



Commentary on Romans

"The Gospel of God"

Chapter 3

By

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Romans 3:1-4

We’ve seen in past studies that there are many ways to outline Paul’s letter to the Christians in Rome. Whichever outline you prefer it’s important to note a primary theme Paul introduced in 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. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’”

We learn that the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith [read previous study here]. It is because of God’s “righteousness” that we understand how Paul expanded his theme to “the wrath of God.” [read previous study here]

One outline we can use for the current study is –

The Whole World Guilty Before God – Romans 1:18-3:20

We see in these verses how God condemns both Gentiles and Jews, why He does, and the right He has to do it.

When we last left Paul at the end of Romans 2, he proclaimed that what the Jews depended on for a unique relationship with God would not provide the result they believed was theirs. Paul continues his reasoning in chapter 3.

Verses 1-2

“What advantage then has the Jew, or what *is* the profit of circumcision? Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God.”

ΤΙ ΟΥΝ ΤΟ ΠΕΡΙΣΣΟΝ ΤΟΥ ΙΟΥΔΑΙΟΥ Η ΤΙΣ Η ΩΦΕΛΕΙΑ ΤΗΣ ΠΕΡΙΤΟΜΗΣ ΠΟΛΥ ΚΑΤΑ ΠΑΝΤΑ ΤΡΟΠΟΝ ΠΡΩΤΟΝ ΜΕΝ ΓΑΡ ΟΤΙ ΕΠΙΣΤΕΥΘΗΣΑΝ ΤΑ ΛΟΓΙΑ ΤΟΥ ΘΕΟΥ

ΤΙ ΟΥΝ ΤΟ ΠΕΡΙΣΣΟΝ ΤΟΥ ΙΟΥΔΑΙΟΥ (*ti oun to perisson tou ioudaiou*) “what then is the superiority of the Jew” .. *perisson* means “advantage, greater, superior”

η ωφελεια της περιτομης (*hé ópheleia téś peritoués*) “or what is the benefit of the circumcision” .. *ópheleia* means “profit, advantage, gain, benefit”

πολυ κατα παντα τροπον (*polu kata panta tropon*) “much in every way” .. *tropon* means “manner of life, character, way”

πρωτον μεν γαρ οτι επιστευθησαν τα λογια του θεου (*próton men gar oti episteuthésan ta logia tou theou*) “chiefly indeed for that they were entrusted with the oracles of God” .. *próton* means “in the first place, first, chiefly” .. *episteuthésan* means “entrusted with, persuaded by, trust in, have faith in” .. *logia* means “communication, utterances, oracles”

This is a powerful question and answer. If a person's racial background and circumcision didn't make a person a "real" Jew, what good was it? Paul said that the Jews had an advantage with God in that they had been entrusted with the "oracles" of God – meaning the Scriptures, the Word of God. At the time Paul wrote Romans he would have been speaking of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament).

God gave the Law to Moses and the Israelites almost 1,500 years before Paul wrote Romans. That means Jews had a HUGE head start on the Gentiles when it came to both information from and relationship to God. They were God's covenant people.

However, Paul had just written these words a few verses earlier –

"For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law; but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision? And will not the physically uncircumcised, if he fulfills the law, judge you who, *even with your written code and circumcision, are* a transgressor of the law? For he is not a Jew who *is one* outwardly, nor *is* circumcision that which *is* outward in the flesh; but *he is* a Jew who *is one* inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise *is* not from men but from God." Romans 2:25-29

Was Paul doing an about face concerning the position of Jews before God? He was not.

Being Jewish meant they had received God's communication (oracles). Jews heard, studied and prayed the oracles of God. Jewish parents were responsible to teach their children the oracles of God from early childhood. However, many Jews didn't believe God's Word. What did that do to the promises of God to His people?

Paul addressed that next.

Verse 3

"For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect?"

τι γαρ ει ηπιστησαν τινες μη η απιστια αυτων την πιστιν του θεου καταργησει

τι γαρ ει ηπιστησαν τινες (*ti gar ei épistésan tines*) "what indeed if disbelieved some" .. *épistésan* means "unfaithful, disbelieve"

μη η απιστια αυτων (*mé hé apistia autón*) "not the unbelief of them" .. *apistia* means "distrust, unfaithfulness, unbelief"

την πιστιν του θεου καταργησει (*tén pistin tou theou katargései*) "the faith of God will nullify" .. *katargései* means "abolish, make of no effect, nullify"

Paul asks what appears to be a rhetorical question – “what if some Jews did not respond in faith? Does that impact the faithfulness of God?” God called the Jews to be His covenant people. If God doesn’t save them because of their unfaithfulness to Him, is He being unfaithful to them? Did the Jews’ lack of faith cancel out God’s faithfulness?

The Amplified Bible translates the verse this way – “What if some did not believe *and* were without faith? Does their lack of faith *and* their faithlessness nullify *and* make ineffective *and* void the faithfulness of God *and* His fidelity [to His Word]?”

Here are some other thoughts about verse 3 –

“The Apostle considers an objection that might be brought against his argument that the divine revelation vouchsafed to them was a special privilege of the Jewish people. It might be said that they had forfeited and cancelled this privilege by their unbelief. He first reduces the objection to its proper limits; it was not all, but some, who were unbelievers. But granting that there were some who did not believe this fact would have no power to shake the eternal promises of God.”

Ellicott’s Commentary for English Readers

“Did not the fact that God chose them as his people, and entered into covenant with them, imply that the Jews should be kept from perdition? It was evidently their belief that all Jews would be saved, and this belief they grounded on his covenant with their fathers. The doctrine of the apostle Romans 2 would seem to imply that in certain respects they

were on a level with the Gentile nations; that if they sinned, they would be treated just like the pagan; and hence, they asked of what value was the promise of God? Had it not become vain and nugatory?" *Barnes' Notes on the Bible*

"The faith of God; i.e. the truth and faithfulness of God, Psalm 33:4. The whole verse is another prolepsis. The implied objection is this, That the Jews are nothing the better for these oracles, or have no advantage by them, if by unbelief they have rendered themselves unworthy or incapable of benefit by them. The answer to this is anticipated by propounding another question; Can the infidelity of some be any hinderance of God's performing his promise to others, to his chosen ones? The interrogation is a negation, q.d. It cannot be, as the following words show."

"The unbelief of the Jews does not reflect badly on God but rather shows his honor and love of man to be all the greater, in that God is seen to have bestowed honor on people who would dishonor him. Look how he has revealed them to be guilty of misdeeds because of what they gloried in. The honor God showed to them was so great that even when he saw what the result of it would be, he did not withhold his good will toward them. But the Jews made the honors bestowed on them a means of insulting him who honored them." John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Romans*

The Apostle Paul answers his question powerfully and decisively.

Verse 4

"Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written: That You may be justified in Your words, And may overcome when You are judged."

μη γενοιτο γινεσθω δε ο θεος αληθης πας δε ανθρωπος ψευστης
καθως γεγραπται οπως αν δικαιωθης εν τοις λογοις σου και νικησης
εν τω κρινεσθαι σε

μη γενοιτο (*mé genoito*) "never may it be" .. *genoito* means "come into being, happen, come about"

δε ο θεος αληθης (*de ho theos aléphés*) "moreover God true"

πας δε ανθρωπος ψευστης (*pas de anthrópos pseustés*) "every moreover man a liar" .. *pseustés* means "deceiver, liar"

καθως γεγραπται (*kathós gegraptai*) "as it has been written"

οπως αν δικαιωθης εν τοις λογοις σου (*hopós an dikaióthés en tois logois sou*) "that anyhow you may be justified in the words of you"

και νικησης εν τω κρινεσθαι σε (*kai nikésés en tó krinesthai se*) "and will prevail in being judged you" .. *nikésés* means "overcome, conquer, prevail"

It's as if Paul is shouting his answer at this point: "No way! Impossible! Every person is a liar compared to God!"

Paul quoted from Psalm 51:4 –

“Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done *this* evil in Your sight —That You may be found just when You speak, *And* blameless when You judge.”

Here are some other thoughts on this important statement by Paul –

“God forbid – Greek. Let not this be. The sense is, “let not this by any means be supposed.” This is the answer of the apostle, showing that no such consequence followed from his doctrines; and that “if” any such consequence should follow, the doctrine should be at once abandoned, and that every man, no matter who, should be rather esteemed false than God. The veracity of God was a great first principle, which was to be held, whatever might be the consequence. This implies that the apostle believed that the fidelity of God could be maintained in strict consistency with the fact that any number of the Jews might be found to be unfaithful, and be cast off.” *Barnes' Notes on the Bible*

“God forbid; the negation that was closely couched in the former verse, is in this expressed by a note of indignation, and of the greatest detestation. Let God be true; let him remain or appear faithful to his promises and covenant; or, let him be acknowledged to be so, according to the frequent testimonies of Scripture: see Numbers 23:19, Titus

1:2, Hebrews 6:17,18. But every man a liar; or, although every man should be a liar; or, whatsoever we say of men, who are all mutable creatures, who are liable to mistakes in their own natures, and so may easily deceive others: see Psalm 116:11." *Matthew Poole's Commentary*

Romans 3:5-8

“What advantage then has the Jew, or what *is* the profit of circumcision? Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God. For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect? Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written: ‘That You may be justified in Your words, And may overcome when You are judged. But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? *Is* God unjust who inflicts wrath? (I speak as a man.) Certainly not! For then how will God judge the world? For if the truth of God has increased through my lie to His glory, why am I also still judged as a sinner? And *why* not say, ‘Let us do evil that good may come’?—as we are slanderously reported and as some affirm that we say. Their condemnation is just.” Romans 3:1-8

We recently moved into the third chapter of Romans where Paul continued his defense of God’s righteous judgment. In our last study we looked at the first four verses of Romans 3. We move now to verses 5 – 8.

Verses 5-6

“But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? *Is God unjust who inflicts wrath?* (I speak as a man.) Certainly not! For then how will God judge the world?”

ει δε η αδικια ημων θεου δικαιοσυνην συνιστησιν τι ερουμεν μη αδικος ο θεος ο επιφερων την οργην κατα ανθρωπον λεγω μη γενοιτο επει πως κρινει ο θεος τον κοσμον

ει δε η αδικια ημων (*ei de hé adikia hemón*) “if moreover the unrighteousness of us”

θεου δικαιοσυνην συνιστησιν (*theou dikaiosunén sunistésin*) “God’s righteousness shows”

τι ερουμεν (*ti eroumen*) “what will we say”

μη αδικος ο θεος ο επιφερων την οργην (*me adikos ho epipherón tén orgén*) “is unrighteous God inflicting the wrath”

κατα ανθρωπον λεγω (*kata anthrópon legó*) “according to man I speak”

μη γενοιτο (*mé genoito*) “never may it be”

επει πως κρινει ο θεος τον κοσμον (*epei pos krinei ho theos ton kosmon*) “otherwise how will judge God the world”

Paul asked a question that Jews knew could not be true. They knew from their Scriptures that God would judge the world, so it would be ridiculous to complain that God would be "unjust" to inflict His wrath on humans. God is Perfect and Righteous and will judge rightly!

"Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked; far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Genesis 18:25

"For He is coming, for He is coming to judge the earth. He shall judge the world with righteousness, And the peoples with His truth." Psalm 96:13

"For by fire and by His sword The Lord will judge all flesh; And the slain of the Lord shall be many." Isaiah 66:16

"Let the nations be wakened, and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; For there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations." Joel 3:12

One of the primary points Paul has been making in his letter to the Romans is that God is righteous and has a right to judge the unrighteous –

"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. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith

to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown *it* to them.' Romans 1:16-19

Paul has been making an extraordinary case to both Jews and Gentiles that God had every right, and was right, in executing judgment for the unrighteousness of the human race.

Here are some other thoughts about Romans 3:5-6 –

"Enjoyment of God's word and ordinances, is the chief happiness of a people. But God's promises are made only to believers; therefore the unbelief of some, or of many professors, cannot make this faithfulness of no effect. He will fulfil his promises to his people, and bring his threatened vengeance upon unbelievers. God's judging the world, should for ever silence all doubtings and reflections upon his justice. The wickedness and obstinate unbelief of the Jews, proved man's need of the righteousness of God by faith, and also his justice in punishing for sin." *Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary*

"I speak as a man – I speak after the manner of human beings. I speak as appears to be the case to human view; or as would strike the human mind. It does not mean that the language was such as wicked people were accustomed to use; but that the objector expressed a sentiment which to human view would seem to follow from what had been said.

This I regard as the language of an objector. It implies a degree of reverence for the character of God, and a seeming unwillingness to state an objection which seemed to be dishonorable to God, but which nevertheless pressed itself so strong on the mind as to appear irresistible. No way of stating the objection could have been more artful or impressive." *Barnes' Notes on the Bible*

"For then how shall God judge the world?—St. Paul considers it a sufficient answer merely to propound this question. He and those to whom he was writing all assumed that there must be a future judgment. The way in which Bishop Butler deals with the argument from necessity is very similar to this, substituting only present for future judgment. 'It is fact that God does govern even brute creatures by the method of rewards and punishments in the natural course of things. And men are rewarded and punished for their actions—punished for actions mischievous to society as being so, punished for vicious actions as such—by the natural instrumentality of each other under the present conduct of Providence,' &c. Hence the necessitarian is in this dilemma: either his opinion is not true, or else it must be capable of being harmonised with these facts. The facts themselves are postulated." *Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers*

"Away with the thought! If this were so, how should God judge the world? That God does judge the world at last is a fixed point both for Paul and those with whom he argues; hence every inference which conflicts with it must be summarily set aside. God could not judge at all if He were unjust; therefore, since He does judge, He is not unjust, not

even in judging men whose unrighteousness may have served as a foil to His righteousness. It is not thus that the conclusions of chap. 2 can be evaded by the Jew." *Expositor's Greek Testament*

"What does Paul mean? God honored the Jews, but the dishonored him. This gives God the victory and shows the greatness of his love toward man, in that he continued to honor them in spite of what they were like. But if this is true of us (someone might say), why am I to be punished when I have contributed to God's victory by dishonoring him? Paul answers this by a corresponding absurdity. In effect, he says that if this man were the cause of God's victory and he was punished as a result, it was an injustice. But if God is not unjust and the man was punished, then he could not have been the cause of God's victory....For God's justice far exceeds what we think of as a justice and is based on other ineffable criteria." Chrysostom, *Homilies on Romans*

Verses 7-8

"For if the truth of God has increased through my lie to His glory, why am I also still judged as a sinner? And *why* not say, 'Let us do evil that good may come'?—as we are slanderously reported and as some affirm that we say. Their condemnation is just."

ει γαρ η αληθεια του θεου εν τω εμω ψευσματι επερισσευσεν εις την δοξαν αυτου τι επι καγω ως αμαρτωλος κρινομαι και μη καθως βλασφημουμεθα και καθως φασιν τινες ημας λεγειν οτι ποιησωμεν τα κακα ινα ελθη τα αγαθα ων το κριμα ενδικον εστιν

ει γαρ η αληθεια του θεου (*ei gar hé aletheia tou theou*) “if moreover the truth of God”

εν τω εμω ψευσματι (*en tó emó pseusmati*) “in my lie” .. *pseusmati* means “falsehood, untruthfulness, a lie”

επερισσευσεν εις την δοξαν αυτου (*eperisseusen eis ten doxan autou*) “abounded to the glory of him” .. *eperisseusen* means “exceed, overflow, surplus, abound”

τι επι καγω ως αμαρτωλος κρινομαι (*ti eti kagó hós hamartólos krinomai*) “why yet also I as a sinner am judged” .. *hamartólos* means “depraved, detestable, sinner” .. from *hamartanó* – “to forfeit by missing the mark”

και μη καθως βλασφημουμεθα (*kai mé kathós blasphémoumetha*) “and not as we are slanderously charged” .. *blasphémoumetha* means “speak evil against someone, speak abusively against someone”

και καθως φασιν τινες ημας λεγειν οτι (*kai kathós phasin tines hémas legein hoti*) “and as affirm some that us to say”

ποιησωμεν τα κακα ινα ελθη τα αγαθα (*poiesómen ta kaka ina elthé ta agatha*) “let us practice things evil that might come the good things” .. *poiesómen* means “make, do” .. *kaka* means “bad, evil in the widest sense” .. *agatha* means “good in nature, intrinsically good in the widest sense”

ων το κριμα ενδικον εστιν (*hón to krima endikon*) "their condemnation just is" .. *krima* means "judgment, verdict, condemnation" .. *endikon* means "just, righteous"

This gives us a glimpse into the life of the Apostle Paul. He faced many accusations from both Jews and Gentiles and this was one of them. Some accused Paul of preaching the doctrine of "Let us do evil that good may come." That is **not** what Paul was preaching, but evil people took him out of context and changed his words to make it sound as if that's what he was teaching. As Paul wrote, "Their condemnation is just."

"The condemnation of all, who either speak or act in this manner. Here the apostle teaches expressly the unlawfulness of doing evil, any evil, on the pretence of promoting what is good. Such a pretence, if allowed, would justify the greatest crimes. This, however, the apostle here signifies they were slanderously reported as teaching; probably on a misinterpretation of their doctrine, that the greatness of the sins of which the Gentiles were guilty, rendered God's goodness in sending Christ to die for them the more illustrious." *Benson Commentary*

"Through my lie – By means of my lie, or as one of the results of my falsehood. The word "lie" here means falsehood, deceitfulness, "unfaithfulness." If by the unfaithfulness of the Jewish people to the covenant, occasion should be given to God to glorify himself, how could they be condemned for it?

Unto his glory – To his praise, or so as to show his character in such a way as to excite the praise and admiration of his intelligent creation.

Why yet am I ... – How can that act be regarded as evil, which tends to promote the glory of God? The fault in the reasoning of the objector is this, that he takes for granted that the direct tendency of his conduct is to promote God's glory, whereas it is just the reverse; and it is by God's reversing that tendency, or overruling it, that he obtains his glory. The tendency of murder is not to honor the Law, or to promote the security of society, but just the reverse. Still, his execution shall avert the direct tendency of his crime, and do honor to the law and the judge, and promote the peace and security of the community by restraining others."

Barnes' Notes on the Bible

"And not rather.—And (why should we) not (say), as some persons slanderously affirm that we say, Let us do evil that good may come. Some such phrase as 'Why should we say' must be supplied; 'why' from the previous clause, 'say' from that which follows. Or '(Why should we) not (do evil), as some persons slanderously affirm that we say, Let us do evil,' &c. The latter, perhaps, is best, as we might then suppose the word for 'let us do' repeated precisely in the form in which it stands. The Apostle does not care to answer this argument in detail; he will not dally with such a perversion of the moral sense, but simply says, 'Whose condemnation is just.' What pretext could any one possibly have for attributing such an opinion to St. Paul? The charge was no doubt utterly false as applied to him, but we know that his teaching was made an excuse for Antinomian excesses, which would not unnaturally be

fastened upon the Apostle. Or, taking his teaching as it stands, we might well imagine the Jews or the Judaizing party arguing with themselves, 'This man openly breaks the Law, and yet he claims to be in the right way, and that all will go well with him; is not this doing evil that good may come? Does he think to win the Messianic kingdom by the breach of the Law, and not by its observance?' *Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers*

Summary of Romans 3:1-8

As Dr. John Harvey points out in his *Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament* (B&H Academic, 2017, p 81), Romans 3:1-8 gives us four accusations against Paul's teaching –

1. Paul's teaching impugns God's covenant with Israel (3:1-2)
2. Paul's teaching impugns God's faithfulness (3:3-4)
3. Paul's teaching impugns God's justice (3:5-6)
4. Paul's teaching impugns God's truth (3:7-8)

Paul answers each of these accusations brilliantly –

Q – What is the advantage of being a Jew and what is the benefit of circumcision?

A – Much in every way and Israel was entrusted with God's revelation

Q – What difference does it make and is God's faithfulness negated?

A – God forbid and God must be true.

Q – Does human unrighteousness promote God's righteousness and is God unjust when He inflicts wrath?

A – God forbid and how will God judge the world?

Q – Does Paul promote God's truth by teaching a lie and does Paul promote doing evil?

A – Those who suggest such things receive the condemnation they deserve.

Romans 3:9-20

We are currently looking at Romans 3 as the Apostle Paul asked and answered several questions about accusations against his teaching. They included –

- Paul's teaching impugns God's covenant with Israel (3:1-2)
- Paul's teaching impugns God's faithfulness (3:3-4)
- Paul's teaching impugns God's justice (3:5-6)
- Paul's teaching impugns God's truth (3:7-8)

In the next part of our study we will look at another pair of questions and answers that contain some of the most powerful of God's accusations against the human race.

Verse 9

"What then? Are we better *than they*? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin."

ΤΙ ΟΥΝ ΠΡΟΕΧΟΜΕΘΑ ΟΥ ΠΑΝΤΩΣ ΠΡΟΗΤΙΑΣΑΜΕΘΑ ΓΑΡ ΙΟΥΔΑΙΟΥΣ ΤΕ ΚΑΙ ΕΛΛΗΝΑΣ ΠΑΝΤΑΣ ΥΦ ΑΜΑΡΤΙΑΝ ΕΙΝΑΙ

ΤΙ ΟΥΝ ΠΡΟΕΧΟΜΕΘΑ (*ti oun proechometha*) "what then are we better" .. *proechometha* means "excel, surpass, better .. from *pro* (before) and *echó* (to hold, possess) .. "to hold before"

ου παντως (*ou pantós*) "not at all"

προητιασαμεθα γαρ (*proétiasametha gar*) "we have already charged indeed" .. *proétiasametha* means "make a prior accusation, accuse beforehand" .. from *pro* (before) and *aitia* (an accusation) .. this is the only place that προητιασαμεθα was used in the New Testament.

ιουδαιους τε και ελληνας παντας υφ αμαρτιαν ειναι (*ioudaiious te kai ellenas pantas hyph hamartian einai*) "Jews both and Greeks all under sin to be" .. *hyph* means "under, under authority of"

Paul brought his questions and answers to a head in Romans 3:9. Everything he had presented since Romans 1:18 came down to this – "both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin." Every Jew, every Greek, all of them, are under the authority of sin.

Let that sink in for a minute.

Every Jew a sinner. Every Greek (Gentile) a sinner. Everyone in the world a sinner. That is what Paul said, what he wrote, what he meant. Paul went so far as to include himself – "What then? Are we better *than they*? Not at all." Everyone was "previously charged" as being "under sin."

"Once more the argument returns to the main track, and at last the Apostle asserts distinctly and categorically what he had already proved indirectly, that the Jew is every whit as bad as the Gentile." *Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers*

“What then — Well then, (may a Jew further urge,) since you grant that the Jews have the advantage of the Gentiles in point of privileges, having the oracles of God, the promises which he will never fail to observe, and the principles of righteousness which he will never himself violate in his conduct, are we not in a better condition for obtaining justification by our own obedience to his law? No, in no wise — The apostle answers, that all are equal in that point, both Jews and Gentiles. For we have before proved — Namely, in the two former chapters; both Jews — By the breach of the written law; and Gentiles — By transgressing the law of nature; that they are all — Every one of them, without exception; under sin — Under the guilt and power of it: and so are equally excluded from the possibility of being justified by works. And therefore gospel righteousness, or justification by faith, is no less necessary for the one than for the other.” *Benson Commentary*

“Are we better than they? – Are we Jews better than the Gentiles? Or rather, have we any preference, or advantage as to character and prospects, over the Gentiles? These questions refer only to the great point in debate, to wit, about justification before God. The apostle had admitted Romans 3:2 that the Jews had important advantages in some respects, but he now affirms that those advantages did not make a difference between them and the Gentiles about justification. No, in no wise – Not at all. That is, the Jews have no preference or advantage over the Gentiles in regard to the subject of justification before God. They have failed to keep the Law; they are sinners; and if they are justified, it must be in the same way as the rest of the world. We have

before proved ... – Romans 1:21-32; 2. Under sin – Sinners. Under the power and dominion of sin." *Barnes Notes on the Bible*

Was this some new doctrine Paul was teaching? Not at all. This was a doctrine much older than Paul's.

Verse 10

"As it is written: 'There is none righteous, no, not one'"

καθως γεγραπται οτι ουκ εστιν δικαιος ουδε εις

καθως γεγραπται (*kathós gegraptai*) "as it has been written"

οτι ουκ εστιν δικαιος ουδε εις (*oti ouk estin dikaios oude eis*) "none there is righteous not even one" .. *dikaios* is an adjective that means "just, impartial, righteous"

Paul was declaring that no human being was "just, impartial, righteous," no, not one.

Paul reached back into his vast knowledge and understanding of the Hebrew Scriptures to prove his point to his Jewish and Gentile readers of the "universality" of sin. He began by quoting from the Psalms and Ecclesiastes.

"The fool has said in his heart, '*There is no God.*' They are corrupt, They have done abominable works, There is none who does good." Psalm 14:1

"God looks down from heaven upon the children of men, To see if there are *any* who understand, who seek God. Every one of them has turned aside; They have together become corrupt; *There is none* who does good, No, not one." Psalm 53:2-3

"For *there is* not a just man on earth who does good And does not sin." Ecclesiastes 7:20

"No one calls for justice, Nor does *any* plead for truth. They trust in empty words and speak lies; They conceive evil and bring forth iniquity ... Their works *are* works of iniquity, And the act of violence *is* in their hands. Their feet run to evil, And they make haste to shed innocent blood; Their thoughts *are* thoughts of iniquity; Wasting and destruction *are* in their paths. The way of peace they have not known, And *there is* no justice in their ways." Isaiah 59:4, 6-8

Here are some other thoughts on Romans 3:10 –

"As it is written, &c.—(Ps 14:1-3; 53:1-3). These statements of the Psalmist were indeed suggested by particular manifestations of human depravity occurring under his own eye; but as this only showed what man, when unrestrained, is in his present condition, they were quite

pertinent to the apostle's purpose." *Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary*

"As it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one. The several passages cited here, and in some following verses, are taken out of the Psalms and Isaiah; and are brought to prove, not only that the Jews are no better than the Gentiles, being equally corrupt and depraved as they; but also to show the corrupt state and condition of mankind in general: and the words are not always literally expressed, but the sense is attended to, as in this passage; for in the original text of Psalm 14:1, it is, 'there is none that doth good'; from whence the apostle rightly infers, 'there is none righteous'; for he that does not do good, is not righteous; and therefore if there is none on earth that does good and does not sin, there is none righteous upon earth, 'no, not one' single person. The Jews allegorizing that passage in Genesis 19:31, 'there is not a man in the earth to come into us', remark (u) on it thus, 'Urab qydu vya Nya,' 'there is not a righteous man in the earth'; and there is not a man that rules over his imagination." *Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*

Verses 11–18

"There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one.' 'Their throat *is* an open tomb; With their tongues they have practiced deceit'; The poison of asps *is* under their lips'; 'Whose mouth *is* full of cursing and bitterness.' 'Their feet *are* swift to shed blood; Destruction and misery

are in their ways; And the way of peace they have not known.' 'There is no fear of God before their eyes.'

Paul quoted from several Scriptures familiar to Jews that supported his teaching –

"For *there is* no faithfulness in their mouth; Their inward part *is* destruction; Their throat *is* an open tomb; They flatter with their tongue." Psalm 5:9

"They sharpen their tongues like a serpent; The poison of asps *is* under their lips." Psalm 140:3

"His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and oppression; Under his tongue *is* trouble and iniquity." Psalm 10:7

"An oracle within my heart concerning the transgression of the wicked: *There is* no fear of God before his eyes." Psalm 36:1

Paul quoted from the Scriptures, which should have had a profound effect on Jews who would read this epistle, then moved to a logical conclusion based on the evidence.

Verses 19–20

“Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.”

οιδαμεν δε οτι οσα ο νομος λεγει τοις εν τω νομω λαλει ινα παν στομα φραγη και υποδικος γενηται πας ο κοσμος τω θεω διοτι εξ εργαων νομου ου δικαιωθησεται πασα σαρξ ενωπιον αυτου δια γαρ νομου επιγνωσις αμαρτιας

οιδαμεν δε (*oidamen de*) “we know moreover”

οτι οσα ο νομος λεγει (*hoti hosa ho nomos legei*) “that whatever the law says”

τοις εν τω νομω λαλει (*tois en τό νομό λαλει*) “to those under the law it speaks”

ινα παν στομα φραγη (*hina pan stoma phragé*) “that every mouth might be stopped” .. *phragé* means “fenced in, closed, blocked off so it can’t spread”

και υποδικος γενηται πας ο κοσμος τω θεω (*kai hupodikos genétai pas ho kosmos τό θεό*) “and under judgment might be all the world to

God" .. *hupodikos* means "answerable to, liable to judgement of, brought to trial" and is used only once in the New Testament, here in Romans 3:19.

διότι ἐξ ἐργῶν νομοῦ (*dioti ex ergón nomou*) "therefore by works of law"

οὐ δικαιοθήσεται πᾶσα σὰρξ ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ (*ou dikaióthésetai pasa sarx enópion autou*) "not will be justified any flesh before him" .. *sarx* means "body, person"

διὰ γὰρ νομοῦ ἐπιγνώσις ἁμαρτίας (*dia gar nomou epignósis hamartias*) "through indeed law is knowledge of sin" .. *epignósis* means "exact or full knowledge, discernment, recognition"

Paul meant that people would have an exact, full knowledge of sin through the Law. This spoke directly to the Jews who were the recipients of the of God through the mouths of the prophets. It reminds us of what Paul had written previously in his epistle –

"Indeed you are called a Jew, and rest on the law, and make your boast in God, and know *His* will, and approve the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the law, and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, having the form of knowledge and truth in the law. You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal? You who say, 'Do not commit adultery,' do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who make

your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law? For 'the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you,' as it is written." Romans 2:17-24

Paul's logical conclusions concerning the power and universality of sin are difficult to argue against. He has made a most profound presentation for stopping the mouths of all people so that "all the world may become guilty before God." No one can be justified in God's sight by the deeds of the law – "for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin."

Here are other thoughts about Romans 3:19-20 –

"Paul sets forth another view of its purpose here; namely, to drive home to men's consciences the conviction of sin. That is not the only purpose, for God reveals duty primarily in order that men may do it, and His law is meant to be obeyed. But, failing obedience, this second purpose comes into action, and His law is a swift witness against sin. The more clearly we know our duty, the more poignant will be our consciousness of failure. The light which shines to show the path of right, shines to show our deviations from it. And that conviction of sin, which it was the very purpose of all the previous Revelation to produce, is a merciful gift; for, as the Apostle implies, it is the prerequisite to the faith which saves." *MacLaren's Expositions*

"Not only the Gentiles, but the Jews also; may become guilty — May be fully convicted as guilty, and evidently liable to most just condemnation. These things were written of old, and were quoted by Paul, not to make

men guilty, but to prove them so. Therefore by the deeds of the law — By works of complete obedience to the law of God, whether natural or revealed; there shall no flesh be justified — Or pronounced righteous." *Benson Commentary*

"Now we know that what things soever the Law (ὁ νόμος here for the Old Testament generally as the embodiment and exponent of the Law) saith, it speaketh to them that are under the Law(not to the world outside, but to those within its own sphere): that every mouth (the Jew's as well as the Gentile's) may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Because by works of law (νόμος here suitably without the article; see on Romans 2:13) shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for through law is knowledge of sin. In this concluding verse the apostle briefly intimates the reason of law's inefficacy for justification, anticipating, after a manner usual with him, what is afterwards to be more fully set forth, as especially in ch. 7. The reason is that law in itself only defines sin and makes it sinful, but does not emancipate from it." *Pulpit Commentary*

"It is in vain to seek for justification by the works of the law. All must plead guilty. Guilty before God, is a dreadful word; but no man can be justified by a law which condemns him for breaking it. The corruption in our nature, will for ever stop any justification by our own works." *Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary*

Romans 3:21-24

“But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. 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.” Romans 3:21-26

These have to be some of the most hopeful verses in all of Scripture, especially in light of what Paul had written previously –

“Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.” Romans 3:20

Paul wrote that Jews and Gentiles were both condemned and faced the awesome justice of an Almighty God. Then Paul wrote – “But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed.”

Righteousness Through Faith in Christ

There is hope, Paul wrote, for Jews and Gentiles. There is a righteousness of God apart from the Law and God has revealed it to Jews and Gentiles. What is it?

"... even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe."

Romans 3:21 – 5:21 takes us into a new realm of understanding. Jesus Christ is the **HOPE** of Jews and Gentiles. There is a righteousness that God readily accepts and it is the righteousness that comes "through faith" in Jesus Christ – "to all and on all who believe."

Here are some outlines of this section of Romans that may help as we dig deeper –

The New American Commentary Volume 27 – Robert H. Mounce – B&H Publishers, 1995

1. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS ONLY GOD CAN PROVIDE (3:21–5:21)
 1. Received through Faith in Christ (3:21–31)
 2. Abraham, the Great Example of Faith (4:1–25)
 3. The Results of Faith (5:1–21)
 1. Peace and Hope (5:1–8)
 2. Reconciliation (5:9–11)
 3. The Gift of Righteousness (5:12–21)

The Epistle to the Romans – J. Vernon McGee – Thru the Bible Radio, 1983

Revelation of the righteousness of God, Rom 3:21—5:11

Righteousness provided.

Righteousness of God defined — not the character of God nor self-righteousness of man.

a. Justification by faith explained, Rom 3:21-31

b. Justification by faith *illustrated*, Rom 4:1-25

c. Justification by faith — *results derived*, Rom 5:1-11

Exegetical Guide To The Greek New Testament, Romans – John D. Harvey
– B&H Academic, 2017

1. God Reveals His Righteousness Apart from Law (3:21-31)

2. God Reveals His Righteousness in Response to Faith (4:1-25)

The Scofield Study Bible, New King James Version – Oxford University Press, 2002

Justification by Faith in Christ (3:21 – 5:21)

1. Nature of Justification (3:21 – 4:25)

2. Results of Justification (5:1-11)

3. Justification Versus Condemnation (5:12-21)

The Ryrie Study Bible, New Testament, New American Standard Version – Charles C. Ryrie – Moody Press, 1976

Righteousness Imputed; Justification, Salvation (3:21 – 5:21)

1. The Description of Righteousness (3:21-31)
2. The Illustration of Righteousness (4:1-25)
3. The Benefits of Righteousness (5:1-11)
4. The Applicability of Righteousness (5:12-21)

Verse 21

“But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets”

νυνι δε χωρις νομου δικαιοσυνη θεου πεφανερωται μαρτυρουμενη υπο του νομου και των προφητων

νυνι δε χωρις νομου (*nuni de chōris nomou*) “now however apart from law” .. *nuni* means “already, at present, now”.. *chōris* means “apart from, separately from, without”

δικαιοσυνη θεου πεφανερωται (*dikaioṣunē theou pethanerōtai*) “the righteousness of God has been revealed” .. *dikaioṣunē* means “justice, justness, righteousness” .. *pethanerōtai* means “make known, make clear, make visible, manifest”

God made known, visible and clear two-thousand years ago that He had a righteousness, a justice, that He would accept apart from, without, the Law. That is a remarkable statement and one that has brought great comfort and hope to millions of people since the 1st century AD.

We are reminded here of Paul's introductory thematic remarks –

“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. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’” Romans 1:16-17

As we read through Romans 3:21 – 5:21, Paul's strong commitment to the Gospel of Christ becomes clear.

μαρτυρουμενη υπο του νομου και των προφητων (*martuoumenē hypo tou nomou kai tōn prophētōn*) “being borne witness to by the law and the prophets” .. *martuoumenē* means “give evidence, testify, give witness”

That's a fascinating statement that may seem strange to some people. How can the Law give witness, evidence, to a righteousness of God that is apart from the Law? How can the Prophets, who were under the Law, give witness to a righteousness of God that is apart from the Law? Does that make sense?

What was the hope given to Jews and Gentiles in the Law and Prophets? That they could achieve a position of righteousness through their personal efforts, their good works, their obedience? If those were the criteria for righteousness, no person would be able to attain to it. Moses wouldn't have made it. Joshua wouldn't have made it. David and Solomon wouldn't have made it. Elijah, Isaiah and Jeremiah wouldn't have made it. Daniel, Ezekiel, Ezra and Nehemiah wouldn't have made it. The Old Testament gives overwhelming evidence and testimony to the inability of human beings to obey God and live righteously.

"Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin." Romans 3:19-20

So, what was the hope found in the Law and Prophets? That our gracious and merciful God would send a Savior to the world with a special righteousness that was acceptable to God.

That's what Jesus Christ did for everyone who would believe in Him.

Verse 22

“even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference”

δικαιοσυνη δε θεου δια πιστεως ιησου χριστου εις παντας και επι παντας τους πιστευοντας ου γαρ εστιν διαστολη

δικαιοσυνη δε θεου δια πιστεως ιησου χριστου (*dikaiousunē de theou dia pisteōs iēsou christou*) “the righteousness moreover of God through faith of Jesus Christ” .. *pisteō* means “faith, belief, trust, confidence”

εις παντας και επι παντας τους πιστευοντας (*eis pantas kai epi pantas tous pisteuontas*) “toward all those believing .. *pisteuontas* comes from a root word that means “to be persuaded” .. the idea is of someone who is persuaded of a truth and trusts it

ου γαρ εστιν διαστολη (*ou gar estin diastolē*) “no indeed there is distinction” .. *diastolē* means “difference, separation, distinction”

The righteousness of God is given to people who believe in Jesus Christ – Jew and Gentile. It’s as simple as Paul’s statement in Acts –

“Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. And he brought them out and said, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’ So they said, ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.’ Then they spoke the word of

the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed *their* stripes. And immediately he and all his *family* were baptized. Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household." Acts 16:30-34

Verse 23

"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"

ΠΑΝΤΕΣ ΓΑΡ ΗΜΑΡΤΟΝ ΚΑΙ ΥΣΤΕΡΟΥΝΤΑΙ ΤΗΣ ΔΟΞΗΣ ΤΟΥ ΘΕΟΥ

ΠΑΝΤΕΣ ΓΑΡ ΗΜΑΡΤΟΝ (*pantes gar hēmarton*) "all indeed have sinned" (missed the mark)

και υστερουνται της δοξης του θεου (*kai husterountai tēs doxēs*) "and fall short of the glory of God" .. υστερουνται means "fall behind, lacking, fall short, suffer need, am inferior to" .. δοξης means "honor, renown, splendor, glory"

A man who became a dear friend shared this verse with me while I was still an atheist. Because I had investigated evidence for the existence of God, the reliability of the Bible and the reality of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, I heard that verse in a new way. I knew I had sinned against a holy God and fallen short of His glory, His splendor, His honor. I was without doubt a sinner in need of saving.

Verse 24

“being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus”

δικαιουμενοι δωρεαν τη αυτου χαριτι δια της απολυτρωσεως της εν χριστω ιησου

δικαιουμενοι δωρεαν τη αυτου χαριτι (*dikaiousmenoi dōrean tē autou chariti*)
“being justified freely by the of him grace”

What a remarkable statement! God offers justification “freely” based on His amazing grace. In light of all that Paul wrote in Romans to this point, how can God do that in a righteous fashion?

δια της απολυτρωσεως της εν χριστω ιησου (*dia tes apolytrōseōs tēs en Christō Iēsou*) “through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” .. απολυτρωσεως means “a release effected by payment of ransom, deliverance, redemption”. It carries the idea of buying back something that was previously lost.

When I came to the realization that I was spiritually “lost,” I was ready to be “found.”

“Amazing grace! How sweet the sound That saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but now am found; Was blind, but now I see.” *Amazing Grace* by John Newton

I was lost, but now am found!

What does it mean that God "found" me? It means that He "redeemed" me. I belong to God. He paid the price for my life; that price was the death of God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Are there any benefits to being redeemed? You betcha!

1. eternal life
2. forgiveness of sins
3. freedom from the curse of the law
4. deliverance from the bondage of sin
5. righteousness before God
6. peace with God (reconciled to Him)
7. adoption as God's child
8. _____ (add your favorites to the list!)
9. _____
10. _____

Christians are blessed beyond measure, yet we often take so much of what God has done for us for granted as we go through our day-to-day routines. How good it is to read these verses and be reminded of the great price God paid for our justification – the death of His Son – and what He has given us. This blessing has come to us through God's grace and great love. We have all that we have that will last into eternity because of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.

Here are other views from commentators you may find helpful –

“The righteousness God provides comes as a free gift. It cannot be purchased or earned. In either case it would no longer be a gift. One of fallen humanity’s most difficult tasks is to accept righteousness as a gift. With every fiber of their moral being, people want to earn God’s favor. From a human perspective this sounds both reasonable and noble. The hidden agenda, however, is that it would provide a basis for boasting. God neither needs nor desires our help in doing what we could never accomplish. We underestimate the hopelessness of our sinful state. At best, any righteousness by works would be desperately inadequate. By God’s grace we are granted a right standing with him. The basis for this redemptive process is Christ Jesus. The gospel centers in the atoning work of God’s unique and only Son. Redemption is found in him and him alone.” *The New American Commentary Volume 27*

“The notion of ransom contains in itself the triple idea of a bondage, a deliverance, and the payment of an equivalent as the means of that deliverance. The bondage is the state of sin and of guilt, with the expectation of punishment; the deliverance is the removal of this state, and the opening out, in its stead, of a prospect of eternal happiness and glory; the equivalent paid by Christ is the shedding of His own blood. This last is the pivot upon which the whole idea of redemption turned. It is therefore clear that the redemption of the sinner is an act wrought objectively, and, in the first instance, independently of any change of condition in him, though such a change is involved in the appropriation of the efficacy of that act to himself. It cannot be explained as a purely

subjective process wrought in the sinner through the influence of Christ's death. The idea of dying and reviving with Christ, though a distinct aspect of the atonement, cannot be made to cover the whole of it. There is implied, not only a change in the recipient of the atonement, but also a change wrought without his co-operation in the relations between God and man. There is, if it may be so said, in the death of Christ something which determines the will of God, as well as something which acts upon the will of man. And the particular influence which is brought to bear upon the counsels of God is represented under the figure of a ransom or payment of an equivalent. This element is too essentially a part of the metaphor, and is too clearly established by other parallel metaphors, to be explained away; though what the terms "propitiation" and "equivalent" can mean, as applied to God, we do not know, and it perhaps does not become us too curiously to inquire." *Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers*

"Freely – δωρεάν dōrean. This word stands opposed to what is purchased, or which is obtained by labor, or which is a matter of claim. It is a free, undeserved gift, not merited by our obedience to the Law, and not that to which we have any claim. The apostle uses the word here in reference to those who are justified. To them it is a mere undeserved gift, It does not mean that it has been obtained, however, without any price or merit from anyone, for the Lord Jesus has purchased it with his own blood, and to him it becomes a matter of justice that those who were given to him should be justified, 1 Corinthians 6:20; 1 Corinthians 7:23; 2 Peter 2:1; 1 Peter 2:9. (Greek). Acts 20:28; Isaiah 53:11. We

have no offering to bring, and no claim. To us, therefore, it is entirely a matter of gift." *Barnes' Notes on the Bible*

"... through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus—a most important clause; teaching us that though justification is quite gratuitous, it is not a mere fiat of the divine will, but based on a "Redemption," that is, "the payment of a Ransom," in Christ's death. That this is the sense of the word "redemption," when applied to Christ's death, will appear clear to any impartial student of the passages where it occurs." *Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary*

"The meritorious cause of justification is, the redemption that is in Jesus Christ: redemption supposes a former state of captivity to sin, Satan, and the law, in which God's elect were by nature, and is a deliverance from it; it is of a spiritual nature, chiefly respects the soul, and is plenteous, complete, and eternal: this is in and by Christ; he was called unto it, was sent to effect it, had a right unto it, as being the near kinsman; and was every way fit for it, being both God and man; and has by his sufferings and death obtained it: now, as all the blessings of grace come through redemption by Christ, so does this of justification, and after this manner; Christ, as a Redeemer, had the sins of his people laid on him, and they were bore by him, and took away; the sentence of the law's condemnation was executed on him, as standing in their legal place and stead; and satisfaction was made by him for all offences committed by them, which was necessary, that God might appear to be just, in justifying all them that believe: nor is this any objection or contradiction to the free grace of God, in a sinner's justification; since it

was grace in God to provide, send, and part with his Son as a Redeemer, and to work out righteousness; it was grace in Christ, to come and give himself a sacrifice, and obtain salvation and righteousness, not for angels, but for men, and for some of them, and not all; and whatever this righteousness, salvation, and redemption cost Christ, they are all free to men." *Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*

Romans 3:25

“But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. 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.” Romans 3:21-26

These are some of the greatest words ever written! The Apostle Paul painted an extremely dark picture leading up to these words.

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men ... Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves ... For this reason God gave them up to vile passions ... And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting ... Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things ... For

as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law ... Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin ... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

If that's where Paul stopped writing, we are so doomed. That's where the Gospel of God comes into view!

"being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus"

Yes! We stand justified before God "by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

That's awesome! But how does it work? How are we redeemed? What makes redemption work?

Verse 25

“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”

ον προεθετο ο θεος ιλαστηριον δια της πιστεως εν τω αυτου αιματι εις ενδειξιν της δικαιοσυνης αυτου δια την παρεσιν των προγεγονοτων αμαρτηματων

ον προεθετο (*hon proetheto*) “whom set forth as” .. *proetheto* means “determine beforehand, purpose beforehand, design beforehand”

ο θεος ιλαστηριον (*ho theos hilastērion*) “God a propitiation through” .. *hilastērion* means “a sin offering, covering” .. the word comes from ιλάσκομαι “have mercy on, pardon, forgive”

The word is used only twice in the New Testament: Romans 3:25 and Hebrews 9:5 –

“... and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat.”

The words “mercy seat” are the translation for the Greek word *hilastērion*. First used in Exodus 25:17, the Hebrew word is חַכְכַּפֹּרֶת (*hakkappōret*). It is similar to the Hebrew word כֹּפֶר (*kōp̄er*), which means “ransom.”

Interestingly, the first time the word is used is Genesis 6:14 where God told Noah to cover the Ark inside and out with "pitch" (*bakkōp̄er*). The second time we see the word is Exodus 25:17 where God instructed Moses how to build the "mercy seat" (*kappōret*) and place it on top of the Ark of the Covenant –

"And the cherubim shall stretch out *their* wings above, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and they shall face one another; the faces of the cherubim *shall be* toward the mercy seat. You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the Testimony that I will give you. And there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which *are* on the ark of the Testimony, about everything which I will give you in commandment to the children of Israel."
Exodus 25:20-22

You saw it correctly! The word was used for a special covering over **both Arks**. Those coverings were meant as a protection for God's people.

The blood of Jesus Christ shed on the Roman cross is our spiritual covering – our "propitiation" –

"Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.'" Matthew 26:27-28

Paul will deal more with this idea of the shed blood of Jesus "covering" our sins later in Romans, but here's a quick sneak-peak of what's coming –

"Blessed *are those* whose lawless deeds are forgiven, And whose sins are covered; Blessed *is the* man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin." Romans 4:7-8

God determined beforehand (before time began) that He would have mercy on, pardon, forgive sinners – Jews and Gentiles. How?

δία τῆς πιστεως εν τω αυτου αιματι (*dia tēs pisteōs en tō autou haimati*) "faith in the of him blood"

Whoa! Faith in the "of him blood"? What is that about?

One of the big pushbacks I hear from non-Christians is that Christianity is a "bloody" religion. Why blood?

Let's go back to Exodus 12 and the Passover to get some important historical perspective –

"Now the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, 'This month *shall be* your beginning of months; it *shall be* the first month of the year to you. Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying: 'On the tenth of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb, according to the house of *his* father, a lamb for a household. And if the household is too small for the lamb, let him and his

neighbor next to his house take *it* according to the number of the persons; according to each man's need you shall make your count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year. You may take *it* from the sheep or from the goats. Now you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight. And they shall take *some* of the blood and put *it* on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses where they eat it ... Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you *are*. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy *you* when I strike the land of Egypt."

Why did God tell the children of Israel to kill a lamb and place some of its blood on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses where they ate? Because Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, would shed His blood on a Roman cross for our redemption!

"... knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like* silver or gold, from your aimless conduct *received* by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God." 1 Peter 1:18-21

John the Baptist, who was the promised "messenger" of the Book of Malachi to Israel, said this about Jesus Christ –

"The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is He of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me' ... And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God!" John 1:29-30, 36

John the Apostle, who was witness to many amazing events in Heaven, wrote this about Jesus Christ –

"Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying: 'You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth.' Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice: 'Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!' And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: 'Blessing and honor

and glory and power *Be* to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!" Revelation 5:8-13

God's redemption of lost sinners – determined before time began, before the foundation of the world – was the death of Jesus Christ on a Roman cross almost 2,000 years ago. Jesus is "the Lamb who was slain" and He is worthy to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!

Our "redemption" is based on the ancient idea of *sacrifice*. These sacrifices were "offerings" to God and began with the first human family –

"Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, 'I have acquired a man from the Lord.' Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord. Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the Lord respected Abel and his offering, but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell."
Genesis 4:1-5

The next time we see a sacrificial offering is what Noah did following the Great Flood –

“Every animal, every creeping thing, every bird, *and* whatever creeps on the earth, according to their families, went out of the ark. Then Noah built an altar to the Lord, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And the Lord smelled a soothing aroma. Then the Lord said in His heart, ‘I will never again curse the ground for man’s sake, although the imagination of man’s heart *is* evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done.” Genesis 8:19-21

Noah offered burnt offerings to God and the Lord smelled a “soothing” aroma. Noah’s offering pleased God and He responded positively toward the earth. That’s the idea of a “propitiation.” It is an “atoning” sacrifice.

The offering Christians point to as prophetic of God’s provision for our sins is found in Genesis 22 –

“Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, ‘Abraham!’ And he said, ‘Here I am.’ Then He said, ‘Take now your son, your only *son* Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you’ ... So Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid *it* on Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them went together. But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, ‘My father!’ And he said, ‘Here

I am, my son.' Then he said, 'Look, the fire and the wood, but where *is* the lamb for a burnt offering?' And Abraham said, 'My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering.'" So the two of them went together. Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the Angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, 'Abraham, Abraham!' So he said, 'Here I am.' And He said, 'Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only *son*, from Me.' Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind *him* was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son. And Abraham called the name of the place, The-Lord-Will-Provide; as it is said *to* this day, 'In the Mount of the Lord it shall be provided.'" Genesis 22:1-2, 6-14

God did provide His Son to be a sacrificial offering for our sins –

"For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us." 1 Corinthians 5:7

"And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma."
Ephesians 5:2

“And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission. Therefore *it was* necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, *which are* copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.” Hebrews 9:22-24

“By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*. And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified. Hebrews 10:10-14

Once for all – Jesus’ bloody death on a Roman cross almost 2,000 years ago met with God’s approval and became the payment for our redemption. Non-Christians don’t understand that and I get it. God sending His Son into the world to die for the sins of the world on a Roman cross seems ridiculous to atheists, agnostics and other non-Christians. That’s what I thought as an atheist. Christians have to be crazy to believe that. However, as a Christian I get it. Jesus’ sacrifice is the one thing in this crazy world that makes sense. Look at what Jesus thought about the sacrifice He was going to make for us –

"Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends." John 15:13

"And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave— just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." Matthew 20:27-28

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep." John 10:11

The world shouts at us day and night about love, but Jesus did the one thing that proves His love for the world – He laid down His life for us. He proved His words with His life. Thank you, Jesus!

εις ενδειξιν της δικαιοσυνης αυτου (*eis endeixin tēs dikaiosunēs auto*) "for a showing forth of the righteousness of him" .. *endeixin* means "proof, demonstration" .. *dikaiosunēs* means "justice, justness, righteousness"

Jesus' death is the "proof" of God's righteousness! As Paul wrote a few sentences earlier –

"But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe." Romans 3:21-22

δια την παρεσιν των προγεγονοτων αμαρτηματων (*dia tēs paresin tōn progegonotōn hamartēmatōn*) “because of the forbearance of the having taken place beforehand sins” .. *paresin* means “overlooking, suspension, remission of punishment for” .. *progegonotōn* means “happen previously” .. *hamartēmatōn* means “evil deed, fault, sin”

Our Part

God overlooks/suspends punishment for our sins because of His “righteousness.” He does this through a process He invented before time began – “faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe.” We must not miss this vital point of Paul’s in Romans 3 –

- The “righteousness” of God comes to us through **faith** in Jesus Christ.
- The “redemption” that is in Jesus Christ comes to us through **faith**.
- God is just and the “justifier” of the one who has **faith** in Jesus.

Our part is clear – we are to have “faith” in Jesus Christ. We are to believe what God said is true and act upon it. As Paul told a jailer almost 2,000 years ago, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.” (Acts 16:31)

The jailer had to make a decision. It was not one Paul could make for him. The jailer asked what he needed to do to be “saved” and Paul told him. We know from what Luke wrote about the event in Acts 16 that the jailer did

"believe" on the Lord Jesus Christ and so did his family. What a great day of rejoicing that must have been!

This message of redemption is for Jew and Gentile. That covers all of us. We all must place our faith in Jesus Christ for God's forgiveness. If you haven't done that or are not sure if you have, please contact us. We would love to share with you about this amazing and free gift of God – the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ.

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." Ephesians 2:8-9

Romans 3:26

“But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. 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.” Romans 3:21-26

In the last part of our study, we looked at verse 25 where Paul wrote – “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.” We saw that there is a “righteousness of God apart from the law” and that is connected to the death of Jesus Christ on a Roman cross almost two-thousand years ago.

Why did God do that? What was His purpose?

Verse 26

“... to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”

εν τη ανοχη του θεου προς ενδειξιν της δικαιοσυνης αυτου εν τω νυν καιρω εις το ειναι αυτον δικαιον και δικαιουντα τον εκ πιστεως ιησου

εν τη ανοχη του θεου (*en tē anochē tou theou*) *anochē* means “patient endurance, delaying, forbearance” and is understood as a suspended or delayed punishment. This is a decision made by God (*του θεου*). It is His prerogative to suspend, delay or accomplish the punishment that comes from His judgment. God has declared all people guilty, but He has also provided a remedy – “even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe.”

προς ενδειξιν της δικαιοσυνης αυτου εν τω νυν καιρω (*pros endeixin tēs dikaiosunēs autou en tō nun kairō*) *endeixin* means “proof, showing, demonstration” .. *nun* is an adverb that means “even now, already” and follows the logic of following something that came before. God demonstrates His righteousness “even now” because of the death of Jesus Christ – “whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness.”

εις το ειναι αυτον δικαιον και δικαιουντα τον εκ πιστεως ιησου (*eis to einai auton dikaion kai dikaiounta ton ek pisteos Iēsou*) God is both

"just" (*dikaion*) in His actions of justifying and the "justifier" (*dikaionta*) of the one who has faith in Jesus.

How remarkable is this! Paul just wrote these words –

"Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin."

Then, writes these words –

"But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe."

What? How can this be? How can God be both the Judge who condemns and the Judge who redeems us? How can God be both just and the justifier?

That is, my friend, the Gospel of Jesus Christ! As the Apostle Paul stated early in this epistle –

“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.”

Paul explains this salvific power in Romans 3:21-26. The righteous God is just in what He does in saving unrighteous sinners through the blood sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Notice our part – “... of the one who has faith in Jesus.” We must believe that what God says He did is what He did and that what He did has the power to save us. If we hear that God sent His Son to die for us but we don't believe it, then the circuit is not complete and salvation does not occur. What is it that connects God's power to save to our actual salvation? “faith in Jesus.” It's as simple and as complex as that.

Can we connect ourselves to the saving power of God through obeying the Law? Can we connect ourselves to the saving power of God through good deeds? Here's God's answer –

“Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.”

The Law is the "knowledge" of sin, not the salvation from sin. No one will save themselves through "good deeds." Why is that?

"There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one."

Try as we might we cannot earn our salvation. We cannot merit our salvation. However, we can believe that what God says is true –

"But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. 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."

Here are some other thoughts for your consideration –

“The Cross not only exonerated God from the charge that He passed by sin before the crucifixion, but also demonstrated that when He declared a believing sinner righteous, He all the time maintained His righteousness. It was a just as well as a merciful act for God to save a sinner, for mercy was bestowed upon the basis of justice satisfied. The demands of the broken law were satisfied. Sin was paid for, not condoned. Thus, the believing sinner is saved not only by the mercy of God, but by the righteousness of God, for his salvation rests upon the fact that his sins are paid for and justice has been maintained. Thus, God is just and at the same time the One who justifies the believing sinner.” *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*, Volume I, Kenneth Wuest

“It is free grace, mere mercy; there is nothing in us to deserve such favours. It comes freely unto us, but Christ bought it, and paid the price. And faith has special regard to the blood of Christ, as that which made the atonement. God, in all this, declares his righteousness. It is plain that he hates sin, when nothing less than the blood of Christ would satisfy for it. And it would not agree with his justice to demand the debt, when the Surety has paid it, and he has accepted that payment in full satisfaction.” *Matthew Henry’s Concise Commentary*

“That he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus; i.e. that no wrong might be done to the essential purity of his nature, or rectitude of his will; nor yet to his immediate justice, by which he cannot

but hate sin, and abhor the sinner as such; though in the mean time he gives a discharge to him that is of the faith of Jesus, (as it is in the original), or of the number of those that believe, and cast themselves upon a Saviour." *Matthew Poole's Commentary*

"To declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness,.... This end is further explained, it being to declare the righteousness of God "at this time", under the Gospel dispensation; in which there was such a display of the grace, mercy, and goodness of God: that he might be just; that is, appear to be so: God is naturally and essentially just in himself; and he is evidentially so in all his works, particularly in redemption by Christ; and when and while he is the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus: Jesus, the Saviour, is the object of faith, as he is the Lord our righteousness; the believer in Jesus is a real, and not a nominal one; God is the justifier of such in a declarative way, and God only, though not to the exclusion of the Son and Spirit; and which sentence of justification is pronounced by him on the foot of a perfect righteousness, which neither law nor justice can find fault with, but entirely approve of; and so he appears just and righteous, even though he justifies the sinner and the ungodly." *Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*

"The second object of the death of Christ was to remove the misconceptions that might be caused by the apparent condoning of sins committed in times anterior to the Christian revelation. A special word is used to indicate that these sins were not wiped away and dismissed altogether, but rather "passed over" or "overlooked." This was due to the forbearance of God, who, as it were, suspended the execution of His

vengeance. Now the Apostle shows by the death of Christ that justice that had apparently slept was vindicated. Thus God appeared in a double character, at once as just or righteous Himself, and as producing a state of righteousness in the believer. Under the Old Testament God had been revealed as just; but the justice or righteousness of God was not met by any corresponding righteousness on the part of man, and therefore could only issue in condemnation. Under the New Testament the justice of God remained the same, but it was met by a corresponding state of righteousness in the believer a righteousness, however, not inherent, but superinduced by God Himself through the process of justification by faith. In this way the great Messianic condition of righteousness was fulfilled." *Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers*

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Romans 3:27-31

"Where *is* boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law. Or *is He* the God of the Jews only? *Is He* not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also, since *there is* one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law."

Romans 3:27-31

In the last part of our study we looked at Romans 3:26 – "to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."

We move now to the next section which focuses on the **exclusion of boasting**.

Verse 27

"Where *is* boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith."

που ουν η καυχησις εξεκλεισθη δια ποιου νομου των εργαων ουχι αλλα
δια νομου πιστεωσ

It's important that we don't forget the context of Romans 3 –

- Everyone is guilty before God
- That includes Jews and Gentiles
- No one is righteous
- No one seeks after God
- No one does good – no one
- No one will be justified by their deeds in God's sight
- Everyone has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God – everyone

That's the bad news. What's the good news?

There is a righteousness of God "apart" from the Law and it's through faith in Jesus Christ! It's available to everyone – Jews and Gentiles. How does it work?

We are justified freely by God's grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus – through 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."

That's the context for verse 27.

Before diving into this next section (verses 27-31) let's look at how the apostle addresses his readers. Paul uses a literary technique of Q&A. He asks his audience a question and immediately gives them the answer –

Q – Where *is* boasting then?

A -It is excluded.

Q – By what law? Of works?

A – No, but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.

Q – Or *is He* the God of the Jews only? *Is He* not also the God of the Gentiles?

A – Yes, of the Gentiles also, since *there is* one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.

Q – Do we then make void the law through faith?

A – Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law.

που ουν η καυχησις (*που ουν ηε καθησις*) “where then is the boasting” .. *καθησις* means “act of boasting, glorying, exultation”

Good question! Given the facts Paul has presented so far –

- Everyone is guilty before God
- That includes Jews and Gentiles
- No one is righteous
- No one seeks after God
- No one does good – no one
- No one will be justified by their deeds in God's sight
- Everyone has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God – everyone

How could anyone boast? How could anyone glory in themselves? Should anyone be proud of what they accomplished toward justification before God through their heritage, actions or deeds? (specifically the Jew – “Indeed you are called a Jew, and rest on the law, and make your boast in God.” Romans 2:17)

Paul answers with pointed precision –

εξεκλεισθη (*exekleisthē*) “it has been excluded” .. *exekleisthē* means “shut out, exclude, separate”

The possibility that anyone could boast or glory in themselves has been “shut out” .. “excluded.” There is no way that anyone can boast because every human being who is alive today, has lived in the past, or will live in the future is guilty before God and **without excuse**.

δια ποιου νομου (*dia poiou nomou*) “through what law” (interrogative pronoun is qualitative – what “kind” of law)

των εργαων (*tōn ergōn*) "that of works" (literally "the" works which Jews boasted)

ουχι αλλα δια νομου πιστεως (*ouchi alla dia nomou pisteōs*) "no but through a law of faith"

This phrase – "law of faith" – belongs to the Apostle Paul. No other biblical author uses that term and we Paul will reference it several times in Romans. Was Paul introducing a "new" kind of spiritual law? No. He was explaining that everything falls within the ancient law of faith, which most people confused with a law of works. Paul makes a powerful point in Romans that justification is and always has been based on the law of faith. The Law and Prophets are witnesses of that fact –

"But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe."

Paul will continue to make this powerful point about the "law of faith" as we continue our study in Romans 3 and 4.

Verse 28

"Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law."

λογιζομεθα ουν πιστει δικαιοσθαι ανθρωπον χωρις εργαων νομου

λογιζομεθα ουν πιστει δικαιοσθαι ανθρωπον (*loizometha oun pistei disaiousthai anthrōpon*) "we reckon therefore to be justified by faith a man" .. *loizometha* means "count, reason, decide, conclude, reckon" .. the root word is *logos* (logic in speech, reasoning, mathematics, etc) .. it is a "reasoned conclusion" we can reach based on the truth of Paul's claim that a man (people) is "justified by faith" (through the means of faith)

χωρις εργαων νομου (*chōris ergōn nomou*) "apart from works of law" .. *chōris* means "apart from, separately from, without" .. justification comes by faith without works.

The Apostle Paul can be wordy at times, but I appreciate how he used words. He looks at an issue from every possible angle, then reaches a logical, reasonable conclusion. In this case, the reasonable conclusion is that people are "justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law." That's clear and concise.

Verse 29

"Or *is He* the God of the Jews only? *Is He* not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also"

η ιουδαιων ο θεος μονον ουχι δε και εθνων ναι και εθνων

η ιουδαιων ο θεος μονον (*ē toudaiōn o theos monon*) "or of Jews is he the God only"

ουχι δε και εθνων (*ouchi de kai ethnōn*) "not also of gentiles"

ναι και εθνων (*nai kai ethnōn*) "yes also of gentiles"

The obvious answer to Paul's question is that God is the God of Jews and Gentiles. This was God's statement to Abram when He called him to leave his home in Ur and travel to a land God would show him – "And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." (Genesis 12:9) Many years later, following Abraham's obedience to God concerning Isaac, God said – "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice." (Genesis 22:18) God made it clear that He was the God of the Jews and the Gentiles.

Verse 30

“since *there is* one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.”

επειπερ εις ο θεος ος δικαιωσει περιτομην εκ πιστεως και ακροβυστιαν δια της πιστεως

επειπερ εις ο θεος ος δικαιωσει περιτομην εκ πιστεως (*epeiper eis o theos os dikaiōsei peritomēn ek pisteōs*) “since indeed one the God is who will justify the circumcision by faith”

και ακροβυστιαν δια της πιστεως (*kai akrobustian dia tēs pisteōs*) “and uncircumcision through the same faith”

Verses 29 and 30 are a powerful and clear message for Jews and Gentiles, but especially for Jews – God is the God of Jews and Gentiles and will justify them through the same law of faith. Period.

Verse 31

“Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law.”

νομον ουν καταργουμεν δια της πιστεως μη γενοιτο αλλα νομον
ιστωμεν

νομον ουν καταργουμεν δια της πιστεως (*nomon oun katargoumen dia tēs pisteōs*) “law then do we nullify through faith” .. *katargoumen* means “make of no effect, render ineffectual, annul, abolish, bring to naught, make idle (inactive)”

Paul asks a logical question that some Jews might have asked. Does the law of faith nullify (make of no effect) the Mosaic Law? Good question. How does Paul answer that?

μη γενοιτο αλλα νομον ιστωμεν (*mē genoito alla nomon histōmen*) “never may it be but law we uphold” .. *histōmen* means “establish, make to stand” Paul was saying that the “law of faith” actually established the Mosaic Law!

Here are thoughts from other commentators for your consideration –

“God will have the great work of the justification and salvation of sinners carried on from first to last, so as to shut out boasting. Now, if we were saved by our own works, boasting would not be excluded. But the way of justification by faith for ever shuts out boasting. Yet believers are not left to be lawless; faith is a law, it is a working grace, wherever it is in truth. By faith, not in this matter an act of obedience, or a good work, but forming the relation between Christ and the sinner, which renders it proper that the believer should be pardoned and justified for the sake of the Saviour, and that the unbeliever who is not thus united or related to him, should remain under condemnation. The law is still of use to convince us of what is past, and to direct us for the future. Though we cannot be saved by it as a covenant, yet we own and submit to it, as a rule in the hand of the Mediator.” *Matthew Henry’s Concise Commentary*

“In these verses the positive exposition of the righteousness of God as offered to faith through the redemption in Christ Jesus, is concluded. The Apostle points out two inferences which can be drawn from it, and which go to commend it to religious minds. The first is, that it excludes boasting. A religious constitution under which men could make claims, or assume anything, in the presence of God, must necessarily be false; it is at least one mark of truth in the Christian doctrine of justification that by it such presumption is made impossible. The second is, that in its universality and its sameness for all men, it is consistent with (as indeed it flows from) the unity of God. There can be no step-children in the family of God; a system which teaches that there are, like that current

among the Jews, must be wrong; a system like the Christian, which excludes such an idea, is at least so far right. In Romans 3:31 an objection is raised. The whole system just expounded may be said to make Law void—to stultify and disannul all that has ever been regarded as in possession of Divine moral authority in the world. In reality, the Apostle answers in a word, its effect is precisely the reverse: it establishes law." *Expositor's Greek Testament*

"Therefore we conclude,.... This is the conclusion from the premises, the sum total of the whole account: that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. The subject of justification is, "man", not in opposition to angels; nor does it design the Jew against the Gentile, though some have so thought; but the apostle names neither Jew nor Gentile, but "man", to show that Christ's righteousness is unto all, and every man, that believes, be he who he will; and is to be understood indefinitely, that every man that is justified is justified by faith. The means is "by faith", not habitually or actually considered; that is, either as an habit and principle infused into us, or as an act performed by us; but either organically, as it is a means of receiving Christ's righteousness; or objectively, as it denotes Christ the object of it: and all this is done "without works", of any sort; not by a faith which is without works, for such a faith is dead, and of no avail; but by faith without works joined to it, in the affair of justification; or by the righteousness of Christ imputed by God the Father, without any consideration of them, and received by faith, and relied upon by the believer, without any regard unto them." *Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*

In Our Next Romans Ebook

Paul is not done making his case for the "law of faith." In the next part of our study we'll see how Paul used the lives of two of Israel's best known leaders to help make his case.

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