

The Big Truths

by Jim Cymbala

The law cannot justify us, but God has given us a righteousness from God, having nothing to do with the law, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Duration: 32:54

Scripture: Romans 3:19-25

Topics: "Truth"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of the Word of God as the most precious gift in the world. He refers to the book of Romans, specifically chapter three, to discuss the significance of the law of God and the righteousness that comes through faith in Jesus Christ. The preacher encourages those struggling with guilt to come forward and celebrate the grace and love of God. He also shares a personal experience of being baptized by the Lord and being led to preach without notes. The sermon focuses on the big truths found in the Bible, particularly in the book of Romans, which unveils the facets of salvation through Christ and the power of the gospel.

Transcript

About three years ago, I had a meeting with the Lord, alone, needing Him desperately, like I always do. The Lord dealt with me about a number of things and baptized me, I felt, with a new sense of His peace. But among other things that happened that time with the Lord was, I felt Him speak to me that I shouldn't preach with notes.

Well, I had preached my whole life with notes. All ministers use notes, usually, of some kind. But there were reasons for that, which I won't bore you with.

So for over maybe three years now, I've been preaching without notes. But this message here, I've had to, like, regage this and say, God, I have to deliver this the way you want me to, because this is too important. So just help me, Lord, that I don't omit something that I should mention, because this is a sermon about big truths, the big truths.

Now, the Bible is a book of truth. Thy word is truth. But there's different kinds of truths in here.

There's the truth that Joseph was espoused to Mary. That's true. Then there's true that Elijah was a prophet of God.

It's true that Moses was the one who led the people out of Egypt. But then there are other truths in the Bible which are more foundational. Jesus is the Son of God.

Help me say amen. And the big truths that I wanna bring to you today, you know, a few weeks ago, I preached about the love of God. And I told you that that is like the bottom.

There's nothing below that. And that's the truth that the enemy will try to rob from us, which is that God doesn't love us, that God isn't love, that God doesn't wanna help us. So I did the best I could under God.

And now this message is one of those big truths. This is called the big truths with an S on the end. Because what we're gonna do now is we're gonna deal with words that we find all the time in the Bible, especially the New Testament, but a lot of Christians don't know the proper meaning of them and how they're to be used.

We're gonna talk about a word like law, the law of God. We're gonna now, in this passage, find out about righteousness or rightness with God. Then we're gonna learn an amazing phrase that a lot of people don't focus on, which is called the righteousness of God compared to my righteousness.

Then we're gonna talk about words like grace. Grace. We're gonna talk about words like faith.

And most of all, we're gonna be talking about the ultimate word of the Bible, which is Jesus, and how he fits into all of this. Now, this passage is the passage which all Christians newly baptized or 30, 40 years in the Lord, you cannot stop going back and remembering this. You can't stop focusing on it because it is food for our soul.

It's the most precious thing in the world. I could tell you that this sermon could be called not just the big truths, but the most precious gift in the world. So let's look at it.

It's found in the book of Romans, which is a very, very important book for our theological foundation. And in chapter three, we read this. Verse 19, now we know that whatever the law says, what law, let's stop, not the law of don't cross only at the corners, not in between, not that law, the law of God, the moral commandments of God that Moses got.

Don't kill, don't commit adultery, don't lie, don't steal. 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. Therefore, no one will be declared righteous, there's one of those words now, another one, in his sight by observing or keeping the law.

Rather, through the law that God gave to Moses, we become conscious of sin. But now, a righteousness from God, apart from the law, having nothing to do with Moses' law, has been made known to which the law, the law of Moses and the prophets testify. This righteousness or this right standing with God comes from God and it comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.

There is no difference. For all have, what, sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified or made right with God or accepted by God freely by his grace as a gift through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. That was good even to just read, wasn't it? Now, Romans, some people have called it the Christian Constitution, because in Romans, unlike any other book, Paul unveils all the wonderful facets that our minds can take of how this salvation through Christ came about, why it came about, and so on and so forth, how it works, the nitty gritty of it.

The argument in Romans starts this way. Paul says, I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ, for it, the gospel, is the power of God, to salvation, to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile. And then he begins to talk about the world and the lostness of the world.

And he starts with not the Jews, but he starts with the Gentiles who didn't receive Moses' law. And he talks about the depravity of human beings, the selfishness, the tendency toward sin. And he says, well, even though these people didn't have the law of Moses, from the very beginning, they had another law that God put in their minds, and that's the law of conscience.

So don't say I didn't know better and I never got the law of God. God gave another kind of law, the witness of conscience. And that is a universal fact, that if any man in any country at any time sees two men jumping on a 12-year-old girl to attack her and spoil her and abuse her, that man will know that's wrong and he'll try to stop them, even though he's never gone to any Sunday school and never knows what a Bible is.

There's a law of conscience. And he says, you don't have the law, but look how you spun out of control. You saw from nature how awesome God is, but you didn't worship him, you didn't thank him, you didn't extol him as creator.

No, you gave yourself over to things that you know violated your conscience, and then God gave you up to all kinds of perverse things. So he says, to those who don't have the law, you violated another law, you violated the law of conscience so you know you're guilty because your conscience tells you you're guilty, because conscience operates this way. When you do something right, your conscience says it's right.

And when you do something wrong, depending on how well-informed and lit up your conscience is, your conscience will say, no, that's wrong, you shouldn't have done that. So then Paul, being a Jew himself and having traveled around that part of the world, going into synagogues, preaching to both Jews and Gentiles, he knows the position the Jew will take who had the law, who was a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and who had the law of Moses, and who went to the temple or went to the synagogue. He says, oh, I know what you're thinking.

You're thinking, those poor brutish pagans, they just do all kinds of horrible things. Look how they live. But he said, now, I wanna say something to you who have the law.

You might have the law, but do you obey the law? You have the law, and you look down at other people, but do you obey all the laws? You say to someone else, you shouldn't steal, but do you steal? You say to other people, they shouldn't do that, but do you do that? He said, you might have the law, but that doesn't mean anything. It's those who keep the law that could be justified. By God.

Just because you know the laws of the state of New York, that won't help you if you violate one of those laws. You're gonna be hauled before the court. So then Paul says, then we see, ah, the universe is now wrapped up into one single entity.

Gentiles who don't have the law, Gentiles who have a little bit of the law, Jews who are immersed in the law and know all the thou shalt and all the thou shalt nots, and he says, now we get it. Now we understand something, so by the works of the law, no one will ever be justified. And now he tells us something that we don't understand, most of us, about the law.

That the law of God was not given to merely stop people from sinning. The law of God was given mostly to get rid of every trace of justification in any one of us and in every one of us that we could ever be accepted by God. The law was given not just to hold back sin.

That was a secondary meaning of it. The main purpose of law is to let everybody be stripped naked of every excuse and let the law do its work, which is the soul that sinneth shall surely die, and you've sinned and you know it. That's the purpose of the law, Paul tells us.

He's gonna get to the place where he talks about the absolute silence that the law brings, that every mouth may be stopped. So it's not a battle just to give up sin, but rather an attempt at ever being right with God. What the law wants to do is stop, stop.

Don't ever try to be right with God because you've already blown it. And all the law does is kill every human attempt at acceptance with God, and all it's supposed to do is bring indefensible guilt with no power of recovery. The law cannot help anybody who breaks it.

The law doesn't have that in it. All the law does is command, condemn. Command, condemn.

And once you break it, the law has nothing to do with you, won't help you, has no mercy, that's why it was written on stone. It just says, you're the man, you're the woman. And it brings deep moral guilt.

When it does its work, and this is its work, is to bring a helpless, moral, deep sorrow and guilt, I have sinned. I should have never done that. I should have never said that.

I should have never gone there. Nobody else might know, but I know and God knows. How many are with me so far? Say amen.

How many in your life have ever been convicted of sin? Some of you didn't raise your hand. I gotta talk to you at the end of the service. I gotta meet who you are.

So that's the purpose of the law. That's the law of God. Nobody will ever be justified.

No meritocracy, nobody ever does enough by the law of God to be accepted by God. You know what, you take a test, if you get 100 questions, you get them all right, what do you get? If you get 10 wrong, what do you get? A 90. The law demands to be accepted by God 100%, every day of your life.

And once you get one wrong, it's all over. You can get all the rest right, you still don't get 100. And then the law says nothing to help us.

It just condemns. That's the purpose of it, just that's it. Why would God do that? Paul says, so now no one will be ever justified by the law of conscience or by the law of God.

Why? God did it so that every single mouth will be shut. Excuse the expression. Everybody in the universe, be quiet.

No whimpering, no justification, no story. You could sell that game to somebody else, God's not buying it, be still. The purpose of the law, according to the Bible, is to make everybody silent, that every mouth may be silenced, and everybody will be made to be quiet with no more squirming, no more self-justification, no more defense mechanisms, no more rationalizations.

The law was sent by God to get everybody to please be quiet. Why would God do that? To condemn us? No. The law does that so that once we stop talking, we will listen to what he wants to say to us.

Praise God. But you can't hear him as long as you're talking. As long as you're rationalizing, as long as you're talking about how you were raised, as long as I talk about my late alcoholic father and how it bent me out of shape, as long as I'm justifying because of the pressures I live under or whatever, the moment I'm still talking, I can't listen.

And God says, I have something to say to you, but you can only hear it if you all just shut up. Excuse saying shut up. You know, I used to teach my kids, never say shut up when they were little.

Any of you ever have that? Shut up was a phrase in our house we didn't use. You didn't ever say shut up. And one day, my middle daughter, who gave me the most trouble, Susan, my daughter Susan Petrie, she was about eight years old and she got, she so tormented me.

See, I'm justifying myself. There I go, see, there. She so tormented me and was bothering me.

I spanked her, she kept, after she kept yelling, screaming, whatever. And I just got so angry and I said, shut up! And she went, I thought you were a pastor. Well, God says, everybody be quiet because I want you to listen.

No more speaking, no more talking, no more justifying, no more excuses, no more playing games with yourself. I want to tell you something. The law can do no more.

It's powerless to help anybody. The only thing law knows, guilt, judgment, sin, death. The soul that sins, it shall surely, that's all the law does.

So any religion that's called Christianity that's based on the law, you're in a lot of trouble. And I want to say this to all of you because I love you and Satan will try to use the law of God to bring us into condemnation. There are Christians all over the place and I've been one that has battled it at times.

You live in condemnation because you know you violated the law. And Satan will quote right from the Bible and say, you're the man. What are you going to church for? You know what you did.

So this is why this message is so important. The law only knows one thing, condemn, condemn, condemn, condemn, condemn, condemn. All right, I broke you, I'm sorry.

Look, hey, that's your problem. I don't care that you're sorry. I'm in correspondence again and we're gonna start calling each other on the phone.

David Burka was the son of Sam, my friend who's serving 600 some years up in Sullivan County Correctional Facility who was that infamous serial killer and then became a very, very, very devout believer. He got 600 years. It doesn't matter that he's a Christian now and it doesn't matter if he promises never to hurt anyone.

You do the crime, that's what the law says. So unless Christians know how to rightly divide the law and understand how it works, you can end up with a lot of sleepless nights, a lot of sleepless nights. And Satan, the Bible says, comes as an angel of light, so he'll use the law on us because, remember with Adam and Eve, didn't God say? He's, I mean, he comes, he's shrewd.

Now we learn, before the good news comes, that you gotta be hopeless before you have hope. God has made it that you can't have a sliver of anything in you that you cling to if you wanna have the real hope. The law was sent to take away everything we lean on because everything we do in life is meritocracy.

You do well, you score more points in a basketball game, you win, why? Because you do better than the other guy. You get 100 on the test, you got 100 on the test. You pass the Regents, you pass the Regents.

You do well on a test, you get a promotion. But with God, meritocracy is totally out of the window. Nothing, God won't deal with anyone who's pointing to anything.

He wants hands at the side, hands empty, every mouth quiet, and he says, you want real hope? First, I gotta make you hopeless because the word I'm gonna give you is so wonderful, you can't really receive it unless you have no hope. For God to show moral compassion, divine compassion, you have to be broken first. Isn't that what conversion's all about? Unless you know you're broken, you're not gonna go to the doctor.

If you think you're doing fine or you just need a little help around the edges, Jesus dying on the cross is not for you. Why would he have to give his life on the cross if you're doing fairly good? No, no, he died on the cross because none of us have a chance. We're hopeless.

Who of us could stand before God? You might compare yourself to somebody else and say, yeah, but I'm not like a degenerate, I'm not like in the street or selling drugs and all that. Those comparisons are part of our fantasy. You're not gonna be compared to anyone else, you're gonna be compared to God.

That's why the Bible says, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. And there's something in us, like in something in some of you right now, you're resisting this because you say, I don't want that kind of description of myself. But listen, if you want the good news, you gotta take the true news first.

You gotta get hopeless before you can have hope. By the works of the law, nobody will be justified. But now, Paul says, a righteousness from God has appeared, having nothing to do with the law.

A right standing with God that has nothing to do with my track record. Oh, praise God. Praise God.

Now an acceptance with God, an open-armed embrace from the Father has been revealed, having nothing to do with the law. Because the law of Moses only makes me be shoved away and feel this infinite gulf between me and God. Me, sinful Jim Cymbala, and a holy God.

How am I ever gonna get there? But now, Paul says, in the gospel, a righteousness from God is revealed. It's made manifest, it's prepared, it's offered to everybody. Having nothing to do with what's your track record.

Do you have an 82 in life, are you a 64, are you a 95, are you a 50, or a 40, or a 30, or a 20? What are you on your righteousness scale? Has nothing to do with that. Praise God. If it had anything to do with that, we should all just run out of the building.

But it has nothing to do with that. No, now a righteousness from God, a right standing with God has appeared, prepared and offered to all with no human merit involved. Where we have failed, he has provided an answer by sending his son, Jesus Christ.

For there's a right standing with God, there's a righteousness that is given to us, never earned, it's a gift. And it comes through faith in Jesus Christ. The person who puts their faith in Jesus Christ is counted as if they've never sinned.

Not because of you, because of him. We're accepted, not because of us. Don't let the devil make you look inward, he'll beat you upside your head every day of the week.

You don't look ever inward, you look outward, looking unto Jesus. Satan, you're right about everything you said about me, but my savior is Jesus Christ. Come on, he's the perfect substitute.

He's the righteous son of God. And this right standing comes from a holy God who is also a loving God. The same God who gave his law is the same God who gave his son.

He gave the law, and then he gave his son. He always wanted to give his son when he saw the human condition, but he knew you can't accept the son, you can't love him and cherish him the way you ought to and the way I ought to, unless the law has done its work and you don't have one word to say except, have mercy on me. Lord, have mercy.

Come on, everybody put your hands up and just say, Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy on us.

That's the greatest thing anybody can say. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

Not for my sake. You see me, I'm broken, I'm wrong, but I believe in the name that is like no other name given among men. I believe that you sent your son in love to be my righteousness.

Notice how sin is so evil, and God is so holy. God could never just wink at sin. God couldn't say, let's make believe you never did it.

No, no, no, no, no. He's too holy, sin's too terrible. So he said, no, my son will go and live a perfectly righteous life.

He will live a perfectly righteous life for you, and then he will die for you. And what I want you to do is give him your sins. Give it to him.

Trust him, give it to him. And he wants to give you something, his righteousness, so that you will never be seen the way you really are, but God will only see you through Christ. He won't see the faults and the blemishes and the sins and the disasters and all the mess ups.

He will never look at that because the blood of his own son was shed for you. So God remains holy, but God remains loving. If he was just holy, he could have wiped us all out, and he could have been found righteous.

The soul that sinneth, it shall surely die. Why? Somebody here, you've never violated your conscience? Anybody here, you've never violated what God said you shouldn't do? But God loved us so much that he gave his son. And the only way this can be received is as a gift through grace.

Grace means nobody ever think you earned it. No, no, no, no, you didn't earn a thing. You got this freely as a gift.

And the only thing faith does, it's the open hand that says, I receive that present. I take that present from you, God. You give me your son, that's what faith is.

Faith is a hand that just says, I take the gift. I receive the gift. Praise the Lord.

Praise the Lord. How many are happy? Every sin, filthy thing you ever did, come on. Can we put our hands together and praise him? Do we have problems? Yeah, but what problem do you and I face that can be compared with the guilt of sin? How many of you here that are Christians have ever been zinged by God because you failed God, and boy, he went after you big time to show you that so that you could deal with it.

Oh yes, that's how you become a Christian. These new baptized people, you know how they became Christians? They got to a place where they said, I'm a mess, and I have no excuse, and the minute you stop talking, you can start listening. Whosoever will may come.

Drink of the water freely. Though your sins be as scarlet, they'll be whiter than snow. I'll forgive them their sins and their iniquities.

I will remember no more. But you can't hear that until you stop. Stop justifying.

Stop singing a song. Just say, it's me. It's me.

When you fail in your Christian walk, don't ever justify it. It's me. It's me.

Thank you, Lord, for your mercy. Thank you for the blood that was shed. One more time, let's put our hands together and thank God.

Every eye closed. Every eye closed. Lord, thank you for your word.

Oh, there is a bomb in Gilead. Now we understand law better. Righteousness, grace, faith.

These are the important words in life. But if you're here today, and you've never had that transaction with God where you just said, Lord, have mercy. Just help me.

Save me. Change me. You're gonna have an opportunity to walk forward, but I especially want to focus on those who are being attacked by guilt.

Satan is the accuser of the brothers and sisters. He loves to use the law of God and our failings to have us live with no joy, no peace. And he makes it sound like it's holy.

And he makes it sound like it's right biblically. But there is therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For what the law could not do, God did, by sending his son.

It's a gift. You gotta hold to that gift. You gotta treasure that gift.

And you gotta know how to resist the devil and say, Satan, be quiet, I resist you. The blood of Jesus has been shed for my sins. You didn't overcome him when he was on earth.

You can't overcome him now. He is my righteousness. I don't have a righteousness of my own.

He is my righteousness. So if you wanna condemn me, talk to him because he is my righteousness. He is my righteousness.

I don't have one of my own. I'm Jim Cimbala. All I've ever done in my life is mess up.

But because of his great love, wherewith he loved me, he has become my righteousness. If you've been under attack with guilt and the enemy's trying to just destroy you, you can get up from your seat and just walk to the front. And that's it, we're gonna just sing this hymn and close.

There's nothing else to say except celebrate this. So if you're here today, just step forward. Lord, I thank you that you've taught us today how to rightly divide the word of God, understanding why you gave the law, but understanding why you gave your son.

Thank you for your grace. Cristo, te amo mucho, Senor. We love you today, Jesus.

You're the best thing ever happened in my life. We have all failed you and you never let go. Thank you for your love.

Thank you for your patience. Thank you for your mercy. Thank you that you who have begun a good work, you're gonna complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.

Thank you that we are safe now under the blood of Christ. Thank you that we have a righteousness that's not our own, but it's a gift, even the righteousness of Jesus. We thank you that he took our sins and we thank you today that he gave us his perfect righteousness.

Oh, thank you, Jesus. Everybody, just thank him in your own words. We thank you, Jesus.

We thank you, Lord. Now, Lord, help us as we dismiss. Bless my friends in the front, whether they're receiving you for the first time or just throwing off the shackles of condemnation, for we're not ignorant of Satan's devices.

Help us to live in the light of your sunshine and always treasuring your gift of grace. Be with us, we pray in Jesus' name. And everyone said.

Turn around and hug a bunch of people as the band plays.

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