

- Brotherhood in Misery (Rom 3:9-23, Gen 8:21)

**#1. The Righteousness of God** (Rom 3:21-23, Eph 1:3-8)

- Without the Law (Rom 3:20-22, Col 2:14, John 6:37)

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**#3. Christ the Judge** (2Cor 5:21)

- The Gospel in a Nutshell (Rom 3:21-24, Matt 12:36)

Please open your Bibles to the Epistle to the Romans, Rom 3:9 (2X). Today we are going to focus on verse 21, but first I want us to see the context. Therefore we start with Rom 3:9.

- **Brotherhood in Misery** (Rom 3:9-23, Gen 8:21)

I want to title this part of chapter 3 as, “Brotherhood in Misery”. Except for verses 21 and 22 this section of Rom 3 emphasizes the total depravity of mankind. It is a very depressing passage, but it is something we should know. In the midst of this depressing passage God inserted verses 21 and 22, which contains the Gospel in a nutshell. It means that this is the Good News in a nutshell, and there is where we can find how God lifts us up from the dunghill. Let us now read in Rom 3:9-23,

Rom 3:9-23, “**9** What then? are we better *than they*? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; **10** As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: **11** There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. **12** They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. **13** Their throat *is* an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps *is* under their lips: **14** Whose mouth *is* full of cursing and bitterness: **15** Their feet *are* swift to shed blood: **16** Destruction and misery *are* in their ways: **17** And the way of peace have they not known: **18** There is no fear of God before their eyes. **19** Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. **20** Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin. **21** But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; **22** Even the righteousness of God *which is* by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: **23** For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;”

In verses 9 and 10 God tells us that we all, meaning all mankind both Jews and Gentiles, came into the world “under sin”. What is sin? Sin is a transgression of the law of God. To be “under sin”, as is stated in verse 9, means that we all are guilty for breaking the law of God. Verse 10 says that no one is excepted; even little babies are under sin, for they sin as soon as they are born, speaking lies. In fact, there is none righteous, no, not one, and that includes little babies, and it includes even the babies in the womb who are not yet born, for they are persons also.

We were conceived and born in sin, which means that every one of us were under the law, and under sin, the moment we were conceived in our mother’s womb. What does it mean to be under the law? It means that the law was ruling over us from the day we were conceived. The law is not our advocate, but the law is our accuser before God. The law says that the little baby in the womb was guilty of sinful thoughts, already before it was born, for God says in Gen 8:21, “for the imagination of man’s heart *is* evil from his youth;” We, as well as the whole world, are accountable to God’s judgment. The law will not get us any credit with God. The law has the opposite result: the law produces sin and

debts that have to be paid to God. The works of the law are no help in getting credit with God. The Word of God is a word of judgment, for through the law comes the knowledge of sin, and therefore by obedience to the law there shall no flesh be justified.

How does the Bible define “the law”? In the narrow sense it may refer to the Ten Commandments. But in the general sense it refers to the whole Bible, not just the OT, for the New Testament contains God’s laws as well as the Old Testament does. You have to determine from the context what the apostle means by “the law.” For example, the command: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ” is a command from God as well as all the other commandments. And so the command to be obedient to the law means that we must obey the whole Bible; but we never are obedient to the whole Bible.

All of us are accountable to the One Judge, who is God. All of us are sinful. There are different degrees of sin, some are worse than others, but all men are sinners. There is no escape from this prison. Sin is not only intentional bad behavior, and it is not only unintentional bad behavior, but it is a power over us (verse 9), it is an imprisonment. At best we can talk about improving the conditions in our prison, but nobody can set himself free, or can set others free. Do not believe the liberals who speak about the brotherhood of all men. There is no such thing. However, this strange brotherhood in misery is not written for our comfort. It is a cry of despair, and it is a cry for escape from this prison. Do not blame Adam, for we have only ourselves to blame, for God says, “There is none that seeketh after God,” and God says, “There is none that doeth good, no not one.”

## **#1. The Righteousness of God (Rom 3:21-23, Eph 1:3-8)**

The first thing we see in verse 21 is “the righteousness of God.” What is the righteousness of God? Righteousness is the virtue to be right with God in all aspects of His holy being. Therefore, “righteousness” is conceived as judged by the standard of God’s holy law, which is derived from His holy character. In the Bible mankind is considered to be corrupt and lacking in righteousness. From Rom 3:19-20 we see that man is totally incapable of making himself righteous, for only if we could be like God can we have the righteousness that God possesses. Let us read Rom 3:21-23 again.

Rom 3:21-23, “21 But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; 22 Even the righteousness of God *which is* by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: 23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;”

We see two kinds of righteousness develop before our eyes. One is the perfect righteousness of God which is absolutely unattainable by man while we live on this earth, because we are not God. The only exception is the Lord Jesus Christ, who is both God and man, and thus He is perfectly righteous like God the Father and God the Holy Spirit are. The second is an imputed righteousness which God imputes to those who are His elect, chosen from before the foundation of the world. The word impute is an accounting term. It means that God declares certain persons righteous, not because of something

they have done, for it cannot be purchased by good works, but God imputes it to those whom He declares to be His children. This act of God can be derived directly from an earlier act of God concerning those whom He chose before the foundation of the world. Put a sticker here in Rom 3 and please turn in your Bibles to the Epistle to the Ephesians, Eph 1:3-8 (2X). We have here a chapter which together with Rom 9 are the two most hated chapters in the Bible. Think about this now: These two chapters contain **the key** to unlock the entire Bible, and to make it completely coherent, and to solve all the mysteries of the Gospel in the entire Bible. But those who remain unbelievers refuse to accept that because they want to retain their self-worth and their self-respect, and thereby they willingly put themselves in a position of being under the wrath of God. They refuse to give all the glory to God, and instead they want part of the glory for themselves. It is the utmost stupidity I have encountered in all my life. Think also about this now: I am no great theologian, but I preach each sermon as if it is my last one. In chemical engineering I am just average; I am no genius. But by now I have been preaching 16 years, and I have posted more than 700 sermons on the internet on election and predestination, and I have gone through the Old Testament and the New Testament from Genesis through Revelation, and I have shown how Gods counsel of election and predestination coherently fits into all the Scriptures that I came across, and I have used the keys that Eph 1 and Rom 9 have provided, and I have shown that there are more chapters like that, and I have shown this to the world, but most of the world does not believe it. It is no longer a mystery that they do not understand, but it is an unwillingness to accept the ways of God. It is the utter stupidity of the Philistine mind, and an unwillingness to believe the depravity of mankind. Let us now read Eph 1:3-8,

Eph 1:3-8, “**3** Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ: **4** According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: **5** Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, **6** To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. **7** In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; **8** Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence;”

Does this passage promise God’s act of imputing righteousness to His people? Yes it does! Look at verse **4**, “In order that we should be holy and without blame before him.” Here is God’s promise that He would cause us to stand before Him holy and without blame and righteous. Look at verse **5**, “He has predestinated us to be the adopted children through Jesus Christ.” How can a child of God be other than righteous? Look at verse **6**, “He hath made us accepted in the Beloved” where the Beloved refers to Christ. How can someone be accepted by God and still be unrighteous? Look at verse **7**, “redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.” How can anyone for whom Christ has shed His blood, and who has obtained forgiveness for all his sins, still be unrighteous before God? That would be

impossible. And so, we see from this passage that there is abundant evidence that the Lord would impute righteousness to all those whom the Father has reserved to be the Bride of Christ. But keep in mind that we will only be **declared** righteous; the quality of righteousness is not infused into us, we do not become truly righteous in ourselves, for we still live in a sinful body and we continue to be sinners at heart and inclined to sin every minute of each day. But God declares all His saints righteous. God declares that we are no longer sinners, but saints. Our righteousness is imputed to our account, just like Adam's sin was imputed to our account, and just like our sins were imputed to the account of Christ. Let us now return to Rom 3:21-22, and there we read:

- **Without the Law** (Rom 3:20-22, Col 2:14, John 6:37)

This passage begins with "But now", indicating that there is a contrast between what went on before and what now follows. What went on before? Rom 3:20 says, "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight." In other words, "Obedience to the law is no way out of being guilty before God, for God is still angry with your past sins." And then follows verse 21, which tells us paraphrased, "But now atonement has been made for your past and future sins apart from the law."

Rom 3:21-22, **21** But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; **22** Even the righteousness of God *which is* by (lit: through) faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe.

"But now" refers to the time when God sent His Son to die on the cross. It indicates God's zero hour, "the fullness of time." It is the hinge on which Old Testament time turns to New Testament time. It was the moment when all of God's enemies were judged and condemned to hell. It was the moment when Christ "Blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;" (Col 2:14)

"The righteousness of God" refers to the Lord Jesus Christ who is the personification of the righteousness of God, for out of all mankind He is the only one who is as perfectly righteous as God Himself. Christ crucified is the only way in which we can be right with God "without the law," or apart from the law, which means "without works" on our part. And He has been manifested, has been revealed, not discovered by men, but made known by God. And He will impute to us a righteousness apart from the law, for this righteousness He will impute as a free gift to all them that believe. Who are those that believe? There is no one that believes, no not one! Remember, we read that in verse 11, "There is none that seeketh after God." And so, only the ones who will be irresistibly drawn to the Lord Jesus by the Father will come to believe in salvation through Christ crucified, because they are the ones whom the Father has chosen before the foundation of the world, and whom the Father has given to Jesus (John 6:37). This righteousness of God without the law, Christ, is being witnessed by the law and the prophets. What does that mean? Although this Gospel of salvation has been made known in the New Testament time, it is not a complete break with the Old Testament time. The Gospel of Christ

crucified in the New Testament is the same Gospel of salvation that applied throughout the Old Testament time. It is the same New Covenant of grace that applies throughout the Old and New Testament time, but most of the Old Testament Jews did not understand the spiritual implications of the laws and ceremonies. Therefore, they adhered to the works of the law as if this obedience to the law could save them, but instead it became a curse to them. This is what God refers to when He speaks of “the curse of the law.” But the fact is that “the law and the prophets”, which was a code for the old testament Scriptures, bear witness to the coming of Messiah who would bear the sins of many and would atone for the sins of many. You only have to read Isa 53 to see how the Old Testament was witnessing to Christ crucified. But why was He crucified? For this we have to turn to:

## **#2. The Righteousness of God in Christ Crucified (Col 2:17, Heb 10:1)**

Very early in the Old Testament we learn of animal sacrifices. God killed one or two animals to clothe Adam and his wife. Abel, the second son of Adam and Eve, offered lambs as a burnt offering unto God. After the flood Noah offered animal sacrifices to God. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob offered animal sacrifices to God, and so on, and so on. All these animal sacrifices were signs and shadows of good things to come, (Col 2:17, Heb 10:1), but all these shadows pointed to the substance, which is of Christ and Him crucified. And thus all throughout the Old Testament God indicated that sins must be atoned for. The principle of atonement is that someone who is unblemished and without sin can substitute for a sinner and pays to God the debt that the sinner owes. A spotless lamb is unblemished and without sin, but animals cannot atone for the sins of man, for animals cannot suffer the equivalent of an eternity in hell. But the man Christ Jesus was able to suffer the equivalent of an eternity in hell, and that was why He was the only one in the entire universe who would be able to atone for the sins of man. The righteousness of God demands that the penalty must be paid in full, either by the sinner or by someone who qualifies to be a substitute. And thus, if the Lord Jesus Christ paid for the guilt of my sins the full penalty that I would have to pay if I would stand before the judgment throne of God, then He had to pay the equivalent of an eternity in hell, for that is the full penalty that I would have to pay. Christ did not go to a place called hell, but on the cross He suffered the equivalent of an eternity in hell in His soul. We can actually see it in the suffering he endured in His body and in His soul. When the sufferings for our sins in His soul were ended He cried out with a loud voice so that everyone could hear it, “It Is Finished” by which He indicated that the sufferings in His soul were finished. This was a great relief for the Lord Jesus, for the sufferings in His soul were much greater than the sufferings in His body. And so, when He cried “It Is Finished” He was still hanging on the cross, and He was still bleeding from His hands and feet and from His head. But all that was negligible compared to the sufferings He had endured in His soul. Yes, the passion of the Lord Jesus in His body is not the focus of His crucifixion, but the physical crucifixion was only an outwardly visible sign of the torments He had to endure, because the righteousness of God must be satisfied. And this what we see here on Calvary

is only one of the many instances that the Bible speaks of Christ enduring the equivalent of an eternity in hell for us because He was our Substitute. But when we speak of this great principle of Substitution, let us understand what that really means.

- **He Became Sin for Us** (2Cor 5:21, Hos 4:8)

Please turn in your Bibles to the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, 2Cor 5:21 (2X). Here is a verse that has been quoted very much and that has been misunderstood and mishandled by many. Here is another verse concerning the imputation of our sins on the account of Christ and the imputation of the righteousness of Christ on us. And so, we must absolutely understand this verse very well, for this again concerns the Gospel of Christ crucified. We read in 2Cor 5:21,

2Cor 5:21, “For He (i.e. God) hath made Him (Christ) *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him (in Christ).”

God chose to present this fact that Christ has been made sin for us as the most affecting of all arguments. The strongest argument which is most adapted to melt the soul is the fact that the Son of God has become incarnate for our sins, and has suffered and died in our place. If that does not touch us in our soul, then nothing else will. 2Cor 5:21 begins with the word “For”. The first time we read “For” it is the Greek word “gar”, which means “Because.” No big problems here. Then we read the words, “To be sin.” The words “to be” are not in the original Greek text. Literally God says, “He has made Him sin, or a sin-offering.” But what is meant by this? It cannot be **#1**, that Christ became literally sin in the literal or in the abstract sense of the word. No one can pretend this, for Christ is the spotless Lamb of God, and He must remain spotless throughout the process of atonement. This expression must therefore be understood in the figurative sense of the word. Nor can it mean **#2**, that Christ was a sinner, for this verse says that Christ “knew no sin” and it is said everywhere in the Bible that Christ was holy, and harmless, and undefiled. Nor can it mean **#3**, that Christ was in any sense of the word “guilty”, for no one is truly guilty who is not personally a transgressor of the law. And if Christ was in any sense of the word “guilty”, then He deserved to die, and His death could have no more merit than any other human being who was found “guilty.” And if Christ was properly “guilty” it would make no difference in this respect whether it was by His own fault or by imputation. A guilty being deserves to be punished, and where there is a penalty there can be no merit in His sufferings. But all such explanations which make the holy Redeemer a sinner, or guilty, or deserving the sufferings which He endured, border on blasphemy and are abhorrent to the whole character of the Scriptures. In no form and in no sense possible can it be maintained that the Lord Jesus was sinful or guilty. It is a cornerstone of our whole system of religion, that in all conceivable senses the Lord Jesus was holy, and pure, and the object of Divine praise. And every interpretation which leads to the statement that Christ was in any sense guilty, or which implies that He deserved to die, is a false view and should be at once abandoned. And thus we arrive at the fourth possibility. **#4**, If the declaration that “He was made sin” does not mean

that He was sin itself, or a sinner, or guilty, then it must mean that He was a sin offering, an offering or a sacrifice for sin, which is the proper interpretation for the word "Atonement". In other words, "God treated Him as if He were a sinner." There are several passages in the Old Testament where the word "sin" is used in the sense of "sin-offering", or a sacrifice for sin. For example, in Hos 4:8 we read, "They eat up the sin of my people." It means that Christ made an atonement, which means that He died for someone else's sin, that His death was not just the death of a martyr, but that it was designed by substituted sufferings on behalf of others to make reconciliation between man and God. Let us now continue in 2Cor 5:21.

- **Who Knew No Sin** (2Cor 5:21, 1Pet 2:22, Heb 7:26, Jer 31:3)

2Cor 5:21, "For He (i.e. God) hath made Him (Christ) *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him (in Christ)."

Christ was not guilty. He was perfectly holy and pure. This principle is also expressed in 1Pet 2:22

1Pet 2:22, "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:"

The same statement of truth can also be found in Heb 7:26,

Heb 7:26, "For such a high priest became us, *who is* holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;"

In all respects and in all conceivable senses the Lord Jesus was pure and holy. If He had not been He would not have been qualified to make an atonement. Therefore the writers of Scripture were everywhere at great pains to keep this idea prominent, for on this depends the whole superstructure of God's plan of salvation. The phrase "knew no sin" is an expression of great beauty and dignity. It indicates His entire and perfect purity. He was altogether unacquainted with sin; He was a stranger to transgression; He was conscious of no sin; He committed none. He had a mind and heart perfectly free from pollution, and His whole life was perfectly pure and holy in the sight of God, "In order that we might be made the righteousness of God." It means that we are accepted as righteous, and treated as righteous by God on account of what the Lord Jesus has done for us. There is here a beautiful contrast between what is said of Christ and what is said of us. He was made sin, and we are made righteousness. In other words, He was treated as if He was a sinner, though He was perfectly holy and pure; we are treated as if we were righteous, though we are defiled and depraved. In wiping away our sins we are treated as if we had ourselves never been exposed to violation of the law of God. In the phrase "Righteousness of God" there is a reference to the fact that this is God's plan of making men righteous, or of justifying them. They who thus are declared righteous are justified on His plan and by a scheme which God has devised. It is a righteousness imputed to us by God. The idea is that all our righteousness in the sight of God we receive in and through a Redeemer. Everything must be traced back to Christ, the Redeemer. And here then is the whole plan of salvation and the peculiarity of the Christian religion. The whole plan therefore is one of substitution, and without substitution there can be

no salvation. Innocence voluntarily suffers for guilt, and the guilty are thus made pure and holy, and are saved. The greatness of Divine compassion and love is thus shown for the guilty; and on the ground of this it is right and proper for God to call on men to be reconciled to Him. And so, how does God call on us? He first softens our heart of stone, and then He shows us that He has given His only begotten Son to the bitter suffering of the equivalent of an eternity in hell for us on the cross, in order that we may be touched in our heart and be reconciled to Him.

How amazing is the Divine condescension, that God should have ever proposed such a plan of reconciliation. It was pure, rich and infinite benevolence. God was not to be benefitted by it. He is already infinitely blessed and happy even though all mankind would have been lost. He is pure and just and holy, and it was not necessary to this sort of action in order to vindicate His own character. But the reason why God did this must be derived from His love for His elect. God loved us from before the foundation of the world. God said to Jeremiah in Jer 31:3,

Jer 31:3, The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.

### **#3. Christ the Judge (2Cor 5:21)**

2Cor 5:21, “For He (i.e. God) hath made Him (Christ) *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him (in Christ).”

“God made Christ sin for us.” Is this pure substitution? We must understand what the substitution is that God writes about in the Bible. That second word “for” in this verse is not the Greek word “gar” like in the beginning of this verse, but it is the word “Huper.” And Huper means “On behalf of.” Here in this place it does not mean “In the place of”, but it means “On behalf of.” Is that important? Yes, it is important, for it is directly connected to the principle of imputation, which is an accounting term.

Here is the situation. God has appointed the Lord Jesus Christ as the Judge of the living and the dead. Before the foundation of the world the Father has given all the elect to the Lord Jesus, and He has to atone “for” all their sins, because they must stand holy and without blame before the Father. But in atoning “for” all their sins Christ who is both the Judge and the Redeemer may not be defiled with their sins, and thus He may not be a total substitution for these defiled human beings, for then He would be defiled with their sins. This is how many have interpreted 2Cor 5:21, but that is wrong. The Father has not imputed the sins of all those He wanted to be saved on Christ, but He has imputed the guilt of all those sins on the account of Christ. Let us look at this now in a human analogy and compare the atonement as a monetary transaction, which we can understand much better.

Before the cross all those sinners stand before Christ as the Judge, and Christ pronounces the guilty verdict on all of them. Each one has to pay a debt that is so great, it is impossible for them to pay. Then comes the cross experience, and Christ the Judge steps from behind the Judge’s bench and He now stands in front of the Judge’s bench and He pays to God the Judge out of His account the penalty,

which was the debt that needed to be paid. The Father has imputed the debt of all these sinners to the account of Christ. And after Christ has paid the debt on their behalf, notice Christ pays it on their behalf, the payment was imputed to the account of all these sinners, and they were debt-free. This is unconditional mercy: It means they did not have to go to hell, because God had forgiven them all that they owed. But this leaves them on neutral ground: No hell, but no heaven either. But now comes the second phase: Christ imputes to them the righteousness of God, and now they have received unconditional grace: which means that Christ has lifted them up from the dunghill and has given them the gift of being the sons of God and the Bride of Christ. These two gifts, mercy and grace are given to everyone who has been Born Again. By His death on the cross the Lord Jesus Christ purchased the mercy for every one of His chosen people, He imputed the payment that He made to their account. And by imputing the righteousness of God to each one of them He has given them the gift of grace to be the sons of God and the Bride of Christ. And Christ did all that not by substituting “for” His people, or by standing “in the place of” His people, but by paying for the guilt of their sins “on behalf of” His people, for that is what the Greek word “for” stands for. After the cross the Lord Jesus took His place again behind the Judge’s bench, and from there He will be the Judge of the living and the dead, meaning the Judge of all the unsaved who are alive and all the unsaved who have died. Where are all the elect? All the elect have already been judged at the cross of Christ in AD 33.

Please turn again to the Epistle to the Romans, Rom 3:21 (2X).

- **The Gospel in a Nutshell** (Rom 3:21-24, Matt 12:36)

Now we can look again at these few verses which follow the dismal litany of the depravity of man. Before God can save us and elevate us He first has to make it clear from where we have fallen. We have fallen into the deep dungeon of Satan’s kingdom, and we have enjoyed our sins. But now there has to be an awareness that we have insulted Almighty God, and we must look at the cross of Christ. Perhaps you remember that there were many at the cross who mocked the Lord Jesus and who railed at Him. Why were they doing that? They did not believe that He was the promised Messiah. To what purpose was He there hanging on a cross? They considered that He was just a victim of the hatred of the scribes and Pharisees. They did not see any purpose for His suffering. And so it is today Those who do not believe that the Lord Jesus Christ was actually suffering on our behalf are the scoffers and the mockers and the railers of today. They are standing around the cross with hardened hearts, and they could not care less if He suffered grievously. They do not care if it was prophesied in the Bible that Christ would suffer for our sins, for they do not consider that they are grievous sinners. Yes, God should punish Adolph Hitler for causing the death of 40 million people, but we are not great sinners. We are decent, moral, law abiding citizens. However, the Lord Jesus said in Matt 12:36,

Matt 12:36, “But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.”

On the last day every sin, as small as an idle word, shall be judged by God, and people shall be held accountable for those small sins. This is the deep dungeon of Satan's kingdom. But here in Rom 3:21-24 is the Gospel in a nutshell. Christ has come for those who believe on Him. Rom 3:21-24,

Rom 3:21-24, "21 But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; 22 Even the righteousness of God *which is* by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: 23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; 24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:"

You see, we are justified freely by His grace. We are justified, meaning we are declared just and righteous in the sight of God through the payment that the Lord Jesus made on the cross, and it is not based on any work on our part. When God gave us the faith to believe that the Lord Jesus paid for our sins, we were instantly declared just and righteous in His sight. What a wonderful gift! What a beautiful Savior, and what a beautiful Gospel. And it does not end there, for in the life hereafter Christ continues to bestow on us one greater gift after another. The half has never been told. And think of this now: It is all a gift of grace, totally free, for the beginning of these gifts was in eternity past when the Father chose a Bride for His Son. Pity those people who refuse to believe that the Father chose a Bride for His Son. They have missed out on the first step, and now they have to rely on the lies of Satan who tells them, "You shall not surely die." Hell is going to be a fun place; all the pleasure seekers are going to be there, and we will have a grand old party. But that is not God's advice.

He says, Let us seek to go to heaven to which Christ would raise us; and though our earthly house of this tabernacle must be dissolved, let us be prepared as we may be for that eternal habitation in the New Heaven and the New Earth which He has fitted up for all who love Him.

AMEN.            Let us turn to the Lord in prayer.