



HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

But Now

June 16, 2019

Romans 3:19-23

Clint Pressley

¹⁹ Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. ²⁰ For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. ²¹ But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— ²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

(Pastor prays)

You don't take medicine unless you actually believe you are sick. If you are sick and yet don't believe you are sick, the problem just gets worse until oftentimes it's too late. I tell you that because for the last 4 months we have been going through the book of Romans and the Apostle Paul has heaped diagnosis after diagnosis on our heads to remind us that without Christ we have a sickness unto death. In fact, without Christ, you are dead and don't even know it. And we have finally gotten to our destination where Paul has been taking us all these weeks. Except for the introduction and statement of the gospel in Romans 1:16 this book has given us an utterly dark picture of our wickedness and hopelessness apart from Christ. Back in Romans 1:20 Paul tells us that gentiles are without excuse, then, in chapter 2:1 he tells us the religious people are without excuse and now in 3:19 he tells us that all humans are without excuse! But that's not the end of the story. The wrath of God dominated the last section and now the righteousness of God dominates this section and the hinge on which the door swings is Jesus Christ. Paul is bringing us out of the Valley of the shadow of death and points us into the

beautiful uplands of God's grace. I want you to come with me as we see the glory of God found in Jesus Christ.

Our Situation is Terrible but God's Grace is Remarkable

The bad news isn't over yet.

Our condition is hopeless

Let's jump right into verse 19 and notice how bad the news is and we will talk about it. ¹⁹*Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God.*

Our problem is comprehensive

"We know" – It is settled. We have knowledge. We collectively are fools aware that we are in sin. That word *know* or *knowledge*, is that it is settled and complete. Not only that, see that word *whatever* in verse 19. Whatever the law says, speaks to those under the law so that every mouth is stopped. It is a universal and comprehensive application which means there is not one person here that this doesn't apply to.

Our problem is indefensible

Pay attention to the end of verse 19. ¹⁹*Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God.* Every mouth may be silenced and the hold world held accountable to God. Now, the religious people would be assured that the terrible list in verses 11 through 18 applied to those wicked gentiles and God's judgment was sure to fall on them. Now Paul is saying wait, not just the obviously bad people, it's you. Every mouth is stopped in the whole world is held accountable to God. Let's deal with the imagery and the words in verse 19. Imagery first. Every mouth stopped. The picture is of a defendant charged with terrible crimes. He's hired a top-notch attorney but as the prosecutor begins to deliberate the crushing weight of the evidence is so thorough that the crackerjack defense attorney just hangs his head and the defendant collapses in the chair realizing that he's doomed six ways from Sunday and there is absolutely nothing he can say in defense. He's guilty. There is no merit to plead, there is no excuse to be made. We stand before God speechless and condemned. Not only that, verse 19 says that we are accountable to God. The whole world is accountable. That word *accountable* is

only used here in the New Testament. It means to be under accusation with no possibility of defense, guilty. Our problem is comprehensive and universal. Our problem is indefensible.

Our problem is spiritual

Verse 20 describes a religious, lost person, a morally right, spiritually dead person. Let's read it and listen to what is the law of the Old Testament. ²⁰*For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight since through the law comes knowledge of sin.* Through reading the Old Testament we get knowledge of sin, not forgiveness of sin. No good deeds can save us, no religious activity can sanctify us. If a person is to be saved then God must do it. Then what is the Old Testament good for? Traditionally there are 3 uses of the law of God.

1. It's a mirror. It reflects the righteousness of God and the sinfulness of men. It reflects the holiness of God and the sinfulness of man.
2. It restrains us from evil. The laws are narratives and instructions and warnings.
3. It reveals God's character. It shows what is good and pleasing to God and what is bad and offensive to God.

It's that first use that Paul is employing here. The law is a schoolmaster that drives us to Christ. It is a mirror that shows us our sin and need for a savior. Think of it like this. I look at Mount Sinai where the 10 commandments were given. I realize I have broken them and I am condemned. That realization makes me look to Mount Calvary where Jesus kept the whole law then died taking the punishment I deserve. The law brings the knowledge of sin, not the forgiveness of sin. Martin Luther said the point of the Old Testament is to make people worse, not better. It shows us our sin and then by the knowledge of that sin we are humbled, terrified, bruised and thereby run to Christ. We must accept the divine diagnosis of our human condition as true, and then free from the just judgment of our sins into the hope that is in Jesus who died for our sins. Our situation is terrible but God's grace is remarkable. Our condition is hopeless.

God's grace is boundless

There they are in verse 21, two of the greatest words in the Bible - But Now. We are justly condemned. We are helpless in our sin. We are powerless to escape God's wrath, but now. But now. Paul suddenly breaks in after all this judgment. But now. God has intervened after the long dark night and the sun has risen. But now. A new day has dawned. ²¹*But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the*

Prophets bear witness to it— But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law. Here is a fresh revelation that solves an old problem. There is a righteousness from God that is apart from the law. Over against our unrighteousness, we have God's righteousness. Over against wrath that we deserve we have God's grace. Over against God's judgment, we have justification. Over against our slavery to sin, we have freedom. Before I get carried away, I want to describe God's boundless grace in bullet points using the text.

Grace is God's initiative

God did it. The righteousness of God has been manifested, revealed. It's been shown. The human problem has been radically transformed by the saving act of God at the cross of Christ.

Grace has always been His plan

Verse 21 – the law and the prophets bear witness to it. The whole story of the whole Bible is taking us to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

Grace is applied by faith in Jesus

²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. Believing that Jesus lived and died in your place. Faith is the avenue that grace travels on to enter your life. Not just any faith. Look at it again, faith in Jesus Christ. This is not a simple affirmation of the truth about Jesus, even the demons do that. A saving faith is placing yourself into total submission to the lordship of Jesus Christ. It happens like this. It is the willful obedience to God. It is emotional trust and intellectual assent. It is you reading the Bible and walking through the text and knowing the truth of the Gospel.

Grace is available to all who will believe

²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, All those who will believe. Anyone that believes in the Lord Jesus will be saved, there is no distinction. Jesus himself said in John 6: 37 *the one who comes to me I will in no way cast out.* There is no distinction among those who can be saved because there is no distinction among those who are lost. We all fall short, we all come in last.

This grace solves our problem

We have to take verses 22 and 23 together. Verse 23 describes why we need the grace of verse 22. ²² *the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*

Verse 23 says for all have sinned, that's in the past tense. That's from yesterday back, the past. Do you have a past? It's what you have done. We feel guilty because of what we have done. Come to the cross of Jesus. There Jesus died for your past. There is therefore now no condemnation. Let's today leave your past at the cross. Notice also this grace solves our present problem. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Falling short of God's glory is every moment of every day. I need the active and immediate means of God found in Jesus Christ. Our situation is terrible but God's grace is remarkable. Our condition as hopeless but God's grace in Jesus is boundless. Come and receive the grace of God in Jesus through his perfect life, atoning death and victorious resurrection.

(Pastor prays)