

FUNDAMENTALS FIRST: GOSPEL 101

Romans 3:21-31

Int: Here Paul explained the gospel in what may be the greatest statement of the Christian faith found anywhere. Gospel basics center on three words in 3:23-25.

SIN 3:23

This word for sin means “to miss the mark” as when an arrow falls short of the target. God’s commands set up a spiritual target he expects every person to hit dead center with shafts of obedience but not a single person has hit the mark. All “are falling short” of the kind of life God means them to live.

“Whatever else men are, they are not what God intended them to be.” Some are better than others but none are good enough for God. All have sinned!

GRACE 3:24

God loves for people to be good but he loves them even when they are bad. His favor is called “grace.” More than the divine disposition, however, grace includes divine action. Paul described God’s gracious acts with three picture words borrowed from the first century world.

Justification (3:24), a legal term drawn from the courtroom. Justification is the gracious act of God in which he declares a guilty person innocent and treats him as if he is without fault. “Justified means it is just-as-if-I’d never sinned!”

Redemption (3:24), a commercial term drawn from the market-place. The word described the act of freeing slaves or prisoners by paying the price for their release. God acted in grace to pay the price demanded to set free the slaves of sin.

Propitiation (3:25), a religious term drawn from temple sacrifices. This word meant to offer a sacrifice to turn aside the anger of the offended God. On the cross the God-man offered himself a sacrifice, absorbing the divine hatred of sin, so that God could freely justify all who trust Jesus without compromising justice.

FAITH 3:25

How can a sinner benefit from grace? Faith. It is the open hand that receives.

“Faith alone” cuts out boasting finally and forever because it excludes any and all efforts to earn God’s favor by works. This is the mark of God’s true plan of salvation. Any plan that allows a person to take pride in what he is, knows, has or does must necessarily be a false plan.

“Faith alone” is the same to all men alike. There is only one God and he has only one way of salvation. Any may come by way of faith in the work of Jesus. All who come must come this way.