

DIAMONDS OF SALVATION

ROMANS 3:22b-26

I'll begin by reading the last line of verse 22. Paul speaks of all men, Jews and Gentiles, when he says, "For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."

When you purchase a diamond the jeweler displays the stones on a piece of ebony cloth. He knows a *dark* backdrop *brightens* the appearance of the diamonds.

Likewise in Romans 3, Paul displays *the diamonds of salvation*. He exhibits magnificent stones - God's glory and grace shine and twinkle for all to see. God invites the world into His gallery to *gawk* and *gaze* and show its *gratitude* for the brilliant salvation He offers.

But Paul is a shrewd jeweler. He presents these diamonds against the black velvet of humanity's sin.

The first three chapters of Romans describe the total depravity of the human race. Read these chapters in one sitting and you'll get depressed... The picture is ugly... The outlook is grim... In fact, by the time you reach the middle of Romans 3 mankind is down for the count! We're all lost, condemned, and damned to hell.

Just look at Chapter 3... Verse 10 slams the lid on our coffin, "There is none righteous, no, not one." Verse 11 drives the nails into the lid, "There is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God..." Verse 12 lowers the coffin into the ground, "There is none who does good, no, not one." Verse 23 shovels the dirt on top of the vault, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." And there you have it - the death and burial of the entire human race.

Paul guns us down with the machine gun of repetition. "There is none... There is none... There is none... There is none..." Paul uses the *none gun* to shoot down all of our pride and self-righteousness! The truth of our sin cuts our legs out from under us. It's impossible for us to think we can stand on our own.

By the middle of Romans 3 the backdrop is as dark as it can get, but that's Paul's intention... Remember, **the darker the backdrop the brighter the diamonds!**

Picture Paul the jeweler... He spreads out an ebony matt and sprinkles out four sparkling, brilliant stones.

On your own the situation is hopeless. You lack the moral merit to afford these expensive gems, but God has devised a means to obtain them that doesn't depend on you. It's been *worked up* by God's wisdom, and *worked out* by God's grace. It was accomplished and paid for by Jesus Christ on Mount Calvary's cross.

This morning's passage in Romans 3 teaches us two great truths: **we are far worse off than we thought, and we are far more loved than we ever dreamed.**

Today, I want us to marvel at what I call **the diamonds of salvation**. For Paul puts on display four gorgeous gems - the doctrines of **justification**, and **redemption**, and **propitiation**, and **vindication**.

And the mere sound of these words should produce goose bumps. They should make us giddy. They should thrill us. They should be music to our ears... ***But what if we don't understand them at all?***

These are big words... What's a **justification**, and a **redemption**, and a **propitiation**, and a **vindication**?

It reminds me of the pastor's son. Raised in church he'd been exposed to terms like **justification** and **propitiation**, etc... He'd heard of all the **"actions,"** but he didn't really know the meanings of any of the terms.

One day at school, the teacher asked her class, **"What's the definition of the word procrastination?"** The pastor's son's hand shot up. He answered, ***"I'm really not sure, but I know my church sure believes in it!"***

Today I want to discuss four big words: **justification**, **redemption**, **propitiation**, and **vindication**. For once you grasp their meaning you'll treasure them like jewels. You've heard the expression, **"Diamonds are a girl's best friend."** That is especially true of Jesus' girl, His bride, the Church. These diamonds will win your heart!

The first diamond of salvation is **Justification**.

Verse 24 tells us that right now those who trust in Jesus are **"being justified freely by His grace."** Biblically speaking, to **"justify"** a person is to view that person as if they've always been just, and righteous, and sinless.

Hey, I've certainly sinned in the past, and as a human being I'm destined to sin in the future, but a person who is justified is treated by God ***just-as-if-I'd*** never sinned

even though I have and will. And this is how God treats you if you've put your faith in Jesus!

Once, a rich, English gentlemen purchased a Rolls Royce, and had the car shipped to France where he planned a road trip across the European continent.

Yet a few days into his journey, his new car broke down. The man called the dealership back in England to see if they could provide him some assistance.

Immediately, a crew of mechanics were flown across the English Channel. These men worked nonstop until the repairs were complete. It was amazing service.

Well, when the man arrived home to England he expected a hefty bill for the extraordinary service the Rolls Royce mechanics had provided, but a bill never came. After a few weeks, he called about the costs...

He was surprised when the clerk at the dealership replied, *"What bill?"* The man said astonishingly, *"Why, the bill for the repairs you made on my car in France."*

Again the clerk said, *"What repairs?"* He said, *"Surely you remember the team of mechanics that flew to France to work on my car? Check your records..."*

That's when the woman answered him firmly, *"Sir, I'm sorry but we have no record of any Rolls Royce ever breaking down and needing repairs."* **Now that's the way every car dealership should operate!**

Understand, justification doesn't mean God ignores our breakdowns - or treats them as if they don't matter. He fixes us, but keeps no record of our malfunctions. He considers our sin as having never happened.

God services us, and tunes us up, and fixes our flats, and repairs the damage caused by our sin - *then never charges us a dime*. Now that's a good warranty!

Justification includes forgiveness, but it's more than forgiveness! Forgiveness is me paying off your credit card debt... *but you can run it up again*. Justification goes further. It's paying off your debt; then supplying you a line of credit so that you'll always have a positive balance. Jesus guarantees that His followers we'll never, ever be caught again with insufficient funds!

Notice too, verse 24 doesn't say we've *"been justified,"* but we're *"being justified."* It's a continuous tense. God constantly treats us as if we never sin even when we do! How He handles us remains the same.

Of course, it grieves God when we sin, and He works to mature us so that it doesn't keep happening - but God never alters how He chooses to treat us.

God never tells one of His children, "Ok sister, that's it! I've had enough of you!... *Or hit the road buddy, and don't come back until you straighten out your mess.*" God has never said to a believer in Jesus, "Forget about My blessing until you measure up." Justification is God's decision to favor and bless me despite my sin!

We all need to settle this issue, once and for all in our minds and hearts... As long as we are trusting in Jesus, He's committed to treating us as *justified*.

And do you realize how this works out? You should never again feel timid or fearful about approaching God. Even when you're not doing so well, He still wants you to call on Him. God is as ready to bless you when you're struggling as when you're soaring. *The doctrine of our justification means that the terms by which God relates to us never, ever changes!*

I read about a Bible College professor who was a godly man. When he walked into the classroom he oozed with God's grace. He glowed with God's glory. His students wanted to uncover the secret of his holy and heavenly life, so one night they hid in the bushes outside his window. They wanted to listen to this spiritual man pray. They anticipated a pleading, fervent, passionate prayer. The students were shocked when the old fellow jumped into bed, pulled up the covers, and sighed, "God, I thank you that *we're on the same old terms.*" And that's what it means to be justified!

No matter what happens or how well I perform - in Christ, I am always *on the same old terms* with God.

So let's go back to the earlier picture... *Diamond dealing Paul* spreads out his ebony cloth over the glass countertop - then he opens up his pouch, and gently sprinkles out these sparkling, brilliant diamonds...

The girl by your side squeals in delight. She's about to squeeze the blood out of your arm... *when you start gazing at price tags!* Beads of sweat pop up on your forehead. The wad of money in your wallet is shrinking.

But now imagine the salesman putting the diamonds back in their pouch, handing them to you, and saying, "*Take them. They're yours! These diamonds are my gift to you. Just enjoy them - be thankful for them - and tell other people about them.*" *You would faint on the spot... Yet that is exactly what God has done!*

Verse 24 says we've been "*justified freely.*" The word translated "*freely*" means "*without a cause.*"

There's nothing *in us* or *about us* - nothing we've done, or are, or ever hope to be - that warrants this kind of treatment. Verse 25 tells us the price was paid "*by His blood.*"

This is what Jesus did on the cross. His sacrifice enabled God's love to treat me as justified.

Now it comes to me as grace - *as unmerited favor. It's love that's on the house!* No human virtue can earn this kind of treatment. The only explanation for why God deals with me so kindly, *is that He loves me!*

Once, a little boy visited the Washington Monument. He walked up to the soldier on duty, pulled out a quarter, and asked if he could buy the Monument.

The soldier chuckled, "**Not for a quarter.**" But the little wheeler-dealer wasn't through. He said, "*I thought you'd say that,*" and pulled out a dime more. After the soldier finished laughing he explained, "Sonny, there's three things you need to know... **First**, you can't buy the Washington Monument, not for 35 cents or \$35 million. It's far too expensive. **Second**, it's not for sale. And **third**, if you're an American citizen you don't need to buy this monument, for it already belongs to you."

And the same is true of the diamonds of salvation.

Many believers long to feel forgiven and be confident in their relationship with God. They want to believe God is as good as I've described Him! But our confidence wanes in light of our own weaknesses.

When I'm burdened down by my own sin, and guilt, and failure, I tend to draw back from God. I assume I have to earn my way into His favor. I start to assume, "*After what I've done, I need to buy the monument.*"

But like the monument, **justification is not for sale.** It's too expensive. None of us can buy such treatment... It requires what we don't have - *sinless blood*... Besides, if you put your faith in Jesus it belongs to you anyway. We're justified *not because of us*, but *in spite of us*. Try to make yourself deserving, and you miss the point. We're justified by God's grace!

The second diamond of salvation is **Redemption.**

In verse 24 Paul adds that we've been justified, "**through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.**" And there are actually several Greek words that get translated into English with this word, "*redemption.*"

One is "*agorazo.*" It's from the word "*agora*" which referred to the city center. The agora was the marketplace - where slaves were auctioned and sold. This word is connected to "*the purchase of a slave.*"

And this is our story. If you're a Christian you're now the purchased possession of Jesus. He holds the title deed to your life. Through the blood of His Son, God purchased you out of sin's slavery... You're no longer your own, now you belong to Jesus. You serve Him.

But the word "agorazo" is not the word used here...

There's another Greek word translated "**redemption**" and that's "**exagorazo**." It too refers to the purchase of a slave, but "**exagorazo**" speaks of permanence.

Many Roman landowners bought slaves to help in the fields; then sold them back after the harvest. But a slave purchased "**exagorazo**" was never returned. He became His Master's permanent possession.

This is also how Jesus sees you. His plan is not to use you up; then trade you in. He loves you, and wants you forever. You're His permanently, "**exagorazo**."

But neither is this the word used in our text...

The word translated "**redemption**" in verse 24 is the word "**lytruo**." It refers to the practice of purchasing a slave for the purpose of setting him free! And this is also what Jesus does for us! He buys us out of spiritual slavery to set us free *from pain, and guilt, and sin... all that's holding us back and keeping us down.*

Jesus wants to "**redeem**" or purchase us in order to restore us to all our Creator God meant for us to be.

For years two factory workers labored side-by-side. One was the classic underachiever - always late and lazy - always on the verge of getting fired... But one day his co-worker noticed a remarkable change.

Overnight, this slothful man began to care about his job. He became productive - a pleasure to work beside. His entire attitude was transformed. And his co-worker wanted to know why!... *He heard an amazing story...*

While in college this man had been involved in a fraternity hazing. One night they'd taken a few freshmen to a long, dark, gravel road for a so-called "**test of nerve**." They put the freshmen in the middle of the road and drove straight at them. The kids were supposed to wait as long as possible before leaping to safety. *Tragically, one of the young men froze...*

The factory worker was driving the car that hit the boy going 70 mph. This man's foolish action haunted him for the rest of his life. He avoided prosecution, but dropped out of school. He became an alcoholic. That one incident sucked the life right out of

him. He lost all motivation. He could never forget the look of terror on the boy's face just before his car ran over him.

Until one day... the worker received a visitor. It was the mother of the young man he had killed. She said she had hated him for years and plotted her revenge. But recently she had given her life to Jesus and now she wanted to forgive the man who had killed her son.

The man said to his friend about the mother's visit, "I looked deep into her eyes that morning and received permission to be the kind of man I might've been had I never killed that boy. Her forgiveness changed my life."

And it was the mother's pardon that brought this man his freedom! This is the meaning of *redemption!* If you'll look closely at the cross of Jesus, you too will find permission to start over. He wants to help you be the person you *might've been* and *should've been!*

This is why Jesus purchased you... to set you free! Whatever you've done... what's haunted you for years... listen to God's word to you, "*You're forgiven!*"

I told you the diamonds of salvation were beautiful, dazzling stones - and the third diamond is equally spectacular – it's the jewel known as **Propitiation**.

Verse 25 refers to Jesus, "*Whom God set forth to be a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God has passed over the sins that were previously committed...*" Notice, in times past, when judgment had come due, God restrained His hand.

There were countless occasions when God would've been just and fair in exterminating the whole human race, but He passed on the opportunity. Acts 17:30 tells us that in times past "*God winked*" at sin. In other words, He closed His eyes to the evil! And it wasn't that sin didn't bother Him... It bothered Him greatly...

I don't know about you, but I'm at the point where it's hard for me to even watch the nightly news. It rials me!

Here's a recent sampling from a single news cycle... A 12 year old boy was used as a heroin mule. Drug dealers forced him to swallow 87 condoms filled with heroin... A suicide bomber killed 6 people and injured 86 others... A teenager sexually assaulted and killed his 22 month old niece... And the list goes on and on...

It's tough to stomach this stuff on a regular basis. It makes you downright mad. *But if it angers me, how do you think God feels?* I'm only exposed to this evil for a mere 22

minutes on the nightly news... While God sees every *grimy act* done in every *slimy place* on the entire planet. He gets extremely angry, and rightly so!

I read about the awful ordeal of a man in Tyler, Texas named [Robert Hardy](#). Hardy woke up one night, and checked on his three month old son. When he walked into the boy's room he found the bassinet tipped over.

He quickly returned to his bedroom to see if his wife had the baby. She didn't... They both ran downstairs in search of their child. When Hardy went into his study he noticed the glass top on the tank where he kept his pet python, was pushed off... *Here's what happened...*

The 12 foot snake had escaped its tank, slithered upstairs, tipped over the bassinet, and ate the baby.

Hardy was so enraged. He was so furious, he ran outside, found an ax, and chopped the snake into a thousand pieces... *And who would blame him?* No one would argue that the snake got what it deserved.

And in the same way God is infuriated when He looks down on the snake-like actions of humankind. Predators slither along consuming innocent people!

God is outraged at the rapists, and child molesters, and terrorists. Then as if that's not enough, He sees some blasphemous celebrity mock His only Son - the Son He sacrificed to save us from our sin. God's holy sensibilities are continually trampled on and violated...

And not only by the snake-like actions of others - but I have to confess there've been times *when I've slithered with the best of them*. We've all been guilty of satisfying ourselves at the expense of someone else.

I'm sure God was tempted many times over the ages to pick up an ax and chop up the snakes... *but He waited*. He waited for a day 2000 years ago... the day He nailed His Son, Jesus Christ, to a Roman cross.

It was there, God vented His anger toward the sin of the world. God brought down His ax on His only Son. The reason God winked at sin in the past and suppressed His *righteous rage* is that He planned all along to take out His wrath on His own Son, Jesus!

Sandy deserves to be hacked up, yet God unleashed his anger towards me on His only begotten Son. This is love that *moistens my eyes*, and *boggles my brain*. *How could God love us that much?... Yet He does!*

Which brings us to the definition of this long word, "**propitiation**" - it means "**to appease or placate**."

God's justice is *satisfied legally through justification*, but it is *satisfied emotionally through propitiation*. There were two very similar sacrifices in the OT. The **sin offering** covered a person's sin - while the **burnt offering** presented a sweet aroma to God. *The sin offering justified man* - while *the burnt offering satisfied God*. And today, the cross of Jesus does both.

When we trace this Greek word translated "**propitiation**" to its Hebrew origins we discover it's the same word translated in the OT as "**mercy seat**."

Remember in Israel's tabernacle, God's glory rested over an oblong-shaped box called the Ark of the Covenant... *This was the 2' by 4' gold box Indiana Jones stole from the Nazis and is now stored in a Smithsonian warehouse*... In this Ark were the stone tablets given to Moses. And God intended to meet with humanity over the Ark, *as we obeyed His Laws*.

But this didn't bode well for sinners like us. For we fail and fall short of God's commandments. Since we're unable to *meet the sacred standard* - how can we *meet with God*? The Law literally cries out for our judgment, and yet thankfully God put a *lid* on the *Law*!

For over the top of the Ark sat a solid gold lid called the "**mercy seat**." This was the place where the priest sprinkled the sacrificial blood that was shed for our sin.

That blood paid mankind's penalty for breaking the Law, and it conveyed to us the mercy that prompted such a sacrifice. If you'd lived in OT times, and wanted to meet with God, and receive His mercy - there was only one place to go... you went to the **mercy seat**.

And Paul tells us that Jesus is now our **mercy seat**. He calls Jesus, our "**propitiation**" or "**place of mercy**."

Jesus alone kept God's commands. He earned a right standing with God that can be passed on to us. *"So, where can I find God today? Where can I meet My Maker and discover His kindness?"* There is still only one place - the cross of Jesus is God's place of mercy.

Well, there's one final diamond on display in this morning's text... In Romans 3:23, Paul explains how *your salvation* has become God's **vindication**.

Justification, redemption, propitiation are diamonds that produce comfort, hope, and assurance. They create in me a *sigh of relief*... But this last diamond of salvation *takes*

my breath away! If the first diamonds reflect God's *grace*; this fourth one reveals God's *glory!*

Paul tells us that on the cross, our Lord Jesus vindicated the character of God. In a single stroke of genius **God became both just AND the justifier!**

Understand, we look at the cross of Christ from a very narrow, self-centered point-of-view. We tend to focus only on what Jesus did for us - what we've talked about: *justification, redemption, and propitiation* - but there's another even more beautiful side to the cross...

Years ago songwriter Steve Camp wrote a song titled, "**Christ died for God.**" What a provocative title! Do you realize that Jesus not only died for you, but He also died for God? Here's a problem most of us never consider, but it's the dilemma God had to overcome before offering us His salvation. *How can God be just in justifying us?* Our Lord's motivation for going to the cross wasn't merely *our salvation*, it was *God's vindication*. As one author puts it, "**Before the cross can be for our sake, it must first be for God's sake.**"

Realize, our sin puts God in an awkward position. God is pulled in two directions... On the one hand, His justice demands that sinners be punished. We should get what our sin deserves... But on the other hand, God's love compels Him to forgive us and fix us.

God wants to help us, but justice won't let sin slide. In order to be righteous **the Judge can't fudge!**

Think about today's crisis of confidence with our judicial system. We let too many blatant criminals walk and get off with a slap-on-the-wrist... No wonder we question if our courts are capable of meting out justice.

God won't allow this kind of erosion of confidence to occur in His court. That's why as much as He loves us, God can't allow guilty people to get off scot-free.

And that's why *Christ died for God*. **On the cross Jesus made a way for God to save us and save face at the same time.** *Through Jesus' work on Calvary's cross sin was punished, AND sinners were forgiven. Jesus both satisfied justice AND set us free.*

Every time you look at the cross it should provoke two reactions. **First, this is what my sin deserved.**

Our rebellion against our Creator is a slap in God's face. When God pronounced the punishment of our sin He wasn't writing an inconsequential traffic ticket that could be

resolved by you paying a minor fine. Sin - no matter its degree - is an assault on God's character.

Sin is a statement of defiance. It's essentially saying that we're wiser than God - that He can't be trusted. How dare His puny creatures make any kind of accusation that would question or criticize the Almighty!

Whenever America suffers a unprovoked attack from our enemies military leaders gather and talk about "[a proportionate response](#)." "[Proportionality](#)" is the official term. We measure the damage and devise a retaliatory strike to mimic that same amount of carnage. **And the cross was a proportionate response.** When Jesus was mocked and tortured, then bled and died, He was bearing what we deserve. His crucifixion was the result of God designing a punishment proportionate to our sin. It seems, Calvary's cross produced the same pain to God's Son, that our sin inflicts on God's heart.

And yet **the second realization the cross should provoke is an appreciation of God's love.** *Jesus' willingness to go there and the Father's willingness to send Him there* is proof that God loves us deeply. Never doubt, God's love for us is an extravagant love.

This is what Paul says later in Romans 5:8, "[But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.](#)" While still His enemies - *with blasphemies on our lips, blood on our hands, and rioting in our heart* - Christ died for us.

Jesus went to the cross not only so God could be just in His punishment of our sin, but having enacted that punishment He could then [justify us](#) - or declare us forgiven. To justify us is to reinstate us as His children.

God's love drives Him to be our justifier - *to shout from the summit that He forgives us, accepts us, and desires to bless us*, and that Jesus made that possible.

The story is told of a time when nomadic tribes roamed Siberia, much the way American Indians covered the Great Plains. One Russian tribe had a strong, wise ruler. This chief was very well respected.

Once it was discovered that their camp had fallen victim to a series of thefts. This mighty chief ordered the perpetrator caught and beaten with ten lashes.

But the thefts continued. The chief upped the punishment to twenty, even forty lashes. Of course, everyone knew forty lashes would be a death sentence. The only tribe-member strong enough to survive that kind of a beating was the chief himself.

What a shock it was, when the thief turned out to be the chief's own mother. The chief was tempted to let his mom go, but he couldn't. He was a man of his word... *justice had to be served*... The woman was tied to a stump - the executioner readied his whip - and just as he was about to administer the first blow, the chief walked over to the stump, and draped his huge body over his frail mother... The chief took her 40 lashes.

Only God is strong enough *to execute justice and be executed for love*. Only God can take the full brunt of our sin - and at the same time win our forgiveness.

God became a man and draped His body over all those who trust in Him. He's now a *righteous judge* and a *loving Son* - and I'm proud of Him for being both!

As they say, "*Diamonds are a girl's best friend*" - and they may be, but these diamonds of salvation are the Bride of Christ's best friend... *justification, redemption, propitiation, vindication* - *have you received God's gift?*

And if you've received these diamonds, *are you proud of them?* Do you wear them close to your heart and everywhere you go? Do you think about them, talk about them, and count them as your greatest treasure?

Well today, I hope you realize, *you have a friend in the diamond business*... And His name is Jesus!