

# Saved by Grace

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[0:00] Take a turn in your copy of God's Word and turn to Romans chapter 3. We're looking at two different verses this morning. Romans chapter 3, verses 23 and 24.

I've chosen these verses because I only have one opportunity right now to speak. And you never know when you get an opportunity like this, just who it is you're going to be speaking to. Oftentimes there's multiple people in the crowd.

And I decide not to assume that all are saved. And certainly I know that all of us can use a reason to be encouraged and to rejoice.

And these two verses, I believe, are verses which are very powerful. And if they have not come to change your life, they must. They absolutely must. The truth of these verses must change our lives. And if they have, then they are a reason for us to rejoice. I'd like for us to take a look after reading a very quick exposition of these verses and the application that they have for our lives.

[1:01] In Romans chapter 3, beginning in verse 23, 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.

As we take a look at these verses, verse 23 begins with the word for. Now, if you've ever taken any kind of English class, you usually know that you don't start a sentence with the word for.

This is pointing back to context. And as we read this scripture, we have to understand the context which has been set before us. The apostle Paul is writing an epistle to the church of Rome.

He has taken now three chapters to speak on the condition of man. He has spoken on the condition of all men in general being without excuse, Romans 1.

Then he has spoken to the Gentiles, that is the non-Jews, saying how they also, though they do not have special revelation, they have the revelation of nature. They know that there is a God, and therefore they also are accountable to God.

[2:08] And then he has spoken to the Jews, that they have not only had nature testifying of the attributes and reality of a God whom they are responsible to, but also they have had special revelation of the law.

And he sums it up in Romans chapter 3, verses 10 through 18, as he sums up the condition of all men, both Jews and Gentiles, of the entire world. And he's quoting Old Testament scripture here, and he ends it, he sums it up with verse 18, there is no fear of God before the rise.

Now verses 23 and 24, I believe, are very well attached to this verse, because this is the condition that we find ourselves in. If we are outside of Christ, before we were outside of Christ, or before we were in Christ, we were outside of Him.

We were in a condition where there is no fear of God before our eyes. And that is, if that is still the condition you are in, is a very serious condition. And those of us who are in Christ know that that is a dangerous spot, and we're going to take a look at why that is.

We dealt with the word force, and now all have sinned. When we look at the word all have sinned, those words tend to make us as sinners to drop our defense.

[3:21] Why? Because if everybody's done it, it must be logical that it must not be that bad, right? I mean, isn't that how our fallen nature tends to reason things out? Well, to take an easy way out, I'll say, well, if everybody was jumping off a bridge, would you do it?

Of course not. The decision to do that would be a deadly one. It would put you in serious harm's way. It's very much a danger. The book of Hebrews tells us that for each and every man, it is set apart for him a day that he will die, and upon that day he will stand before the Lord.

And if we're outside of Christ, that day will be a terrible day. I know that as a student, when I was a child, I was lost, and I wasn't a great student.

I didn't focus on my studies. I prefer to be outside. And I know what it's like to come up and stand before Mama with a failing grade, with a poor test or something like that.

And my excuse was almost always the same, which, well, Mom, I know I did a poor job, but so did everybody else. Everybody else did a poor job on this exam too. When I stood before Mama, all those other students weren't with us.

[4:35] Mama was responsible for one student, and that was her son, the one who stood there alone as he stood before her. Brothers and sisters, God does not grade on a curve.

When we stand before God on that day, we will stand before him alone. If we're outside of Christ, that will be a terrible day. And we'll get to the righteousness that is in Christ here in a moment.

First, I want us to understand the depth of our sin, the danger that it really creates. You see, if I was to take and rattle the keys, we'll call the keys the gospel.

If I was to rattle that in front of this microphone, it would mean nothing to you. It probably wouldn't be pleasant. But if I rattled those keys and you were in a deep, dark dungeon, if you realized that the condition of your soul is to be in that dungeon, then all of a sudden the gospel, those keys, sound very pleasant.

The gospel alone without realization of the depth of sin does nothing. Likewise, I don't want to preach condemnation without the gospel. So I have a very short time this morning to do so.

[5:43] And as we go through verse 23, Falling short of the glory of God. And that is, I think, allows us for an important and logical point.

And that is sin, transgression, is measured by the one whom we sin against. And this verse tells us that it is measured against the glory of God.

And the glory of God is beyond our recognition. God is a God who is perfectly innocent in a way that we cannot relate to because we have never seen anything that infinitely innocent, that perfectly just, without any error.

John tells us that God is light and in him there is no darkness. There is no imperfection in his character. His attributes are perfect. He is infinitely worthy of nothing less than undefiled worship. We know nothing. If we do not know God, we know nothing of that manner. Our sin is first and foremost measured against him according to Scripture.

[6:45] And this is logical as well. Think for a moment. If I was to brutally step on, if I was to crush and murder a bug, an ant, no one cares. That doesn't make headlines in any way.

It's not even conversation worthy. But if I did that same act with the same motives and same results, but if I did that instead of an ant, if I did that, say, to an innocent child, just the very thought of doing that puts a bitter taste in our mouth, doesn't it?

That child is infinitely more valuable than that ant. They're not even worth comparing. They're not measurable to one another. But our sin is first and foremost against God, one who is infinitely more valuable than we can even imagine.

We may say, well, Mike, okay, I get that. Sin is measured by the one that I sin against. But, you know, I've never done anything as terrible as murder somebody.

I call this the good old boy syndrome. That was when I was a lost sinner. That was what I would tell myself. You know, I'm a pretty good fellow. I can always look at that other guy, bearing in mind that we're not judged against that other guy.

[7:54] We're judged against God's perfection. But I was lost. I would say, you know, I can see this other guy. He's a pretty bad guy. I mean, man, he has done terrible things. I've never done anything as bad as him.

After all, I've never murdered anybody. That was my thinking. However, our sin being first and foremost against God is not quite the same.

What is the greatest of all commandments? We heard it this morning. It is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind. The great reformer Martin Luther said, If that is the greatest commandment, it must be the greatest transgression to break it.

Well, that seems pretty logical to me. Therefore, our worst attribute or our sin, which we've committed, is not loving the Lord our God with all of our heart, soul, and mind.

It's worse than anything that we can imagine. Because murder is really, in our minds, in our fallen nature, is what we consider to be the worst. So let's take for a moment a white lie.

[8:55] I've actually stood in churches during business meetings. Not a church I'm a member of now, but they said, a deacon actually said, A white lie is okay. It's not a big deal.

What is the nature of a white lie? It's what we consider probably the smallest sin that we can commit. A white lie is anything but white. It is terribly dark.

What is it? It's me telling a person something that's not totally true. I'm telling them that because I want something. I want either their approval, or I want something that I can obtain by giving them this false truth, this non-truth.

I can tell them this, and I can obtain it upon my own power. It is us saying that we can break the law of God. We can transgress Him in order to obtain this thing.

Now, we, as image bearers of God, having been made in His image, image bearers reflect the nature of God. We reflect it to God. We reflect it to the person we're sinning against, and we reflect it to all of creation.

[10:00] What are we doing? We are testifying falsely against God, to all of creation, and to God Himself. We are lying to God. We are saying, I cannot live without this thing, this approval of this person that I'm going to obtain through this white lie.

I cannot live without that so much that I need to break the law of God. To break the law of God and to displease Him is more important for me to have whatever this is I'm trying to get, that I can forsake God.

And it is testifying to all creation. It's saying that either God does not love me enough, or He does not have the ability to provide for me this thing which I need so desperately that I would go upon my own power outside of God, and I have to get it myself.

We testify falsely against God for that idol that we have put on our heart. That is a white lie. Sin is a big deal. So, what is the truth of this verse?

With a show of hands, please tell me, anyone here who has never sinned, who has never transgressed the law of God, exactly. We have all fallen short of the glory of God, each and every one of us.

[11:17] So, we have to deal with that. Scripture tells us that the wages of sin is death. According to the Word of God, death is what sin results in. That is what you get for sinning.

But there's a lot of world religions out here that would tell us other things. So, let's take a look at logically whether or not that will work. Let's say for a moment a man is in a human courtroom.

He is standing before, he's a fallen judge, but he's a good man. He's a righteous judge. He loves justice. He wants to do what's right. And this man, he is, let's say he's a murderer person.

Now, bear in mind, murder is not the greatest sin. Not loving the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind. That is the greatest sin, and you are guilty of it. I am guilty of it.

All of us are guilty. But for a moment, this man, he's murdered a man. He's done this terrible act.

He's escaped for ten years. And now he stands before this good judge, and the judge says, I'm about to pass judgment on you, sir.

[12:19] What do you have to say? Because you're about to die for this sin you've committed. And the man says, okay, I understand you've got me red-handed. You finally caught me, but you've got to understand, it's been ten years.

There's been a lot of time pass. Now, we do that, don't we? We say, well, that was yesterday's sin. That's not a big deal. As if time has dealt with our sin. Well, sir, there's been a lot of time pass.

And before that time, I had never done anything wrong. I was a good guy. And after that time, you know, after I murdered that man, I've walked little old ladies across the street.

I have done good works. I've carried groceries. I have just been an outstanding citizen. How about this? I've sat in a church pew for these past ten years.

All these things are things that we've tried to do to deal with our sin outside of Christ. Sitting in a church pew won't save us. That is not a relationship with Christ.

[13:18] Knowing of God and knowing the gospel facts is not the same as resting and knowing God. Well, how about this, sir? I've come to peace with what I've done. I've called, I've got peace with my sin.

I'll call it peace with God. What would that judge do? A human judge. He's not the almighty judge that knows all things and is ever present and eternal and all.

No, he's just a human judge. Those things of time, of works, of coming to peace with your sin, all of these things that are offered by other world religions, sitting underneath a tree and coming to your own personal balance between good and evil, none of those things do anything to deal with sin, even in a human courtroom, even in a fallen courtroom full of sinners.

Brothers and sisters, we have to deal with sin and the way we deal with sin is death. What we deserve is for that verse to be our bumper sticker faith.

That's it. That's all we deserve. All of sin and fall short of the glory of God, that should be the end of our book. Don't let that be the end of your book. We have verse 24, being justified.

[14 : 38] A legal term which means you no longer have debt. Someone has paid for this. Being justified is through redemption. Redemption means to pay for something.

Quite literally means to be bought back. How is this done? We see in verse 25 it's through perpetuation. That means someone, somewhere, has taken on our debt for us. He has stepped in our place and who is that man?

Verse 24, Christ. Christ has come and has taken the pain and the punishment, the wrath of God's perfect justice that we deserve for the sins which we have committed.

We have Christ. This free gift of grace that is, that's amazing because it's something we didn't earn. It's not something we deserved.

You didn't get it by sitting on a pew. You didn't get it by sitting underneath a tree meditating. You didn't get it by walking little old ladies across the street. You got this undeserved and ill-deserved mercy resulting in your salvation and Christ despite who you are because we have a gracious God.

[15 : 53] He did so without sacrificing His justice and He was able to do that by punishing Christ for our sin. That has some practical applications for us.

I believe it has three. First of all, we need to come to an understanding of the depth of our sin. Our sin is measured against the height of God's glory.

That means it is infinitely great. It's not something that we can just look at and say, it's okay. It's not a big deal. I'll just go on with my day.

Our sin needs to break our hearts and if it does that, if we have come in Christ to come to hate our sin which we once loved and love the God which we once hated which we had no fear of God before our eyes, if we have come to see the danger that we were facing outside of Christ of eternal damnation, we need to come to repentance.

Repentance is not a 360 turnabout where we grab a little Jesus and add it to the rest of the idols of our lives and the rest of the ways that we deal with sin. It's a 180.

[17 : 03] It's turning around to the opposite direction and walking towards a God that we now love. That is repentance. Once we've found repentance, when we have a growing relationship with Christ, we have a reason for rejoicing.

We have a reason for rejoicing knowing that our debt has been paid. I look at a lot of churches today and I don't see a lot of rejoicing. Think about it.

If you were walking down a sidewalk and you found a winning lottery ticket and there is more earthly wealth, this wealth that will eventually pass away or that you will die and it will be left to who knows who.

If you found this ticket and you just won a measurable earthly wealth, you would rejoice, wouldn't you? You would be jumping for joy. You would be telling everybody that you knew, hey, I've got immeasurable wealth.

We would be crazy if we didn't. In Christ, we have something far greater than that. We have eternal life. We have living water that leads to peace with God.

[18 : 12] A restored relationship that what we deserved was eternal damnation. The justice and wrath of God poured out upon us. It was poured out upon another and we didn't pay the price.

Finally, we have a call to evangelism. We need to be sober-minded about the world we live in. We need to be sober-minded about that guy that we sat next to on Monday morning who doesn't know Christ, who is sitting there still thinking he's okay.

He's sitting there thinking he's got all these great ways, these plans that will deal with his sin when what he's really doing is marching wholeheartedly into eternal damnation, to facing face-to-face before one almighty God.

He'll be standing alone. We have a call to share the gospel, even if all we know is our own personal testimony and take these verses, Romans 23 and 24.

We have a call to love our neighbor as we love our God. How can we love them and be okay with them marching into eternal flames? That is the reality of the gospel, is the salvation that is in Christ through our redemption.

[19 : 37] A sure salvation is the only way the debt had to be paid and the wages of sin is death. But the glory of God is that he who knew no sin was made to become sin for our righteousness so that we no longer have fear of hell and we have a reason to rejoice.

Let's go and share that to the world. Gracious Father in heaven, we do thank you for the sound once again of the gospel that reminds us of the greatness and gravity of our sin that it's against you, a God of glory and that reminds us of the Savior you sent to redeem us, to buy us back to you that we might receive this gift freely by grace.

Thank you for such a great salvation. Please write these things on our hearts that sin would become exceedingly sinful to us, that grace and the Lord Jesus would become exceedingly sweet and that sinners would be a burden upon our hearts that we would take this good news to tell them of our Savior.

Thank you for the privilege of coming before you, our final judge, arm in arm with the Savior to have him present us before you clothed in his righteousness alone and we come and pray and praise you in his name.

Amen. Amen. We are dismissed. Thank you.