Romans 3:21-31

Supreme Paradox!

I. Announce:
   A. Slide#1 Tem/Murr Rescue Mission - has their Mobil Medical Unit for you to tour.
      1. Medical profession volunteers are invited to sign up & use their gifts.
      2. To encourage those in need of medical care to come & use it. [See Eric Wells]
   B. Slide#2 Join me this Thursday to hear our Mayor, Doug McAllister, giving the State of the City.
   C. Slide#3 Interview Carlos & Valeria Ramos (GRN) to Brazil.

II. Slide#4 Intro:
   A. Slide#5,6 Now we find light at the end of the sin-tunnel! (Rom.3:10-18)
   B. The main Questions to answer this morning:
      1. How can a holy God forgive guilty people?
         a) If our judges in our courts did that, Wouldn’t they be removed from their office?
            Wouldn’t our society fall apart?
   C. So we learn about what Bengel called, “the supreme paradox of the gospel”.
      1. Webster defines a paradox, “a statement that is seemingly contradictory or opposed to common sense & yet is perhaps true.”
      2. G.K.Chesterton gave the definition for a paradox as “truth standing on its head shouting for attention.”
      3. A paradox is a powerful vehicle for truth, because it makes people think.
         a) The Scriptures often use Paradox - We see, unseen things (2 Cor. 4:18); we conquer by yielding (Rom. 6:16-18); we find rest under a yoke (Mt. 11:28-30); we reign by serving (Mark 10:42-44); we are made great by becoming little (Luke 9:48); we are exalted by being humble (Mt. 23:12); we become wise by being fools for Christ's sake (1 Cor. 1:20, 21); we are made free by becoming His bond servants (Rom. 6:10); we wax strong by being weak (2 Cor. 12:10); we triumph by defeat (2 Cor. 12:7-9); we find victory by glorying in our infirmities (2 Cor. 12:5); and we live by dying (2 Cor. 4:10,11).
   D. Title: Supreme Paradox [How can a holy God forgive guilty people?]
   E. Outline: Three Metaphors & Three No’s.
   F. As a teaser...I will prove at the end, we can be saved by works!

III. Slide#7 THREE METAPHORS! (21-26)
   A. 3 Metaphors are given to describe what God has done for man’s sinful condition:
      A Courtroom; Slavery; Sacrifice.
   B. Slide#8 [1] A COURTROOM! (21-24a,26)
C. We have the picture of a **Condemned Man** in a courtroom, as he hears the verdict of **acquittal** (not guilty).

D. #8a **Justification** – a legal declaration, an announcement of one’s status before God.
   1. It’s opposite is **condemnation**.
   2. It **doesn’t mean** we are instantly perfect & holy;
   3. It **does mean** we are instantly **forgiven** & **loved** by God.
   4. It **does mean** Christ’s righteousness is **instantly credited** to our account.
   5. It **does mean** God looks at us & sees the **perfect obedience** of His Son.
      a) The Old religion (Judaism) thought “a man can attain to a right relationship w/God by keeping meticulously all that the law lays down. If he fulfills all the works of the law, he will be right w/God.”¹
         (1) Yet we know that no man ever **kept**, or **will ever keep**, **every** commandment of the law. Simply because, man is an imperfect creature who can **never** render a **perfect obedience**.
      b) The Law...
         (1) The Law helped man to **become aware** of his sin.
         (2) The Law helped man to **know what he ought to do**, so he could realize that he is not doing it.
         (3) The Law helped man to **see** that as he tries to **satisfy the law**, he will realize he will **never satisfy it**.
         (4) The Law helps man to **see** the way to God is **NOT by the law**, but **by Grace**!

6. **Justification** then is not to make someone **something**, but to **account** someone as **something**.
   a) Rom.4:5 God justifies the **ungodly**.
   b) But wait! - Prov.17:15 says, He who **justifies the wicked**, and he who **condemns the just**. Both of them alike are an **abomination** to the LORD.; **And**, Ex.23:7 says, For I will **not** justify the wicked. Then he turns around & **does** it…How can He?

E. #8b **Righteousness** – He not only **cancels** our failures, **Justifies** us, but he also **declares** us Rt.
   1. Isn’t that the same? **Nope**!
      a) If a **Teacher** cancels out an **F** you got on an exam, it **isn’t** the same as declaring it an **A**!
      b) If a **Bank** were to **forgive** you the debts of your account, that wouldn’t be the same as **declaring** you **rich**!

¹ William Barclay, pg.53.
So also, canceling our sins, is not the same as declaring us righteous.\(^2\)

F. All have sinned (entire human race has plunged into sin w/Adam) and Fallen short (means to lack, or to be without. Present tense we "keep on falling short")

1. Fall short of what? His glory (i.e. His splendor or radiance)
   a) We fail to show the outward manifestation of what God is;
   We fail to be like Him, to be Christ like!

G. Freely – (lit.) Without any cost!

1. A wage is something you earn or work for.
2. God's grace however is a Gift to us. Exactly opposite of what we deserve. It comes only one way...through the blood of Jesus Christ.

H. Slide#9a [2] SLAVERY! (24b)

I. We have here the picture of an Enslaved Man, standing on his slave block, who hears he is redeemed from his bondage, & is set free.

J. Redemption – means a ransoming, a liberating, a redeeming.

1. It means man was in the power, the grip, the dominion of sin, & the ownership of Satan; And now, Jesus Christ’s blood purchased him & set him free.
   a) Yet, “Freedom is not the right to do as you please, but the liberty to do as you ought.”


L. We now have the picture of a once Guilty Man at the Cross of Christ, as he hears that the wrath of God has been removed.

M. Propitiation – fancy word that means satisfaction.

1. Jesus’ death was necessary to satisfy God the Father’s need to judge sin.
   a) This is so important because it preserves God as a just judge of sin, even though we have been forgiven.
2. Propitiation is a sacrifice that bears the wrath of God & thereby turns Gods wrath into favor.\(^3\)
   a) Because He passed over sins & not punished them in the past(OT), people could rightly accuse God of unrighteousness.
   b) The assumption...A God who does not punish sins...is not a righteous God.
   c) The cross showed He could still be righteous by storing up the punishment of all the OT saints, then gave that penalty to Jesus on the cross.

3. By pouring out His wrath on His own Son, God rightly judged our sin

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\(^2\) John Piper, The Passion of Jesus Christ, pg.39.

\(^3\) Grudem, Systematic Theology, pg.510.
a) Even those previously committed i.e. pre-cross.

N. So, Q: How can a holy God forgive guilty people?
   1. A: God the Lawgiver & Judge obeyed His own law, died for us, & paid the penalty for our sins...The Judge is now our Savior.

IV. Slide#11 THREE NO’S! (27-31)
A. 3 NO’s are given to describe what God has done for man’s sinful condition:
   No Pride; No Prejudice; No Presumption.
B. Slide#12a [1] NO PRIDE! (27,28)
C. What’s our response to this? – “Look at the Gift I’ve Earned!” (Nope!)
D. If the way to God is the way of faith & acceptance, then ALL boasting in human achievement is gone!
   1. Quit trying to keep a profit & loss statement w/God!
   2. Quit making an entry on the credit side of the page whenever you carry out one of the law’s requirements.
   3. You see, the Gift always glorifies the Giver not the Recipient! [So, no boasting!]
      a) Thus the Hymn writer says, “When I survey the wondrous cross, On which the prince of glory died, My richest gain I count but loss, And pour contempt on all my pride!”
E. The way of obedience to the Law is concerned with what a man can do for himself;
   The way of Grace is concerned with what God can do & has done for a man.
   1. Thus, the way to a right relationship with God lies not in a frenzied, desperate, doomed attempt to win acquittal by our performance; it lies in the humble, penitent acceptance of the love & the grace which God offers us in Jesus Christ.4
F. #12b [2] NO PREJUDICE! (29,30)
G. One of the Jews might have questioned, hey that’s great for the Gentiles who didn’t know the law, but what about us who did?
   1. Paul takes them to the basis of the Jewish creed, the very thing that every Synagogue service always begins with, even today…The Shema, “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!”
      a) One – Not, one kind of God for the Gentiles & one kind for the Jews…The Lord is One!
      b) The way to Him is the same way for all!
H. #12c,13 [3] NO PRESUMPTION! (31)

4 William Barclay. Pg.56.
I. The end of the law? No! - It strengthens it!

1. The Law is **not evil** & the law should **not be ignored**.

2. Up to this time, man tried to **be a good man**, tried to **keep the commandments**, tried to **serve God**, because he was **afraid** of God & **terrified** of the punishment that would come.

   a) But now we strive for goodness because we **love** God, not because we are **afraid** of Him!

   b) **It is not the law of fear but the law of Love** that keeps a man right!

   (1) Many people do not care to be **fined** or even **imprisoned**, but often what keeps a man from **shipwrecking his life** is **the eye of one who loves him**.

      (a) Remember the old films: The cops on the **bullhorn** trying to get the man holding hostages inside to give up, **“no way coppers, never take me alive!”** Then, “Johnny…this is your mother!” – “Ma?”

      (b) **It is not the law of fear but the law of Love** that keeps a man right!

J. Read what Paul says later in **Rom.8:3,4…**regarding what happens to the law now!

K. **Wrap up!** – Christ’s righteousness is given to us as a **gift**.

1. **It is ours by faith, apart from the law, apart from works. All because of Christ!** – That is the flip-side of sin!

2. Did you know we can actually agree to the statement, **“we are saved by works!”** - As long as we qualify it with... **His works not ours!**

L. **Slide#14,15 Have you found Jesus?** (see Him behind the curtains?)

1. Actually, He was never lost... **but we all have been lost**?

2. We are lost sheep in need of a Shepherd & He would love to be yours this morning.

M. **End: Water Bottle Illustration.** [start with a water base - sodium Hydroxide]

1. **At Conception** sin enters from the parents to the child [add red drops] [Turns red-Phenanthrene]

2. **At Justification** we are **set right** w/God. He deposits His rt into our account. We are **delivered from sin**. [add acid/drops, clears up] [Acidic Acid, strong vinegar]

3. **At Sanctification** we **grow in** holiness, [If I put more sin/drops in, nothing happens!] We are **delivered from the power of sin**. [no matter how many “red/sin” drops, wont turn red again]

4. **At Glorification**, we are **delivered from the presence** of sin altogether. [set bottle aside]