

Study 0030

Scripture Text: Romans 3:19-31

Before we draw the curtain on the subject of Christian foundations, there are themes, which are fundamental to the Christian walk, which we need to study. We have probably heard about these themes, talked about them, and even made confessional and assertive statements regarding them, but may never have fully understood their implications for our lives as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is our prayer that as we study these themes, the Lord will not only wipe away our ignorance, but He will also bring us into the full possession of these matters.

In our scripture text above, we come across these themes as they appear rather innocuously in the text. They are: propitiation, remission, justification, righteousness, and, redemption. These themes put together, culminate in salvation, which is another familiar theme. One common thread that runs through all these themes is Jesus Christ. These themes are, in reality, the foundational work that the Lord Jesus did; that is, the bedrock or basis upon which our Christian foundation is laid (**1 Corinthians 3:11**). Let us now look at these themes individually.

Propitiation

This refers to both the act of atoning for sin, and, the person or thing that is the atoning sacrifice. More than just an atoning sacrifice for sin, propitiation is the acceptable sacrifice demanded by God to atone for sin. Also, propitiation means ‘the mercy seat’ (the place above the Ark of the Covenant in the Old Testament tabernacle, where the chief priest sprinkled the blood of an atoning sacrifice by which the sins of the nation of Israel was covered over for one year) **Hebrews 9:1-5**. For the New Testament saint, Jesus Christ is our propitiation Who has paid the penalty for the sins of mankind in a manner that is acceptable to God (**1 John 2:2; 4:10**). The implication of Jesus being our propitiation is that no one else could satisfy God’s condition for the payment for sin. No animal or human sacrifice can atone for your sins (**Psalms 49:6-7; Hebrews 9:11-15**)! Only the sacrifice of Jesus Christ can, and He has already done it! It also implies that any other sacrifice that a person may believe will remove sin or a curse (ancestral or otherwise) is a fallacy; and anyone preaching such is a fraud, and should be dismissed with the wave of the hand! Beloved, no amount of daily, weekly, monthly, or annual sacrifice of animals or humans as practiced in some cultures and civilizations can remove sin; only Jesus’ propitiation can!

Remission

The word ‘remission’, means ‘dismissal’ or ‘release’, and is used in connection with the act of forgiveness of sin by God. Remission is the release of man from the debt of sin, and from the penalty of death resulting from sin. It is a ‘passing by’ or ‘passing over’ of a debt or sin. The active element of remission is the dismissal of the sins of man, which paves the way for forgiveness. Once sin is taken away, forgiveness becomes possible. Sin was the reason for God’s anger against man; so, when sin is dealt with, the basis for that anger no longer exists, and forgiveness is now possible. It was the propitiation of Jesus Christ that made remission possible; for without the atoning sacrifice of Christ on the cross, man’s sins would have remained (**Acts 10:43; Hebrews 10:17-18**). But now they are remitted and the debt of sin is no more. The way to seek and obtain God’s forgiveness is now open (**Jeremiah 31:34; Isaiah 43:25; Hebrews 8:12**). No wonder the Lord Jesus charged His disciples to go out and proclaim this good news to the world that the influence of sin is broken and that man is now free from servitude to sin (**Luke 24:45-49**). This is the good news that we are to preach; for

indeed, remission which brought forgiveness has paved the way for restoration and resumption of normalcy in our relationship with God as well as other side-effects—healing, prosperity, deliverance, righteousness, etc. (**Isaiah 33:24; 1 Peter 2:24; Luke 4:18-19**).

Justification

Justification is the declaration of a person as not guilty, not on the account of his not being guilty, but on account that his guilt cannot be credited to him, because someone else has paid the penalty for the offence. The idea of justification is that you cannot punish a person for an offence if another person has taken the punishment in his place. This, Jesus did when He died on the cross (**Colossians 2:14**). Justification, which means that a transgressor is no longer a transgressor because someone else has been punished for his transgression, is thus something that makes the transgressor able to live in civil society again, rather than spend his life in prison. Justification is thus an acquittal of a guilty person, and treating him as though he did not commit any crime; that is, **just-(as)-if-i[e]-d(id)-(nothing)!** This is what we are because Jesus Christ has paid the penalty for our sins: **JUSTIFIED!**

Justification is God's way of making us (sinners) acceptable to Him (a holy God). Our justification is as a result of the death of Jesus Christ, Who paid the penalty for our sins—the just dying for the unjust (**Isaiah 53:4-5; 1 Peter 3:18**). We are justified by grace; that unmerited favour which God grants sinful man (**Romans 3:24**). God looks at us, and on the basis of what Jesus has done, pronounces us not guilty. For this reason, we cannot boast of having done anything to warrant our justification (**Romans 3:27**). Although all men have been justified by God because of what Jesus Christ did, it remains for men to appropriate this act of God; and that can only be done by faith (**Romans 3:27**). This is what we are saying: if someone has baked pies and put them in a store for all and sundry to come and take freely, and you wish to partake of the pie; you will have to go to the store to get one for yourself! So it is with justification: all men have been justified because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (**Romans 4:25**), but not all men have appropriated it; because not all men have believed, or put their trust in what Jesus did for mankind by His death, as being sufficient to make them acceptable to God (**Romans 10:16**); preferring rather to be justified by the observance of the Law (**Romans 3:20; Galatians 3:11; 2:16**). Only those who believe in Christ are justified by God, Who is the Justifier of those who believe (**Romans 3:26**).

Because of justification we are now able to enjoy relationship with God, which was not possible before (**Romans 5:1**). By reason of the sinfulness of man, we were enemies of God, being afraid and hiding from Him, on one hand; and being rebellious and opposed to Him, on the other hand. But because of justification, we are at peace with God; we are no longer afraid of His anger, wrath, and judgment on sinners. Also, because of justification, there is now no condemnation to all who believe in Jesus Christ (**Romans 8:1**). Even though we have done things worthy of condemnation, but because of what Jesus Christ did, we are not condemned, but rather justified; that is acquitted and free from the bondage of sin (**Romans 8:3-4**), but not free to do as we like with impunity. Our justification leads to our being glorified (**Romans 8:31**). By justifying us, God brings us to the place where we are glorified. It is inconceivable to even think that God will bring glory to a person who is still considered unholy and unjust! Finally, those who are thus justified must live by faith in God (**Romans 1:17**). This is one of the lynch pins on which the Christian's walk hinges: faith!

Conclusion

We should not take for granted the awesome work which the Lord Jesus has done for us, and treat our salvation with levity. Indeed, we ought always to be grateful to God, and never live as children of lawlessness; ever! Imagine that in the Old Testament days, those who disobeyed the word of God, which they had no power or ability to obey, were severely punished. Now, in our day, we are enjoying the grace of God, and sometimes take it for granted. But let us not forget that the grace of God that has appeared to all men, does not advocate recklessness, unrighteousness, and lawlessness, as some are wont to practice; rather grace teaches us that, “*denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world*” (Titus 2:11-12). We pray that the Holy Spirit will help us to always be thankful to God and to His Christ for His unspeakable gifts to mankind in general, and to us in particular.

EXERCISE

Answer true or false to the statements below:

1. Some of the themes that we need to study which are the bedrock on which the Christian foundation sit include, healing and prosperity.
2. Propitiation describes the act of mercy which God shows to man as a result of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ.
3. Jesus Christ is one of those who are our propitiation.
4. Some of the sacrifices done by our fathers and their fathers are very important; otherwise, we would not be in a position to receive what God wants to give us.
5. Ancestral curses are deleted by the propitiation of Jesus Christ.
6. Remission is the release of man from the debt of sin.
7. Remission paves the way for man to ask for and receive forgiveness from God.
8. Remission is one of the key elements of the good news of the kingdom of God.
9. Remission is critical to the re-establishment of relationship with God.
10. Without remission, divine healing, prosperity, etc., will not be possible.
11. Justification is what happens when we stand before God at the final judgment, and He acquits us of guilt.
12. In justification, the guilty person is declared not guilty.
13. In justification, the guilty person is declared not guilty because he sought forgiveness from God.
14. We are justified by grace, but must appropriate it by believing that what Jesus did in dying on account of sin, He did for us.
15. Justification leads to our being glorified.
16. Justification removes the enmity between us and God.
17. Those who are justified by God must henceforth live by faith.
18. Our study reveals in part, the need for continuous thanksgiving towards God.
19. Grace means that we are absolved of responsibility for sins committed.
20. Grace is only available to those who deserve it.