

THREE IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

ROMANS 3:19-26 • TV-335B

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By

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Romans 3:19-26

“Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”

Last week I brought you a message on the subject; **“HE CALLED YOU BY OUR GOSPEL.”** Well this week I’m going to bring to you as clear as I can that Gospel by which He called us and unto which He called us.

And I’d really like for you to have this tape. These messages are on the same cassette tape; a 60 minute tape, 30 minutes on each side. And on one side is; **“HE CALLED YOU BY OUR GOSPEL”** and on the other side is this message which I’ll preach in a few moments on **“THREE IMPORTANT QUESTIONS”** I’d like for you to have.

I’ll tell you at the end of the program about securing the tape but let’s go into the three questions:

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Now, the Bible says in **Psalm 99**; *“The Lord reigneth. Let the people tremble. Exalt the Lord our God and worship at His footstool. For the Lord our God is holy.”*

Now listen again: **Habakkuk** says; *“The Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him.”*

Zephaniah says; *“Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord for He is holy.”*

Isaiah said; *“In the year that king Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting on His throne high and lifted up and His train, His glory, filled the temple. And the seraphims about the throne of God cried holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty.”*

And David wrote *“Holy and reverend is His name.”* And this book is called, *“The Holy Bible.”* And His angels are called, *“The holy angels.”* His presence is called, *“His holy presence.”* So the Lord Jesus is called, *“The holy one of God.”*

And the tabernacle was called, *“The Holy of Holies.”* And when the high priest went under the veil into the Holy of Holies to offer an atonement upon the mercy seat he had written on the miter on his head, *“Holiness to the Lord.”*

What would you say is the chief attribute of God? Well, you who know the Word of God, who know the character of God, who know the living God, will immediately answer, *“God is holy, God is holy.”*

Now I know today’s religion and today’s preachers emphasize, over emphasize, if it’s possible, the love of God. And they would say the chief attribute of God is His love but not so, not so. The chief attribute of God is His holiness.

His love is a holy love. God is holy. He must be holy. God may show mercy but He must be holy. God may be gracious but He must be holy. Do you see what I am saying?

First of all: How holy is God?

I’m talking about the living God now; I’m not talking about the God of our imagination. I’m not talking about God as we think He is. God’s not who you think He is; He is who He says He is. How holy is this God?

I wish I could answer that, I really do. I wish I could answer that question. But I do know this; if I could, if I could answer that question, *“How holy is God;”* there’d be no breath left in me and there’d be no breath left in you?

Paul went to the third heaven and came back and couldn’t tell them anything. He said, *“I heard things it’s not possible to utter.”* There’s no language that can contain or express or define the holiness of God almighty. God is holy.

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Daniel said, *“When I saw the Lord, my comeliness, (my strength) just melted into corruption.”* John on the Isle of Patmos who had leaned upon the breast of the incarnate Lord, but when he saw him in His glory and heard Him speak he said, *“I fell at His feet as a dead man.”* The life had gone out of him.

God is holy. How holy is God? Well, I can suggest some things. I can't define His holiness, I can't picture His holiness, but I can suggest some things. I can tell you this and these preachers talk about seeing the Lord and God telling them things; He is so holy Moses couldn't look on Him.

Moses said, *“Show me your glory (your goodness).”* And God said, “All right but He said I'll have to hide you in the cleft of the rock and put my hand over you because as I pass by no man can look on me and live.”

And I'll tell you, after God had called Moses; (you listen to me now), I'm talking about God's holiness, the strictness of God's holiness and His requirements in Christ Jesus, His requirements of a perfect righteousness and a perfect justice satisfied.

After He had called Moses to deliver the people of Israel from Egypt and after Moses had gotten his wife Zipporah and his son and started toward Egypt to do what God had sent him to do; God met him in the inn; you'll read this in **Exodus 4:24**.

God met him in the inn and would have killed him. He took hold of Moses and would have killed him, why? He had not circumcised his son. That was the token of the Covenant; that was a seal of the Covenant; that was a picture of the rending of the heart and the regeneration of the heart by the Holy Spirit.

That's a picture of our reconciliation and redemption in Christ. And Moses had yielded to the wishes of his pagan wife and had not circumcised that boy and God was going to kill Moses before He let him go to Egypt to lead the people out.

And she took a knife, **verse 25**, and circumcised that lad and through the knife at the feet of Moses and said, *“You are to me a bloody husband”* but God let him go, God let him go. God is holy.

Now you say, “I'll figure out some way to get to heaven.” Not at the expense of His holiness. “Well, I just believe loving God won't send a man to hell.” A holy God will. I'm telling you my friend; God is holy, so holy that king Uzziah died when he tried to go into the tabernacle to offer incense, to offer a sacrifice. He was a beloved king but his heart was lifted up with pride. And he went in to offer a sacrifice. And the priest told him, *“It appertaineth not to thee to offer a sacrifice; that's the priest's work.”*

You see, that's Christ's work. Christ is our high priest. Christ is our Mediator. You're not the mediator. You're not the priest. And he did it anyway and God killed him.

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And Isaiah said when king Uzziah died under those conditions, under the judgment of God for violating the holiness of God; *“I saw the Lord high and lifted up.”*

Uzzah just reached out to steady the ark and God killed him. Nadab and Abihu brought strange fire to the altar and as Moses and Aaron their fathers stood there and watched them. God sent fire from heaven and burned them to a cinder. God is holy, God is holy.

And I’ll tell you this; God is so holy it drains the breath out of you to think of the holiness of God.

God is so holy that when His well-beloved, only begotten Son, was hanging on that cross bearing not His sins; He had none; *“He knew no sin and He had no sin,”* but bearing the sins of His people by imputation and representation; God turned His back on His only begotten Son, so much that Christ Jesus our Lord cried, *“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”* God is holy.

And I’ll tell you this; I know people put a lot of emphasis on the love of God and bless your heart the love of God is indescribable and unspeakable, God’s love for sinners. *“Greater love hath no man than this that he lay down his life for his friends.”* Christ died for His enemies.

I preach the love of God but I’m saying this; God’s love will never be expressed at the expense of His holiness. And I do know this; the book of Acts has 28 chapters, and in the book of Acts you have the beginning of the church, you have the call of Paul to the ministry, to Christ.

You have the conversion of the first believers after the apostles. You have the beginning of the church and the beginning of the deacons and the ministry and the sending out of the first missionaries.

You have the messages of Paul, Phillip, Stephen, Peter, and all these men. At Pentecost you have all their sermons. The word love does not occur in the book of Acts, not one time, not one single time.

You say, “What did they preach?” They preached the holiness of God, the holiness of God, how God must be just. God must be holy. He will be holy. Am I overstating it? No sir; I’ve understated it. God is holy, holy.

Now I’m not talking about a sham; I’m talking about a purity, an immaculate, infinite, eternal, indescribable, unchangeable, holiness, and perfection.

Secondly: How sinful are men?

Well, how sinful are we? Am I and you are very sinful. How sinful are we? Well, when we compare ourselves with ourselves we don’t appear to be too sinful. He said, *“You are they that compare yourselves with yourselves.”* And then Paul said, *“You’re not wise.”*

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And I'll tell you this, when we compare ourselves with the rules of the churches; we don't come out too badly. Or when we compare ourselves even like the Pharisees of old with their outward law of God; "*Thou shalt not kill.*" To my knowledge, I have never killed anyone. "*Thou shalt not steal,*" so forth, and so on, you see?

And some of you say and this is what Paul said and that's what the rich, young ruler, said; "I've kept these from my youth up, all these outward commandments." And Saul of Tarsus felt that; he said, "*I was blameless concerning the law.*"

So when we look at the outward law; now I'm not talking about the spiritual content of the law or the spiritual application of the law or the thoughts behind it; I'm talking about the deed; "*Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.*" Why Saul said, "*I've never made a god.*"

"*Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.*" Why I've never said GD or taken God's name in vain, when you compare yourself to the law. And Christ said, "*You are they that justify yourselves before men.*"

And He said, "*God looks on your heart, (not on your deeds, not on your acts, not on your claims, but on your heart) and that which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination to God almighty.*" He looks on the heart.

"Oh, that's a different story now." Talk about what I am and what you see and what others see and what I profess to be. But wait a minute! What am I? Well, I'll tell you this, what makes this question difficult to answer, how sinful are men? How sinful is a man?

What makes it so difficult is that people know so little about the holiness of God and to really see men as sin you've got to see it in the light of God's holiness, not in the light of others around you, not in the light of people worse than you are, not in the light of some outward law, not in the light of some church rule.

But you've got to see your heart and your nature and your soul in the light of God's holiness. You see; God is perfect. And when I stand before the light of perfection I'm imperfect. Do you see what I'm talking about? That's what I'm talking about.

Almighty God is Spirit and I'm flesh. Almighty God is light and I'm darkness.

Almighty God is truth and I'm lies. It is difficult to tell a thing just exactly as it is. God is life and we're death. God is good and we're evil.

God is love and we're hate. God is just and we're unjust. Do you see that? It's impossible for us to do good, God good, as good as God defines good. "*There's none good but God.*"

God said in **Genesis 6**; "*Every imagination of man's heart is evil continually.*"

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He said in **Psalm 14**; *“I looked down from heaven to see if there is any that did do good and He said there’s none good no, not one*

Psalm 39:5; *“Man at his best state is altogether vanity.”* Even his righteousnesses are filthy rags.

Isaiah says *“From the soul of our feet to the top of our heads; there’s no soundness in us.”*

And David said in **Psalm 51:5**; *“Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.”* I was born that way. I came into the world that way; it’s my nature.

You don’t have to teach children to lie; they’re born knowing how to lie. You don’t have to teach them to be selfish, to be greedy. You don’t have to teach them to hate. You don’t have to teach them to fight; we’re born that way. That is born in us.

Why do we have to beg and plead with our children *“Tell the truth now? Be honest. Don’t cheat in school.”* You know, *“Don’t hate people.”* Why do you have to keep pulling? Do you teach them to hate? No; they’re born knowing how.

You see, Jeremiah said; *“The Ethiopian cannot change his skin.”* That’s his nature. *“The leopard cannot change his spots.”* The elephant cannot change his wrinkles. That’s his nature. *“And neither can you do good, (neither can I do good) that are custom, born, doing evil.”*

When David talks about us he talks about, *“We’re in the depths of sin, out of the depths.”* The Word talks about, *“being in the dunghill;”* it talks about, *“being dead in sin.”*

The Scripture says, *“We are without God, we are without hope; we are without Christ.”* That’s us, defiled, depraved, dead, no goodness. *“Man at his very best state is vanity, vanity.”*

“And God dwells in a light to which no man can approach.” Do you see that? You say *“Preacher; you’re overstating sin.”* No sir, no sir; believe me, my friend, I’m not. I’m understating it.

Just like the holiness of God; if I could define and describe the infinite, immutable, holiness of God; it would just slay every one of us because everybody in the Bible that saw God in His holiness fell in the dust. They fell prostrate and broken in the dust and thought they were going to die because they had seen the Lord.

And if I could really define and describe our wickedness, the wickedness of our hearts, the wickedness of our hearts, it will leave us without breath. We would be like Isaiah; he said, *“I saw the Lord and I cried I’m cut off, I’m undone. I’m a man of unclean lips.”*

What about Job? Job said, *“I’ve heard of you Lord. Now mine eyes seeth thee; wherefore, I hate myself. I put my hand on my mouth; I’ll never speak again. I repent in sackcloth and ashes.”*

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Saul of Tarsus said, *“When I saw the holiness of God I died.”* I cried, *“O I’m the chief of sinners. Who shall deliver me from this body of death?”*

How holy is God? You need to think on these things; how holy is God? *“No man hath seen God at any time. No man knoweth the Father but the Son to He to whom the Son will reveal Him.”* No man can come to God except Christ brings him as His Mediator.

Ok, I come to the third and awesome question; Then, God being who He is in His holiness, in His righteousness, and we being what we are in our corruption, defilement, and inability; how can we be clean, how can we be just with God and how can we be saved?

How can we ever stand in the hill of the Lord or ascend unto His holy place, how? Have you thought about that? Job did; he asked the Lord one, two, three or four times. He said, *“How can man be clean that’s born of a woman? How can man be just with God?”*

Why he said, *“The sun and the moon are not pure in God’s sight. The stars are not clean. How much more abominable and filthy is man who drinks iniquity like water?”*

David asked the question; in **Psalm 24**; *“Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? Who shall stand in His holy place?”* Who?

And He answered it; He said, *“He that hath clean hands, (perfectly, immaculately, clean hands).”* That leaves us out doesn’t it? No need to raise them, just high up. *“He that hath a pure heart; one who has never lifted his soul to vanity, one who’s never sworn deceitfully; he shall receive the righteousness of God.”* Well that’s not you and me and no other human being.

“How can a man be just with God?” Well, some people have turned to the sacrifices and the ceremonies and that won’t work because, *“It’s not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to put away sin.”*

Some people have turned to Mount Sinai and the law and that’s not possible because the Scripture says; *“By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified.”* Some have turned to works of righteousness and the Scripture says; *“It’s not by works of righteousness which we’ve done.”*

Some have turned to religious heritage and God says; *“He’s not a Jew which is one outwardly.”* Some have turned to the human will and God says, *“It’s not of him that willeth; it’s of God that showeth mercy.”*

Some have turned to the duties of religion only to hear Christ at the judgment say; *“I never knew you.”* Well, where do you suggest we turn Brother Mahan? Turn to Christ. He is God’s righteousness, redemption and sanctification.

All right; watch **Romans 3:19**; now listen: *“Now we know that what things whatsoever the law saith, (God’s holy law) it says to them who are under the law; (that’s you and me and every*

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other son of Adam), *that every mouth may be stopped and all the world become guilty before God.*"

That's the first place to start, guilty; I'm guilty. "*God be merciful to me the sinner.*" Are you with me? Are you there in **Romans 3:20**? "*Therefore, by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in God's sight.*"

Now this is what we're talking about, "*in God's sight,*" not in the sight of the church. "*For by the law is the knowledge of sin,* (not the cleansing of sin) *but the knowledge of sin.*" The law shows me what a rascal I am. God's holiness shows me even more.

Romans 3:21; "*But now, the holiness of God, the righteousness of God;*" I'm not talking about this feigned holiness of today where you wear certain clothes and that means your holy or you don't go to the movies or you don't watch television or you don't smoke a cigarette or you don't dance or you don't play cards and that makes you holy.

That's an outward piety. That's not God's holiness. That's not inward holiness. "*God doesn't look on the outward countenance; He looks on your heart.*" There's where the holiness of God must reign and we're not holy in the heart.

"*But now, there's a righteousness of God,* (the holiness of God and that's what we need that is manifested), *that is being witnessed by law* (the Word of God) *and by the prophets. It's the righteousness* (holiness) *of God which is by the faith of Jesus Christ.*"

It's faith in Christ and the faith of Christ. "*And it's to everyone that believes, Jew or Gentile; there's no difference. We've all sinned and come short of the glory of God, being freely justified by His grace through the redemption that's in Christ Jesus whom God set forth to be a propitiation that He might be just and justify those that believe.*"

What I'm saying is this; I'm not holy, but I must be. God is holy and I'm a sinner. If I'm going to live with God, if I'm going to dwell with God, if I'm going to go to God's heaven I've got to have a holiness that matches God's holiness.

I've got to have a righteousness with which God will be well pleased and I can't produce it. I'm not going to be cleansed by going into a baptismal pool. My heart and soul are not going to be cleansed by somebody sprinkling water on me.

I'm not going to be cleansed by walking down an aisle shaking hands with the preacher and praying a sinner's prayer. Is that going to give me a righteousness? Is that going to cleanse this defiled and polluted heart?

Is that going to lift me from the dunghill of sin and give me a holiness in the sight of almighty God? Will those deeds, duties, performances, decisions, and professions, make me holy before God?

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Who shall stand in His presence, he that is perfectly holy, pure in heart, clean hands, who has never sinned? And all this traipsing up and down the aisle and rededicating and raising your hand and shaking hands with the preacher and praying at an altar and going to a baptismal pool and joining a church is not going to make you holy before God.

You see, there's a law to be satisfied, the unchangeable law of God. *"What the law saith; it saith to everyone under the law."* And God's law is going to be obeyed or we are going to pay for it.

And there's a justice of God. The justice of God says, *"God must punish sin. God can't clear the guilty."* He can't do it. And I can make professions all day and raise my hand and join churches and turn over a new leaf and do all these things but it's not going to change the record; the record is there written; my sins are written down in the books.

And the law of God demands my obedience and I haven't done it. And the justice of God says *"The soul that sinneth; it must surely die,"* not raise your hand, die, not be baptized, die, not join the church, die, because I've got to pay for my sins.

But God sent His Son into the world, made of a woman, made in the flesh, in the likeness of sinful flesh. He took upon Himself the form of a servant, made of a woman, made under the law, and came into this world, bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh, and as my representative, as my surety. He obeyed God's law perfectly.

His heart was pure. *"He never lifted up His soul to vanity. He never swore deceitfully."* His hands were clean. He did it; He actually did it. *"He actually was tempted and tried and tested in all points as we are yet without sin"* by heaven, earth, and hell, before the holy law of God and the laws of men, and never violated a one. He did love God with all His heart.

He did love His neighbor as himself. And by His obedience we have a righteousness. You see; *"By the disobedience of one we were made sinners. By the obedience of Christ we were made righteous."*

We have a holiness. It's not a put-on holiness. It's not the length of my hair or the length of my nails or the absence of jewelry. It's not where I go or where I don't go outwardly. It's before God.

I have a righteousness or holiness. I've kept the law, I've kept the law. I've obeyed the law. I did not sin. I did obey God's law. Well you say, "You did not preacher." I did in Christ, I did.

And then I paid my debt. I don't owe God anything. "You paid your debt." I paid it in Christ. He was my representative. He went to the cross and there the justice of God taking all my sins, laid them on Christ, and slew Him. He died for our sins.

"He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him. By His stripes I am healed." Do you see that? Can you see that?

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We have a righteousness; we've got to have one. You don't have one. I don't have one of ourselves but Christ perfected one for us; He obeyed the law. That justice has got to be satisfied. The law is not going to turn you loose until it's satisfied.

And I'll tell you this, it held onto Him until He cried, "*It's finished*" and He satisfied God's law. That's the Gospel friend!