

## THE BOOK OF ROMANS

### Chapter 3:21-26

Romans 3:21-26

Comments on Romans 3:21-26

**ONE POINT ESTABLISHED** -- In the portion of the letter that we have considered, Paul showed that the Gentile, while relying upon natural law as his human wisdom interpreted it, had plunged into all sorts of sin. He had not even lived up to the law of nature. Paul also showed that the Jew, instead of living up to the demands of the law of Moses so as to be justified by it, had so transgressed the law as to be condemned by it. All, both Jews and Gentiles, were condemned sinners, and were lost, unless some plan could be presented that would make righteous men out of sinners. The law would justify a man, if he kept it perfectly; but it could not justify one after he had transgressed the law.

3:21 - 5:11 - Righteousness is God's gift received by faith.

3:21-31 - Apart from the law a righteousness has been revealed. Paul has just concluded that ALL men have come under the condemnation of sin because they could not justify themselves in the sight of the law. That whole section spoke of condemnation. The section we now begin speaks of justification. The former section told of the need or the problem. This section speaks of the remedy or the solution.

Compare with 1 Cor. 1:19, 20; John 9:25.

Amazing grace how sweet the sound

That saved a wretch like me.

I once was lost but now I'm found,

Was blind but now I see.

See also, Rom. 6:22; 7:6; 16:26; Gal 3:25; Eph. 2:13; Col. 1:26; 2 Tim. 1:9,10; 1 Pet. 2:9,10.

vv. 21-31 - The righteousness of God, manifested in Christ and apprehended by faith, is the sole remedy and available for all.

21 But now apart from the law a righteousness of God hath been manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;

v. 21 – This statement begins a rich section. Note some of the characteristics Paul gives of the righteousness that he asserts. It is:

1. “Manifested,” 3:21;
2. “Of God,” 3:21, 28;
3. “Witnessed by the law and the prophets,” 3:21;
4. “Apart from law,” 3:21, 28;
5. “By faith,” 3:22, 25, 26, 28, 30;
6. “Unto all,” 3:22, 30;
7. “Free,” 3:24;
8. “Purchased,” 3:24;
9. “Just,” 3:24, 25;
10. “Glory excluding,” 3:24, 25;
11. “law establishing,” 3:31.

v. 21 - Manifested is in the perfect tense; it was manifested and is still open to view for all to see. It implies the once-for-all nature of this righteousness – it will never be superceded.

It is manifested “now” (emphatic), that is, at the present time, this very strategic moment in the history of redemption. In Gal. 4:4, Paul calls it the “fullness of time.”

This righteousness, or right standing with God, is “of God,” it is not of man. It is grounded on something God did for man in Christ. It is laid hold on by faith, but it is grounded in a once-for-all life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

It is manifested apart from law – any law. There is no article in the Greek. It is apart from any law – the law of Moses and the law under which the Gentile lived.

Though apart from law, it is not in opposition to the teaching of the law and the prophets, being anticipated by them. It is important for Paul to

anticipated by them. It is important for Paul to establish that this righteousness isn't new or novel. The prophets bore witness to the truth of justification by faith apart from the works of law. Paul makes this assertion with special reference to the Jews. He declares only that which was declared in their own sacred writings. Note that Paul does not say that this plan of righteousness was taught and developed by the law and the prophets, but that they bore witness, gave their testimony, concerning this plan of righteousness that was not, apart from the law, brought to light.

This righteousness of God is through faith to believers. It is not through faith "in faith" or through faith "in obedience." Paul knew "whom" he had believed. Faith has no inherent power to justify. It simply lays hold on him who is able to do so. Obedience has no intrinsic merit. Obedience is the hand that reaches out and lays hold on the gift that was purchased by Another's utter obedience. Rom. 5:19. The problem with the Jew was that he was trusting in his obedience to establish his own righteousness. Rom. 9:31-33.

Romans 4:16 is explicit on this point – it is of faith that it may be of grace. To understand faith as earning or meriting is to make faith equivalent with works of law while Paul goes to great lengths to establish that they are in opposition to each other. See Rom. 11:6.

But even though you can't earn righteousness and even though it is grounded on the once-for-all, non-repeatable work of Christ FOR us and INDEPENDENT of us, yet this righteousness cannot be laid hold on except by a living and abiding faith.

It is an unhappy conclusion of many that obedience is meritorious. It is not. Justification is both conditional and unconditional. It is unconditional when we speak of the GROUND of justification; it is conditional when we speak of the sinner's willing PERMISSION to Christ in order to appropriate the

SUBMISSION to Christ in order to appropriate the gift of justification. There is no merit but in Christ.

Some future kingdom advocates assert that there is no prophecy in the O.T. concerning the gospel plan of salvation. Paul flatly contradicts such teaching when he asserts that the prophets gave witness concerning this plan of righteousness that is now made known. They are not so much speculating about unfulfilled prophecy as they are dislocating prophecy. When they say that the land promise to Abraham has not been fulfilled, that the prophecy concerning the restoration of the Jews has not been fulfilled, that the prophecy of Dan. 2:44 is not fulfilled in the church, that the prophecy that Christ would sit on David's throne has not been fulfilled, they are not speculating about unfulfilled prophecy, they are dislocating prophecy that has been fulfilled to a date future.

Paul asserts that the gospel of God to which he had been separated had been promised by the prophets in the holy scripture. Rom. 1:1-2. Jesus said that it had been written in the prophets that repentance and remission of sin would be preached among all nations beginning at Jerusalem. Luke 24:45-48. The idea that the prophets said not a word about the church age was never heard until some became wiser in their own minds that Christ and the inspired writers.

22 even the righteousness of God through  
faith in Jesus Christ unto all them that  
believe; for there is no distinction;  
23 for all have sinned, and fall short of the  
glory of God;  
24 being justified freely by his grace  
through the redemption that is in Christ  
Jesus:

vv. 22-24 – This righteousness that is apart from the law is attained through faith in Jesus Christ and is for all who believe, for there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile. Both Jew and Gentile need this salvation for they all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

This is a restatement of the theme at which we looked in Rom. 1:16-17. This salvation is granted to all those, but only to those, who put faith into practice.

Some translate “as a gift” as “freely.” It is used in the sense of a gift. It doesn’t mean copiously (though that is true). In Mt. 10:8 Jesus said (twice): “freely ye have received; freely give.” There was no price tag put on what they had received. It had cost them nothing. They were to share it in that way. There is an exclusion of earning or merit. Paul says that we are justified before God although the grounds for that justification are not within us.

The fundamental idea of grace is a gift, given out of the sheer generosity of the giver’s heart, a gift that the receiver could never have earned and could never have deserved by any efforts of his own.

Through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus – Redemption is a ransoming from. It comes from “lutron” which speaks of the price paid for the deliverance of that which is delivered. When first century Greeks heard the word they thought of the purchase-money for manumitting slaves.

Paul learned of this ransom from Christ. Matt. 20:28. The word carries the idea of equivalence; as Jesus spoke (he used the word “anti” that is used to speak of “instead of, in the place of, in exchange for” and such like), he used the concept of substitution. The redemption wasn’t by silver and gold but by the precious blood of Christ. 1 Pet. 1:18-19. Deliverance doesn’t come by working our way out, or inventing our way out, or subverting our way out, or carousing our way out, or thinking our way out, or warring out way out, but by admitting that Christ is the way out! Redemption, like everything else that is worth having, is “in Christ Jesus.” Grace was given us before times eternal “in Christ Jesus.” 2 Tim. 1:9. All spiritual blessings heaven has to bestow upon us are “in Christ Jesus.” Eph. 1:3. God’s choice of mankind, in eternity, was “in Him” [Christ Jesus]. Eph. 1:4.

“Outside” of Christ God thought no thoughts that we know anything about. “Outside” of Christ God acted no acts that we know anything about. Paul’s constant theme is “in Christ ”

constant theme is "in Christ."

**NO DISTINCTION** -- God had chosen Abraham and his seed for a special purpose. The Jews had failed to grasp God's purpose; they thought of Jehovah as their God, and no one else's. In their thinking he was a tribal, or national, God. It took a special miracle to convince Peter that Jehovah was the God of any but the Jews. To correct this deep-seated idea among the Jews, Paul frequently reminded the Jewish Christians that now there was no distinction between Jews and Gentiles. Some of the Jewish Christians never did get over that tribal idea, and drifted into a sect known as Ebionites.

Let us read Rom. 3:21-24, leaving out an apparent parenthetical expression: "But now apart from the law a righteousness of God hath been manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ unto all them that believe;...being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." To justify a person is to declare him free from guilt. Law cannot declare a person just, or free from guilt, if he had violated it in only one point. Justification by law was impossible, for all sinned. But apart from the law, a plan of righteousness had been revealed. The apostle tells us that this justification is free; and he further emphasized the fact that it is free by adding that it is by grace. It is bestowed gratuitously. It is not arrived at by merit, but comes by grace. And it is by faith. By the term "faith" Paul means all that is implied in accepting Jesus Christ as our Savior, Prophet, Priest and King. This will later be discussed more fully. The justification that is offered apart from the law is also through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, or by Christ Jesus. It is by what he did that we have redemption.

**SOME TERMS DEFINED:** -- Well to study here some words that Paul uses. It stands to reason that no one can understand a passage of Scripture unless he understands the words of the passage. In

he understands the words of the passage. In studying these words we shall consider only those meanings that relate to the salvation of sinners.

**JUSTIFY** -- To justify a person is to pronounce him just, or righteous; to declare him not guilty. Of course, if a person kept the law perfectly, he would be justified; he would be declared not guilty. If God forgives a sinner, there is then nothing against him. He is free from guilt - he is as righteous as if he had never sinned.

**GRACE** -- Grace is favor. It is a benefit bestowed without pay -- the gratuitous bestowal of a thing that a person needs. The sinner needs forgiveness -- needs to be righteous. Only through God's grace is it possible for a sinner to be forgiven, or to be justified. No matter how many things he may be required to do as conditions of forgiveness, it does not destroy the fact that, on God's part, his forgiveness and justification are wholly of grace. No amount of works will destroy the fact that forgiveness is by grace.

**REDEEMER** -- A redeemer is one who rescues another from bondage, or liberates another from any condition wherein he is held. Jesus redeems us from the bondage of sin and from the power of the devil. He is our only Redeemer.

**RANSOM** -- Ransom is the price for redeeming. Jesus came to "give his life a ransom for many." Matt. 20:28; Mk. 10:45. Hence, he became that which is given in exchange for another as the price of his redemption. I Tim. 2:6. "Christ died for the ungodly." Rom. 5:6. "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a people for his own possession, zealous of good works." Tit. 2:14.

**REDEMPTION** -- Redemption is the act of redeeming. Christ is called "redemption" because the whole process of redemption is centered in him. I Cor. 1:30. Jesus is our redeemer -- no one else can rescue us from the bondage of sin. He is also our Ransom, for he was the price paid for our redemption. And in him God graciously provided a means by which sinners can be justified. The one that is in connection with Christ.

25 whom God set forth *to be* a propitiation, through faith, in his blood, to show his righteousness because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God;

26 for the showing, *I say*, of his righteousness at this present season: that he might himself be just, and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus.

vv. 25, 26 – God publicly exhibited him. Some translations use “propitiation,” others “atonement,” some “mercy seat.” To propitiate is to appease, to render favorable. Thayer speaks of “relating to appeasing or expiating, having placating or expiating force.” The big question is whether it is of a place or propitiation or a propitiatory thing. Some seek to avoid the concept of appeasing God’s wrath, but whether Christ is the thing (person) that avoids wrath or the place where wrath is avoided, wrath is still avoided.

Was Christ’s death an “appeasing” death or merely an “expiatory” death? The expiation school removes the wrath of God and claims the appeasement view is pagan and no like the God manifested in Jesus Christ.

There can be no forgiveness without repentance of sin. There can be no repentance of sin unless some manifestation of sin’s ugliness be made known; unless sin be recognized for the abomination that it is. How bad is sin? Bad enough to attack God himself. The cross is sin’s finest hour. Sin reached a new low right at the very spot where grace was reaching a new high and love was making it highest appeal. To repent requires that we adopt a changed mind about sin. But sin could not be seen to be sin until the cross. That is, it’s only at the cross that the depth of sin’s depravity is made clear. God’s view of sin wasn’t understood at its deeper level until the cross.

If Christ was only a man then sin’s crime here at the cross was to slay a fine man, the finest man; but only a man. But Christ was God manifest in flesh and the crime committed by “ordinary” sins was a crime against God himself. Satisfaction is found only in Christ because we have in Christ’s death God’s word against sin and our unholy work of sin. The death of Christ enables God to set aside his judicial wrath against us without setting holiness aside or making light of his law



aside or making light of his law.

The difference between expiation and propitiation is that one sees wrath in God and the other doesn't. The appeasement view speaks of both truths that the wrath of God is averted and the sins of mankind are covered by the blood of Christ.

God did this "to show his righteousness." God "passed over" sins aforesaid. Did he just ignore them? If so, why is He making such a big deal of sin now? He did not treat them casually. He passed over them in light of the coming sacrifice. God's justifying of us must itself be just. It would hardly do for God to free us from our unholiness and unrighteousness by an unrighteous procedure. Abraham said, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?"