

## Romans 3

### 3:21-31. Righteousness Provided by Faith

We see that the righteousness of God apart from the Law is made known (v. 21). It had been mentioned throughout the Old Testament (v. 21). That righteousness is made available to all by faith in Christ and is, in fact, given to all who believe (v. 22). It is needed by all because all have sinned and come short of the glory of God (v. 23). This righteousness of God is received freely by His grace (v. 24) and comes through the redemption that is in Christ (v. 24). When Christ died for sin on the cross, He not only secured the release of believers from slavery to sin (v. 24), but He also satisfied the wrath of God directed against the individual sinner because of his sin (v. 25). Furthermore, the cross not only establishes the righteousness of God in forgiving sin prior to the cross, but also provides righteousness for the one who believes in Jesus in the present (v. 26). Faith, thus, excludes boasting because it involves no merit on the part of the individual (v. 27). Therefore, Paul concludes that righteousness is obtained by faith apart from keeping the Law (v. 28). However, far from making the Law powerless, righteousness by faith renders the Law valid (vv. 29-31).

**(21) But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;**

**(22) Even the righteousness of God *which is* by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:**

**(23) For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;**

**(24) Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:**

**(25) Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;**

**(26) To declare, *I say*, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.**

**(27) Where *is* boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.**

**(28) Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.**

**(29) *Is he* the God of the Jews only? *is he* not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also:**

**(30) Seeing *it is* one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.**

**(31) Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.**

### 3:21

Man lacks righteousness before God, but God has made provision for him. **But** indicates that a contrast is about to be given, and **now** is an adverb of time. **The righteousness of God** can be *the righteousness belonging to God*, i.e. God's righteousness; or it can be *the righteousness which comes from God*. Both are true because it is God's righteousness and because it can only come from Him. **Without the law** is *apart from law*, whether the Mosaic Law or any other kind of law. **Is manifested** means *has been revealed, has been made known, or has been shown*. Its tense indicates that its action has been completed in the past with the results continuing on, i.e. the righteousness of God was revealed in the past, and it remains revealed for all to see. **Being witnessed** is to be understood in the sense of *having been declared* or *having been confirmed*. **By the law and the prophets** refers specifically to the Old Testament Scriptures and includes all of it. The Hebrew Old Testament had three divisions: the Law, the Writings, and the Prophets. The first and third divisions are specifically mentioned here, and there is no doubt that the middle division is included as well. God has made known His righteousness which had been mentioned throughout the Old Testament.

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Verse 22 is in apposition to *righteousness* in verse 21 as is indicated by **even**. **The righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ** makes specific *the righteousness of God without the law* from verse 21. It is another way of saying the same thing. **By faith** is *through faith*. **Of Jesus Christ** indicates that the object of that faith is Jesus Christ. Since faith is only as good as the object in which it is placed, faith which has Christ as its object will prove to be very valuable. **Unto all . . . them that believe** indicates that the righteousness of God is available for all who believe in Jesus. Believing is a prerequisite for obtaining salvation. **And upon all them that believe** indicates that salvation is not only *available* for all who believe; it is also *given* to all who believe. **For there is no difference** indicates that there is no difference or distinction between the group represented by *unto all . . . them that believe* and the group represented by *upon all them that believe*. They are exactly the same group of individuals, and they must all come to God on exactly the same grounds. All, whether Jews or Gentiles, have sinned. All who exercise faith in Jesus Christ, whether Jews or Gentiles, will obtain this righteousness of God. All, whether Jews or Gentiles, have come short of the glory of God. All who believe, whether Jews or Gentiles, are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ.

### 3:23

**For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God** is a partial explanation of why there is no difference. **All have sinned** indicates that all persons without exception have committed sin. The tense of *have sinned* indicates that this is regarded as a historical fact. **Come short of** is used in the sense of *are lacking*. Its present tense indicates continuing action. That which all are lacking is **the glory of God**. *The glory of God is the glory which belongs to God*. God is holy; and a certain glory, therefore, belongs to Him. Man is not holy because of sin; and, therefore, he is also lacking this glory

which is characteristic of God.

### 3:24

**Being justified** is a participle, but what it is to be connected with is not as clear as we might hope. It seems best, however, to connect it with *unto all and upon all them that believe* in verse 22. All of those who believe in Jesus are being justified freely by his grace. This is necessary because all the ones being justified freely committed sin, thereby necessitating this justification by faith. The tense of *being justified* is present and indicates continuous action. *Being justified* means *being declared righteous and being treated as righteous*. God the Father is pictured as a judge before whom each believer appears. He renders His decision; and in the case of each and every believer, He declares that the believer is righteous or just. Now the believer is not really righteous because he still has sin in his life, but God treats him as righteous because he has by faith in Christ accepted God's provision of righteousness. Hence, he is said to be justified. He is not declared innocent because that is not the case; he has sinned. He is also not merely acquitted because that would suggest that he was not guilty, when in fact he was. Nor is he condemned which would be what he really deserves. He is justified or declared righteous. **Freely** is an adverb which is used in the sense of *as a gift, without payment, or gratis*. **By his grace** indicates the means by which this justification comes to pass. It is by means of the grace of God which is unmerited or undeserved.

**Through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus** indicates the channel through which God extended His grace to the sinner. **Redemption** originally meant the buying back of a slave or captive, making him free by payment of a ransom. It is used in the New Testament of the release from slavery to sin by the payment of the blood of Christ as a ransom for sin. It is not just any redemption; it is specifically **the redemption that is in Christ Jesus**. **In Christ Jesus** can mean the redemption that is found in Christ Jesus, or it can mean the redemption that is provided by means of Christ Jesus. Both statements are true and can be supported from other Scripture.

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### 3:25

**Whom** is a reference to Christ. **God hath set forth** means *God has displayed publicly* and refers to the crucifixion. **To be a propitiation** is used in the sense of *as a propitiation*. **Propitiation** means *that which propitiates* or *that which expiates*. It means that the wrath of God which had been directed toward the sinner has been removed. The believer thus stands forgiven and at peace with God. In Leviticus 16:14 the word used to translate *mercy seat* in the Greek translation of the Old Testament is the same word translated *propitiation* in this verse. It refers to the cover of the ark of the covenant. **Through faith in his blood** indicates how one receives this propitiation. It is given to those who exercise faith in what the Bible teaches regarding the blood of Christ which was shed in order to atone for sin. **To declare his righteousness** is literally *a proof (or sign) of his righteousness*. **His** is used in reference to God the Father. **For the remission of the sins that are past** refers to God's act in forgiving sins which were committed prior to the time of the actual crucifixion. **For** is *because of* or *on account of*. **Remission** is *letting go unpunished* or *passing over*. **The sins that are past** is *the sins (or transgressions) that have happened before*. The punishment demanded as a payment for sin was not fulfilled until the crucifixion. God temporarily overlooked *the sins that are past* knowing that Christ would eventually come and die for sin. Had Christ not eventually come, God would not have been righteous in failing to punish sin. **Through the forbearance of God** is *in the forbearance of God* where **forbearance** means *clemency*.

### 3:26

**To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness** is a reaffirmation of what Paul has written in the previous verse for the sake of emphasis and explanation. **To declare** is *on account of a proof*. **At this time** is *at the present time* and refers to the time of the cross. What He was declaring or proving was **his righteousness**. **His** refers to God the Father. **Righteousness** refers to God's character. It is one of uprightness. He is

perfect in every way. There are no flaws in His character. The reason God set forth Christ to be a propitiation through faith in His blood is so **that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus**. The **He** is God the Father, and **just** is *righteous*. God would not have been righteous if He had overlooked sin forever. His holiness required that He punish sin, and He merely delayed the punishment until the time of the crucifixion. His eventual punishing of sin in Christ not only enabled God the Father to be righteous; it also enabled Him to be **the justifier** of the one who places his trust in Jesus. God the Father, and no one else, is the One Who justifies. To justify is a judicial declaration of righteousness. Not everyone is justified, however. It is only **him which believeth in Jesus**. He who does not believe in Jesus is not justified.

### 3:27

Verse 27 is an inference based upon what has preceded. This is indicated by **then** which is to be understood in the sense of *therefore, consequently, accordingly, or so*. **Where is boasting** reminds one that, if righteousness were obtained by means of the works of the Law, there would be some room for boasting. However, since righteousness comes by faith and is free, there is no room whatsoever for boasting. **Boasting** suggests *pride*. **It is excluded** or *it is eliminated* answers the question. Another question is raised: **by what law? of works? Nay** is *no*; it was not excluded by the law (i.e. the principle) **of works**. **But** introduces a contrast. Boasting was excluded **by the law** (i.e. the principle) **of faith**. Self did not and could not earn salvation in any way and, therefore, provided no reason for boasting.

### 3:28

Verse 28 summarizes verses 21-27 by stating, **Therefore, we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law**. **Therefore** is the same word translated *then* in verse 27. It also indicates that an inference is being drawn and is to be understood in the sense of *accordingly*,

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*consequently, then, or so.* **We conclude** is *we think, we believe, or we are of the opinion that.* **Man** is the generic term for human being and includes females as well as males. It is used in the sense of *humanity*. **Is justified** indicates that God the Father declares him righteous. **By faith** is *by means of faith*. **Without the deeds of the law** means *apart from the deeds of the Law*. Keeping the Law, specifically the Mosaic Law, will save no one because no one has kept the Law perfectly. Believing in Christ is the only means of salvation by which anyone may be saved, and all who exercise faith in Christ will be saved.

### 3:29

In verse 29 Paul asks two questions and then answers them. First, **Is he the God of the Jews only?** He answers the first question by his second question and by his answer to his second question, **Is he not also of the Gentiles?** The structure of this second question anticipates a positive answer. It is to be understood in the sense of *He is also (the God) of the Gentiles, is He not? Yes, He is.* Lest there be any doubt, Paul answers further, **Yes, of the Gentiles also.** Although the Jews may have thought so, God is not the God of the Jews exclusively. He is the God of the Gentiles as well.

### 3:30

Verse 30 provides the reason for verse 29. **Seeing** is a conjunction which is used in the sense of *since indeed*. **It is one God** is *God is one*. **Which** is a reference to God. **Shall justify the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith** indicates that faith is the means by which both the circumcision (i.e. the Jews) and the uncircumcision (i.e. the Gentiles) shall be justified. There are not two Gods involved who might justify differently. There is only one God, and He will justify both Jews and Gentiles in exactly the same

way. That way is by faith.

### 3:31

What effect does justification by faith have upon the Law? Paul is probably anticipating this question on the part of some Jew. He had undoubtedly been asked this question on other occasions. **Then** is inferential and is to be understood in the sense of *therefore, consequently, accordingly, or so*. **Do we . . . make void** is *are we making ineffective, are we making powerless, or are we making idle*. **God forbid** is a paraphrase of a very strong negative reply to Paul's question, *Do we then make void the law through faith?* Literally translated *God forbid* is *may it never be*; and it is used in the sense of *absolutely not, by no means, perish the thought, or no way!* It expresses abhorrence at the very idea. **Yea** is a strong adversative conjunction which is usually translated *but* and may be understood in the sense of *rather*. **We establish the law** is Paul's answer to his anticipated question. **Establish** is literally to *put, place, or set*. When used figuratively as here, it is variously rendered by *establish, confirm, or make valid*. Far from rendering the law ineffective, faith validates it. The one attempting to earn his salvation by his good deeds will learn to his dismay that he has not fulfilled the Law. By contrast the one who is justified by faith has realized that he is a sinner because the Law has shown him that he is not perfect before God. He thus establishes the Law in its proper use by acknowledging that he stands justly condemned before a holy God. He also recognizes that the demands of the Law have been fulfilled by Christ's death on the cross for sin. Christ also established the Law by obeying it perfectly and by enduring its penalty in His death upon the cross. When He shouted triumphantly, *It is finished*, the just demands of the Law had been forever satisfied.