

ROMANS 3:21-31 – The Righteousness of God Through Faith in Christ

1) Outline the passage. What are its main idea and key themes?

2) How does this passage fit within the broader argument of Romans?

3) According to v. 21, how has the righteousness of God been manifested *now*? What does this mean? How is this significant?

4) What do the Law and the Prophets bear witness to? In light of this, how should we understand and apply the Old Testament?

5) How do we obtain God's righteousness? Why is it so crucial for us to understand this?

6) Why does Paul add "for *all* who believe"? Why does everyone need God's righteousness and why can it be attained only through faith in Christ? How does this help to lay the foundation for Christian unity?

7) According to v. 24, how are we justified? What implications does being redeemed through Jesus Christ have for us?

Digging Deeper: What is Justification?

(Adapted from Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 722ff.)

Justification is an instantaneous legal act of God in which he (1) thinks of our sins as forgiven and Christ's righteousness as belonging to us, and (2) declares us to be righteous in his sight.

A. Justification includes a legal declaration by God

- Romans 3:20, 26, 28; 5:1; 8:30; 10:4, 10; Galatians 2:16; 3:24
- It is important to emphasize that this legal declaration in itself does not change our internal nature or character at all. In this sense of "justify", God issues a legal declaration about us. This is particularly evident in Romans 4:5. Here Paul cannot mean that God "makes the ungodly to be righteous" (by changing them internally and making them morally perfect), for then they would have merit or works of their own to depend on. Rather, he means that God declares the ungodly to be righteous in his sight, not on the basis of their good works but in response to their faith.

B. God declares us to be just in his sight

- First, it means that he declares that we have no penalty to pay for sin, including past, present, and future sins (Rom. 8:1, 33-34).
- Second, it means that we have the merits of perfect righteousness before God (Rom. 3:21-22; 4:3).

C. God can declare us to be just because he imputes Christ's righteousness to us

- This means that God reckons Christ's righteousness to our account. He counts us righteous, because he thinks of Christ's righteousness as *belonging to us* (Rom. 5:17; 1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:9).

D. Justification comes to us entirely by God's grace, not on account of any merit in ourselves

- We are justified by God's grace as a gift (Rom. 3:23-24; Eph. 2:8-9; Tit. 3:7)
- God did not have any obligation to impute our sin to Christ or to impute Christ's righteousness to us; it was only because of his unmerited favor that he did this.

E. God justifies us through our faith in Christ

- Justification comes after saving faith in Christ (Gal. 2:16).
- But Scripture never says that we are justified because of the inherent goodness of our faith, as if our faith has merit before God. Faith is the *instrument* through which the merits of Christ are given to us. We are justified *solely* on the basis of Christ's work and his righteousness.

8) How is God the Father involved in our redemption (v. 25a)? What does it mean to say that Christ was a “propitiation by his blood”? [Note: NIV translates it as “sacrifice of atonement”]

Digging Deeper: The OT sacrifices and Jesus Christ

In v. 25, Paul uses several key terms that are used in the OT to denote the tabernacle/temple and its sacrifices. The word translated “propitiation” denotes the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies (eg. Exod. 25:17-22; 35:12; 38:5, 7-8; Lev. 16:2, 13-15; Num 7:89). The word translated “put forward” or “presented” alludes to the setting out of showbread in the tabernacle/temple. The reference to “blood” in v. 25 is associated with the Levitical sacrifices, especially with respect to the forgiveness of sins. In using terminology from the Day of Atonement (cf. Lev. 16), Paul is making the point that the OT sacrifices cannot bring forgiveness, because all along they simply foreshadowed the forgiveness effected through Jesus. God looked ahead to the death of Jesus as the true sacrifice for sins. Those who revert to the law for righteousness will be disappointed because the atonement provided in the law does not really forgive. Only Jesus’ death satisfies God’s wrath.

9) What does the cross of Christ demonstrate (v. 25b-26)? What is the significance of this?

10) According to vv. 27-31, what are the implications of the cross? What implications/applications does this have *for us*?

11) Based on what we have learned from Romans 1-3, how would we explain the gospel to others?

GOD:

MAN:

CHRIST:

RESPONSE:

OUTLINE OF ROMANS

I. Introduction (1:1-17)

- A. Salutation (1:1-7)
- B. Thanksgiving (1:8-15)
- C. Statement of theme (1:16-17)

II. The Heart of the Gospel: Justification by Faith (1:18-4:25)

- A. The universal reign of sin (1:18-3:20)
- B. Justification by faith (3:21-4:25)

III. The Assurance Provided by the Gospel: The Hope of Salvation (5:1-8:39)

- A. The hope of glory (5:1-21)
- B. Freedom from bondage to sin (6:1-23)
- C. Freedom from bondage to the law (7:1-25)
- D. Assurance of eternal life in the Spirit (8:1-30)
- E. The believer's security celebrated (8:31-39)

IV. The Defense of the Gospel: The Problem of Israel (9:1-11:36)

- A. Introduction: The tension between God's promises and Israel's plight (9:1-5)
- B. Defining the promise: (1) God's sovereign election (9:6-29)
- C. Understanding Israel's plight: Christ as the climax of salvation history (9:30-10:21)
- D. Summary: Israel, the "elect", and the "hardened" (11:1-10)
- E. Defining the promise (2): The future of Israel (11:11-32)
- F. Conclusion: Praise to God in light of his awesome plan (11:33-36)

V. The Transforming Power of the Gospel: Christian Conduct (12:1-15:13)

- A. The heart of the matter: Total transformation (12:1-2)
- B. Humility and mutual service (12:3-8)
- C. Love and its manifestations (12:9-21)
- D. The Christian and secular rulers (13:1-7)
- E. Love and the law (13:8-10)
- F. Living in light of the day (13:11-14)
- G. A plea for unity (14:1-15:13)

VI. The Letter Closing (15:14-16:27)

- A. Paul's ministry and travel plans (15:14-33)
- B. Greetings (16:1-23)
- C. Concluding doxology (16:25-27)