousness that God demands of men. Although the full revelation of salvation through Christ was not given in the Old Testament, that had always been the way of salvation to which that testament pointed.

All of the law, all of the sacrifices, all of the commandments, everything contained within the Old Testament does nothing short of point us forward to Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word, God made flesh, the second person of

the trinity: 2 Corinthians 5:21 "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

God's Righteousness Acquired for All

The repetition of God's righteousness at the beginning of verse 22 is for emphasis, focusing our brains and our hearts on the truth that not only is this righteousness itself revealed but the means by which this righteousness is attained is also revealed. It is revealed that this righteousness, not available through the law, comes by faith, and faith alone, to all who believe, and this righteousness is perfect and it is certain.

That saving faith is the only means by which this righteousness is obtained is also demonstrated throughout all of scripture. In the letter to the Hebrews the entire 11th chapter is dedicated to that understanding. In chapters 4 and 5 of this letter Paul continually brings us back to this truth. It was here that the great reformer, Martin Luther, found his solace and true peace with God, Romans 1:17 "For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "But the righteous will live by faith." Paul, in this verse is quoting the prophet Habakkuk, who writes in Habakkuk 2:4 ""Behold, as for the proud one, His soul is not right within him; But the righteous will live by his faith."

Notice in the contrast in the verse from Habakkuk, we have in one case, the description of the "proud one" and then we have the "righteous one". To be proud one has to have something on which to stand, an accomplishment in which to boast but the righteous lives only by faith, nothing that he can claim, nothing in which he can boast, nothing on which he can stand. The late AW Tozer wrote in his book "The Root of Righteousness":

Romans: The MacArthur New Testament Commentary Righteousness Is Acquired by Faith

Something has happened to the doctrine of justification.... The faith of Paul and Luther was a revolutionizing thing. It upset the whole life of the individual and made him into another person altogether. It laid hold on the life and brought it unto obedience to Christ. It took up its cross and followed along after Jesus with no intention of going back. It said good-bye to its old friends as certainly as Elijah when he stepped into the fiery chariot and went away in the whirlwind. It had a finality about it. It snapped shut on

a man's heart like a trap; it captured the man and made him from that moment forward a happy love-servant of his Lord.

Distinction is clearly made in God's word between faith and saving faith. Simply defined faith is belief in something or someone, repeatedly we are shown that there are those who have a belief in Jesus that is not salvific, it does not lead to the righteousness of God, because it does not involve total submission to Christ. For those who have faith, made possible by the gift of God's grace and therefore a gift itself, there is evidence or fruit. Our will becomes obedient to the will of God, we desire what God desires, our emotions are deepened, our capacity for love increased, we grow in our knowledge and understanding of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The reality is that this righteousness is granted by faith to ALL who believe. This word all gives so many people so much trouble. On the one hand there are those who desire that this word all always apply to all people, everywhere. On the other hand, however, there are others who are afraid to be too inclusive when this word is brought forth, but the teaching of scripture is abundantly clear, all who have true saving faith will believe. This is the whosoever of John 3:16. It is not an all-encompassing statement meant to imply everyone everywhere because it specifically defines for us who the whosoever is: John 3:16 ""For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."

It is the same in Acts 13:39 "and that in Him, everyone who believes is justified from all things which you could not be justified from through the Law of Moses." or in John 6:37 ""All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will never cast out." and 1 Timothy 1:15 "It is a trustworthy saying and deserving full acceptance: that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost." It is not that the all here to teach us that all people everywhere will be saved, but that all who believe, regardless of their current position before God. Just as there is no distinction identified in 23 so also there is no distinction identified in 22...All who believe will be saved.

God's Righteousness Given Freely through Grace

That those who are saved by faith are justified is clearly identified in verse

24. Justification, as we have previously discussed, is biblically defined as God declaring that the demands of the law have been fulfilled on behalf of the believing sinner through the righteousness of Christ. Verse 24-25 elaborate on this justification/righteousness relationship in three metaphors, CH Dodd writes:

Romans

“In the first, God takes the part of the judge who acquits the prisoner; in the second, that of the benefactor who secures freedom for the slave; in the third, that of the priest who makes expiation”

This what the term justified means in plain language - the work of Christ on the cross has resulted in an acquittal in those who believe. But beyond that, this verse demonstrates for us something far deeper in that this is accomplished through grace, Mounce defines it in this way:

Romans

God’s grace is God acting in Christ for the benefit of sinners. Our justification stems from the unmerited favor shown to us in the gift of God’s Son.

in addition, MacArthur writes:

Romans: The MacArthur New Testament Commentary Righteousness Is Given Freely through Grace

Yet God justifies believers as a gift by His grace, not because of any good thing in the one who is justified.

By definition, a gift is something given freely, unearned and unmerited by the recipient. God’s greatest of all gifts is that of salvation through His Son, given completely out of His divine grace. “If righteousness comes through the Law,” that is, through human fulfillment of God’s divine standard, Paul declares, “then Christ died needlessly” (Gal. 2:21).

The law reveals God’s righteousness and exposes man’s unrighteousness. Grace, on the other hand, not only reveals God’s righteousness but actually gives His righteousness to those who trust in His Son. That gift of grace cost God the suffering and death of His own Son on the cross, so that, for the believer, there is nothing left to pay.

God’s Righteousness Accomplished by Redemption

The next metaphor that Dodd points out as “the benefactor who secures freedom for the slave” is shown to us in the second clause of verse 24 and reminds us that the God’s righteousness is accomplished through “the redemption which is in Christ Jesus”. This is the truth of a redeemer, someone who purchases something for a price. The price to make us right was so high that only the sinless, spotless “Lamb of God” was able to pay the price and bear the burden of God’s wrath on our behalf.

God’s Righteousness Paid in Blood

The price paid is defined for us in verse 25, the atoning blood of Christ, our propitiation. The word used here for propitiation is the same word that is used in the Greek OT to translate mercy seat, or place of atonement. This has caused issues in the theological world with those who want to say that this merely means that this was a covering for the sins, not a removal, which changes the fact that justification is once for all freely given through grace, by faith to those who believe in Christ. Taken out of context, it is easy to come to this conclusion when you consider the fact that the mercy seat in the tabernacle was used once a year on the day of atonement when it was sprinkled with blood to atone for the sins of the people, but that this work had to be repeated. This is where some get the idea that what was paid for on the cross was the sins of your past, but every sin of the future has to be offset by receiving more and more grace, saying penance, working to earn the rest of your salvation and if you fail, you die in sin, you are sent to purgatory, where hopefully your loved ones will say enough prayers or make enough donations to the church to move you into heaven... what a dismal state to be in. This is what Paul meant when he wrote to the church at Galatia in Galatians 5:1–6 “It was for freedom that Christ set us free. Therefore, stand firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery. Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. You have been severed from Christ, you who are being justified by law; you have fallen from grace! For we through the Spirit, by faith, are eagerly waiting for the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love.”

Rightly understood, the truth of the meaning here being a full and final payment is well covered in the context of this passage. Morris points out

that the term means “the removal of wrath” and that in the context of verses 18-20 demonstrating that all are sinners under the wrath, anything less than a full and complete removal of wrath, then we are still under that wrath.

Furthermore, this action was carried out in public, in full view, on a hill, just outside of Jerusalem, on the cross... it was there that God poured out His full wrath on His Son, so that all who believe would not perish, but have everlasting life.

Conclusion

Over the last two weeks we have journeyed from the depths of man’s sinfulness to the summit of God’s redeeming grace. Romans 3:9–26 is one of the most theologically rich, spiritually sobering, and eternally hopeful passages in all of Scripture. In it, the Holy Spirit speaks through Paul with clarity and force, dismantling any notion of self-righteousness and replacing it with a righteousness not our own—the righteousness of God, received by faith in Jesus Christ.

Let us take a few moments to gather the threads of this profound truth.

We Were Guilty, Condemned, and Hopeless

Verses 9 through 20 form an unrelenting indictment. Paul pulls from various Old Testament texts, stringing them together in a devastating litany of man’s depravity. “There is none righteous, not even one... all have turned aside... their throat is an open grave... the path of peace they have not known... there is no fear of God before their eyes.” That is a courtroom declaration. The gavel has come down. The verdict is in. Humanity—Jew and Gentile alike—stands guilty before the holy, just Judge.

Every mouth is shut. Every heart is laid bare. The law, far from being a ladder we climb to God, has exposed our inability, our impotence, our utter ruin. It brings knowledge of sin, not power to overcome it. It declares, “You are condemned,” but offers no hope for rescue.

But then... those two words.

“But now...”

Two words that signify the greatest transition in human history. Two words

that carry us across the chasm of our despair and set our feet upon the solid rock of salvation. “But now”—God has done something. “But now”—God has spoken. “But now”—God has moved in power, mercy, and grace.

What follows delivers the heart of God’s redemptive plan. Righteousness has been manifested—not earned, not achieved, not discovered—but revealed. It is God’s righteousness, not man’s imitation. And this righteousness is not tethered to the Law. It is not the reward of the religious. It is not the prize for the pious. It is apart from the Law. Yet it is not disconnected from the Law, for it is witnessed by the Law and the Prophets. The Old Testament breathes out the promise that is fulfilled in the New.

We Are Justified by Faith in Jesus Christ

This righteousness is “through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe.” The condition is not heritage, not ritual, not merit—but faith. It is trust. It is surrender. It is believing the promises of God and casting yourself wholly upon the finished work of Christ.

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”—this is the universal diagnosis. But the solution is just as universal in its reach—“being justified as a gift by His grace.” A gift. Unearned. Undeserved. Unrepayable. Grace. God’s unmerited favor given freely to those who could never obtain it on their own.

And how is this accomplished? Through “the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.” Redemption—a word saturated with imagery. It evokes the slave market, where one stands chained and helpless, and a redeemer enters, pays the price, and sets the captive free. That’s us. Enslaved to sin, shackled by guilt, condemned by the Law—and Christ walks in, not with silver or gold, but with His own blood, and redeems us.

God’s Righteous Wrath Is Satisfied

Paul goes deeper still. “Whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith.” That word, *propitiation*, is critical. It means the satisfaction of wrath. God’s justice must be satisfied. He cannot overlook sin. He cannot ignore rebellion. He is just—and justice demands that the penalty be paid.

But God, in His mercy, did not pour that wrath upon you, though you

deserved it. He poured it upon His own Son. Jesus became our substitute, bearing our guilt, absorbing our punishment, satisfying divine justice—so that we could be declared righteous.

God did this “to demonstrate His righteousness,” for in His forbearance, He had passed over former sins—not ignoring them, but waiting to deal with them fully at the cross. Now, at this present time, He has shown Himself to be “just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”

He is just—He does not compromise His holiness. He is the justifier—He makes righteous those who trust in Christ.

This is the glory of the gospel: that God remains righteous even as He declares the unrighteous righteous. That He does not bend His law, but fulfills it in Christ. That He does not lower His standard, but raises us to meet it by imputation. That He does not ignore our sin, but removes it entirely by the blood of His Son.

What Shall We Say to These Things?

Dear brothers and sisters, how can we remain unmoved in light of this truth? How can we cling to our pride, our works, our efforts, when Scripture has made it abundantly clear that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, to the glory of God alone?

This passage annihilates legalism. It lays to waste every attempt to earn God’s favor. It humbles the religious and exalts the broken. It leaves no room for boasting, no ground for arrogance, no credit to man. “Where then is boasting?” Paul will ask in the next verse. “It is excluded.”

But this passage also crushes antinomianism. For if this salvation has cost the blood of the Son of God, how can we treat it lightly? How can we walk in sin, presuming upon grace? If we are justified by faith, then let that faith bear fruit in repentance, in holiness, in love.

So then, we are left with a question. One that has echoed through redemptive history. One that must be asked in light of this text. One that cannot be ignored:

What will you do with this righteousness?

You have heard the truth. You have seen the hopelessness of your own condition and the sufficiency of Christ. You cannot unhear it. You cannot

pretend ignorance. So I ask you, not casually, but with the urgency of eternity:

Have you truly believed upon Christ?

Not merely agreed with facts. Not merely assented to doctrine. Not merely participated in religious rituals. But have you, by faith, received the righteousness of God in Christ? Has your life been seized by grace? Have you been made new? Has your old man been crucified with Christ? Has the Spirit borne witness in your heart that you are a child of God?

If not—if you are trusting in your goodness, your morality, your traditions—then you are still under wrath. The law has shut your mouth. The courtroom is silent. And unless you come to Christ, you will bear the penalty yourself.

But if you believe—if you have received the gift of justification—then rest. Rejoice. Worship. And walk in the obedience of faith. Live in light of the righteousness that has been freely given. And as we prepare our hearts for Resurrection Sunday, let the cross of Christ be your boast, your peace, your joy, your anthem.

Let us not forget: this gospel is not just for the lost. It is for the church. It is for us, every day. Preach it to yourself. Rehearse it in your heart. Sing it in your home. Share it with the world.

For it is the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes.

Closing Prayer

Gracious and merciful Father,

We bow before You, overwhelmed by the depth of our sin and the height of Your righteousness. We see clearly now, by the light of Your Word, that in ourselves we are utterly condemned—no righteousness, no excuse, no merit. But in Christ, we have been declared righteous, justified freely by Your grace, through the redemption that is in Your Son.

Thank You for the cross. Thank You for the blood that was shed—the blood of the perfect Lamb, the sinless Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ. Thank You that He bore our wrath, became our propitiation, and now sits at Your right hand as our Advocate and Intercessor.

We confess, O Lord, that we are often forgetful of the weight of this truth.

We minimize our sin. We presume upon grace. We live as if we earned what we have been freely given. Forgive us. Humble us. Restore to us the joy of our salvation.

We ask, Father, that this gospel would not just be heard today but planted deep in our hearts. Let it take root. Let it bear fruit. Let it transform us, moment by moment, into the image of Christ. Make us a people marked by repentance, faith, and love. Let our lives declare the righteousness of God.

And for those among us who have not yet believed—who stand even now under condemnation—draw them. Open their eyes. Pierce their hearts. Grant them the gift of faith, that they might be justified, not by works, but by Your grace.

We give You all the glory, for You alone are worthy. You alone are just. You alone are the justifier. Blessed be the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and King. May our lives, both now and forevermore, declare His righteousness.

In His matchless name we pray,

Amen.