

Introduction:

Good morning. It's refreshing being back here with you all...I want to first thank you for your support of myself and my family...As many of you know...Two weeks ago, the Bradshaw family went from 3 to 4...We now have two beautiful baby girls...They get their good looks from their momma...

Thank you for the cards, prayers and support...

Thank you to those that took up the slack in my absence...Thank you to the staff for your hard work...Thank you to Dwight and Dustin for doing a great job bringing the word...I heard great things while I was away...

I also heard a nickname got leaked...And yes my father in-Law called me "Bozo" after Bozo the clown for my linebacker type noggin...

Before I begin...I'd also like to thank...

Thank you also to all those that worked so hard at VBS this week...I cannot begin to communicate how impressed I was with the decorations, organizations, and attitudes of everyone that help...It was awesome...

What makes it all worth is the children...The Lord brought us four children this week that believed in Jesus Christ... And the children gave over \$1400 to missionaries...Awesome...

Bow with me in a word of prayer...

ME:

Today I'd like to talk to you about valuing Grace...Valuing God's grace...

Ya know...In every major city in America, there is beautiful place that is often overlooked...Perhaps one of the most wonderful and revealing places in a city is the **city dump**...

It is a wonderful place that society has invented...Rather than throwing our garbage on our front lawn we take our once valuable items and throw them in a place to be forever forgotten...

But ya know...A city dump is not just a wonderful place but also a very informative place... Perhaps it is the best place to investigate a culture....

The garbage at the dump reveals a city's culture...It reveals what they eat, drink, and read...It reveals its likes and dislikes...it reveals its wealth or poverty...it reveals its celebrity gossip and its politics....

But let's say for whatever reason... You decided to be brave and take a field trip to Huntsville's city dump... So, you decide to walk around and observe Huntsville's garbage...

What would you find? I imagine you'd see lots of Little Rosies wrappers...

But then as you waded through... you would find things of actual value that people just threw away.

You would see monetarily valuable items thrown away... Items like old cell phones, old TVs, and old watches... In the very least, you would see soda cans worth 5 cents a piece... You'd see glass bottles that have value but are thrown away as mere garbage... You would find so many items of valuable that have been discarded as worthless trash...

WE:

Transition: But ya know... That is the story of Christianity...

Transition: As I look at my life and as I reflect upon the years of ministry... I realize that this is a Christian's propensity... To discard pillars of spirituality as useless or invaluable garbage...

Transition: And yet this is the very struggle of the church in Rome... They are struggling with the temptation to throw away spiritually valuable items...

Transition: And their temptation centers around the issue of God's grace... **Today, we** are answering the question... What are three ways to value God's Grace?

Transition: So, return with me to the Book of Romans... Today we will be finishing up Romans Chapter 3...

GOD:

Review:

As you turn there... I want you to think about something... If you could describe Romans 1:1-3:26... in two phrases what would they be?

1:1-3:20- Mankind's complete brokenness... But then flip the script...

3:21-26- God's wonderful grace... Right?

Mankind's brokenness and inability to attain salvation is described in Chapters 1, 2 and 3... And then God's magnanimous, stupendous, undeserved, wonderful salvific grace is described in verses 3:21-26...

Since it has been a few weeks, I'd like to revisit God's wonderful grace in 3:21-26... Join with me as I read...

Read verses 3:21-24, *"But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even the righteousness of God*

through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; 23 for all "have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;

Awesome...Simply awesome truth...

What truth are these verses describing? The Process of Justification ...Right?

The Process of Justification is that we are all sinful and continue to fall short...But God declared us innocent by means of His grace...Through the instrument of purchase...With Jesus as the Buyer.....And now salvation is freely given to all by faith...

Transition: Let us now revisit the opposite side of the coin... Notice verses 25-26...

Read verses 25-26, *"25 whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation ^bin His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; 26 for 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."*

What truth are these verses describing? The Process of Satisfaction...

The Process of God's Satisfaction...is that God sent His only Son to be the propitiation or satisfaction for our sin and God's satisfaction with Jesus' payment is demonstrated as He passes over our sins previously and forever committed.....

Listen to this thought, "Righteousness is a gift received through faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus' death liberated believers from the slavery of sin and satisfied God's judging righteousness..." (Schreiner, Romans 200)

Romans 3:27-31

(Preview) Transition: So, in lieu of God's grace through justification and satisfaction...how should we then act?

In lieu of grace, Paul gives us three actions in verses 27-31...And Notice with me...the first action in verse 27-28...

Read verses 27-28, *"Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith. 28 For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law."*

What is the first way to value God's Grace?

Point #1: Value God's grace by resisting self-righteous pride...Value God's grace....Point #1: by resisting self-righteous pride,

Now.....What does Paul mean here when he says... *"Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith."*?

In order to understand verse 27, what must we do?... We must think about Paul's audience... Who is Paul's audience...? Christians... who are Jews...

Now... What is the Jewish tendency toward God and salvation? Their tendency is to "earn" salvation... which inevitably results in Self-righteous boasting... Their mindset is to think that they are meant to abide by a law of works and not by a law of faith...

Listen to this thought, "The Jewish struggle is that they can confess God's grace, deeply believe in it, and yet believe that human works play a vital role in obtaining salvation. Paul vigorously opposed such a synergism, contending that the entrance into eternal life was by faith alone..."

Despite grace... **The Jewish tendency** is to dot all their "I's" and cross all their "T's" ... They Stress out trying to be as perfect as possible so that God will never again send them away and so that they can bang heaven's gates demanding entrance...

Problem: But there is one problem...

Transition: When a Jewish Christian or when any Christian who has believed in Jesus Christ ... When any Christians worries about being good enough to get into heaven...

Transition: Then, how does that reveal grace?.....

Practical:

Allow me to poke into your world for just a second... When we, as Christians, worry about being good enough... When we focus on being self-righteous or stressed over being perfect in every jot and tittle then...

How then does that reveal grace?

It reveals that we believe grace isn't good enough... That God's payment wasn't good enough... As Christians... if we continue to boast and stress about being good enough for heaven then that means God's grace wasn't sufficient...

Transition: Friends, I want you to receive something..... I'd like for you to pull down your defenses for just a second... and receive this statement...

God's grace to save is sufficient... God's grace is sufficient...(Repeat with me) It is sufficient to save you... It is sufficient and is all that is needed to save you...

Friends... we don't have to prove it... We don't have to be good enough... We don't have to be perfect enough... We don't have to earn it... if we had to earn it then it wouldn't be free... As Christians, we don't have to stress out over pleasing an overbearing father to earn approval... His grace is sufficient...

Story:

RUN DMC...To demonstrate the struggle that we have as Christians with self-righteous boasting...I heard of a story about a pop-culture icon that became a Christian...Now, this particular musician was widely known as a heathen...But the grace of God gripped him and he believed...

So, the first thing that he did to prove his seriousness to follow Christ is that he went out and found the biggest Bible money could buy...So that when he came to church everyone would look at the size of his Bible and realize how serious he was...

Think about it: That is the very thing that Paul is condemning here, right?...That we should not boast in our self-righteous pride or self-righteous actions but rather Value God's grace to save us apart from works...

Transition: Salvation is not a competition... Salvation is not earned...It is free....and since it is free we each have nothing to boast about...

Point #1: Value God's grace by resisting self-righteous pride...

Transition: But then notice the second action to Value God's Grace...And it comes as a reminder to Paul's Jewish audience...

Read verses 29-30, *“Or is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, 30 since indeed God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith is one.*

Point #2: Value God's grace by sharing inclusively...by sharing inclusively...

Now, notice with me... a key connecting word in verse 29... What is the first word in verse 29? “Or” this is the Greek conjunction “ἢ”...A conjunction tells us that there is a relationship between verses 27-28 and 29-30...

So, we must ask a perceptive question...What is the relationship between verses 27-28, and 29-30?

In my opinion... Verses 29-30 prove verses 27-28.....The truth of a Jew being saved by a law of grace and not the law of works is proven in verses 29-30...

What is the proof? The proof is two-fold...

Proof #1: that God is also the God of Gentiles...“*Or is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also,*”

That God...is the God of both Jews and Gentiles...If mankind was only justified by obeying the

Law then the Gentiles stood no chance...Why? Because they didn't have access to the Law...

The first proof of being justified by faith is that God is the God of the Jews and Gentiles ...All of mankind regardless of Jew or Gentiles...Regardless if black or white...Regardless of ethnicity has always been saved by grace through faith outside of the Law ...

Transition: The first proof that we are saved by the law of faith rather than the law of works... is that **God is the God of both Jews and Gentiles...**

Transition: And notice **Paul's second proof** in verse 30...

Read verse 30... *“since indeed God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith is one...”*

Now...The second proof here is difficult and must be uncovered...In fact, we must find it.....In order to find the second proof I am going to give you waaaaaaaaaaay TMI...We are about to get all down in the weeds....

Some of you may be asking...Why must we reach into the weeds? Well, Notice verse 30 in the NASB...It reads a bit funny... *“since indeed God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith is one...”*

What does this even mean? It all centers around the phrase “is one”...And I see three possibilities for interpreting verse 30...

Possibility #1: Is it saying... “Since indeed God is the one who will justify...the circumcision and uncircumcision by faith”?

Possibility #2: Is it saying... “Since indeed God who will justify the circumcised and the uncircumcised as one”?

Or,

Possibility #3: Is it saying... “Since indeed God is one....He will then justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised by faith”?

The mystery can be solved by digging into the original language...Here is verse 30 in Koine Greek, “εἴπερ εἷς ὁ θεὸς ὃς δικαιοῦσιν περιτομῆν ἐκ πίστεως καὶ ἀκροβυστίαν διὰ τῆς πίστεως.”

The mystery is solved with the very first phrase...

The first word is the conjunction “since”

The second word is “one”

The third word is “the”

The fourth word is “theos” or God...

Now this syntactical construction is a Nominative absolute...Since the noun “God” has the article then..... it is the subject and is modified by the word “one”

In other words...Paul is saying... “Since God is one”... He will then justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised by faith”

Proof #2 that we are truly justified by faith apart from the law of works Is that “God is one”...

In other words...There is only one true God...And since there is only one true God...He then justifies all of us...and all of His created sinful humans the same...

But Notice one more key observation in verse 30... *“since indeed God is one He will then justify the circumcised (Jews) by faith and the uncircumcised (Gentiles) through faith...”*

What does this verse reveal about God? God is inclusive.....He isn’t one way with this group and another with another group...God loves and offers salvation the same way to all people...By grace through faith...

Listen to this thought from a commentator: “the oneness of God demands that Jews and Gentiles are justified in the same way...by faith” (Schreiner, Romans, 200.)

Transition: And if the 1st century Jews would truly value God’s grace...Then they would see the invitation of the Gospel to all peoples...Matthew 28:18-20...They would not find it to be exclusively for them...But would share the Gospel as inclusive to all peoples...

Illustration: But Friends, Can I poke for just a second? We must be careful of something...We must be careful not to be like these Jews...

We must be careful not to think that the Gospel is really only meant for people like me...that look like me...that act like me...that rationalize like me...

But I imagine many of us also struggle with the same thing...

I mean think about it...It is easy to share the Gospel with a child that is raised in a Christian family than it is the rowdy out of control child...It is easier to share the Gospel with a friend at work than it is someone on the street... or maybe vice versa....It is easier to share the Gospel with someone seeking it...Than a professing atheist...

But as I understand this passage...The Gospel is meant for anyone...And if it is meant for anyone...Then we must boldly share it with everyone...

Even if they are different...Even if they are militant against it...God is the God of the Jew and the Gentile...Of the atheist and the homeless...Of the CEO and the lowly, of the rich and the poor....So then let us share boldly...including all people and excluding none...

Transition: Point #2: Value God's grace by resisting self-righteous pride, by sharing inclusively...

Transition: But then Paul gives us a **third action** item to value grace... Notice verse 31...

Read verse 31, *“Do we then nullify the Law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Law.”*

Point #3: Value God's grace by Standing on the Word...by standing on the Word...

Now, in order to understand this verse we must once again think about Paul's audience...But this time...I don't want you to just think about them...But rather I want you to put yourself in their shoes...

Think about it...If you are a first century Jew, you are in a dilemma.....If we are saved by grace...Then what do we do with the Law? If the Law does not save, then has the Law become useless?

And How does Paul respond? GOD FORBID...Rather, what? We establish the Law...that word “establish” is literally “stand”...On the contrary we stand on the Law...

So, What is Paul saying? Grace does not erase the Law...But rather the Law informs Grace...

Think about it...

To the Jews, without the Law then how do they know how to live under Grace?

To the Jews, without the Law how then do they know how to guide others...

Without the Law how then do they know how to grow themselves...

And without the Law, how will God's grace be shined to the nations?

And To Us...Without the Law...How can we know sin? And without the knowledge of sin...How could we understand Grace?

Rather than throwing away a valuable commodity into our spirituality...Let us rather recognize its worth...We stand on the Law because the Law informs sin which then informs Grace...

Friends...Can I say something?

Salvation is by grace through faith... And Sanctification is by the Spirit through obedience to this (Hold up Bible)...

We diminish grace if we put on a self-righteous performance...We diminish grace if we keep the Gospel to ourselves...And we diminish grace when we do not obey this...

Practical:

But ya know...once again it is easy for us to become like these Jewish Christians ...There is a drastic temptation for us today...for each of us in this room it is tempting for us to throw away valuable items in our spiritual dumps....

Now, some of you might be saying...Ya, right, Byron...I don't throw away pieces of God's Word because of grace....

Hmm... Sure we do...You know how I know this...Because I do it too...

What are valuable areas of our spiritual life that we “nullify” or the we often throw away as useless? I actually think of 4 areas...

Area #1: Certain sections of scripture...I mean think about it...**How many of us value** certain sections of God's word over other sections? We love Ephesians, Romans, Revelation, Hebrews, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John...But there is a whole other half of Bible that is often dusty...Leviticus.....Deuteronomy.....Haggai...

Transition: As I understand 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and Romans 3:31...these are equally valuable...

Transition: What are some other valuable items that we throw away as invaluable?

Area #2: But what about people?

Story:

I recently had someone come up to me and ask me the question... “Now, Byron, you said back in October that anyone is invited to come to church.....Is that true?”

My response was, “Absolutely...I certainly hope so..”

But why did this person even ask this question? Because it is easy for us as Christians to value certain types of people and throw other types of people away...

Area #3: We often “nullify” Quiet times...it is easy to spiritually “graduate” from personal devotions...Or even if we have the habit...It is also easy to reduce readign the scripture for information rather than transformation (point to yourself)...

Area #4: We often “nullify” or throw away True fellowship...It is easy to sacrifice and nullify true open fellowship with one another on the altar of busyness or a lack of trust...

Friends, let us be careful not to devalue or nullify what is truly important to God...Let us be careful not to throw away spiritual glass bottles into our spiritual landfill but rather find value in what God finds value...And God finds...

His completed, whole Word valuable...
People Valuable...

Time in prayer and devotion valuable
 True fellowship valuable
 Serving in ministry valuable
 Making Disciples valuable,
 Loving Others Valuable...

.....

Transition: As I head toward closing...I'd like to address two different groups of people... Those without grace and those with grace...

YOU:

Group #1: The first group are those without grace...Every Sunday...I stare out into the crowd and know this group is here...Every Sunday gripped with fear...the fear I have is that some of you will not hear truth...That your fingers are in your ears and the enemy blinds you to the truth...

What is that truth? That you are wandering in darkness...That you think you have salvation...That you think since you mom or dad told you were a Christian...Or since you "know" the truth then you are saved...

You are not saved by knowing the truth...You are saved by believing the truth...

If you are unsure of where you will go when you die...If you are unsure if you have trusted Christ to be your Savior...If you are in the slightest unsure if you are a Christian or not...

Then God through Jesus Christ offers you salvation by faith...You are saved by believing in Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior...If you doubt or have never believed then right now...Right where you are believe in Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior...And if you ever believe I want you to come up to me and share it so I can rejoice with you...

Transition: But then there is Group #2: those with grace...

And my main application for you is to Value Grace...Value Grace...Now, what does that mean? That means to understand and appreciate God's undeserved favor...

Yet...In order to Value Grace, I am going to give you **four steps**...This week I want you to take four steps to really valuing God's grace...

Step #1: Read...I want you to read Romans 3:21-26 everyday this week...I want you to read over and over again and saturate your life with the process of justification...

Step #2: Release Self Righteous Anxiety...Oftentimes, what fuels legalism...teetolaing...and a self-righteous performance is **anxiety**...If I don't appear perfect, will people still like me? If I don't act perfect will God still love me...If I don't perform perfectly will God still accept me...I suggest if you struggle with self-righteous anxiety then read and memorize Romans 3:21-

26...And saturate on that truth...

Step #3: Remove Self Imposed Biases... It is easy as a Christian to circle our lives with people just like us...or share the Gospel with people just like us...But we must realize that God is one...And He is God over all...And so we are under obligation to share the Gospel to all those we see...**Remove Biases; in fact, eradicate biases...**...and look beyond our differences and be willing to love and share the Gospel with all...

Step #4: Revive All Scripture... Grace does not nullify any part of the Bible...But rather Grace informs all parts of the Bible and is informed by all parts of the Bible...Friends, we cannot understand God's grace without understanding this...(Hold up Bible) Revive your love for the entire scripture...Get on a annual reading plan...I want to say we have a plan in the foyer...

Transition: As I close I'd like to reflect upon a hymn...it is a hymn that captures the value of God's grace for us...

Marvelous grace of our loving Lord,
Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt!
Yonder on Calvary's mount outpoured,
There where the blood of the Lamb was spilled.

Sin and despair, like the sea waves cold,
Threaten the soul with infinite loss;
Grace that is greater, yes, grace untold,
Points to the refuge, the mighty cross.

Dark is the stain that we cannot hide;
What can we do to wash it away?
Look! There is flowing a crimson tide,
Brighter than snow you may be today.

Marvelous, infinite, matchless grace,
Freely bestowed on all who believe!
You that are longing to see His face,
Will you this moment His grace receive?

- Refrain:
Grace, grace, God's grace,
Grace that will pardon and cleanse within;
Grace, grace, God's grace,
Grace that is greater than all our sin!