

Grace and Redemption --- Romans 3:23-24

October 1, 2017

Introduction

Romans 3:23-24 For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

As we begin this morning, I want to remind you how very important it is for you to be renewing your mind. The world constantly bombards our minds with its values and standards. It is easy to slip into the mind-set of our culture and allow the world's way of thinking to seep into our lives. On top of that, there is the old self that would drag us down in a number of ways. Our minds must be continually renewed as we grow in sanctification and walk with the Lord.

Ephesians 4:22-24 In reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, 23and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

Romans 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

It is vital that you expose your minds to the truth on a regular basis, and our gathering together as a church to study the Word of God is part of that process.

John Newton was an English clergyman who lived from 1725 to 1807. He had a wide and effective ministry. He is best known to us for his hymns, one being "Amazing Grace." Newton was raised in a Christian home and was taught the Bible and memorized verses while growing up. But his mother died when he was only six years old, and he was sent to live with a relative who mocked Christianity.

One day at an early age, Newton left home and joined the British Navy as an apprentice seaman. He was wild and lived an exceedingly immoral life.

He gained a reputation of being able to swear for two hours without repeating himself. Eventually he deserted the navy off the coast of Africa. In his memoirs, he wrote that he went to Africa for one reason only and that was "that I might sin my fill."

In Africa, he fell in with a Portuguese slave trader. He was cruelly treated in this slave trader's home. This man often went away on slaving expeditions. When he was gone, the person left in charge was the trader's African wife, the chief woman of his harem. The woman hated all white men, and she took out her hatred on Newton.

Newton wrote that for months he was forced to eat his food from the ground like a dog, and he was beaten without mercy if he touched it with his hands. For a time he was actually placed in chains. Newton became weak and emaciated but was able to escape and made his way through the jungle. When he finally made his way to the sea, he boarded a British merchant ship making its way up the coast to England.

When the captain of the ship which took Newton learned that the young man knew something about navigation as a result of his time in the British Navy, he made him ship's mate. Even then, Newton fell into trouble. One day, when the captain was ashore, Newton broke out the ship's supply of rum and got the crew drunk. He was so drunk himself that when the captain returned and struck him in the head, Newton fell overboard and would have drowned if one of the sailors had not grabbed him and hauled him back on deck in the nick of time.

Near the end of the voyage as it was approaching Scotland, the ship ran into bad weather and was blown off course. Water poured in and the ship began to sink. Newton was sent down into the lower deck to pump water. The storm lasted for days. Newton was terrified. He was sure that the ship would sink and he would drown. But while he was there in the hold of the ship, pumping water, desperately attempting to save his life, God brought to his mind Bible verses he had learned in his home as a child.

Newton was convicted of his sin and of God's righteousness. The way of salvation suddenly became very clear to him. He was born again and transformed. Later, when the storm had passed and he was again in England, Newton began to study theology and eventually became a distinguished preacher.

He wrote these words:

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost but now am found,
Was blind but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved.
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed.

Through many dangers, toils and snares,
I have already come.
'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.

Newton was a great preacher of grace. He had learned that grace was from God, apart from any human effort. He deserved nothing but God's wrath, but he found grace through the work of Jesus. It is our great privilege this morning to turn our thoughts to the great biblical teaching of grace.

Review

Last week, I introduced to you the biblical teaching of justification by faith alone. I will not rehearse everything we learned about faith. I will point you to our website to review that on your own.

Suffice to say that in the realm of spiritual realities, faith is simply acting upon the Word of God. He tells you that you are totally depraved, dead in your sin. You believe it not only because of what you know to be the case in your heart and mind and in your own experience but, more than that, because of the revelation of God in His Word. He tells you that He came to die for you because He desired to demonstrate His love for you. He tells you that He put your sin on Christ and crucified Him in your place. He tells you that He raised Jesus from the dead as proof that His payment was sufficient for sin because the wages of sin is death. He paid the wage of sin in full because death no longer had power over Him. And God tells you to simply trust in what Christ has done for you and you will be saved. You

can add nothing to God's provision.

So we have been working through Paul's introduction of the good news part of the Gospel. We have found numerous foundational doctrines stacked one on top of the other: Justification. Faith. Grace. Redemption. Propitiation.

In one short verse, verse 24, there are three dynamic words that describe the magnificence of Christ: justification, grace, and redemption. It is as if Paul, having turned the corner away from sin, now wants to explode our understanding concerning salvation in Christ. He overwhelms us by providing rapid fire a number of different facets of salvation. In truth, there is no one term or thought that can encompass all that Christ has done for us.

We have already considered, in summary fashion, some of these important terms. We have focused on the doctrine of justification and the fact that believers will never see the inside of God's great courtroom. Last week, I introduced to you the term faith and how God's great salvation is applied through simply trusting in all that God has said through His Word. Now Paul conveys to us two more vital terms and doctrines of the Bible; namely, grace and redemption. As we move on in the text, I want to focus your attention on these two important themes in Scripture.

Grace and Redemption

Grace

*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.*

Romans 3:23-24

You have heard grace explained by the acronym: God's Riches At Christ's Expense. That is fine as far as it goes, but it is far deeper than that. Grace involves giving a gift to one who deserves the exact opposite. In our case, God gives us perfect righteousness when, apart from Christ's payment on the cross, we are utterly depraved. God gives us adoption when we deserve repulsion. God gives us freedom when, apart from Him, we are in bondage. God gives us love when we deserve His wrath. God gives us the gift of eternal life when we deserve eternal death or, what Revelation calls, "the second death." God gives us heaven when we deserve hell.

God pronounces us innocent in Christ when, in ourselves, we are guilty.

2 Corinthians 8:9 *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.* Do you see how grace is a gift given to one who deserves the exact opposite?

God's grace was active in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve first rebelled. Mankind should have ceased to exist right there on the spot. Adam and Eve should have died, but God showed grace and accepted the death of a substitute in their place. By grace, God called Abraham to begin a nation through which God would communicate Himself to the world. There was nothing in Abraham that caught God's attention; it was by grace. The King James Version states that Noah found grace in the sight of God. Noah was not special in and of himself. All of God's works towards mankind are by His grace.

Paul knew that the person whom he had become was all by God's grace. 1 Corinthians 15:10 *But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.*

Grace is an appropriate word in the context of where we are in Romans. Paul has just mentioned that no one can be made right with God by good works. Therefore, grace is needed. If God had only been just and not gracious, there is nothing that could have been done for sinful man. Grace, like faith, is the opposite of a man's attempts to be good.

Titus 3:5-7 *He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*

Romans 11:6 *But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.*

For the most part, unfortunately, grace has ceased to be amazing in our modern Christianity because the church has ceased to preach the depravity of man. Grace can only be understood in light of the

helplessness and hopelessness of man. Grace means giving an eternal, infinite gift to one who is utterly unworthy or undeserving. Martyn Lloyd-Jones writes, "There is no more wonderful word than 'grace.' It is not merely a free gift, but a free gift to those who are without hope and without God and without merit."

The importance of understanding sin is why Paul inserts verse 23 at this point, "*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*" You may think, "Paul just spent three chapters conveying the depths of man's sin, so why is he bringing it back up here?" We may be tempted to think that this verse belongs up with verse 9, which states that all Jews and Gentiles are under sin. But we would be mistaken if we thought that way.

I came across one way that the term translated "fall short" was used in ancient times. I told you before that falling short refers to "missing the mark," as with a bow and arrow, and that is a true usage. Man not only misses the bull's-eye, but he does not even hit the target. Another usage of "fall short" was within the financial market. It was used to describe a person whose debts exceeded his assets and who had to file bankruptcy. He fell short of what he owed.

Man owes God glory. What is right in our existence is to be like the perfect and holy angels who ascribe glory to God constantly. God is worthy of glory. All of who He is draws glory. We have already seen this in Romans 1. Instead of glorifying God, man suppresses God. Romans 1:21 *For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.* Man misses the mark; he falls short. Because of his sin, he does not glorify God.

Paul reminds us of the sinfulness of man because he is drawing an eternal, infinite contrast between man and God, between man's utter need and God's amazing grace. The last part of verse 22 states, "*There is no distinction.*" That means there is no difference between you and the worst person on the top of your worst-person list. There is absolutely no difference in God's eyes between you and the worst person who ever lived on this planet, even though down here on earth we have a list of sins that are worse than others.

Revelation 21:8 *But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars,*

their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.

Wow, “all liars” seems out of place. You mean lying is on par in God's eyes with murdering, immorality, sorcery, and idolatry? Yes, “*there is no distinction.*” One of my sons had a good insight this past week when he said, “Actually, Dad, we are guilty of most everything listed in that verse.”

James Boice writes, “Until we know that in God's sight there is no difference between us and even the wildest profligate, we cannot be saved. Nor can we appreciate the nature and extent of the grace needed to rescue us from our dilemma.”

In contrast, in the midst of man's total depravity, God extends grace.

Unfortunately, mankind does not understand that he is already receiving a measure of grace from God every day of his life. There is what is called “common grace,” which God gives to all. Jesus said that God causes the rain to fall on the evil and the good, the just and the unjust. We could spend the rest of our time this morning articulating all the blessings that we and all of mankind enjoy every day. But unregenerate man, and even some professing Christians, lives every day without any thought of thanking God for the common grace that He gives.

But even more than common grace, every day that an unbeliever wakes up and is not in eternal judgment is a day of grace. God could simply sweep every unbeliever into an eternal hell and the holy angels would praise Him for His justice; not even one voice could be raised in objection. We must understand that God owes mankind nothing. The natural blessings we have are not due to our own righteousness or worthiness but to God's common grace.

But here our focus is on the grace demonstrated through the person of Jesus Christ. We will find in our study of chapter 4 that Paul will give an example of wages, on one hand, that are due to the person who earns, merits, works for, and deserves what is given to him. But on the other hand, grace is given to the one who knows he cannot make himself right with God and who simply trusts in what Christ has accomplished. Grace through faith is the avenue by which righteousness is credited to the sinner's account. Grace is apart from good works. Grace has nothing to

do with a person's merit.

That is a tremendous thought. If we have been truly humbled by the fact that we are totally depraved, then the fact that grace is a gift means that being justified in the sight of God is never an issue of your performance and never will be. Grace will never be withheld because of something you have done or have not done in the past, present, or future.

Some people think that God will withhold grace because their sin is too great. Other people think that God only needs to sprinkle them with a little grace because their sin is not as great as that of others. Both of these thoughts are wrong. On one hand, God will never withhold grace from those who truly trust Him, no matter how great their sin. And on the other hand, God must immerse every believer in grace because all are utterly depraved.

One of the greatest results of grace will be that a whole group of human beings will be in heaven forever. They will forever be to the praise of the glory of God's grace. Most humans will be in hell, suffering the results of their rebellion. But by God's grace and by the unfathomable action of Christ's death on behalf of sinful man and by the imputation of Christ's perfect life upon them, these humans are made perfect, fit for heaven and the perfect righteous presence of God Almighty.

Ephesians 1:5-8a He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, 6to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. 7In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace 8awhich He lavished on us.

These themes of grace, redemption, and Christ's blood are so foundational in the Word of God. We will return to them over and over in our study of Romans.

Paul declares that we are *“justified as a gift by His grace.”* He then goes on to talk about how grace may be given to man.

Redemption

*Being justified as a gift by His grace
through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.*

Romans 3:24

This is the first mention of redemption in the book of Romans. Paul uses this term in a number of his letters. This term “redemption” answers the question, “How can God be gracious and just at the same time?” If He is perfectly just, then He must judge sin. He cannot just “let people off the hook,” so to speak. God would cease to be just if He did not judge sin. Paul will declare in verse 26 that God is “just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.” The explanation of how God can be just and the justifier of sinful man is by redemption and propitiation, which are in Christ Jesus.

The words “redeemer,” “redeem,” and “redemption” have everything to do with Christ on the cross. The wages and consequences of ungodly man breaking the law had to be paid. The wrath of God is the expression of His justice. The just desserts of man's depravity is God's righteous wrath. If justice is to be satisfied, God's wrath has to be propitiated or satisfied: paid in full. This is the redemption that the Redeemer paid on the cross. We will learn that redemption is related to propitiation which means “to satisfy.” God's wrath and justice were satisfied by Christ's death on the cross.

This doctrine of redemption, paying the price of God's wrath against sin, is much neglected in the free-grace thinking of our day. The ability of God to extend grace is not free. Someone had to pay. 1 Corinthians 7:23 says, *“You were bought with a price.”*

Acts 20:28 Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

These words “redemption,” “redeem,” and “redeemer” were not religious words in Paul's times. When we hear them today, our thoughts turn towards spiritual matters. But when men in the first century heard them, their thoughts turned toward financial matters.

It is important to understand what these words meant to the author and original readers. These words were derived from a word with the basic meaning “to loose.” It was used of all kinds of loosening; for instance, the loosening of clothing, the loosening of armor, or of tied up animals, and so on. At times, it was used of men who had been loosed from captivity,

particularly to the loosening of prisoners of war when a ransom had been paid.

In time, this word acquired the meaning of “payment for loosing something or someone” or “ransom price.” It also carried the meaning “to redeem.” It is important to keep in mind that these words were specific in application to payment as the basis of release. There were other words available that meant a “simple release of someone or something.” So here we are dealing with a release by payment. In fact, this term can also be translated as “ransom.” 1 Timothy 2:6 says that Christ “*gave Himself as a ransom.*” Jesus said in Mark 10:45, “*For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.*”

These words are not confined to just a release of prisoners of war. For example, it may refer to a slave who bought his own freedom. A slave might save his meager earnings over decades until he had the necessary amount to pay for his freedom.

Interestingly, it is important to note that the Jews used this word group “redeem,” “redeemer,” and “redemption” as they translated the Old Testament into Greek in the Septuagint. For example, Exodus 30:12 “*When you take a census of the sons of Israel to number them, then each one of them shall give a ransom for himself to the LORD, when you number them, so that there will be no plague among them when you number them.*”

This is not the release of a prisoner of war or a slave. It is a death sentence that is in question. The man's life is on the line. But his payment of the half shekel releases him from this sentence and enables him to walk out a free man. This is the typical and consistent use of these words.

One example that we find in the Old Testament that helps us to understand redemption is found in the Law. Suppose a person in Old Testament times owned an ox that had gored somebody to death. Under certain circumstances, the owner of the ox would be fined. But suppose there had been negligence. Suppose the ox was known to be dangerous and the owner had failed to keep the ox contained. In this case, the owner of the ox could be killed. He would have to forfeit his life for the one whose life had been taken.

In this case, the Old Testament provided a way by which the owner could

come to an agreement with the relatives of the dead man. It would be possible for him to pay a ransom price instead of dying. This carries the idea of redemption: paying the price of a person who is guilty and who would otherwise die.

When we come over into the New Testament usage of this word group, “redeem,” “redemption,” and “redeemer” are used in reference to paying the price for the wages of sin. Redemption points to the fact that justice has been satisfied. Ephesians 1:7 *In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace.*

Colossians 1:13-14 *For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, 14in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*

1 Timothy 2:5-6 *For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, 6who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time.*

Titus 2:11-14 *For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, 12instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, 13looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, 14who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.*

This terminology of purchasing, buying, paying the price for freedom is very important when we begin to consider application to our lives. We must understand that Jesus became a curse for us. He bought us out of being cursed by the Law. Galatians 3:13 *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, “CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE.”*

We understand how valuable Jesus' death was on our behalf. He was the only One who could pay the price for us. I told you before the often repeated truth, “He had to be man so that He could suffer. He had to be God so that He could suffer enough.”

1 Peter 1:18-19 *Knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, 19but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.*

Hebrews 9:11-12 *But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; 12and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.*

These two passages have particular bearing on our Romans passage in that they link redemption with the payment of blood. This link is established in our passage as we read further about Christ being the propitiation, or satisfaction, for our sin . . .

25whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; 26for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

We will consider further this whole idea of propitiation for sin next week.

Conclusion

I want to conclude by considering how grace and redemption impact not only your eternal well-being, but also how you live your life every day. Ephesians 2:8-10 *For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9not as a result of works, so that no one may boast [future salvation]. 10For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them [present application].*

God has given you grace, He has given you faith, and He has given you salvation for a purpose. You will be to the praise of the glory of His grace forever in heaven, and He has saved you now for good works. Good works have nothing to do with your being saved. But good works have everything to do with your having been saved. God gives you grace to live a new life to His glory.

Concerning the fact that He has paid the price for you to be freed from the penalty of sin and so that you may be justified in His sight, concerning the reality of redemption, there are applications to how you live your life here and now. 1 Corinthians 6:18-20 *Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.*

Immorality is rampant in our modern culture. I was shocked to watch a commercial this past week concerning a jewelry store selling diamond rings. There were two young ladies holding hands and one told the other how she would like to spend the rest of her life with the other, as in marriage. It concluded by showing them kissing one another.

If you are not aware of it, I am going to tell you that two women or two men marrying is sin against God. I am not saying that their sin is any greater than my sin, but it is sin. It is immoral, and I am shocked that it is portrayed as being normal. I was thinking that one problem with the whole LGBT agenda is that it is taking a wrong, sinful, rebellious mind-set and trying to make it normal and okay.

What would you think if all the murderers in prison formed a club and tried to convince society that murder was okay? Or if all those who have raped or molested children formed a society and began lobbying to say that rape was okay. That is exactly what the LGBT agenda is trying to do. They need the Lord just like anyone else. But they must be told that their actions are rebellion against God.

Lastly, Titus 2 masterfully brings both grace and redemption together and applies them to our daily lives. Titus 2:11-14 *For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, 12instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, 13looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, 14who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.*

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