



Scott Turansky, Senior Pastor
September 20, 2015

ROMANS 3

Romans Series: How God Changes People

[PRAYER] Lord, the feeling of being overwhelmed is not an unusual feeling that we experience in our lives today. Each of us are challenged in our own ways in our emotions to feel anxious or angry or depressed or discouraged or sad. Lord, we know that the answers come from knowing you and knowing about you and understanding your principles, but sometimes it's hard to integrate those in the moment. I'm asking, Father, that you would give us some handles that we can learn today that we can carry with us this week so that when we are feeling overwhelmed we can hold onto them to grasp them. We're asking that you would give us grace today that we'll be able to use in the course of this week as we experience the challenges that each of us face. Bless us this morning, Father, each one. In Jesus' name, amen.

You can open your Bibles to Romans 3. One of my goals as we're going through the book of Romans is that you are learning how to share your faith with someone else. If someone were to ask you "what does it mean to be a Christian," or "how do you get to heaven" (it's unlikely someone's going to ask you how do you get to heaven, but maybe somebody will), or maybe the fellow will ask "what does your church believe," or there's some open door that you have with someone, what will you say?

I'm praying that every one of you, everybody who attends Calvary Chapel Living Hope will have an opportunity to share Jesus Christ with someone. Just because you have the opportunity doesn't mean you'll be able to do it. You won't be able to do it unless you're ready. I want to share with you some ways to do that. So I've given you this key ring with five cards on it. If you didn't get one, you can pick one up when you go out.

We've talked about the first one, which is that salvation starts with God. He's loving and He's holy and He's created us. The second one is that we have a problem. That problem is sin and that prevents us from having a close relationship with God. That was the second card. Then we learned about the solution last week about Jesus being our solution. The solution of Jesus Christ dying on the cross for our sins and that provides the solution for the sin problem.

But now we come to the white card and when we come to the white card it's the card that reflects the decision that we all need to make independently. Every one of us needs to make a decision. It's a very important decision that we make and, as I said on the card, it's free, but it costs everything that we have. We want to communicate that message to you. You can't earn it. There's nothing you can do to get it. It's free. But when you make a commitment (that's what this is; it's a decision), when you're making a decision, a commitment to follow Jesus, you are

giving up everything to follow Him. He's the most important thing in your life. That's the fourth card.

So as you're sharing with someone about the gospel, you want to come to a point where you're asking the question, "Would you like to ask Jesus Christ to come into your life?" Most every week here on Sunday morning I ask that question. If you're here this morning and you've never accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you will have an opportunity to do that. It's a decision that you make and that's the same decision you want to offer to people when you're sharing Christ with them.

So you might hold onto that, or we have the little bracelets that are out there that tell the story. We have the other little bracelets that have an additional color on them and we'll talk about that next week. When we talk about green we'll talk about the blue as well. But those are just tools to provide you the resources that you need so that when you have the opportunity you'll be able to share Jesus with other people.

In your Bibles in Romans 3 we continue the courtroom scene. That's really what it is. Paul is acting like an attorney at this point and he's drawing the guilt of the world into account. We're really the audience. He's writing to the Romans, the Jewish Roman Christians, and he's communicating a message to them. But it's a message that we also are listening to that we are all guilty and he's trying to persuade the jury (us) so that we understand that we are also the ones who are guilty as well. So that's the scene that we're in.

In chapter 1 he looked to the Gentiles, the bad people who do all kinds of bad things, and so everybody's saying, "Yeah. Go give it to them. Give it to them. They're the bad guys." But the Jews then he turns around in chapter 2 and turns it on them. "You guys, there is no excuse for you either. You've got a problem. You've got a sin problem." So the idea is that every one of us, whether we're Jews or Gentiles, deal with sin in our lives.

Now he comes to chapter 3. In chapter 3 he's going to start with three objections. As you have opportunity to share Jesus with other people, people may come up with an objection. They may say, "Well what about..." and then you may try to answer those. You might not have all the answers, I don't have all the answers, but I know someone who does. And so we can find the answers and share those with other people. "I'll get back to you on that" or "let's talk to the Lord. He has the solutions for all of our questions."

Here's question number one or objection number one. I'm going to say it and then I'll show you what it is in the passage. "If I become a Christian, I'll have to give up all of who I am." Maybe you've heard that excuse or objection that people have. That's the first objection that the Jews have as they're listening and he's anticipating.

In chapter 3:1 it says, *What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision?* Am I going to have to give all this up because I'm a sinner? You're helping me understand that I'm a sinner. They give all these things up. What advantage is there?

Verse 2: *Much in every way! First of all, the Jews have been entrusted with the very words of God.* Do I lose my uniqueness because I become a Christian? Do I lose my uniqueness because I'm a sinful person? No, I don't. I don't lose that uniqueness that God has given to me.

He's saying to the Jews, "You are special. You have *the very words*. You've been given the Ten Commandments. You've been given the law. You've been given *the very words of God*. You're the ones who are the recipients of the covenant. You are the ones who have the temple worship. You're the ones who have the twelve tribes of Israel (and out of them came Jesus Christ who was a Jew). You guys have an ancestry that's amazing. But the reality is you're sinful."

So even today when a Jewish person becomes a Christian, they don't typically say, "I got saved." You know what a Jewish person says when they become a Christian? "I got completed." What they're saying is, "I was a Jew, a person who was following God, but I was missing a piece of that puzzle that I needed. So when I accepted Jesus Christ it completed me."

I would suggest that's something we can all say in our lives. God takes our uniqueness and when you become a Christian He amplifies that uniqueness and uses it in a powerful way. It's amazing what God does because He completes every one of us. He makes us whole so that the problems that we have, the struggles that we have, the challenges we have are overcome by His grace and He completes us in Him so we are the people God wants us to be.

You want to be the most that you could be? You're not going to lose that by becoming a Christian, you're going to gain that. That's what he's saying here to the Jews.

The second objection is basically this. "I don't believe in God, therefore He must not be there." You've heard this objection. You start sharing Christ with someone and they say, "Well I don't believe that." As if "well if I don't believe that then it must not be true."

The belief does not cause the truth, or my actions in life don't determine God's faithfulness and who He is. I don't determine God. God is there. He's the truth. So I need to go to Him and understand Him as truth. I believe in Him because He's true. He's not true because I believe in Him.

Verse 3 says, *What if some were unfaithful? Will their unfaithfulness nullify God's faithfulness? So do people's actions or inactions make God either there or not there or faithful or not faithful? Not at all! Let God be true, and every human being a liar. As it is written: "So that you may be proved right when you speak and prevail when you judge"* (speaking about God).

God is true whether we believe in it or not. It's not a good excuse to say, "Well I don't believe in that. I believe in something different." As if somehow believing in something different means I don't have to look at the truth. We need to draw people back to the truth that God exists. He created you, He designed you, and you need a Savior. He has provided that Savior.

Number three of objections in verse 5 – "My sin makes God look better. After all, if God shines bright and I'm sinful, then the more I sin the brighter God looks." That's the idea here. Verse 5: *But if our unrighteousness brings out God's righteousness more clearly, what shall we say? That*

God is unjust in bringing his wrath on us? (I am using a human argument.) Certainly not! If that were so, how could God judge the world? In other words he's saying it doesn't make sense.

Verse 7: *Someone might argue, "If my falsehood enhances God's truthfulness and so increases his glory, why am I still condemned as a sinner?" Why not say—as some slanderously claim that we say—"Let us do evil that good may result"?* Their condemnation is just!

He's saying it's not logical to assume that we can sin so that God shines brighter. It doesn't make sense. It's not logical and it's not the right way to think.

When I was teaching my students in Kenya, I taught students who were going to be pastors. So I'm teaching in the Moffat Bible College, my students are pastors who are going to go out and pastor churches. In one Bible course I was teaching, I asked this question – "Will Judas go to heaven?" There was a dialogue going on in my class about this and so we debated it for a little bit.

Here's what some of the line of argument was. Judas was part of God's plan to get Christ crucified so we could get saved, therefore he's going to be in heaven. Do you understand what he's saying here? In other words, he did a bad thing and because God uses all bad things, bad things can even be good, and we can somehow earn merit before God. We had some good dialogue about that. What a fascinating discussion that we had.

God does use everything that happens, good and bad, as part of His plan, but that doesn't justify and take away the responsibility of those who are making poor choices in their lives. Our sin, although it may cause God to shine more brightly, doesn't excuse us so that we aren't under God's judgment or the wrath of God as being described here. We have a problem.

All of these objections are leading us to the conclusion. You can see in verse 9 the word *conclude* is there. *What shall we conclude then?* So this is the conclusion now of what we learned in chapter 1 and chapter 2. Chapter 1 the Gentiles are the sinners, chapter 2 the Jews are the sinners (*all have sinned*), chapter 3 we have some objections. And now in verse 9 – *What shall we conclude then? Do we have any advantage? Not at all! For we have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin.*

The power of sin. Very important that we understand the difference between the penalty of sin and the power of sin because that's going to help us as we move forward to understand more about how people change.

Remember in the book of Romans what I'm trying to do is not just teach you about the things that are about salvation, but I'm trying to help you see here how God changes people. I want to draw attention to that today so you can see it a little bit more.

So we have in verse 9 that all of us are *alike* and we're *under the power of sin*. Now Jesus Christ died for the penalty of sin, but we still wrestle with this power of sin in our own hearts. I wrestle with this. You wrestle with this. There's a sin nature we have and we wrestle with the power of sin in our lives. So he's building a court case that we're all guilty here. We all need a Savior.

Next we have a bunch of Old Testament quotes that support the idea that we're all in the same boat. We're all sinners. We're lost. All this negative stuff. We have to get to the negative stuff before we can see the positive stuff. But he's saying we're lost, and so verse 10 here's some quotes.

As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one." I think he's hammering this point because sometimes we think that we're righteous and somehow we're earning our way to God. No. *There is no one righteous.* We all have to come to this place where at the bottom of the barrel there's nothing that we have that we can offer God that would earn ourselves or a positive way to salvation. We only can come to God because we are sinners.

Verse 11: *There is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless.* Worthless is a very important word when we talk about self-esteem or self-worth. He's saying we're all worthless. Let's start there. We're worthless in and of ourselves because of the sin nature that we have. *There is no one who does good, not even one.* That's Psalm 14:1-3.

Now Psalm 5 he quotes in verse 13. *"Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice evil."* Then Psalm 140 (verse 3) – *"The poison of vipers is on their lips." "Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness." "Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery mark their ways, and the way of peace they do not know." "There is no fear of God before their eyes."*

So I want to make sure you got the conclusion here. He's trying to make it really clear. We are all sinners. Now if that's getting you feeling down a bit here, I think that's good. We have to start by feeling down. We have to come to the acknowledgement that we are sinners. This is a different statement than any other religion has.

As I talked to a Hindu man the other day, I asked him to tell me about his god and I asked him, "Is God pleased with you? Are you sure you're going to make it to the next level?" So he started talking about it. He was describing the way you get to the next level in the Hindu religion is you do good. When you do good then you advance in your next life to be better. So you're reincarnated into something else.

That's a whole different way of looking at life than Christianity. Christianity looks at salvation and getting close to God this way. We start with the fact that we are sinners. So we have to get there.

Now let's go on then. Once we understand that we're sinners then we're overcome with the amazing grace of God. So let's go there.

Verse 19: *Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God.* Who's righteous? Not one mouth is opened. Who can get to God on their own? Everybody's silent. We're all held accountable to God.

Verse 20: *Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin.*

We need to be conscious of this. We need to realize this. In many ways this is going to be the way to healing in our lives. When we have change that needs to take place, we have to be conscious of what's going on in our hearts, the sin that we have there. So if you're feeling beat up this morning, you're on the right track.

This is different than the humanist who says, "Just think positively. Pull yourself up by your bootstraps. You can do it." That's not what the Bible says and that's not what God says about salvation. We need to understand the sin problem and when we do we're overcome with gratefulness about who God is and what He does in our lives.

Now we get to verse 21 and we see this tremendous value that we have. We talked about being worthless. We have to accept the fact that we're sinners. We're worthless until we have the value of God imparted to us. That's what we see in verse 21. *But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.*

How do you get this righteousness? How do you get this worthwhileness in your life – instead of worthless, now you're valuable? It's through the righteousness of Christ that comes by faith, by making the decision to ask Christ to come into your life.

He continues. *There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.*

There are three words I want to look at in verse 24. *All are justified freely.* Let's start with that word *free*. It is free. It is given to us. This justification is not something you earn. This is important for those people who would say, "I have done so many bad things in my life. God can't accept me." Or the person who says, "Let me get my act together first before I accept Jesus into my life." There is nothing you can do or that you've done. Nothing you've done that's going to prevent you from coming to Jesus. Nothing you can do that can get you closer to Jesus. The reality is you need to make the decision to accept Jesus Christ by faith. That's the first word. It is free.

The second word talks about God's *grace*. Now this is a five letter word both in Greek and in English. Five letters, either *charis* or *grace*, five letters, but there's so much power in that word that we could talk for days just about grace and what grace is. Because grace is what we receive inside of us that allows us to be that whole person that God wants us to be. Yes, we have sin in our lives. But because of God's grace He comes in and He gives us something we don't deserve. He gives us the righteousness of Christ that we need. It's God's grace that is so powerful.

So you may have been deeply hurt in your life and that hurt is so painful and you live with it regularly. I just want you to know God's grace is there to heal that hurt and to provide for you a ministry out of that hurt because of His grace. If you tend to be a critical person or a judgmental

person, God's grace comes into your life and helps you deal with that particular area. If you have an addiction problem, if you have a problem with emotional challenges, God comes in and He bathes that in His grace.

It's God's grace that helps us deal with any kind of relational problem, a marriage problem, a problem with a young person. All of those things are covered by God's grace. We're *justified freely by his grace*. We don't deserve it. It's just grace.

We get it *through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus*. Redemption is this elaborate system of buying something. When Christ died on the cross that was the payment for our sin so that we could be bought back and we'd get all of these things as a result. It's an elaborate purchasing process that takes place to satisfy God's holiness and we get all the benefits.

I was explaining to Ed Miller how I purchase something on Amazon. I'm going to share with you how I purchase something on Amazon and how I redeem something or how I buy something on Amazon.

I first don't go to amazon.com, I go to smile.amazon.com. You all should be doing this one way or another. Because when you go to smile.amazon.com and buy something then you have the opportunity to donate automatically an amount of your purchase to an organization. The National Center for Biblical Parenting is one of those organizations, so when I go to smile.amazon.com and I purchase something for a hundred dollars, like I did this week, then a portion of my amount goes to the National Center for Biblical Parenting. Automatically it just happens.

When I bring up amazon.com on my computer, the total amount is \$95.64, then I get out my MileagePlus app, MileagePlusX, and I tap on that and I choose "amazon.com." I type in there \$95.64 and I hit "go." It pays my credit card to MileagePlus and I get a little redemption code. I take that code and I type it into the smile.amazon. My order's all up there, I type in there my promo code, my gift certificate code, and I hit "go," and the amount left that I owe is zero. I still get the miles back. I get the miles on my account and then when it goes back and my credit card is charged, I get points back on my credit card.

Do you see all the benefits I get? I know this is so complicated for some of you. You don't understand. You're going to want to talk to me later to find out how you can get all these benefits. But when I buy something on Amazon and I redeem it, I get all of these benefits because of this process.

The same thing is true when God buys you back. Who does He pay? Does He pay Satan to buy you back? No. He pays Himself back. He pays His character back, His holiness, because of His love for us. The redemption is Jesus Christ, that's the certificate code that gets paid, and then all of these benefits start coming to us in all kinds of different ways. It's an amazing thing.

I know it's complicated and we learn a lot about our salvation and the complicated nature of it, but we are the recipients of it and they start appearing in our bank accounts in different ways – in our MileagePlus account, in my bank account, and all these different places. They start appearing because we're saved. It's the redemption process that God has designed for us. And it's a

beautiful one. That's what he's talking about here. He uses the word *redemption* here to describe that.

Verse 25: *God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith.* That's how you get it. It's not that complicated. You receive it by faith. *He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.*

God is absolutely just at condemning us for sin. He's absolutely just in forgiving us through Jesus Christ. That's what it's saying there.

Verse 27: *Where, then, is boasting?* Well that is one thing you lose when you become a Christian. There's no boasting anymore. *Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. Because of what law? The law that requires works? No, because of the law that requires faith.* There's nothing you can do for us. You can't boast about it.

For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law. Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith.

You and I get saved the same way. The same way that someone's going to get saved in India or China or Jordan or Lebanon. Everybody gets saved the same way. *Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law.* We need this understanding of who God is in order to move forward in any change process that we're trying to address in our lives.

Let me explain to you how this works. Just a review: We need forgiveness for our sins. We have sin in our lives that creates a significant problem. Jesus Christ died on the cross so that we could have the righteousness of Christ in our lives. We must receive Jesus Christ in our lives in order to appropriate that and have that inside because then we have all the benefits that come from the redemption process. That's the message that's taught there. This is not just a theological discussion. It's a very practical one that applies to our lives every day.

In order to help you understand that, I want to share with you my own wrestling in this in my own life. I don't really wrestle with materialism or sexual impurity or bitterness in my life. Other people wrestle with those things in their sin nature. I have a sin nature in my heart and so there are temptations I have in my heart and one of those temptations that I have is to value myself based on productivity. If I'm getting things done, I feel good about myself; if I'm not getting things done, I don't feel good about myself. That's my temptation. I need to battle that in my own heart so that I'm not valuing myself that way. Because that would be wrong. That would be boasting. That would be looking at works, not the way that God designed me that I trust in Him and getting to know Him and so on.

So if you ask me the question, "How was your day?" in my mind, in my heart I am tempted right away to go to a meter, the meter inside of my heart. When you say, "How was your day?" I hear the question, "Did you get anything done today?" That's what I hear. That's not what you asked.

But that's what I hear because of my sin nature. So I start to ask myself, "Well what did I get done today?" That's not what you asked me, but that's what my heart says because my sin nature goes that direction. And that's wrong.

Now some of you when someone says, "How was your day?" you answer in a different way. You hear the question, "Did you have fun today?" So you evaluate did I have fun or not? Or "Did you manage your emotions okay today?" We all hear different messages when you ask the question "how was your day" or "how do you value yourself."

So the solution for me in my life is that I need to continually be aligning myself back into the place where God wants me to be. Because when I start valuing myself based on production, I get out of line. When I get out of alignment with God then bad things happen.

I'll give you some examples of bad things that happened. I can tend to then be critical of other people because they're not doing what I told them to do. If they would do what I told them to do, I would get more things done, and so I become more intense. That's another problem. "Hey look. Did you see the clock? Come on. We've got to get out of here. We've got to get moving." Time, productivity becomes more important to me than the people that are involved. So I cross a line and then I start getting myself into trouble. This is a very practical thing in my life. I can become intense, I can become critical, or I can be discouraged. If I'm not getting things done, at the end of the day, I go, "Ah. I'm a bad person. I'm not doing well."

There are other people that have other kinds of challenges in their lives. Some people have a bent toward being critical in their lives. They criticize other people for whatever reason. They've got another sin nature issue that's going on. Now once you know this about me, you, I'm sure, now will be more tolerant and forgiving of me if I'm rushing you to go here and there. Right? Hopefully. Unless you have a sin problem of being critical. Then of course I'm going to have to be tolerant of you.

Do you see what this does in a relationship? Just apply this to marriage. In a marriage relationship I have a sin nature and so does my wife. So when something happens that she's doing something that irritates me, it's only by God's grace that I'm not that kind of a person and I can start forgiving her and be more tolerant of her because God's doing a work in my own life. So we're able then to give each other grace as God gives it to us because we need that each one in our own lives.

Humility for me, this is the cutting edge for me in my life in my heart. God is developing humility. Because if I have humility, it's defined this way for me. It may be defined differently for other people, but humility means for me, one, that I am giving credit to others and to God for good things that happen through my life. It's not just about me. Secondly, humility means I am a servant of God, that results aren't important. My job is to serve Him and to do what He has called me to do.

So for me when I find myself getting out of alignment and I get myself into some of those problems, I have to go back to Romans 3. I have to remind myself *there is no one righteous, no, not one*. That my righteousness comes from Jesus Christ and I need to value myself based on my

relationship with God and what He's done for me. Then I can bring myself back into alignment so I'm not this intense, critical, or discouraged person. I have the peace of God that is one of those redemption benefits that I have in my life.

What I'm trying to do is help you understand that the theology we're talking about is very relevant to our daily lives. It's relevant to me. I need Romans 3 in my life. It will help me to be the person that God wants me to be and to be able to trust Him in the challenges that we face.

There's a verse that I really like in Ephesians 2:10. It reminds me that I am in process so that when I do get out of line I know that God is still working on me. In one translation it says *we are his masterpiece*. The idea is that we're in process. He's creating us. But in the New International Version it says, *we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them*. God is in the business of recreating, creating, doing something significant in our lives.

If you're here today and you're being challenged in a particular area of your own heart in the course of your life, maybe you're overwhelmed with some emotion or maybe you're dealing with some kind of a problem in your life. I want you to know you're just like me. We're sinners. *There is no one righteous, no, not one*. We're equal. We're level at the foot of the cross.

Our job is to go to Jesus and say, "I want you to run my life. I need you to help me to come into the alignment in my life to where I need to be. Create in me a new heart. Give me what I need, Lord. I know I need you." When we're in touch with that need, then God does an amazing thing inside of our hearts and allows us to be able to take our uniqueness and be able to move forward with the problems and stresses that we feel in our lives. But He does with the beauty that comes from knowing Him personally.

If you've never made that commitment to Jesus Christ, you don't know Him personally, it starts with that – to invite Jesus Christ to come into your heart. So during this next song that we sing, if God is speaking to you and drawing your attention to your need before Him, your need for a Savior, I just want you to go to the side. There are prayer counselors that will be on the sides and they'll pray with you, help you connect to God in that very personal way.

Would you stand with me? Let's pray together.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, we are frustrated sometimes with our weakness, but we know that you turn that weakness into strength with your grace. We need that grace. We need to practice it, we need to learn it, we need to be the people that you want us to be. So Lord, I ask that you'd help me this week to wrestle with the power of sin in my own heart, to be able to trust you and to follow you in every area of my life. I pray that for my brothers and sisters here too, that you would help us to see our need, help us to see our sin, and then be so enthralled with the tremendous righteousness that you provide for us in our lives. When we understand that, we're just drawn to worship you. So now we're coming before you, and lifting up your name (not our name, lifting up your name), and thanking you for who you are and what you've done. We need you. In Jesus' name, amen.