

Romans 3:21-31 - The Gospel of Justification!

Scriptures:
Romans 1:16-17 - For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."

21 But now the righteousness of God apart

G1343 – “righteousness (state) n. — a status of legal rectitude that satisfies the moral requirements of God’s character.”

G5565 – without.

from the law is revealed, being witnessed by

G5319 -

the Law and the Prophets,

The reality of the fallenness of mankind is a dilemma for both God and man. How can helpless man who is irredeemably broken by sin ever be right with holy, righteous God. From God's perspective, divine justice demands condemnation for sin. But God's love compels Him to reach out to guilty humanity.

That brings us to our text for the day.

[Verse 21-22a] –

‘the law’ = the Mosaic Law found in the Pentateuch.

One of the issues with man's interpretation of the Law is that it caused some to believe they could achieve God's righteousness. Their very best fell grossly short of God's perfection. The Law and the prophets witnessed that human attempts at righteousness failed to achieve God's standard of perfection. The continual need for sacrifices proved that to be true. The Law proved that man needed something beyond the reach of man to be right with God.

Notes:
Recap of Romans 1:1-3:20 – After Paul introduces himself in the opening verses of the letter, he expresses his desire to come and visit them and share the gospel with them. Paul tells them why and establishes the theme of the letter in verses 16 and 17 of chapter 1 (Romans 1:16-17).

Paul wants to preach the gospel because of its power to transform lives. Paul says at the end of verse 17 that a just person shall live by faith. Faith is going to be one of the major sub-themes Paul is developing throughout this letter. And Paul makes a connection to living by faith and being a just person.

Another word for just is right or righteous. A just person is in a right relationship with God. A just person is also living a righteous life before God. It is through the Bible that we learn what that means, because it is not natural. It is impossible to be right with God and live by faith without a vibrant, active relationship with the Word of God and the Holy Spirit of God. We'll touch on that more later.

As Paul continues in chapter 1, he naturally concludes that if someone can be right with God, then others can be out of alignment with God. The Bible teaches that we were created in the image of God to be in a right relationship with Him. If we are out of a right relationship, God's righteous response is wrath. A careful study of the second half of chapter one shows us that all the evil things going on in the world are a result of people being out of a right relationship with God.

Chapter two begins with an exhortation to those who think they are someone immune to God's judgment by a faithless exercise of religion. Religion without faith cannot save anyone. The power of the gospel to transform people outside of a right relationship with God to be children of God is by faith.

Romans 3 challenges the religious Jews to examine their faith. Just being religious, even Jewish, does not make you better than anyone else. In fact, everyone is equally messed up in the eyes of God.

There is no such thing as a good person. Even the very best human falls exceedingly short of God's perfection.

“I do not know what the heart of a bad man is like, but I do know what the heart of a good man is like, and it is terrible.” Ivan Turgenev (Hughes, 1991) page 81

Scriptures:
Jeremiah 23:5 -
"Behold, the days are
coming," says the LORD,
"That I will raise to David
a Branch of righteousness;
A King shall reign and
prosper,
And execute judgment
and righteousness in the
earth."

22 even the righteousness of God, through

faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who

Notes:
Speaking of the Messiah, the coming
Savior, Jeremiah said ([Jeremiah 23:5](#)). Jesus is both the
righteousness of God and the human
example of righteousness toward
God.

Paul has made it clear that it is
hopeless to try to be right with God
through our effort. Our only hope of
being right with God is through faith
in Christ Jesus.

believe. For there is no difference;

G4100 - think to
be true, to
believe, implying
trust.

Scriptures:
1 Peter 1:15-16 - as He who
called you is holy, you also
be holy in all your conduct,
16 because it is written, "Be
holy, for I am holy."

23 for all have sinned and fall short of the

G264 - do wrong,
i.e., to act or
intend contrary to
the will and law
of God.

G5302 – “to miss
out v. — to fail to
reach, attain, or
experience for
oneself.”

glory of God,

A friend sent me a text this week to
thank me for sending out the daily
Proverb. He was trying to do His
daily devotions but was having some
unkind thoughts about someone. As
he was thinking those things, his
phone chimed at 8:15 am with the
Proverb for the day. He was
immediately convicted and repented
before God for allowing those
thoughts to fill his mind. Even
though they were just thoughts, my
friend knew they were unrighteous
and just needed a little reminder
from God's Word.

Paul's objective is to help us to
realize that we are helpless to be
righteous enough for God to save us.
We are helpless, but not hopeless.
Through faith in Christ, we achieve
what is impossible through human
effort.

Notes:
Even if someone was 99.99%
righteous, they would not be
righteous enough to satisfy God's
standard of perfection – they would
still fall short. Only faith in Christ
makes us right with God. Faith in
Christ makes us equal before God.
Even if someone only has 0.01%
righteousness, faith in Christ makes
them just as righteous before God as
the person who is 99.99% righteous.
That doesn't mean we don't need to
try to be right in our behaviors. God
calls us to live out His standard of
perfection as well as we are able ([1 Peter 1:15-16](#)).

"Human righteousness is of great
importance in human relations and
should not be practically minimized,
but it does not produce God's
salvation." (Hughes, 1991) page 83

Practical righteousness of how we
live in relation with other people.
When we live in a way that is right
before God, it is right before other
people and allows them to see God's
goodness, love, glory, and something
of His perfection.

Scriptures:

24 being justified freely by His grace through

Notes:

G1344 - to be justified v.
— to be or become
judicially vindicated as
having complied with
the requirements of the
law (of God)."

G1432 -

the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

G629 -
deliverance,
redemption, a
ransom, a
release.

Scriptures:
Romans 8:32 - He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

Romans 5:8 - But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

25 whom God set forth as a propitiation by His

G2435 – “propitiation n. — the means of appeasing wrath and gaining the good will of an offended person; especially with respect to sacrifices for appeasing angered deities.”

blood, through faith, to demonstrate His

righteousness, because in His forbearance

God had passed over the sins that were

G3929 -
disregard, leaving
unpunished,
passing over.

previously committed,

Notes:
‘propitiation’ = sacrifice of atonement.

Atonement: to be cleansed of sin or from the defilement of sin.

An innocent animal was sacrificed to satisfy God's wrath over sin. Jesus was an innocent Man, the only innocent Man who ever lived. When He shed His blood on the cross, it cleanses of the guilt and penalty for sin of anyone who puts their trust in Him.

The same word is used in the Old Testament to refer to the Mercy Seat in the Jewish temple. This was the golden cover of the Ark of the Covenant. Once a year the high priest would go behind the veil to sprinkle blood on the Mercy Seat to seek atonement for all the people of Israel.

“The Ark contained the Law of the Ten Commandments, and the ceremony portrayed the fact that a broken Law stood between a holy God and mankind.” (Hughes, 1991) page 85

The Mercy Seat was where the atonement was made. Once atonement was made for sin, God was free to be merciful, not give them what they deserved, to all sinners covered by the atonement. As Christians, Christ is our mercy seat.

‘in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed...’ – ‘forbearance’ = patience. God did not pour out His wrath in the past for our sins. God is patient and merciful. He gave us time to repent and put our faith in Christ.

God made a way to forgive us and maintain His moral integrity by directing toward Himself, in the person of His Son the full weight of the wrath we so richly deserved. Jesus took our wrath on the cross.

Also, by doing it this way God declares His hatred of sin and evil. God poured all His wrath on His Son ([Romans 8:32](#)). John 3:16 tells us that God loves the world and so He sent His Son to save us. God loves every individual person who has ever lived. He proved that love by sending Jesus to take the wrath we deserved because of our own sin ([Romans 5:8](#)).

Scriptures:
John 14:6 - Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

26 to demonstrate at the present time His

righteousness, that He might be just and

G1342 – “just adj. —
being legally or ethically
right, proper, or fitting;
especially as free from
favoritism, self-interest,
bias, or deception.”

the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

G1344 - put right with,
justify, vindicate,
declare righteous, i.e.,
cause one to be in
right relation.

Notes:
God demonstrates His righteousness
by making a perfect way for sinners
to be justified – made right in His
sight.

God is just – God is always right – in
full alignment with His perfect
standard of holiness and
righteousness.

God is the justifier – He has chosen a
way from within His perfect
righteousness to make sinners right
with Him. That way is by putting our
faith in Jesus. It is the only way
sinners can hope to approach
righteous God ([John 14:6](#)).

Scriptures:

27 Where *is* boasting then? It is excluded. By

what law? Of works? No, but by the law of

faith.

Notes:
When it comes to our salvation
there can be no boasting. All we
provided in the process of salvation
is our sin. God did everything. This is
a call to humility and humility is the
key to a fuller experience with God's
grace in your life.

Scriptures:

²⁸ Therefore we conclude that a man is

Notes:

justified by faith apart from the deeds of the
law.

Scriptures:

²⁹ Or *is He* the God of the Jews only? *Is He*

Notes:

There is only one God and therefore there is only one salvation. No one gets special treatment when it comes to salvation. The ground at the foot of the cross makes us all equal.

not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the
Gentiles also,

³⁰ since *there is* one God who will justify the

circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised

through faith.

Scriptures:
Romans 5:1 - Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ...

Philippians 3:9 - ... and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith...

Philippians 2:12-13 - Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

31 Do we then make void the law through

G2673 – “to inactivate
v. — to cause
something to become
idle, inactive,
inoperative, or
useless.”

faith? Certainly not! On the contrary,

we establish the law.

G2476 – “to
establish (uphold)
v. — to confirm
or assert the legal
validity of.”

Notes:
Paul touches on a topic he will cover more fully later. What is the relationship between the Law and faith. Does faith cancel out the Law. His response is, certainly not! Faith confirms that the Law is just and right. But more on that later.

The main takeaway for us today is this: if you have trusted in Jesus, you are right with God. All you did to be right with God is give your sins to Him and accept that Jesus died for those sins. That means we are no longer at war with God (Romans 5:1).

Once you are at peace with God, you don't have to work to stay at peace with God. You didn't do anything to make peace with God – He did everything, even giving you the faith you needed to believe.

I have known people who are uncertain about how God feels about them. God loves you! He has always loved you. Nothing you do or don't do will change how much God loves you. When you put your faith in Christ, you were made right with God. Nothing you do or don't do will change how right you are with God. It is not a spectrum or a scale. If you put your trust in Jesus – you are right with God – period!

Listen, I am not a perfect man, husband, father, pastor, brother, friend. I am flawed in many more ways than I would like to be, or am humble enough to admit. But one thing I don't concern myself with is how God sees me. He sees me through the righteousness of His Son, Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:9). That means that I don't have to worry about how to make myself right with God – I am right with God. I do still have to work on all the rest of my flaws, but even in that I know God is doing the heavy lifting (Philippians 2:12-13).

Let's close with this – if you have put your faith in Jesus, you are right with God. Rest in the peace of God and then let Him make you more right, more like Jesus, as you interact with the world around you. The gospel is the power of God to save and transform us to be like Jesus.

Rest with Jesus and walk with Him day-by-day.

[Top of Section](#)

[Top of Chapter](#)