

Set Right By Grace

Rom 3:21-30

SS Lesson for 07/17/2016

Devotional Scripture: Eph 2:1-7

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Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary

Commentary from The Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

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From the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

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Introduction

Overview and Key Verse of the Lesson

The lesson establishes that all mankind can be **Set Right By Grace**. The **study's aim** is to see how God can be just and right and still justify the believing sinner. The **study's application** is to know that we live by faith and the grace of God and not through law and works.

(Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary)

Key Verse: Rom 3:23-24

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

Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary

In God's condemnation of the human race His own personal infinite righteousness was revealed along with the fact that not a single human being—the Lord Jesus Christ excepted—has ever or will ever be able to meet that standard and be accepted by God on his own merit. Now in this second major section of Romans Paul discussed God's "provided righteousness" for people through Jesus in justification. Justification is a forensic declaration of righteousness as a result of God's imputing to believers Christ's righteousness, provided by God's grace and appropriated through faith.

3:21. By the words **but now** Paul introduced a sharp contrast with what preceded. He had just affirmed, "No one will be declared righteous in His [God's] sight by observing the Law" (v. 20). This is now followed by the statement, **Apart from Law** (in the Gr. this phrase is in the emphatic first position) **a righteousness from God... has been made known** (i.e., made plain). This in essence repeats the words of 1:17a. But Paul added the fact that **the Law and the Prophets testify** to this fact. What Paul was introducing about God's righteousness was not foreign to the Old Testament. "The Law and the Prophets" was often used of the entire Old Testament (see references at Matt. 5:17), the Law referring to the first five books and the Prophets, the other books. In Romans 4 Paul illustrated this truth from the Law (Abraham: Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:1-3, 9-23) and from the Prophets (David: Ps. 32:1-2; Rom. 4:4-8).

3:22. The first part of this verse is not a new sentence in the Greek; it is an appositional clause, and could be rendered, "a righteousness from God **through faith.**" These words reminded Paul again of the Jewish insistence on their special position before God. As a result he added, **There is no difference** (cf. 10:12), introduced in the Greek by the word "for" to tie it to what precedes. Any prior privilege the Jews had is gone in this Age when God is offering a righteous standing before Him to all sinful people on the basis of faith in Christ alone. Since all are "under sin" (3:9), salvation is available "to all" on an equal basis.

3:23. Paul explained that "no difference" existed among human beings because **all have sinned**. The Greek is literally, "all sinned" (*pantes hēmarton*). The same two Greek words are used in 5:12. Since the entire human race was plunged into sin with Adam, all (whether Jews or Gentiles) are sinners. It is impossible to say there is a "difference," that the Jews' privileges (2:12-21; 3:1) exclude them from God's condemnation. Not only did all sin, but also all **fall short**. This single Greek verb is in the present tense, stressing continuing action. It can be translated "keep on falling short." The simple fact is that as a sinner not a single human being by his own efforts is able to measure up to **the glory of God**. God's glory is His splendor, the outward manifestation of His attributes. God desires that humans share that splendor, that they become like Him, that is, Christlike (cf. "glory" in 5:2; 2 Cor. 3:18; Col. 1:27; 2 Thes. 2:14). Yet their sin keeps them from sharing it.

3:24. In view of man's sin God has stepped in with His provided righteousness, because all who believe **are justified** (the pres. tense may be trans. "keep on being declared righteous," i.e., each person as he believes is justified). "Justify" (*dikaioō*) is a legal term, meaning "declare righteous" (not "make righteous"; cf. Deut. 25:1). See Romans 1:17 on Paul's frequent use of this verb and its related noun "righteousness."

God's justification of those who believe is provided **freely** (*dōrean*, "as a free gift," i.e., without charge) **by His grace**. God justifies by the instrument of His grace, His unmerited favor. Grace too is a favorite word

of Paul's, used by him in Romans 24 times (in the Gr.). But God would not declare a person righteous without an objective basis, without dealing with his sin. That basis is **the redemption that came by Christ Jesus**. The Greek word for "redemption" is *apolytrōsis*, from *lytron*, "a ransom payment." *Apolytrōsis* is used 10 times in the New Testament (Luke 21:28; Rom. 3:24; 8:23; 1 Cor. 1:30; Eph. 1:7, 14; 4:30; Col. 1:14; Heb. 9:15). (See the chart, "New Testament Words for Redemption" at Mark 10:45.) The death of Christ on the cross of Calvary was the price of payment for human sin which secured release from the bondage of Satan and sin for every person who trusts God's promise of forgiveness and salvation.

3:25a. God presented Him, Christ, as a Sacrifice of atonement. The Greek word for "Sacrifice of atonement" is *hilastērion*, rendered "propitiation" in the KJV and the NASB. This noun is used elsewhere in the New Testament only in Hebrews 9:5 for the mercy seat (NIV, "the place of atonement") of the tabernacle's ark of the covenant. There a goat's blood was sprinkled on the Day of Atonement to cover (atone) Israel's sins (Lev. 16:15), and satisfy God for another year. Jesus' death is the final sacrifice which completely satisfied God's demands against sinful people, thus averting His wrath from those who believe. (The verb *hilaskomai*, "to satisfy by a sacrifice, to propitiate," is used in Luke 18:13 ["have mercy"] and Heb. 2:17 ["make atonement"]. And the related noun, *hilasmos*, "propitiation," appears in 1 John 2:2; 4:10.) Christ, God's propitiatory Sacrifice for sin, was "presented" (lit., "set forth"), in contrast with the tabernacle's mercy seat which was hidden from view. This work of Christ is **through faith in His blood** (cf. Rom. 5:9). It is appropriated by faith (cf. 3:22). By the death of Jesus and the shedding of His blood the penalty for sin has been paid and God has been satisfied or propitiated. The phrase "in (or by) His blood" probably should go with "a sacrifice of atonement," not with "through faith." A believer places His faith in Christ, not in His blood as such.

3:25b-26. God's purpose in Christ's death was **to demonstrate His justice** (i.e., God's own judicial righteousness, *dikaiosynēs*; cf. 1:17) **because in His forbearance** (*anochē*, "holding back, delay") **He had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished** (cf. Acts 17:30). Why did God not always punish sins in the past? Does this mean He is not righteous after all? Previously Paul said God was forbearing because He wanted to lead people to repent (Rom. 2:4). Here God is said to be forbearing because He anticipated His provision for sins in the death of Jesus Christ. Such forbearance was an evidence of His grace (cf. Acts 14:16; 17:30), not of His injustice. Paul was so insistent that God's righteousness be recognized that (Rom. 3:26) he repeated (from v. 25) the words **to demonstrate His justice** (*dikaiosynēs*, "righteousness"). God's purpose in the redemptive and propitiatory death of Jesus Christ was so that He could **be seen to be just** (*dikaion*, "righteous") **and the One who justifies** (*dikaionta*, "the One who declares righteous") **the man who has faith in Jesus**. God's divine dilemma was how to satisfy His own righteousness and its demands against sinful people, and at the same time how to demonstrate His grace, love, and mercy to restore rebellious, alienated creatures to Himself. The solution was the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, God's incarnate Son, and the acceptance by faith of that provision by individual sinners. Christ's death vindicated God's own righteousness (He is just because sin was "paid for") and enables God to declare every believing sinner righteous.

3:27-28. After explaining God's provided righteousness for sinners, Paul considered five questions (in Gr.) which he anticipated his readers might ask. Two are in verse 27, two in verse 29, and the other in verse 31. The first is, **Where, then is boasting?** How can Jews have any boasting in their special position? (2:17-20, 23) Paul's response was abrupt: **It is excluded** ("completely shut out"). Since justification is by grace (3:24) through faith (vv. 22, 25-26), boasting because of one's accomplishments (works) is ruled out. This prompted a second question: **On what principle?** ("Law" here in the Gr. means "principle.") **On that of observing the Law?** (lit., "through works") Paul's response was, **No** (lit., "not at all," an intensive form), **but on that of faith**. Doing works (i.e., observing the Law) is no basis for boasting for the Law cannot justify. It was not given for that purpose (cf. v. 20). The apostle then summarized, **For we maintain** (the verb *logizometha*, "to reckon," here has the idea of coming to a settled conclusion) **that a man is justified** ("declared righteous") **by faith** (cf. vv. 22, 25-27) **apart from observing the Law** (lit., "apart from works of Law").

3:29-30. The next two questions cover the same issue of Jewish distinctiveness from a different angle. Because the Gentiles worshiped false gods through idols, the Jews concluded that Yahweh, the true and living God (Jer. 10:10), was **the God of Jews only**. That was true in the sense that the Jews were the only people who acknowledged and worshiped Yahweh (except for a few proselyte Gentiles who joined with Judaism). But in reality Yahweh, as the Creator and Sovereign of all people, is the God of all people.

Before God called Abraham and his descendants in the nation Israel to be His Chosen People (Deut. 7:6) God dealt equally with all people. And even after God's choice of Israel to be His special people, God made it plain (e.g., in the Book of Jonah) that He is **the God of everyone, Gentiles as well as Jews**. And now since there is "no difference" among people for all are sinners (Rom. 3:23) and since the basis for salvation has been provided in the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ, God deals with everyone on the same basis. Thus **there is only one God** (or "God is one"). Paul no doubt had in mind here the "Shema" of Israel: "Hear, O Israel: The LORD [*Yahweh*] our God [*'Elōhm*], the LORD [*Yahweh*] is One" (Deut. 6:4). This one God over both Jews and Gentiles **will justify** all who come to Him regardless of background (**circumcised or uncircumcised**) on the **same** human condition of **faith**.

3:31. The final question is, **Do we, then, nullify the Law by this faith?** Paul responded in his characteristic expletive, **Not at all!** (*mē genoito*, "Let it not be"; v. 4) and then explained, **Rather, we uphold the Law.** The purpose of the Mosaic Law is fulfilled and its place in God's total plan is confirmed when it leads an individual to faith in Jesus Christ (cf. v. 20; Gal. 3:23-25). Paul repeatedly affirmed that faith, not works of the Law, is the way of salvation. He wrote the word "faith" eight times in Romans 3:22-31! (See vv. 22, 25-28, 30 [twice], and 31.)

Commentary from The Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

This text is set up in a problem/solution format. Thankfully, God's solution to our problem is more than sufficient. What is the problem? In a word, it is sin. It is looked at from a couple of different ways in the text. First, sin involves all of us. All have sinned. Since the Fall of Adam and Eve, no one has lived a perfectly sinless life. The whole human family is in the same boat as far as God is concerned. Here on earth, we have various ways of comparing the relative goodness and badness of our fellow human beings, and that can be helpful in some cases; but all of that is irrelevant for the purposes of God and salvation. All have sinned. All have the same problem. Next, we see that sin causes us to fall short of God's glory. The meaning of "to fall short" is a simple one: "to not have enough." It is sometimes used of poverty. It focuses on what is lacking. We are lacking what is necessary to experience God's glory. The glory of God is a broad term, encompassing all that He is in His eternal and holy nature. I think it probably has a future sense here also; that is, it refers to the future reality of experiencing the glory of God's presence in heaven. Because of sin, we all fall short of experiencing that. We cannot make it back to God. We cannot make it to heaven. We cannot enter into God's presence. In heaven nothing defiled or sinful will be allowed (Rev. 21:27). That is the problem. All have sinned. And our sins keep us from heaven and all the blessings of God's eternal presence and power. This is the most significant problem of the human race, though not everyone recognizes it. So what is the solution? The solution is God's plan and work of redemption, of salvation through grace, and of justification by faith. Let us outline the elements of this plan. First, it involves being justified through faith in Christ. The term "justified" comes out of the legal world—it refers to being declared not guilty. The word has the same root as the word "righteousness." It means to be declared righteous, to achieve a completely righteous standing that is not by works but by God's grace. We can be made righteous only by God's grace. Second, let us also note that salvation is a free gift. It is not earned or purchased. The term "free" is used. We all know what that means. You do not have to pay for it. It is received without payment. This is grace—God's unmerited favor. Through faith in Christ, we are given the righteousness we could never achieve on our own. This is what obliterates the problem of sin and falling short. A third point is that this all flows from Christ's redemption, that is, His purchase of us by His blood. "Redemption" is a broad term that has in the background a commercial transaction, particularly the purchase of bondage. Redemption gives a total picture of God's saving work for a sinner. Only grace can overcome our problem; only grace can make us right for heaven. Thanks be to God for the free and powerful gift of salvation.

Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

The mystery is a popular kind of story. The puzzle at the story's beginning is solved by the detective who discovers all the clues and figures out "whodunit." The story moves to a climax when the mystery is revealed. The problem of evil in the world is arguably the greatest mystery. Why does the world contain so much suffering? Why do human beings seem so persistently wicked? Skeptics wonder if there is a God, one who is good and powerful, then why does he allow such things to go on? Yet if God were to end evil in the world, would he not have to destroy evil humanity (compare Genesis 6:5-7)? And in the end, has not every human who knows right from wrong proven to be a participant in the pervasive evil? How could anyone survive God's just

judgment? How can he be merciful and still bring judgment on evil? Today's text makes the bold assertion that through Jesus Christ, God has revealed the solution to that great mystery. In Christ, God has brought his righteous judgment on evil. In Christ, God has made mercy freely available to everyone. In Christ, God has solved the mystery of the ages.

Bringing the opening section of Romans to a climax, our lesson text draws on the important Old Testament theme regarding what it means to belong to God's people. One key concept in this regard is the distinct calling of ancient Israel as God's people. The Old Testament asserts that Israel's God is the only true God, the Creator of all that exists and the world's true sovereign. Why then was he worshipped by only one tiny, insignificant nation? That situation was to be temporary, as explained by God's dealing with Abraham: God promised that through that man all nations would be blessed (Genesis 12:1-3; 22:15-18). Closely related to this promise was the role of God's law in the life of Israel. The Law of Moses was God's gift to Israel distinctly (Exodus 20). While much of the law expressed God's justice and purpose for all peoples, many parts of it expressed specific commands that God gave Israel to express that nation's distinct identity in the world. All peoples—both Gentiles and Jews—were held accountable to laws such as those prohibiting murder and stealing. But only ancient Israel was bound to certain others. This raised a difficult question: When God fulfilled his promise to bless all nations, did that mean that all nations were to become part of Israel and keep Israel's distinct laws, such as circumcision? Or would God receive Gentiles without those markers of Israel's identity? Paul worked to answer this question at the famous Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:5). In the early part of Romans, he labored further to answer it. Today's lesson text picks up where last week's ended.

From the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

It is sometimes hard for us to grasp the concept that faith is not a work that earns a person favor with God. The idea of earning something by working is deeply ingrained in our minds. We may think that simply having faith and believing what God has said is giving God very short change in the bargain of salvation. Yet God does not need our belief in Him to be happy or blessed in some way. He does not need our good works, even evangelism. Nor does He need our praise. We are the ones who benefit from good works, faith, and worship. God has no needs. He is perfectly capable of carrying out all He desires and plans. He is complete and perfect whether or not anyone trusts in Him. Mankind, on the other hand, is completely needy. We have no ability to save ourselves or even to believe in God. Unless He graciously bestows on us the strength and ability to have faith in Christ, we would never believe and be saved (Eph. 2:8). So today we look at how God sets us right by grace. The law God gave to Moses showed His standards for daily conduct and worship. God's demands were possible to achieve on a mechanical level, but unless the sacrifices and other acts of worship were done in faith, they were of no value in spiritually aiding the individual.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Revelation of Righteousness (Rom 3:21-22)

21 But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference;

Righteousness apart from the Law (21)

A righteousness that brings eternal life (Rom 5:21)

21 so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

A righteousness that we have in Jesus (1 Cor 1:30)

30 It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God — that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.

A righteousness that God made through Jesus (2 Cor 5:21)

21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

A righteousness that we have faith and hope in (Gal 5:5)

5 But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope.

Righteousness of God (22)

Righteousness from God that allows knowledge of Jesus (Phil 3:7-9)

7 But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. 8 What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ — the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

Righteousness from being a part of the Kingdom of God (Rom 14:17)

17 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit,

Righteousness from God through the gospel (Rom 1:17)

17 For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith"

Righteousness from God through Jesus taking our sins (2 Cor 5:21)

21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Grace and Righteousness (Rom 3:23-24)

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,

Grace and righteousness because all have sinned (23)

All sinned because there are none who are righteous on earth (Eccl 7:20)

20 There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins.

All sinned because all are under sin (Rom 3:9)

9 What shall we conclude then? Are we any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin.

All sinned because the whole world is a prisoner of sin (Gal 3:22)

22 But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.

All sinned because no one can claim to be without sin (1 John 1:8)

8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

All sinned because sin entered the world through one man (Rom 5:12-13)

12 Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned— 13 for before the law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law.

All sinned because all are slaves to sin (Rom 6:20)

20 When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness.

Need for justification (24)

Justification to fulfill God's promise (Rom 4:16)

16 Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring — not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all.

Justification through faith in Jesus (Gal 2:16)

16 know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.

Justification through faith that is accompanied by works (James 2:24)

24 You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone.

Justification for those who believe in Jesus (Acts 13:39)

39 Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses.

Need for grace (24)

Need for grace because grace reigns over the law (Rom 5:20-21)

20 The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, 21 so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Need for grace because we are under grace not the law (Rom 6:13-18)

13 Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. 14 For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace. 15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! 16 Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey — whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? 17 But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. 18 You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

Need for grace because God has chosen His remnant by grace (Rom 11:5-6)

5 So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. 6 And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.

Need for grace because God makes grace abound in us (2 Cor 9:8)

8 And God is able to make all grace abound in you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

Need for grace because God's grace is sufficient in all things (2 Cor 12:9)

9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.

Need for grace because we are saved by grace (Eph 2:8-9)

8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast.

Declaration of God's Righteousness (Rom 3:25-26)

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,
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.

Righteousness through Jesus' blood (25)

God defined the blood as the atonement vehicle for sins (Lev 17:11)

11 For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life.

Jesus' blood justifies (Rom 5:9)

9 Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!

Jesus' blood reconciles man to God (Col 1:19-20)

19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Blood of the new covenant (Matt 26:28)

28 This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

Blood that brings redemption (Eph 1:7)

7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace

Blood that cleanses our conscience from dead works (Heb 9:14)

14 How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

Blood that brings us near to God (Eph 2:13)

13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.

Righteousness through God's patience (25)

God's patience is manifested through grace (Ps 103:8)

8 The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.

Patience that should lead to our repentance (Rom 2:4)

4 Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?

Patience because God wants all to repent (2 Peter 3:9)

9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

Patience of God to show His wrath (Rom 9:22)

22 What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath--prepared for destruction?

Righteousness judgment (26)

Because God's judgment is based on truth (Rom 2:2)

2 Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth.

Because God judges in righteousness and justice (Ps 9:7-8)

7 The Lord reigns forever; he has established his throne for judgment. 8 He will judge the world in righteousness; he will govern the peoples with justice.

Because God is righteous in all His ways (Ps 145:17)

17 The Lord is righteous in all his ways and loving toward all he has made.

Because God will judge the world through Jesus (Acts 17:31)

31 For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead."

Because God's judgment is right (2 Thess 1:5)

5 All this is evidence that God's judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering.

Faith and Righteousness (Rom 3:27-31)

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

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

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

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

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

Righteousness not by works (27)

Because if God kept a record of works and sins, no one would be saved (Ps 130:3-4)

3 If you, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand? 4 But with you there is forgiveness; therefore you are feared.

Because no one can be justified by works (Acts 13:38-39)

38 "Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. 39 Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses.

Because if by works, there would be no value in faith (Rom 4:13-14)

13 It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith. 14 For if those who live by law are heirs, faith has no value and the promise is worthless,

Because it is only through God's mercy anyone is justified (Titus 3:4-7)

4 But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

Because works of the law never made anyone perfect (Heb 7:18-19)

18 The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless 19 (for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God.

Righteousness is by faith (28)

Righteousness by faith because God's faithfulness cannot be nullified (Rom 3:3)

3 What if some did not have faith? Will their lack of faith nullify God's faithfulness?

Righteousness by faith because it is through faith that God is pleased (Heb 11:6)

6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

Righteousness by faith because it provides hope (Heb 11:1-2)

11 Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. 2 This is what the ancients were commended for.

Righteousness that is lived by faith (Rom 1:17)

17 For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."

Righteousness for all by faith (29-31)

For all because God wants everyone to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9)

9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

For all because God wants all men to be saved (1 Tim 2:1-4)

2 I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone— 2 for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. 3 This is good, and pleases God our Savior, 4 who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

For all because Jesus came to save the lost (Luke 19:10)

10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."

For all because Jesus was sacrificed to justify all men (Rom 5:18)

18 Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men.

For all because God's grace brings salvation before all men (Titus 2:11)

11 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh

The Roman poet Horace, laying down some lines of guidance for writers of tragedies in his day, criticizes those who resort too readily to the device of a *deus ex machina* to solve the knotty problems which have developed in the course of the plot. 'Do not bring a god on to the stage,' he says, 'unless the problem is one that deserves a god to solve it' (*nec deus intersit, nisi dignus vindice nodus inciderit*).

Surely man's problem as Paul summarized it is one that needs God to solve it. James Stifler suggests in his commentary on Romans that there is a 'sigh of relief that can be heard' in the particle 'but' which introduces verse 21. Surely this is the case, for what a relief it is to know that God has provided a solution for man's dilemma of sin.

The dilemma of man is such that he is incapable of releasing himself from the shackles of sin. He must be saved by someone other than himself and by someone who does not suffer from the same malady. One drowning man cannot help another. What man cannot do (provide a righteousness acceptable to God), God has done in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ. This is the good news for which we have waited.

A Preliminary Definition of Righteousness. The righteousness of which Paul writes in verses 21-26 may be defined as: **The gift given to every man who trusts in Jesus Christ which enables him to stand before the Holy God uncondemned and in His favor.** This righteousness of God is described in verses 21-26.

(1) The source of righteousness is God. Paul wrote, "But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets" (Romans 3:21, cf. also v. 22). This righteousness is that which is provided by God and not produced by the efforts of men. It is the righteousness of God.

(2) This righteousness, though not produced by the Law, was promised by it. From this same verse (v. 21), we can see that in one sense this righteousness of God is related to the Old Testament Law and in another it is totally distinct. It is related in that it was predicted in the prophecies of the Old Testament concerning the Person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ. Further, the Old Testament Law is a valid standard of righteousness, so when our Lord came to the earth as a man the Law pronounced Him to be righteous, according to God's standards. Not one charge of sin could be made against our Lord Jesus Christ, according to the Law of the Old Testament (John 8:46).

But this righteousness of God which Paul writes about is completely independent from the Law in that it cannot be attained by men and their futile efforts to satisfy the requirements of the Law. So the righteousness of God comes not from Law-keeping, as the Jews erroneously supposed.

(3) The righteousness of God is retroactive. The righteousness of God is retroactive in that it is sufficient for the sins of men who lived in previous ages. "... This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed" (Romans 3:25). Paul's argument about the retroactivity of God's righteousness subtly undermines the false hope of the Jew in attaining righteousness by Law-keeping. Since the righteousness of God is retroactive and saves those who had faith in God in the Old Testament age, then Law-keeping not only fails in the present age; it has never saved men.

(4) God's righteousness vindicates Himself. Stifler has written, "The chief question in saving man is not how the man may be accounted just, but how God may remain so in forgiving sins."

With reference to God's character under the Old Testament economy, God appeared to 'look the other way' when men sinned. It appeared that God was less than just in dealing decisively with man's sin. When God's wrath was poured out on His Son, Jesus Christ, there was not one shadow of doubt left as to how God felt about sin.

A number of years ago, I was a school teacher with a reputation for being the toughest disciplinarian in school. One woman bus driver at least thought so and brought a couple of boys to my room who had thrown rocks at the bus. I paddled these two boys, but was informed that there was yet one culprit who had not yet been brought to justice, and this lad was the principal's son. I had a long talk with the principal, who implied that perhaps his son should be exempted because he had a glass eye. Since he did not have a glass bottom, I went to his room and paddled him, too. Until this boy was paddled, there was a cloud of suspense which hung over the school. Would Mr. Deffinbaugh paddle the principal's son, or would he make an exception? How quickly the cloud was dispelled with the crack of the paddle.

So it is with God's character. God's character was in question. For hundreds of years, God had passed over sins previously committed. He could not be just and overlook sin forever. Sin must be punished. When the wrath of God was poured out on His own Son, God's righteousness was vindicated once for all. This is not only so in reference to past sins, but also to present sins. God simply cannot overlook sin. If He were to pronounce men righteous without a payment for sin, He would contradict His own character, His holiness and justice. The justice of God demanded a payment for sin. So the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ vindicated God's character by satisfying the requirements of justice and holiness.

(5) The righteousness of God accomplishes man's salvation. The revelation of God's righteousness not only vindicates God, but it saves men. This salvation is described in three dimensions in verses 21-26.

The first term, 'redemption,' in verse 24 describes salvation in terms of the slave-market. Redemption refers to the payment of a purchase price which liberates the captive. When a man went to the slave-market and paid the price of the slave he redeemed the slave. The death of Christ on the cross and the shedding of His blood was the payment of our redemption price. We, just as Israel was redeemed from the slavery of Egypt, have been redeemed from the bondage of sin.

The second term, 'propitiation,' takes us to the temple. This word is used in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) for the 'place of propitiation' or the 'mercy seat' which covered the ark in the Holy of Holies. In this sense our sins have been covered or blotted out by the shed blood of Jesus Christ. But propitiation also conveys the idea of appeasing. God's wrath has been legitimately aroused by man's sin. This wrath has been appeased by the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. God's holy anger has been satisfied in the work of Christ.

The final word, 'justification,' takes us to the courtroom. This is a legal term which means to pronounce righteous. If God were to judge us according to our own righteousness, He would have to declare us as unrighteous and wicked. But when we acknowledge Jesus Christ as our substitute—the One Who died in our place and Who offers His righteousness in place of our wretchedness—then God declares us to be righteous on the basis of the work of Jesus Christ.

By the terminology of the slave-market, the temple and the court room, we see this righteousness of God described in terms of its effect on the believing sinner.

(6) God's righteousness is available to all men, and appropriated by faith. God's righteousness is true to God's character in that it is available to all men without distinction. Just as there is no distinction with God in universally condemning all men as sinners, so God does not show partiality in offering it only to the Jews.

Just as the righteousness of God is not allotted to men on the basis of their race, so it cannot be earned or merited by man. It is given by grace as a free gift: "Being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24). Your salvation is not without cost, for it cost God the death of His Son, but it is without cost to you for there is nothing you could ever do to earn it. The gift of God's righteousness must be accepted by faith, not earned by works: "Even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe ..." (Romans 3:22).

The problem for most people is not that becoming a Christian is too difficult; it is that it is too easy. We want desperately somehow to contribute something to our salvation. But the Word of God tells us that our righteous deeds are like filthy rags in God's sight (Isaiah 64:6). The more we offer our works to God the greater the offense to Him.

What kind of righteousness are you relying on for your eternal salvation? The rags of your own works, or the riches of Christ's merit. You don't have to walk the aisle or raise your hand to become a Christian. All you need to do is acknowledge the wretchedness of your righteousness and trust in the righteousness which Jesus Christ offers in its place—a God-kind of righteousness which results in eternal life. Stop trusting in yourself and lean only on Him. That's the good news of the gospel. Come to think of it, none of Romans 3 is bad news for the Christian.

(Adapted from URL:<https://bible.org/seriespage/5-some-bad-news-and-good-news-romans-3>)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

In the best mystery stories, the audience is uncertain as to how the mystery will be solved until the very end. All the clues are clear, but how they fit together is obscure. When the solution is revealed, a good mystery prompts the audience to express satisfaction with the outcome. "Yes, that makes sense. It had to be that way." The gospel is just such a solution to the mystery discussed in the Introduction. If there is any meaning in the world, there must be a God who demands justice. But if God is just, then we are subject to his judgment because of our

sins. We need a God who is merciful. In Christ, God is both just and justifier, both righteous and merciful. The cross solves the mystery and answers our deepest need.

Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

1. God sent Jesus as the way all men can know His character and way of righteousness (Rom. 3:21)
2. As we rely on Jesus to forgive our sins, He empowers us to live a life that pleases Him (vs. 22)
3. There are no "big" or "small" sins. All sin separates us from God (vs. 23)
4. As we rely on Jesus for forgiveness, He wipes the slate clean as if we had never sinned (vss. 24-26)
5. We have no bragging rights, because saving faith is all about what God has done for us (vss. 27-28)
6. As we rely on Jesus for salvation, He gives us an identity and a relationship with Him (vss. 29-31)