XVIII. Romans in Biblical Perspective The Gospel of God "The Divine Indictment—A Divine Postscript!" Romans 3:19, 20 Dr. Harry L. Reeder, III August 1, 2021 • Sunday Morning Sermon

We will be specifically looking at two verses in this study but they are closely tied to Romans 3:9–18 which contain the Divine indictment and the profile of the indicted through Old Testament verses that Paul uses. Let's look now in Romans 3 for God's Word is the truth and Lord, sanctify them in the truth (John 17:17). Romans3:9–20 says [9] 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, [10] as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; [11] no one understands; no one seeks for God. [12] All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one." [13] "Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive." "The venom of asps is under their lips." [14] "Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness." [15] "Their feet are swift to shed blood; [16] in their paths are ruin and misery, [17] and the way of peace they have not known." [18] "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

[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.

The grass withers, the flower fades, the Word of our God abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

Expositional preaching is always built on what you have already preached, realizing there has been time in between so I won't review too much. There are none who desire salvation apart from God changing how we view life and our need of a Savior. They have to be sought through the people of God and the Word of God in the power of the Spirit of God. A man asked me one time 'will everyone who wants to be saved be saved?' I said 'yes, but you have to understand there is absolutely no one who wants to be saved unless God changes your wanter.' God has to change what you want, give you eyes to see and ears to hear and heart that comes to Him. Salvation is by grace from beginning to end, a work of Divine grace whereby God takes sinners and brings them from spiritual boneyards to everlasting life in Christ.

Having laid out the indictment, Paul takes the Gentile pagan with religion of irreligion, the moralistic man-made religion of Gentiles and those who think true religion will save them which it can't and pronounces all guilty. True religion is designed to send you to the Savior and mature you in the Savior but it can't save you. All are pronounced guilty and all are under the weight, penalty and power of sin. All are under the indictment.

Paul began by telling us he is eager to preach the Gospel of God for which he is not ashamed, which now we can see why and he tells us two significant things about the Gospel of God. On the one hand, it is the power of God and on the other it is the righteousness of God. Paul says in Romans 1:16–17, [16] For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. [17] For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith." The first three chapters of Romans we see why Paul has said that.

We see that the indictment is clear since all are guilty that we need the righteousness of God. We have no righteousness for all we have is sin. Even in God's common grace He keeps from being as sinful as we could be, our sin even pollutes the good things we could do. All of us stand before God with a sin record, from conception all the way to the last breath and Paul has dismantled every single defense strategy we would bring to that Day of the judgment. Our righteousness is like filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6) but in the Gospel there is a glorious message. The Jesus who died to remove your sins is the Jesus who gives you an alien righteousness that becomes yours for He clothes you with His righteousness.

II Corinthians 5:17 says [21] For our sake He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God. That righteousness and new record is no good unless you get a hold of Jesus. How does someone who won't seek, doesn't understand and dead in their sins, get to that Jesus for His righteousness? Good news – it is the power of God for you can be born again. You can be raised from death unto life in Christ.

This past week I was with a family who has a wonderful testimony of medical marvel where the man had a heart transplant. Any of you who know Jesus have had a heart transplant. You not only have a new record as Jesus nailed it to the cross but you have a new heart that is soft in His hands, cutting out that stone heart. He did that by His power. This is why Paul has been giving us the synopsis of the Gospel but he is far from being through on this. Please keep coming back to this study for there is so much more, but where are we right now?

In Romans 3:19–20 Paul now gives us a Divine postscript. COVID-19 gave us a lot of challenges and one of them is what do you do when you're not free to go do anything? If you were in my house during this time where everything has a place and there is a place for everything then things we had not gotten to yet were then addressed and work was done. In the midst of one of those little cleaning projects that we have undergone in our marriage, there was a box with letters that my wife had written me while we were courting and during our engagement. We decided to look at them but then all of a sudden this fear came over me. The fear was that as we were going through the letters we would get to one that had not been opened yet.

I hope all of you know that you have 66 letters from God – the Bible. I do not want to get to heaven and God says to me 'Oh you didn't open that one?' All Scripture is given by the love of God. II Timothy 3:16–17 says [16] All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, [17] that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

Praise the Lord that every letter she had written me had been opened and read and reminded of what they said as we went through them, but as we were going through them we noticed that my wife always loved to put 'p.s.' in the letters. That stands for postscript. Why do people include this in a letter? They do it for one of three reasons. One is they just want to say one more thing. Two they realize there is something that was important to say that they forgot to say in the body of the letter. The third reason is that it has already been said but it's so important that they want to say it again and they want it to be the last thing the person hears.

As Paul gets to the end of this section, where this foundational element of the Gospel of God has been proclaimed to let us know we need the righteousness of God and the power of God as he has brought all of humanity before the judgment seat of God and showed us that we are sinfully impotent and sinfully guilty, he wants to make sure we see the bad news so we will embrace the Good News for it is absolutely crucial. One time Dr. Schaeffer made this comment; 'If I was on one of the trains, going somewhere, sitting next to someone and God has opened up the opportunity for me to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ given a whole hour to do it, I would

use at least 50 minutes to point out to them their need for Christ.' The reason people don't get the blessings of the Gospel of grace is they don't see their need.

I'm not sure if you have noticed this or not, but we have been living with this for some time but now we live with it with a vengeance and that is we live with a culture of self. Now it is almost un-confronted – it's a given. In a culture of self, when it comes to dealing with your sins there is always two problems. Problem number one is, if I have a problem with sin then I'll handle it – self-reliance. Problem number two is, if I have a problem with sin it's really not my problem for I'm not the perpetrator, I'm the victim.

This all started in the Garden. Adam did you sin? 'Oh not me, the woman You gave is the one who gave me the fruit and I ate for this isn't my fault – I'm the victim here of a dysfunctional wife in marriage.' Adam basically is saying he has a dysfunctional wife, dysfunctional marriage and a dysfunctional God who gave him the marriage and the wife. Then God says to Eve, 'Did you take the fruit from the tree and eat?' Eve says 'I'm a victim for the devil made me do it.' That whole notion of being a victim has penetrated all of society and it is with us now unchallenged – where we're always a victim. Excuses like 'there weren't enough lights in my neighborhood, I needed one more year of education, I didn't have a good teacher, I had an imperfect father or mother.' I understand environment influences but we're constantly looking to be the victim, unless the Holy Spirit gives us judgment Day honesty – I'm not responsible.

If we per chance acknowledge sin, 'don't worry Lord I'll handle it' why does Paul put the Divine postscript about works? This is the Divine postscript to the Divine indictment that Paul gives. Romans 3:19–20 says [19] Now we know (because God has revealed it to us) that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, (why does the law speak to us?) 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.

By the Spirit of God, when the law speaks, we shut up for it stops our defense strategies. It dismantles every rational we think will get us by the Judgment Day. Sinners have nothing else to say when God speaks through His law. Secondly, when God speak through His law the whole world is held accountable to God. Paul has labored with all his heart to show us the blessings of the amazing grace of God in the Gospel, by the provision of the power of God and the righteousness of God but people don't see the blessings as blessings until they understand their desperate need. We don't want to hear it because it's a scandal and if we do hear it we want to think we're the solution to it.

Here at Briarwood we use Evangelism Explosion (EE) which is a wonderful way to share the Gospel. It was through EE that I came to Christ and what opened the door were two marvelous questions at the beginning that you are taught to ask through EE. One of them is a transitional question that is; if you were to die tonight do you know where you would spend eternity? With this question, Paul has been doing this for three chapters in Romans. Hebrews 9:27 says [27] And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment. What instrument is in his hands to show you what happens on that Day? It is the law of God. When the law speaks, as it will in that Day, every mouth will be shut on that Day. So on this day when the law speaks, for us to be saved, it has to shut our mouth – no more excuses, no more victimization, no more impotent defense strategies, no more hopes in man-made religion or irreligion. That is what the postscript is there for.

Paul has been saying for three chapters that no one will be saved by the works of the law, but he is going to repeat it for emphasis and he wants this to be the last thing because the vast majority of those who never come to Christ, don't come to Christ because they don't believe they need Him. Dr. Kennedy developed EE. I went through the training twice and the second time I was trained by Dr. Kennedy himself. Dr. Kennedy says on the second question which is; if you were to stand before God and God says 'why should I let you into heaven,' hear them, repeat what they say and over 90 percent of the time their answer will have to do with works righteousness. This stand throughout the Scripture and Paul has brought this out particularly in the first three chapters of Romans.

We always have our excuses – we're either the victim or the victor. I'll save myself through my works. We're the victim when we use self-preservation and say we're not responsible for our sin or when we use self-reliance – I'll handle this. Obedience to God's law? I've already done that – sound familiar? Remember the rich young ruler? Mark 10:17–20 says [17] And as He was setting out on His journey, a man ran up and knelt before Him and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" [18] And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. [19] You know the commandments: 'Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.'" [20] And he said to him, "Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth." Jesus told the man to go do the law and basically his response was, I've done that – self-reliance. Throughout the Bible, the point is made that we're constantly relying on works righteousness as if through our works of the law we're going to be saved.

We will do whatever we can to deceive ourselves and blind ourselves because we want the glory. We are in the culture of self. It's all about us and if there is a God then He exists for us – that's what we think. This is why Paul brings this postscript to us. People will eventually say 'I got this' unless the Holy Spirit changes them. This isn't an accusation, it's just exposure here. I know that many reading this have been saved through grace alone, in faith alone, in Christ alone and the Lord's Day for you is a delightful moment that God has set aside to bring His Word and His Spirit together in His Divinely ordained means of grace to grow in grace and give praise to the God of glory and grace, but there's some reading this who think 'I better go to church if I want to go to heaven and because I went to church I'm going to heaven.' Some may think 'When the offering came, it wasn't simply God's tithe and offerings but it was really the way I buy my way to heaven.'

I don't know where you are but my sense is that the vast majority have said 'yes I'm a sinner' and you have stopped defending yourself, for your mouth has been shut, which then allows you to open your mouth to be saved. God be merciful to me, a sinner, but I like Paul can't walk by this moment because I want you to be saved. I don't want you to put your trust anywhere else but in Jesus, His righteousness and His power. This is so important that Paul will repeat it in Ephesians 2:8–9 which says [8] For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, [9] not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Paul also says it in Galatians 2:15–16 which says [15] We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; [16] yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified (innocent). It is only by faith in Christ, His righteousness and the power of God.

If you don't want to believe Paul, James or Peter then hear Jesus who talked about the Day of Judgment more than anyone in Scripture. In His marvelous sermon on the mount He brings us to His takeaway and Jesus says in Matthew 7:22–23, [22] On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and cast out demons in Your name, and do many mighty works in Your name?' [23] And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you workers of lawlessness.' The unsaved give a works answer but Jesus responds by saying He never knew them.

We have a default of either playing the victim in self-preservation or playing the hero in self redemption thinking we can work our way to heaven, but when God's Spirit takes God's law and points us to that Day and the bar of God's justice with the holiness of the Judge, who will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, it shuts our mouth and we are now accountable. We are no longer a victim – I'm a perpetrator. I'm indicted and the power of God has shown me that I need the righteousness of God. Paul states it clearly in Romans 3:20 which again says [20] For by works of the law no human being will be justified in His sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. What does the law do? The law gives us the knowledge of sin.

Not all of what I'm about to say is in this text but it is indicated in the text. I believe the book of Romans is so important. I believe we are in a season of sifting and sorting in the evangelical church, in the world and particularly in this nation. When you start getting sifted, shook and sorted, you have to have a foundation and there is nothing more important for a Christian and for the church to get the foundation right, so we don't build wood, hay and stubble, but gold, silver and precious jewels. The most essential doctrine of God He has given to us as His church is what Paul said – I delivered to you that which is of first importance, the Gospel (I Corinthians 15:3). If you get the Gospel wrong, you get everything else wrong.

That is why I'm grateful for the elders who have challenged me to preach on the epistle that is designed to unfold the Gospel of God. This is foundational in this day and time but it's also foundational in terms of eternity and the initial movement of the Good News is the understanding and clarity of the bad news. The instrument God has given to show you your need of His righteousness and the power of God is the law of God. The law of God is not the Gospel of grace, but the law of God was given to cause you to understand the Gospel of grace and it was given designed by God as a gift of grace.

We find the Gospel of God throughout the Bible but there are two passages in particular where we find the law of God in particular – Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5. This is how the law of God is introduced to us in Exodus 20:1–17 which says, [1] And God spoke all these words, saying, [2] "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. [3] "You shall have no other gods before Me.

[4] "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. [5] You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, [6] but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

[7] "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain. [8] "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. [9] Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, [10] but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your

gates. [11] For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

[12] "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you. [13] "You shall not murder. [14] "You shall not commit adultery. [15] "You shall not steal. [16] "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. [17] "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's."

Notice that the law of God wasn't given to Israel to do and if they did it He would deliver them. God delivered them, then God them His law that they may know Him, love Him and how to love one another – made in the image of God. It was a gift, not for us to secure His deliverance, but it was a gift from the One who had delivered them and you. It's a way we can love Him who first loved us. Therefore the law has three marvelous Gospel uses.

One is the evangelistic use. The law is a school master, a teacher – it's God's gifted teacher to us in the hands of the Holy Spirit through the preaching of it to bring us to Jesus and the Gospel. Why do people come to Jesus? It is to be saved from their sins. What is sin? It's the transgression of the law of God in thought, word or deed. It is either stepping over the law of God or falling short. It is either the sin of commission or omission. You have either crossed the boundary in rebellion against God or you have come short of how you ought to be loving God. In other words, you can't come to Jesus to be saved from your sins until you know you're a sinner and you can't know you're a sinner until the boundary markers of our transgression have been given to us – the law of God. It is there to show you that you're a sinner and that you need a Savior and you can't save yourself. In other words, you're sinfully guilty and spiritually impotent. It's there to show you why the righteousness of God and the power of God are so important. It's there for the 50 minutes to let you know the Good News of the 10 minutes, to draw upon Dr. Schaeffer's example earlier.

Secondly, it's discipleship use. We who are loved and saved by grace through Christ now love Jesus and Jesus said 'if you love Me you will keep My commandments (John 14:15). Now it shows me how to love the Lord with all my heart, soul and mind and how to love my neighbor as myself. The law doesn't have power, only Jesus by the Spirit has the power. You can't get a righteousness out of your obedience to it, for when you came to Christ you received His righteousness but our obedience to Him shows Him our love for Him.

Thirdly, when God's law is loved and used by His people in its Gospel use, it becomes an instrument of common grace. The common grace of the law of God restrains the sin of others in the world. It doesn't save them, but it restrains. I've heard people say that it seems like today in our society no one honors the Lord's Day anymore and my response to that is that I don't expect them to. I would like for them to just for their own personal benefit but why would I expect them to when the Lord's people don't honor it for it's just become another day for us. Why would we expect people to order their life with some sense of sexual purity and chastity when God's people are not bringing to bear the weapons of the Spirit against our own sins of sexual immorality? Again, this isn't works to be saved and I want to make that clear. But the works of the law as we grow in grace become a retardation of sin in society. It can't redeem society but it can restrain sin in society.

Here is the takeaway for it's a series of four syllogisms so here is the first statement. The law of God cannot save you from your sins for it has no power to save you. Only Jesus can save

you from your sins. I love God's law for it is glorious and it's glorious in what it has been Divinely designed to do. It is not glorious if you try to make it do what it can't do.

The second statement is, you cannot save yourself by the works of the law for you don't have the power to do so. If we could save ourselves through the works of the law then why did God send His Son through the law. You can't do it until God gives you a heart to do it and you don't get a heart to do it without Jesus coming into the world to do the law for you in perfection and provide for you a perfect righteousness as He sends His Spirit to bring you up and change your heart and life so that you now want to do it, not for salvation but for Him.

This brings me to the third statement. You cannot be saved without God's work of the law. Remember the law can't save you and you can't use the law to save yourself but you can't be saved until God uses the law to shut you up and show us we're accountable. The Spirit of God has to use the law of God which is why preachers have to learn to use the Gospel use of the law from the pulpit. You don't get saved by grace in Christ because you need some help to get a bigger business, to get more money, to get along. You don't even come to Christ to get peace of mind. You come to Christ to have peace with God, to be reconciled to Him and you won't come to Him until God shows you your enmity with Him. That's why God speaks to you with His law – that we shut up and now we confess Christ alone.

Finally, those who are saved delight to do the works of the law out of love to our Savior. Jesus has saved them with His work, not theirs but now they love to do the works of the law due to their love for Him. Listen to the words of the Psalmist who loves the law of the Lord from Psalm 119:97–105 which says [97] Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day. [98] Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is ever with me. [99] I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation. [100] I understand more than the aged, for I keep Your precepts. [101] I hold back my feet from every evil way, in order to keep Your word. [102] I do not turn aside from Your rules, for You have taught me. [103] How sweet are Your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! [104] Through Your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way. [105] Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

The right use of the law is to show me how to love You, my neighbor, my spouse, my family and it shows me how the foundational, ethical, framework of how to love the Lord who made me for His glory and how to love others who are made in His image. According to Ephesians 2 which I read earlier shows that even our faith is a gift but don't just stop at verses 8 and 9 but Ephesians 2:10 says [10] For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. You can find them in His law that we should walk in them, not to be saved but because we love our Savior.

I have found in my life that D. James Kennedy, Dr. Schaeffer and the Apostle Paul, is right – I need to put this 'p.s.' because people either play the victim instead of realizing they are perpetrators of sin or they want to play the hero and over 90 percent give a works answer to the question, why should God let you into heaven. When they do give you this kind of answer, repeat it to them and get it on record because you want to give them some Good News.

At my first pastorate at Pinelands Presbyterian in Miami, Florida we ran buses to two nearby retirement homes to the church. I just loved those people and we even held Bible studies at both those retirement homes. One day Ms. Margaret came in stately and I could tell she had been raised a Presbyterian and I asked to visit with her. My wife came with me and I asked Ms. Margaret if she were to die tonight, would she know where she would spend eternity. She said 'Pastor, I certainly hope I will be in heaven and I am just so loved in this church. You are doing

a fine job preaching the Bible.' I said 'thank you.' She said 'I've been raised in the church my whole life and nobody ever preached the Bible.' I said 'I would hate to be those pastors who have to stand and give an account for what they did but I would like to ask you a second question and that is, if you were to stand before God today and He asked you why He should let you into heaven what would be your answer?' She said 'I love my church and I have tried to do everything my pastor has said to me all these years and I think I've done pretty well.' Works!

Then I said 'Thank you for loving your pastor and trying to do what was preached but the Bible says we won't get to heaven if that's what we're depending on. In fact, Jesus, Peter, Paul, James and they all say this. Can I share with you how you get to heaven?' Then I just shared the Gospel with her – Jesus' atoning sacrifice, His righteousness and the power of the Spirit that brings you to Christ and by grace alone, through faith alone and in Christ alone. In other words, I preached to her what I'm going to share in the next study – But now... Then she said 'Would you help me pray that?' and so we prayed. When we finished I said 'Now Ms. Margaret if you were to stand before God and ask you why He should let you into heaven, what would you answer?' She said 'I would tell Him I did exactly what you just said.' It took three times, but finally praise God she came to understand salvation by grace. What a sweet, sweet lady who came to know Christ.

Have you come to know Christ? Are we the tax collector or the Pharisee? The Pharisee just wouldn't shut up. The Pharisee said in Luke 18:11–12, [11] The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. [12] I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' Over here was a man who had been shut up and now he could fess up. Luke 18:13 says [13] But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' Praise God for the law – a gift to show us Christ is our salvation. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, please speak to the hearts of Your people. If you know Jesus as Your Lord and Savior take a few moments to give thanks to God who saved you, sent the law to show you were a sinner and needed a Savior for He was sent to go to the cross to save you. Then the Holy Spirit was sent to show you that you needed a Savior, also sent you to Jesus and you put your trust in Him alone. Today if you are reading this and you have never given your heart to Jesus and there is this sense that something needs to be done, I hope you have heard me that it's not what you do that saves you but what Jesus did so dismantle your defense strategies, close our mouths, stand accountable before God and declare – two wonders I confess, Jesus' glorious grace and my unworthiness. If you want to pray with someone as a believer or someone who wants to come to Christ please call us here at Briarwood at (205) 776-5200 for we'd love to pray with you. There is that Day and there is this day – forget all other days for on that Day, it is appointed unto men once to die and then the Judgment, mouths will be stopped. On this day, you can open your mouth to say 'Jesus I come, nothing in my hands I bring, simply to the cross I cling.' Thank you Jesus, Amen.

Power Point

THE LAW AND THE GOSPEL

1. Evangelistic use of the Law of God

- 2. Discipleship use of the Law of God
- 3. Common grace use of the Law of God

LIFE TAKEAWAY

The Law of God cannot save you from your sins

You cannot save yourself by the works of the Law but

You cannot be saved without God's work of the Law

Those who are saved delight to do the works of the Law out of love to our Savior.