

Title: The Covering (The Oft Overlooked Essential) – Romans 3:10-26

Aim: Emphasize the vital importance of Christ's imputed righteousness.

Intro: Divert from the series Pastor Derek is preaching, but the message of Scripture is essentially the same – the problem of sin & the solution of Jesus. If this were part of a series, I would title the series “Think About It.” There are some things about which we don't give enough thought, but should. Suppose you were deep in debt – not difficult for some – so much so that you were destitute, perhaps even homeless, w/no means to remedy the situation – no means, no job, no resource; helpless, hopeless. Then suppose that some benefactor decided to pay off all your debt. How wonderful! He or she directly contacting your creditors & leveling your debt to 0. That would be a tremendous gift of deliverance, would it not, BUT your need would not be fully met. We make that mistake sometimes when we offer benevolence to those in need. We may meet an immediate need but not enable them to go forward w/means, either helping them get a job or housing or develop resources. They're going to end up in the same predicament in time. Not that we shouldn't do the 1st part but we must realize more is needed. If all your debt is paid but you have no means going forward, you're still destitute, homeless, in need. I hope & pray that none of you are ever in such a predicament, tho all too many in this world are. Now, transfer that concept to our need of redemption & God's perfect plan. There is an essential element of God's saving grace that is all too often overlooked & under-considered – hopefully for you not after this message. We need a Savior who has paid our debt, but we also need the means of right standing before God. God has graciously & fully provided both. It's important that we give God thanksgiving, praise & glory for His absolute perfect plan of redemption & depend fully upon

what He has done for us in Christ. It's that 2nd element that is often overlooked, misunderstood & under-considered. Romans 3:10-26 & some others passages give us some insight. [READ] I) **Vss 10-18 make clear the plight of mankind.** To be righteous is to be innocent, guiltless. According to Strong's, it is "used of him whose way of thinking, feeling, and acting is wholly conformed to the will of God, and who therefore needs no rectification in the heart or life." Righteousness is the state of one who is as he/she ought to be." Paul quotes a number of Psalms, beginning w/Ps.14, & Prov.1 & Isaiah 59, to forcefully declare that none are righteous (as should be before God); none have understanding – realizing their spiritual need & God's provision - unless it's given by God; none seek for God on their own. Left to ourselves, we are worthless – useless, unserviceable - useless to do anything about our spiritual need, unable to remedy it. We are spiritually bankrupt; helpless, hopeless. We are born in sin & slaves of sin (vss13-17); vs18 – no fear of God. Left to ourselves – spiritually destitute. You may or may not think that way about yourself. You may be shocked to hear Paul's description of you (he was specifically writing to the Jews & Gentiles in Rome, letting the Jews know that they were in the same boat, no better off). The well-known vs23 shows us that we are in that number as well (starting w/the last of vs22), "***For there is no distinction: for all have sinned & fall short of the glory of God,...***" II) **Vs24 gives us the wonderful hope of the provision of God: "...& are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,..."** Salvation & justification are gifts of God – His undeserved favor shown to us. How could He do that? Rom.6:23 tells us that "***the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.***" God could save us because of Christ. Sin must be judged, so by His perfect plan of

redemption, God “put forward” His Son “as a propitiation by His blood...” According to Strong’s, propitiation relates to appeasement or expiation. It is “used of the cover of the ark of the covenant in the Holy of Holies, which was sprinkled with the blood of the expiatory victim on the annual day of atonement (this rite signifying that the life of the people, the loss of which they had merited by their sins, was offered to God in the blood as the life of the victim, and that God by this ceremony was appeased and their sins expiated); hence the lid of expiation, the propitiatory.” Jesus satisfied God’s wrath when He paid for our sins by His own life blood. Jesus is the covering for our sin. So, because of Christ’s payment for our sin, by faith in Him we are guiltless. But if that is all, we are yet hopeless, w/no means of right standing before God. Vs19-20. The law of God demands not only payment for sin but perfect righteousness. Left to myself, I continue to add to the multitude of sins for which Christ died to pay the penalty. Left to myself I have no means of living a perfectly righteous life. My sins are paid for but I have no personal resource to attain perfect righteousness. We generally think 1 of 2 ways about righteousness. 1) “I have sinned too much – I can’t be right w/God.” Or, 2) “I am doing my best, I’m pretty good; I think I’m good enough. Certainly, God will accept me.” Both are wrong. Jesus did indeed pay it all. The grace of God is indeed greater than all our sin. You can’t sin too much to be forgiven, unless you reject Christ. But it’s also true that you can’t be good enough to be accepted by God nor maintain His acceptance of you. III) **We need something not of ourselves to give us right standing w/God.** We need the penalty of our sin paid & we need a righteousness not our own to count for us – vs21-22a. How was the righteousness of God manifested? In the person of Jesus Christ, who lived in perfect obedience to the Father, perfectly

fulfilling the demands of the law – God’s standard. Paul knew that he needed this righteousness to be justified before God. He knew he could not depend upon his own righteousness, even tho he had a great pedigree. Philippians 3:7-9. He needed a righteousness not his own – we need the same, & God has supplied it! II Corinthians 5:21 gives us that good news. Jesus is our covering in more than 1 way. His blood is the cover for our sins & His righteousness credited to us is the cover for our lack of righteousness. Of course, it’s not as if God realized after Christ died for us that we still lacked righteousness & then decided to add Christ’s righteousness to our account. This was the plan all along – His death as payment for our sin, fulfilling God’s wrath & His righteousness imputed to our account so that as God looks upon his children, He doesn’t see our sin but the perfect righteousness of Christ. This is described by John Murray, in Redemption Accomplished & Applied as the passive & active obedience of Christ. “The truth expressed rests upon the recognition that the law of God has both penal sanctions and positive demands. It demands not only the full discharge of its precepts but also the infliction of penalty for all infractions and shortcomings. It is this twofold demand of the law of God which is taken into account when we speak of the active and passive obedience of Christ. Christ as the vicar of his people came under the curse and condemnation due to sin and he also fulfilled the law of God in all its positive requirements. In other words, he took care of the guilt of sin and perfectly fulfilled the demands of righteousness. He perfectly met both the penal and the preceptive requirements of God’s law. The passive obedience refers to the former and the active obedience to the latter.” Paul says this “shows God’s righteousness” both as we look to the past & the present. In the past, God “passed

over former sins” – knowing that He would be holding Christ accountable for those sins on the cross. In the present God sees/counts us as righteous because Christ fulfilled all righteousness. God is both just, having punished sin, & justifier of the one who has faith in Christ, having credited us w/His righteousness. What a marvelous plan! What a perfect salvation! IV) **What then of practical righteousness?** How should we think about it? 2 ways: 1) Stop depending on your own righteous efforts to give you right standing w/God. Our righteousness is as filthy rags in God’s sight. We can’t be good enough. We need a Savior. Praise God there is a Savior – Jesus. In that same vein, stop depending on your own righteousness to keep you saved, acceptable to God. Stop trying to win God’s acceptance as a Christian. You don’t have enough on your own. Depend solely on Christ alone. Put your hope solely on His death & righteousness counting for you, applied to you by faith. 2) Pursue righteousness not to be/stay saved, but because you are, if you are in Christ by faith. If you believe in Him, you are God’s child, totally forgiven, deeply loved, fully accepted. You don’t have to win God’s favor. Respond by pursuing the righteous life you were created to live. We are set free to be who God made us, to be like Christ, as the Holy Spirit works in us, imparting Christ’s righteousness. Seek to be in practice who you are in position before God. Some of you know that I often respond to the question, “How are you?” w/the phrase, “Well, thank you - better than I deserve.” I often get an argument, “O no, you deserve to be doing well.” No, I don’t, & neither do you. But we have a Savior who has paid for our sins & we’ve been credited w/His righteousness. We don’t deserve it, but God’s got us covered!

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