

# Our One And Only Hope

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Date: 24 November 2024

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[ 0 : 00 ] So this morning we're continuing on in our series in Romans, and we come to a different kind of section that we've been reading. As Matthew alluded to earlier, the time that all of this has been building.

And in Romans 3, in verses 21 through 24, if you have your Bible, go ahead and turn with me, we're going to see that we get some relief, we get some hope.

So with that, this is God's word. But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law. Although the law and the prophets bear witness to it, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.

For there is no distinction, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified by his grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

Amen. Let's pray. Lord, we're thankful for your word this morning, for it shows us Christ Jesus. And we pray that you might work faith in our hearts, that we would love you more, and that we worship you because of your sending your son, that which was costly to you.

[ 1 : 22 ] And we pray this in Christ's name. Amen. Have you ever considered or wondered, maybe even thought about how fortunate you are to live in Colorado Springs?

And I say that knowing that some of you might be thinking, I can't wait to leave this place behind. Hopefully that's not Charlie and Corey this morning as they set out to move.

Maybe you've grown up here. Maybe you're really anticipating graduation. Or you're looking for a new job. Or just excited for something that's new. A fresh start even.

But we need to realize that we're fortunate because Colorado Springs is one of the most beautiful places to live. Maybe that's what's drawn you to here. But recently I was talking to somebody, and I won't name them.

They said they hated Colorado Springs. Not just the town, but they thought it was ugly. And it blew my mind. You could say maybe you don't enjoy aspects of Colorado Springs.

[ 2 : 24 ] Maybe it's too cold, or maybe it's too sunny. Those are all advantages, I think. And so it got me on this journey. I started looking because it was the first time I'd ever heard someone say that they thought Colorado Springs was ugly.

So what do I do? I'm a good millennial. I went to the internet to see if other people thought this very same thing. And I scoured far and wide, and I stumbled across a list of the ugliest cities in America. Colorado Springs did not make that list, I'll tell you. But in conversation with this individual, they said they hated living here, and in fact, they thought the mountains were unimpressive.

I get that if you think Colorado Springs is not the best place to live, you don't enjoy aspects of it, the amount of people that just looked out the windows right now is kind of amazing. I'll just let you know that.

But you can't say that it's not impressive. And this person kept doubling down on this. They hated living here. And even with that, they thought the rest of Colorado was equally as unimpressive.

[ 3 : 39 ] And then it blew my mind. I couldn't find anybody else on the internet that thought this. And it didn't come up in the ugliest cities of America. But we know that even the vistas are impressive, that there are benefits to living here.

Yes, we get 300 days of sunshine. Yes, we have winter. But it's not as bad as if you lived in North Dakota or Canada. We have all these opportunities for recreation and fun stuff outside.

But we have the views. And they're amazing. Right? I find myself each time I come out of a store, it's always when I go to a store, and it's in different parts of town, that I come out, I'm released from shopping.

Yes. And I look out, and I see new aspects of both Cheyenne Mountain or Pikes Peak. It's almost like I've never seen it before. And I'm amazed.

I think it's partially elevation, too. Changes in elevation can make you see different things. It catches my eye almost like the first time when I moved here so long ago.

[ 4 : 45 ] But with all of this beauty, what happens when it becomes normal? When it becomes commonplace? And when you think to yourself, man, that's just not that impressive anymore.

When the landscapes that once caught our eye are just, eh. When you become immune to the stunning creation, even the magnitude, how high the mountains are and how low you are.

You're simply unimpressed. Even that, your wonder becomes less and less frequent. Maybe it disappears altogether.

How the gold has become dim. How the pure gold is changed. The holy stones lie scattered at the head of every street.

The precious sons of Zion worth their weight in fine gold. How they are regarded as earthen pots. The work of a potter's hands.

[ 5 : 48 ] Jeremiah wrote that about Israel, the nation of Israel. They had forgotten their God. They had forgotten his word. They were trapped.

They forgot who God was and whose they were. The gold had become dim. They used to celebrate.

They used to enjoy the scenery. But instead, it wasn't as grand anymore. God wasn't as grand. The gospel wasn't moving to them anymore.

The righteousness of God had not become their concern anymore. We can see that and say, man, that's pretty icky. But the hard part is we know that sometimes the beauty fades in our own hearts. And it becomes less and less important. And the gold becomes dim. But what's the antidote to all this? How do we fix this problem? What do we do?

[ 6 : 55 ] We return to high points of scripture like this. Like this one this morning. And we can see that God is glorious. Because in this text this morning, we see the righteousness of God.

But the righteousness of God comes to us. It's revealed in Christ Jesus in spite of sin. The righteousness of God.

And as we look at that this morning, we're going to pause and take a look at the absence of righteousness. That sin part. And then we're going to see the restoration that comes with the Redeemer. It's all about God and all about His righteousness.

To reinvigorate us. To see the grandeur of the gospel. So that the gold doesn't become dim. Righteousness, sin, and redemption.

First, let's turn our attention to righteousness. Look with me at verse 21. Paul starts this reading with this word now. It's a shift, not in terms of time, but a shift in terms of thought.

[ 8 : 01 ] And if you've been with us for any amount of time, Paul, we keep saying this week after week. And we talk about this during the week, Matthew and I. Paul is making this larger argument in the book of Romans.

And he's marching on to kind of this point in the early chapters of Romans. He's not letting anybody loose. He's not letting anybody get out of the idea that they are sinful.

Whether you're Jew. Whether you're Gentile. Whether you have the law. Whether you don't. He's making this argument that the righteousness of God is not found in the law.

We see that. Especially on the heels of what we read last week. What we looked at. But now he's pointing our attention to that real righteousness.

Not righteousness from the law, but the righteousness of God. And so it's a pivot, not in terms of time. But it's a pivot in terms of what's really important. What real righteousness is.

[ 9 : 02 ] Verse 21 continues this idea of righteousness. Righteousness, but it's a change. So we have to pay attention and look for the change. Now if you're thinking, I thought we already talked about this.

The righteousness of God. You would be right. So what Paul does often is he'll pull ideas back that he's already addressed. And he'll revisit them. Or he'll grab them forward and pull them into the text that he's talking about right now.

Maybe something that he's going to develop later. We'll see that in the later chapters of Romans. But now you'd be right in saying, hey, I thought we already talked about the righteousness of God.

Why is he coming back to this? He talked about it in Romans 1 verses 16 and 17. When he said, the gospel was 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. That same righteousness that Paul taught us about in Romans 1.

[10:06] That said, hey, this is where we're going. This is why this is important. He's pulling that forward into this chapter. And saying, hey, remember what I said back there? This is actually what it looks like.

And so if there's a sense in which the last couple weeks have been heavy and difficult. This is the break. This is the gasping for air that we've needed. This is the hope that we've been wanting.

But he's using Romans 1 and saying, hey, I'm going to explain this now. Because I've shown you that righteousness can't come from the law. In fact, it's not righteousness at all.

This righteousness is different. This righteousness is God's moral character. And his justice and holiness and all of that wrapped up together.

In fact, it doesn't even come from the law. That's how he starts out. Now, what he's really talking about here, if we can identify it and synthesize it, is justification.

[11:06] How am I right before God? That's what he means when he's talking about the righteousness of God. How is man standing before God? It was that question that Martin Luther was obsessed with.

He could not let that idea go for a second. And how did he solve that answer? How did he solve that in his own mind and heart?

Through Romans. God spoke to him through the words of Paul and assured him that he could. But not on his own merit, but on God's.

Now, if it comes apart from the law, it's a little strange here. Paul doesn't tell us that the law is completely worthless.

He says, in fact, what? The law and prophets bear witness to this. Wait a second. I thought we just heard back in verse 20 that nothing good can come from the law.

[12:05] That it's not going to work. And then Paul said, wait, we don't get the righteousness of God from the law, but then the law and the prophets bear witness to it? Now, here we have an instance where Paul uses the term law in a couple different ways in really quick succession.

It can be really stinking confusing. So let's just take a minute to just unpack that and try to figure out what's going on. So sometimes when he says the law, it's shorthand for, hey, I can earn my salvation or I think I can earn my salvation by keeping the law apart from any concern for God.

Right? That would be bad. Sometimes when he uses the word law, he means the first five books of the Old Testament. Sometimes when he uses the word law, he means the Bible.

And sometimes it can be bad. It can be good. Right? We know the bad use of the term law, but the good one is God's word.

And so Paul can delight or even speak back to the Lord this. Right? Just like the psalmist. Lord, how I love your law. Clearly he's not talking about righteousness that comes from keeping the law or not keeping the law, which doesn't work.

[13:23] He's talking about a different law. Lord, how I love your law. It is my meditation all the day. How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth.

Now, as readers, we're kind of confused. What do we do? How do we know if it's law good or law bad? How do we know if it's God's word or how do we know if it's this inability to earn righteousness?

Well, you have to go on a treasure hunt. Treasure hunt of context clues. And so sometimes even your Bible might try to help you out. It might capitalize like the law and the prophets.

That should let you know something's going on there. But you have to read and you have to remember that righteousness doesn't come from your keeping or not keeping the law.

It comes from God. It comes from something outside of yourself. Righteousness from the law without a shred of concern for God himself can never save.

[14:30] Only righteousness from God. Now, why does this matter? Why am I spending so much time on this idea that, hey, the law and prophets even bear witness to this fact that righteousness doesn't come from the law?

Well, it's because it's not a new idea. Sometimes we get confused and think the newness of the New Testament is this idea. It's not new at all. In fact, it's a very old, old thing.

There's a very famous British scholar. I love that he's British because what he said about this is completely un-British and it's completely unscholarly. He said this about this.

This is not some newfangled way. That's not how British people talk. But he's trying to emphasize the fact that this newness, the newness of the new covenant, the newness of the gospel, the newness of this manifestation that we'll see, is not that it comes from apart from the law.

It's new because Christ is here. The newness comes because Christ is on full display in the person and work. He's flesh and bones.

[ 15 : 43 ] He's also a redeemer. He's also the sacrifice. And we can't separate those two ideas as we see and look at the newness of the righteousness of God.

Look at verse 22 with me. The righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.

The righteousness of God comes through faith, Paul says. Faith not in just a general, generic, sort of out there God that's disconnected, suspended.

You might hear those kind of ideas from your friends, family members, neighbors. No, it's much more specific than that. It's faith in what? Faith in Christ Jesus. Faith is the mechanism by which we are right before God.

Faith is the mechanism by which we attain or we get or justification is applied to us. It's just not out there.

[ 16 : 44 ] And then suddenly, magically, it continues to be out there and then it has no bearing upon us. Specifically, it's the faith of all who believe.

It's not the faith of Jesus. It's not his own faith, himself. It's faith in Jesus Christ by which the Christian has justification applied to them.

You're right before God by trusting in Christ. In the 1800s, there was a man named George Wilson. He was convicted of robbing, I think, a U.S. male location.

Okay? And he did so, so violently that he was actually thrown in jail. And he was going to be executed. He did this with an accomplice named James Porter.

And actually, they didn't murder anyone, but they were so violent and so nasty that they were threatened with execution. Now, Wilson's friends banded together and appealed to the highest authority that they knew of, the President of the United States.

[ 17 : 48 ] And they sought and actually received, acquired a pardon on behalf of George Wilson. Now, what Wilson did next is kind of interesting, and it had never been done before in the history of the United States.

He had received a pardon, but he refused it. And it caused such a firestorm that the U.S. legal system didn't know what to do. There was a Supreme Court case that went all the way to the United States Supreme Court.

And they had to decide, if you don't accept a pardon, is it still applied on your behalf? Wilson never accepted that pardon. But it raised the question, is it still in place?

Is it still valid? Does it still come with power? Wilson refused to accept the pardon that was freely offered to him. The righteousness of God is offered to us all.

To every man, woman, and child. To every person that hears the gospel. And yet, what is required of them?

[ 18 : 58 ] What is required? Faith in Christ. The righteousness of God is only applied when we have faith in Jesus. And as God sent his own son, that which was costly to him, we will see in a second.

He applies it through faith. He sent his only son, both God and man, to pay for the penalty of sin. And that pardon that you receive by trusting in Christ alone for your salvation.

And Christ died the death that we all deserve. And yet, he was perfect. And we are not. Faith is the condition of that pardon.

That pardon that we need because we break God's law. We break God's law in little ways, in big ways, in attitudes, in actions.

We break God's law in our heart. We need pardon. And it's applied to us because of our faith in Christ. And yet, we know that if we try to keep the law to earn righteousness, the irony in that is that we still love sin.

[ 20 : 13 ] It's that we love sin and we continuously have to root it out. And that's the Christian life. But sin is that absence of righteousness. The righteousness of God that's applied to us in faith is also absent.

It's lacking because of sin. Now, at the very end of verse 22 and into 23, he starts this new idea. He talks about sin very directly and very frankly.

Paul is clear. Sin is all people. It's in all people. It marks all people. It marks Jews. It marks Greeks, Gentiles.

It marks men, women, children, every tribe, every tongue, whether we're sitting in here or not sitting in here this morning. So what are we going to do with that?

There's no distinction. It's all quantitatively, all people as well. All people because sin is universal. And it corrupts wholly.

[ 21 : 20 ] It affects our minds. It affects our bodies. It affects the way we think, the way we act. It affects our emotions. It's not very hopeful right now.

But it shows us that we need something else. Because if we keep going back to the law for that righteousness, it's going to fail.

He's also very frank about the nature of sin. He talks very specifically about how it affects all people. And it affects all of us completely.

But he also says that what? It's falling short of the glory of God. Now, when you think of the term glory of God, you often don't think about man. And it's rightfully so, because we have sin.

But Isaiah writes that man was created for God's glory. So they're related somehow. Paul will even write later in 1 Corinthians that it's because man is in the image of God that he has glory.

[ 22 : 27 ] So man has some sort of glory that's reflective of God, but it's marred by sin. In fact, it's not even there anymore. It doesn't matter if the sin is big or small.

Everyone sins. It's really bad, and it spoils the glory of God. Even if you just happen to sin a little bit or a lot of it.

It carries that weight of eternity, and it carries the punishment with it. No matter if we think it's insignificant or not. No matter if it's huge. No matter if it's little.

It still carries with it the weight of that punishment, and the distortion, and the absence of the glory of God. It falls short.

I have a friend from college who had a really, really terrible job. The irony is that really, really terrible job that he had, he is now the boss at the really, really terrible job.

[ 23 : 27 ] And he loves it. But in his job, they made plastic-injected molded parts. And his job, because he was a teenager, young college student, his job was to do the most menial part of that plastic-injected molded part creation.

You might be thinking, what does that mean? Think of anything that's plastic that is created by a mold. You heat up plastic. If you've done this in your microwave at home, it's a really fun time. And then you shoot it into a mold, just like you're making something, you're baking something, like chocolate or anything like that.

And it comes out in the shape that you want it to have. Now, his job was to take the plastic, heat it up in a souped-up microwave, get it really stinking hot, and then take it out and immediately stick it into the mold and make it into the shape of whatever they wanted.

Now, as he did that, he had about 10 to 15 seconds where he was absolutely doing nothing. And it would repeat over and over throughout the day, whether it was for 8 hours a day or 12 hours a day. But thankfully, his boss got the bright idea, hey, these guys are really bored as they're doing this job, so what are we going to do to help them out? We'll get them all TVs at their workstations. That's very nice of him, right?

[ 24 : 44 ] So for about 15 to 20 seconds in this process, because he would put it in the microwave for 15 or 20 seconds, he'd watch TV, and then he'd turn around, and he'd inject it into the mold, and he'd make something.

And then he'd watch and wait for about 15 to 20 more seconds as it cooled down, sometimes longer, maybe a minute. And then he'd turn back and watch TV, and he'd repeat that process over and over and over again until it was time to go home.

So one day, I was fascinated by this, because this job sounds miserable, and I'm thankful I'm not doing that job. And I said, what do you watch on television? And he said, well, I watch soap operas. And I said, oh, that's really funny that you, as a young college-aged man, watch all the soap operas. And in fact, he knows all the storylines of every soap opera, and knew it for years because he worked there for years.

Now, when he was challenged about this, when, like all young men do, make fun of each other, you make fun of them for being a soap opera watcher. And he said, no, no, no, no, I'm not a soap opera guy.

[ 25 : 49 ] I only watch it for 15 or 20 seconds. At the end of the day, he's still a soap opera watcher, whether he watches it religiously, day after day, as he sits down on the couch and watches it.

There's nothing wrong with that. It's embarrassing for him. But even if he watches it for 10 seconds, he's still a soap opera watcher. Whether it's 10 seconds or planned or thought out, whether it's for a brief moment or it's his whole life, he's still a soap opera watcher.

He's recovered and doesn't watch soap operas anymore. But he'll always be known as the soap opera guy, even to this day. Now, when we sin, it doesn't matter if it's for 10 seconds or 15 seconds, or it's entrenched in a lifetime.

It still carries all that corrupting influence. It still carries the same punishment, whether it's for 10 seconds as the microwave closes, or we plan it out and we're entrenched for our entire lives.

It still carries the same weight. It still carries the same punishment. It still falls short of God's glory. That's why Paul can say that every mouth is stopped and the whole world is accountable to God, because it's everyone, whether it's 10 seconds or a lifetime.

[ 27 : 17 ] The righteousness of God is gone. We've all fallen short. We all fall short of the glory of God.

But we are not left in our sin, thank goodness, because we have a redeemer. Look with me at verse 24. And are justified by his grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

There's two main parts to this verse. One is that it's free, thank goodness, because if it wasn't free, then we'd have to earn it. We'd have to do something. But free doesn't mean it doesn't come without a cost.

It might be free to us, but it costs somebody somewhere. If you've taken economics before in any kind of format, high school, college, even middle school, you know there's this idea that there's no such thing as free lunch.

Somebody's paying for that lunch, whether it's you, whether it's your mom or dad, or whether it's somebody else, a wealthy benefactor who wants to give you lunch. There's no such thing as free lunch.

[ 28 : 29 ] Everything comes at a cost. The same is true of this grace that's offered to us in the gospel. He's kind of circled this idea for the last couple chapters that, hey, we're building, we're building, there's guilt.

We have these brief encounters in sin, or we're entrenched in it. But somebody has to pay. It's just not us. The innocence that we have is because it comes at a cost, because of Jesus.

God's grace in the gospel to us comes at a cost, a cost of Christ's life. And it's graciously given to us because we couldn't earn it.

We are the undeserving party because we've fallen short. That's why it's gracious. That's why it's free. But just because it's free doesn't mean it's costly. If it was cheap, if it didn't come at such a high price, it would still be free to us.

It would still be effective. But think about from God's perspective, it comes with such weight and such high cost that it's not cheap, that it's not easy, that he's given his own son to redeem us.

[ 29 : 53 ] Justification is free. It is gracious, but it comes at a high cost. The idea of redemption itself, the use of that term, is coming and paying at a price.

It's coming and paying at the price of Christ's life. It's buying us back out of slavery. That's the same language that God uses when he talks about Israel being delivered from Egypt that he's bought back.

Christ, the work of Christ, allows for God to buy us back out of the captivity of sin. And the currency is Christ's life.

The gospels remind us of this when they say the son of man came not to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many, many of us.

So whether you followed Christ for many, many years, right, and the gospel has become less glorious, it's become commonplace, uninteresting or boring, if we read these words and we're not reignited to see the beauty of the gospel, we have a problem.

[ 31 : 06 ] If we've never had these created worlds. The same is if you've walked with Christ for many, many years. But in that, we should ask for us to be more gentle and humble and kind in our

words, in our speech, in our action.

We should be more compassionate to others because our lives have been transformed and we realize that we have no, in no way can we boast because God has been so kind to us in Christ. If you've never considered the claims of the gospel before, think on that. What are you gonna do with your sin? God has been compassionate in giving his son to each and every one of us and yet, we have to have faith in his son.

If you're a Christian that struggles this morning or anytime with this idea of the weight of our own sin bogs us down and the weight of our sin makes us actually question, could God even love me? Like I don't even know what to do with that. Be assured that it is not your sin or lack of sin that secures your future.

[ 32 : 24 ] It's Christ's work. It's your faith in Jesus that does that. And as we continue to march on and even grow discouraged with what seems like each passing day, that your own personal holiness isn't what secures the glory of God, the righteousness of God.

By the works of the law, no one is justified. In fact, Christ has redeemed you. Wherever that finds you this morning, may we all be reminded of the beauty of the gospel.

May we consider it afresh. May we consider it for the first time. And may we worship him because of it. Because God is worthy of that.

Because it's great and beautiful and grand. Amen. Let's pray. Lord, we're thankful this morning for the reminder from your word about the beauty of the gospel, about the beauty of Christ's work, the righteousness that's found in you because of our faith in Christ Jesus.

In spite of our sin, Lord, may we delight in those things this day. Amen. Amen.