

A. Foundational Elements

1. Sermon Title: The Missionary: His Hero
2. Text: Romans 3:9-26
3. Subject: God's Righteousness
4. ETS: Paul explained to the Romans that the gospel displays God's saving righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ.
5. ESS: The Christian missionary knows Christ as the real hero.
6. OSS: Hearers will see that God's righteousness is available to us through faith in Christ. The lost person will trust Christ to be saved. The saved person will boast in the work of Jesus on the cross.

B. Formal Elements

Introduction

1. ILL: Who doesn't love a good hero?
2. Background to the Series: We are continuing the series titled, "The Missionary." So far in this series, We have discussed "The Missionary's Witness," and "The Missionary's Suffering and Sacrifice." Those two messages coming from Paul's letters to the church in Corinth. Now, we turn to Paul's letter to Rome as we discuss the Missionary's hero. Interestingly, many of us would say the missionary, himself/herself, is a hero. We think of missionary's as heroic humans who have endured countless difficulties. I mean consider the lives of men like the apostle Paul, St. Patrick, David Brainerd, and William Carey. These were faithful men of God who sought to see God's glory in Christ known around the world. Also, let us not forget those faithful women who have also participated in furthering God's kingdom such as Charlotte (Lottie) Moon, Amy Carmichael, and Helen Roseveare. These women also had a supreme focus on seeing others come to know Jesus around the world. They knew and lived out a purpose that far surpassed themselves. These are some incredible heroes, indeed. Yet, I wonder if we were to talk with them today, who they would point to as the hero. When walking away from talking to them, who would be impressed on our mind as the real hero, the missionary's hero?
3. Background to the Text: In Romans, Paul showed us his hero. Paul wrote this letter from Corinth at the end of his third missionary tour. As he is ending this tour, Paul began to think about his future ministry. He desired to continue his ministry westward and go as far as Spain, in order to preach the gospel in a new frontier. On the way, Paul planned to go to Rome, a church he had heard of but not visited. Therefore, he writes a letter to the church in Rome, explaining his plans. As a seasoned minister, he also unpacked the gospel theologically for these Christians and explained how the gospel impacts the way you live. This morning we will focus on the first portion of Romans, because you will be reading Romans 1-6 this upcoming week in the F260 Reading Plan. We will look at Romans 3:9-26. Here, we find a huge turning point in Paul's explanation of the gospel. Here, we find the connection between the human dilemma and the divine solution. In chapters 1-3, Paul is laying out very simply the human dilemma, or problem, that all have sinned and are unrighteous before God. Then, in chapter 3, we see the divine solution, or answer, that God revealed a saving righteousness he provided through the death of Jesus.

Body

- I. THE HUMAN DILEMMA: WE ARE VILLAINS (v. 9-20)

Romans 3:9-20 What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, as it is written:

“None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless, no one does good,

not even one.” “Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive.” “The venom of asps is under their lips.” “Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.” “Their feet are swift to shed blood; in their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they have not known.”

“There is no fear of God before their eyes.” 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.

For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

EXP: Paul showed all are guilty of unrighteousness before God. The law of morality, God’s law of what is right and wrong, reveals the reality that all of us stand guilty.

We, the flesh apart from God, are all unrighteous, worthless, violent in speech and conduct. Paul’s summative quotation, or reason, was, “there is no fear of God before [our] eyes.”

EXP: Paul’s conclusion is we all, then, are guilty before the God, to whom we are accountable. We are accountable to God as our creator and law giver. God is our judge, and before him no human being is justified through works of the law.

In other words, no one is good enough before God. If you are counting on being good enough to escape the consequences of your sin, both temporal and eternal, Paul says you are hopeless. For through the law our charges are revealed.

ILL: The law then acts as the mirror of morality. The picture being portrayed by Paul is a courtroom picture. Paul used language like charges, guilty, and under the law. Paul is trying to paint this picture. All of humanity, each individual human being, is accountable to God as our judge.

As we enter the courtroom, we see a mirror before the stand. This mirror is the mirror of morality. At the top of this mirror, there is a sign which says the law. God, as the judge, directs us to go before that mirror. The mirror does not reveal what is on the outside, but rather a history of what has occurred on the inside.

The mirror of morality reveals all the rebellious acts you have committed. The mirror reveals all the degrading speech you have voiced. The mirror reveals all your rebellion in thought and desire.

The mirror even reveals your face turned completely away from God, not seeking the being you were made for but instead seeking everything else. The charges have been verified through the mirror of morality—through the law. You are unrighteous before your judge, God.

ARG: Some people might read this passage of Scripture or the numerous other passages of Scripture, which discuss man's sinfulness and ask, "Why? Why does the Bible portray such a negative, bleak, hopeless picture of human beings?"

I can hear, now, the malicious question from those hardened by rebellion. But, I can also hear the honest question from the unsure and new bystander. To truly answer this question, I believe we ought to untangle our wishes from our curiosity.

To do this I want to pose a question in return. Do you want to see what is real, or do you want to see a fairy tale?

ILL: When you look in a mirror, typically, you see reality. When I look into a mirror, I see coffee stained teeth, a receding hairline, and a fully grown man still five inches shorter than he wants to be. But look, just because I want to see pearly white teeth, long flowing locks, and a taller frame, doesn't mean those things are my reality.

If I allow my wishes, or desires, to skew the reflection, then I will not see an accurate picture of reality. I am not using this illustration to say everyone should have a bad self-image. I am saying we cannot confuse our wishes, or desires, with reality.

So, if we untangle our personal biases, I believe we are able to hear the real answer to the question. Why does the Bible portray this picture of humanity? It does, because it is the reality.

APP: Look at the world and the chaos therein, do you see the reality of brokenness? Or, consider your own history for only a moment, do you see your sin? Is the evidence not clear? Are you not convicted by the law, which is the mirror of morality and the mirror of reality?

We have to see that, despite our best efforts, we are a fallen race. That is the truth. With the fullest love, the Bible declares the truth. Like a good doctor, the Bible diagnoses our ailment.

We are sinners. I pray that the Holy Spirit would do what only the Holy Spirit can do: bring conviction in your heart of sin, and righteousness, and judgement. This is the human dilemma.

TS: Paul has revealed the truth. The setting has been set. As we look with biblical glasses over the world, we are confronted with guilty humans who deserve God's wrath—villains awaiting punishment. Yet, the God of the Bible has an answer to this human problem.

II. THE DIVINE SOLUTION: JESUS IS THE HERO (v. 21-26)

Romans 3:21-26

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.

For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.

This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

EXP: God's answer for our guilt, our unrighteousness, is to bring about another righteousness. You see in verse 21 that a righteousness has come, yet that righteousness is not ours. The righteousness that came was God's righteousness.

God gifts his righteousness to us. Oh, but do not believe for a second that this gift was cheap. God's righteousness is brought through the death of his perfect son, Jesus Christ. Jesus died on the cross for our sins, so that, through faith, and only through faith could one receive this costly gift.

Paul makes clear that the gift of freedom from God's wrath that you are due, this gift of being right before God, is brought only through faith. All have sinned and need a savior, or a hero. Therefore, to be saved, all must place their faith in what Jesus Christ does on the cross to save them. You will never be good enough, but God has provided a way for *his* righteousness to be given to you.

ILL: Now, let's look at the word propitiation in verse 25. Your version might say the sacrifice, or the atoning sacrifice. Every translation is trying to make clear Paul's actual word hilasterion, which is literally translated propitiation.

Do not be concerned for all the translations do a good job at representing what Paul meant. You see, propitiation is a word which means to appease someone. In this sentence, the word clearly refers to God's wrath against your sins being appeased, or placated, or removed, by Jesus's work on the cross.

ILL: Remember that Paul was talking to the church in Rome. This church was situated in a culture where appeasing the anger of the Greek and Roman gods was a normal custom. Humans were supposed to bring forth gifts or perform sacrifices in order to please the gods and remove their anger.

They must appease the wrath of god, but, in their religion, it was impossible to know if the wrath of god toward you would ever be satisfied fully. Now, listen to the great news of our God. He has sent his son to be the sacrifice upon which he poured out all of his wrath for your sins, instead of punishing you.

He gives you his own righteousness as a gift through his son's death on a cross, if you are to place your faith in Jesus. In God's plan, the human villains, us, were hopeless. We were guilty, charged with unrighteousness before a holy, divine judge.

However, at the perfect time, a hero has come. That hero brings you his own righteousness and takes your punishment. That great hero is named Jesus. The hero that changed the powerful wrath of God towards you into the unconditional love of God toward you.

ARG: Now, the previous question has changed. The previous question was, "Why does the Bible describe such a poor view of humanity?" After reading these verses, the question becomes, "Is God a just judge, or a good judge, if he let's villains go free from punishment?"

Paul answers this question with a clear yes, God is a just and good judge. God sending Jesus shows his righteousness. For before, in the Old Testament God promises to bring a way of salvation in the future. Now, the plan has been accomplished. Jesus has taken the wrath we were due.

So, as Paul said, God has become both the just judge and the justifier. The villain's sentence has been fulfilled, but it was not fulfilled by them. The punishment was fulfilled by their champion, their hero, their superman, better yet their God-man, Jesus Christ.

APP: If you are here today and you are considering the Christian faith, then know that before God, on your own, you are unrighteous and deserving of his unbridled wrath. Yet, a hero has come to save you from that wrath. You can choose today to place your faith in Jesus.

If God is moving in your heart to trust Jesus and what he has done on the cross to pay for your sins, do not leave today without making the decision to turn from your sins and place your faith in Jesus.

If you already have a personal relationship with Jesus through faith, then I want you to be reminded of the sufficiency of the cross. God's great love is toward you, and for you, and will never be removed. A Christian can, and ought, to be thoroughly persuaded of God's unwavering love for them.

You ought to be able to close your eyes right now and imagine the truth that God embraces you with a great, big, fatherly hug. You might be thinking, "Well I know God might want to embrace me, but I just still have a lot to work on."

That thought has completely missed the point Paul has made. Paul said a righteousness has come that is not your own, but is God's righteousness in Christ. Do you dare say that God is unrighteous? Or, is his son unrighteous? No, of course you would not if you know them.

Well, then, hear that this righteousness has been gifted to you. The love which God has toward Jesus, his perfect son, is the love which God has toward you, once you are in Christ. Be confident and satisfied with God's love lavished on you in Christ.

TS: The human dilemma has been resolved with the divine solution. The human problem was not resolved by the human answer. No, the human problem was resolved by God's answer. So, then, let us come back to the focus of the sermon series, The Missionary. What does this mean for the missionary?

III. THE MISSIONARY'S JOB: POINT TO THE HERO (Application)

EXP: Though we do not have time to unpack the following verses, Paul goes on to say that boasting is excluded for the Christian. The Christian, and therefore, the missionary cannot boast in himself. For he is not his own hero.

No, the missionary is called to point to his real hero—the real hero, Jesus Christ. For what Jesus Christ has done in this present time, has forever changed your future. And, who you now point to in this present time, could forever change the future of those around you.

APP: This calling should bring a new mindset for the Christian. Now, when the Christian sees an unbeliever acting like an unbeliever in their sins, the Christian has no right to say how could he, or she, act like that. The Christian has no right to say they should talk, act, or think better, as if the Christian had any power in their own salvation.

Instead, the Christian should point this person to the same hero that once saved them. The Christian mindset should not be anger, but compassion for that person to know Jesus as their hero. So, you, Christian, if you see the human problem show itself around you in the lives of others, present to them the divine solution: Jesus can be your hero.

Conclusion

ILL: In 1812, a man named Adoniram Judson left America to be a Christian missionary. Surely, this man endured the hardships of 1,000 men. He spent thirty-eight years on mission to the Burmese people. During these years, Judson experienced excruciating loss.

Judson's wife, Nancy, died along with the three children they had together. He married again to a woman named Sarah. Together Sarah and Adoniram had eight children. Three died in childhood. Eleven years after their marriage, Sarah also died from sickness. Judson, too, faced sickness, ridicule, imprisonment, and torture.

As an example of his personal hardships, I share this picture of his imprisonment. Judson was kept in the heart of a place called the Death Prison. There a small room held about fifty prisoners. The hot, windowless room was full of the stench of bleeding, unbathed prisoners, none of whom were able to speak to each other.

The only time they were able to speak was in response to the ruler of the prison, whom they must call Father. Every night all the prisoners were strung up by the metal shackles on their feet. They were lifted just to the point where only their head and shoulders were pressed against the dirt floor. Here, Judson spent seventeen months. Around 475 nights, Judson spent strung up by his feet.

Clearly, Judson endured terrible hardships for the sake of seeing people saved by the gospel. What a hero for us Christians? What an example to see a man so set on the value of Jesus and his gospel that he would endure such suffering to see humans from another country saved.

And people were saved. Currently in Burma, now called Myanmar, 3,700 baptist congregations exist all tracing their origins back to this man. What a life? What a legacy? What a hero?

Ah, but let us listen to whom Judson says the real hero is. In one of his diaries, Judson wrote,

“On thee, Jesus, all our hopes depend. In thee all power is vested, even power to make sinful creatures instrumental in enlightening the heathen.”

Judson did not depend on his power as the hero. No, it was the power of Jesus in which he depended. For no other hero has the power to bring righteousness to us and make us villains no more.