

Jews might be stopped. The essence of the final phrase is that the entire world is guilty before God. That includes not only the gentile, but also the Jew.

3:20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

Paul makes an astute legal observation. A law is not the means of justifying anyone. It rather is the legal instrument for condemning one. The Jews looked to their law as their means of justification (i.e., salvation). However, “by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.” A statute defines a crime and specifies its penalty. It becomes the definition of a crime (i.e., sin). A statute by its very nature is not the instrument for adjudication. It merely defines the precise information of the crime (i.e., sin). Thereby, one might have greater knowledge of the offense (i.e., sin).

For example, one may be breaking an ordinance and not be aware of it. However, a code-enforcement officer arrives and reads the statute to the offending citizen. The citizen was guilty all along. However, by now reading the statute, he has been made aware of his transgression. The law became the instrument to inform him of his offense.

The point Paul is beginning to develop is that the Jew thought the Law of Moses was their means of justification (i.e., salvation). However, it in fact was the instrument by which they were condemned.

3:21 But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets.

Having established that there are none righteous and that the law is merely the standard by which sin is defined, the apostle now proceeds to present God’s solution for man’s guilt. He

introduces a thought which was alien to many an orthodox, Jewish mind.

The righteousness of God is available *apart* from the Law (of Moses). Furthermore, that righteousness was “witnessed by the law and the prophets.” Rather than being the means of being made righteous, the Law and the Prophets (i.e., the Old Testament) actually testified of righteousness apart from law. (That witness will be presented in chapter 4.) The simple point is that the ultimate level of righteousness was available (and exclusively so) apart from keeping the Law. It was there in their revered Old Testament Scripture for all to see.

3:22 Even the righteousness of God *which* is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe. For the fourth time in Romans, Paul uses the phrase “the righteousness of God.” It is the ultimate degree of righteousness, having the same level of righteousness as God Himself. That righteousness is not by trying to keep the Law. Rather, it is by faith in Jesus Christ. The phrase “by faith of Jesus Christ” could literally be rendered, ‘through faith in Jesus Christ.’ Moreover, this righteousness of God is available **unto all and upon all them that believe**. Recall how Paul is developing the idea that salvation (achieving the righteousness of God) was available for both Jew and gentile and the means for both is the same. **For there is no difference**. Both Jew and gentile alike are guilty before God as was richly developed in the preceding portion of the book.

3:23 There is therefore no difference for either Jew or gentile. **For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God**. The first phrase has been amply evidenced. However, he adds another area of testimony in that sinful mankind has “come short of the glory of God.” That shortfall is in two areas. (1) We were created in the image of God. Yet, from the entrance of sin

and its darkness, we have fallen far short of our Creator's glory. (2) God is righteous. That is manifoldly demonstrated throughout the Scripture. Yet, because of the corrupting presence of sin, we have fallen far short of His righteousness and hence His glory. Therefore in concise fashion, the apostle summarizes in verse 23 the indictment against humanity—for Jew and gentile alike.

3:24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. The righteousness of God referred to in verses 21 and 22 is now developed fully. (It is noteworthy that the terms, *righteous* {δικαιος *dikaios*}, *righteousness* {δικαιοσύνη *dikaiosune*}, and *justified* {δικαιωω *dikaioo*} are all very closely related. They all relate to the simple concept of 'right.') The "being justified" here is a continuation of the previous idea of the righteousness of God. In being justified, we are being provided the very righteousness of God Himself. Moreover, it is offered "freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

Mountain peak truths are being set forth. That righteousness of God is offered **freely**. The word so translated (*δωρεαν dorean*) has the sense of 'freely and undeserved.' Our justification is not only free, but it is truly undeserved. The basis for such a gift is "his grace." Apart from the brief allusion to God's grace in the introduction to the epistle (1:7), this is the first substantive mention of it in Romans. Our salvation (i.e., justification) is by His grace (His goodness and kindness). Furthermore, it is "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Another major facet of salvation emerges. *Redemption* was the practice in earlier times whereby a slave could be set at liberty through the payment of a liberating ransom. The ransom which has purchased our redemption is none other than the precious blood of Christ. See I Peter 1:18-19. That blessed truth emerges in the next verse, but clearly is implied here.

3:25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.

(More major truth is touched upon.) The *whom* of course clearly is Christ Jesus. Though the following is not easily understood by the gentile mind, it surely rang a bell with Paul's Jewish readers. The context of the illustration goes back to the Day of Atonement in the book of Leviticus and the blood of the sin offering applied to the mercy seat that day. In Leviticus 16:11-14, it is described how the high priest was to take the blood of the slain sin offerings and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat on the annual Day of Atonement. In so doing, God was *propitiated*. The idea is that God, in accepting the shed blood of the innocent sacrificial animal, was satisfied.

The word translated as **propitiation** (ἱλαστηριον *hilasterion*) refers to the shed blood of the sacrifice of the sin offering. God accepted it as an atonement for the sin of the people. Therefore, Paul points out that God has set forth Christ "to be a propitiation through faith in his blood." He, our sinless sin-offering, shed His precious blood and God has accepted it as the supreme sacrifice for our sin. As we trust His shed blood, God is propitiated. His righteous demand for justice has been satisfied. The shed blood of Christ has satisfied His demand for the judgment of sin. Therefore, as we trust that precious blood, God is propitiated (satisfied) with us because of Christ's shed blood.

In so doing, God has declared "his righteousness for the remission of sin that are past." Several major truths are in view. First, God has been not only merciful, but also *just* in forgiving the sins of His people *prior* to Calvary. What is in view is the basis of salvation for the Old Testament saint. Though they may have offered various animal sacrifices, the real basis for their forgiveness was the shed blood of Christ on the cross. They may not have understood that, nevertheless, the shed blood of Christ

is the ultimate basis for the salvation of all men from Adam onward. Underpinning the mercy of God is His justice. The sacrifice of Christ, as our sinless substitute, has provided a just basis for God to save all who will trust Him.

Moreover, the word translated as **remission** (παρεσις *paresis*) literally means a ‘passing over’ and may be an allusion to Christ as our passover. Once again, this must have rung a bell in the Jewish mind. It all is “through the forbearance of God.” The idea is of God’s patience in waiting for the fulfillment of Christ’s sacrifice in granting salvation to the Old Testament saint prior to Christ’s work.

3:26 To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Moreover, all of this is being developed “to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness.” As in verse 25, Paul goes to length to point out the justice of God in *how* and on *what basis* our justification has been established. The word translated as **declare** (ενδειξις *endeixis*) has the idea to ‘demonstrate.’ God has demonstrated the just basis of our salvation through the sacrificial work of Christ. (Part of the problem of the self-righteous Jew was that he could not understand the basis by which God could, in His grace, save a person on the simple basis of faith.) That is what Paul is here addressing. He is demonstrating not only the grace of God, but also the *just* basis of salvation by faith. “That he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”

God, therefore, has demonstrated that in saving us by faith, (1) He Himself is just even as (2) He is the One who is justifying us. (The principle of imputed righteousness about to be developed in chapter 4 is just beneath the surface here.) In being justified, it is evident someone justified us. To be justified means to be declared righteous. In the greater flow of the context, not only have we been declared righteous in spite of our

obvious guilt, we also have received the very righteousness of God. Hence, by trusting in the blood which has propitiated God's just demands against sin, He has shown Himself to be not only just, but also the One justifying us.

3:27 Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. The obvious is stated. "Where is boasting then? It is excluded." The self-righteous Jews of Paul's day were prone to boastful thinking that they were better than the hapless gentile. But the fact our righteousness has been bestowed by God, it therefore has nothing to do with any merit on our part. It shows there is no basis for a boastful self-righteous attitude. Paul in effect then poses the question, 'On what basis?' That is the sense of the question, "by what law?" (Here, as in other places in Romans, the Apostle uses the word *law* in its generic sense as a principle.) He answers his own question. The basis for the exclusion of a self-righteous boastful attitude is the *law* (or principle) "of faith." If we are trusting in *Another* for our righteousness, then there is no basis for a boastful spirit on our part.

3:28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. The conclusion therefore is, "a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." The obvious verdict is that we are justified by faith (in Christ) apart from any principle of law. There is no article preceding *law* in the Received Text. The idea once again is the greater *principle* of law in distinction to *the* Law of Moses. However, the point simply is that justification by faith is independent of any law.

3:29-30 Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: 30 Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.

He begins his conclusion of this section by several rhetorical questions. “Is he the God of the Jews only?” The answer is obvious. God is over all. Therefore, “is he not also of the Gentiles?” Again the answer is obvious, “Yes, of the Gentiles also.” There is one God and He is over both Jew and gentile. Therefore, that same God will justify “the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.” God will justify both Jew and gentile by faith. (A technical distinction is worth noting. The word translated as **by** is {εκ} *ek* and here has the sense here of ‘springing out of’ faith. The word **through** is {δια} *dia* and has the sense of gentiles being justified *through* faith.)

3:31 Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law. To preempt the question of the still unconvinced Jew, the Apostle poses another rhetorical question. “Do we then make void the law through faith?” That is, are we abolishing or abrogating the principle of law (again, there is no article in the text prior to *law*) by the faith (the article is present with faith)? The gospel does not destroy the law, but rather fulfills it. See Matthew 5:17. Therefore, Paul in fact was establishing the law by its fulfilling in Christ.

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Overview of Romans 4: In the development of Romans, Paul has clearly presented the charges pending against the human race—all the world is guilty before God, both Jew and gentile. He also has shown how God has provided righteousness for lost mankind in Christ. Now, in chapter 4, the Apostle develops more fully how that righteousness is received—by faith in Christ. Once again, Paul is appealing to the Jewish mindset in the early church. He therefore refers to the Old