

Romans 3:9-26 – The justice of God

Why did Jesus die? Most Kenyans say they are Christians. But are they really? If we ask people, “Why did Jesus die?”, they usually do not know. Romans 3:25-26 are two very helpful verses, to teach us about the true meaning of the cross. Paul the apostle said, “May I never boast, except in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ” (Galatians 6:14). To boast about someone's death is very strange. Why did he say that? If we can understand why, we will understand the truths that bring eternal life!

1. The justice of God

The cross of Jesus is about God's justice. In verse 25, Paul says “He did this to demonstrate his justice”. Then he says the same in verse 26. He says in verse 25 that Jesus was a sacrifice to take away God's anger. We learn here that justice is very important to God. Justice in the world is often delayed, or cancelled – someone pays a bribe, and the money was more important than justice for them. God is not like man. He will never cancel justice. He is very patient – verse 25 uses the word “forbearance”. But though he waits for people to repent, he never cancels his justice. He is too pure, and hates sin too much, to ever forget. We can see this truth taught throughout the book of Romans, e.g. 1:18, 32, 2:5-6.

2. The problem we have, and the death of Jesus

If God is perfectly just, and punishes all sin, then how can he receive any sinner into heaven? “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). God can never say “well, often you have done good, so let us just forget about these sins”. The answer is the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus was given as a sacrifice to take away God's anger for our sins (v25). God's anger is not cancelled, but better: it is fully satisfied. Jesus paid the whole price. In v25, Paul tells us about God's people in the Old Testament. People like Abraham, Jacob, and King David were all saved. But how were they saved? We know they were sinners – Abraham's faith sometimes failed, Jacob deceived his own father, and David was an adulterer. Verse 25 tells us that God could forgive them, because he knew that Jesus was coming into the world. Jesus was going to pay for their sins on the cross. God was patient, waiting for that day. Those believers were saved the same way that people today are – trusting the Saviour that God had promised and now has sent.

3. So, rejoice in the cross!

We know that hell is real, because the cross tells us that God does and will punish sin. But if we are trusting in Jesus' death, we will not go to hell. It is not our keeping commandments, going to church or reading the Bible. It is the death of Jesus – alone. We should rejoice, because he has done everything! The cross should be our comfort and our hope always. When we evangelise, we should speak always about the cross. God is just, and cannot punish sin twice. If he punished it when Jesus died, then it is done – we need not fear punishment again!