

- I. Introduction
 - A. Up to this point in Romans, Paul has spent most of his time proving that Jews and Gentiles alike are in the same boat: Sinful rebels who have earned God's judgment.
 - B. Paul ended the previous passage with this statement: *For by works of the law no human being will be justified in His sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.* (Romans 3:20)
 - C. The Old Covenant Law found in the first five books (the Pentateuch) and echoed in the rest of the Old Testament, has no power to save, but it did serve an incredibly important purpose.
 - D. Paul says that the law only brings a "knowledge of sin."
 - 1. STORY: Pain in my stomach. WebMD: blocked duct or incurable cancer
 - 2. The Law **shows** sin. It does not **solve** sin.
 - 3. Just like a blood lab from your doctor. They take blood, test it, and tell you what is wrong with you.
 - 4. KNOWING what's wrong doesn't FIX what's wrong.
 - a. When a doctor gives a diagnosis, no one ever jumps up and says "Hallelujah I'm healed!"
 - b. The cure is always different from the diagnosis
 - E. Paul has spent two chapters giving us our diagnosis: sin. Here in Romans 3:21, we see the sunrise after a very long and dark night. Paul begins to illuminate the CURE. Not only are people LOST in the exact same way but they are all SAVED in the exact same way: the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ.
- II. *But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—* (Romans 3:21)
 - A. Paul is answering the question, "How does a sinner become a saint? How does an unrighteous person become righteous in God's eyes?"
 - B. He says that something recent has happened, but something ancient was pointing to it the whole time: the Law and the Prophets, aka "The Old Testament Scriptures."
 - C. The core of the Gospel message: God making HIS righteousness OUR righteousness.
 - D. Paul now goes into deeper detail describing how this gift of righteousness is given to us:
- III. *The righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction (between Jew and Gentile): for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,* (Romans 3:22-24)
 - A. God freely GIFTS people HIS **righteousness** to those who put their faith in Jesus.
 - 1. What is "righteousness"? (Same root word as "just, justice, justifier")
 - a. In short, righteousness is defined by the character of God: His perfection in love, justice, purity, and goodness.
 - b. So for a person to be "righteous" in God's sight, they must perfectly reflect His character.

- c. That's a problem! You and I don't do that. We are FAR from that!
- 2. So for us to be saved, somehow we have to get into ourselves the righteousness that God has and that we don't.
- 3. This passage is the mind-blowing explanation of how that happens – how God's perfect righteousness transfers to me, a sinful rebel.
- B. Paul makes a stunning first statement on how God transfers HIS righteousness into sinful humans: "BY HIS GRACE AS A GIFT."
 - 1. God's righteousness is not something you can buy, coerce, accomplish, or earn.
 - 2. If you want God's righteousness in you, you're going to have to receive it. It is a gift.
- C. If you are working hard to do enough good works of obedience to make yourself good enough in God's eyes, you are barking up the wrong tree.
 - 1. Some of us grew up in a religious tradition that trained us to earn our place in Heaven by outweighing the bad we'd done by doing good.
 - 2. But get this: an offering of "righteousness" is only as good as its source. If I try to produce a righteousness to satisfy God's view of righteousness, it will never work, because its source (me!) is flawed, so the offering will also be.
 - 3. Those ways we try to earn God's favor ARE NOT sourced from God but from us. They are substitutes and surrogates for God's righteousness that are not made of the same stuff!
 - 4. Story: Video ... guy pulls up to gas pump, can't figure it out ... Tesla.
 - a. Our self-made righteousness is not a fuel that works for salvation.
 - b. God's righteousness and our salvation are powered by something we don't possess.
- D. This is not God being difficult or unwilling to be pleased. This is simply God saying "You don't have what it takes but I do. Let me give it to you."
- E. This is the good news of Jesus' Gospel: that God's righteousness – the genuine, unpolluted kind – is GIVEN to us as a gift. How? How does God deliver that righteousness to us?
 - 1. Middle of v. 24: "... through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus"
 - 2. What is "redemption"? In short it is a price paid to liberate us from slavery to sin.
 - 3. And that price paid was Jesus Himself. Read on:
- IV. [Jesus] Whom God put forward as a propitiation by His blood, to be received by faith. (Romans 3:25a)
 - A. God liberated us from the penalty of our sin by offering up Jesus as a "propitiation."
 - 1. The meaning of "propitiation" is highly debated, but from the full context of Romans and the context of this passage, here is what it means:
 - 2. Our sinful rebellion against God makes us unrighteous. God's justice demands that evil have a just penalty, but we don't have what it takes to satisfy the justice of God. We don't have the currency to pay the debt. If that debt will be paid, there must be a substitute IN OUR PLACE that does indeed satisfy the debt that God's holiness demands.
 - 3. That substitutionary sacrifice that both pays the debt and is of a quality that pleases God's righteous character is called "a propitiation."
 - 4. Propitiation is a substitute sacrifice that steps in our place and deals with God's just wrath. It absorbs the wrath of God for us.

- B. JESUS is the substitute sacrifice that absorbs our punishment, satisfying God's demand for justice.
1. How did Jesus' step accomplish this? By His blood, death on a cross.
 2. How do we receive that gift that Jesus accomplished in our place? By faith.
 3. Then Paul goes on to answer how Jesus' death accomplishes both justice AND salvation for us:
- V. *This was to show God's righteousness, because in His divine forbearance He had passed over former sins. It was to show His righteousness at the present time, so that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (Romans 3:25b-26)*
- A. Jesus' death accomplished more than one thing:
1. It upholds righteousness because God did not let sin go unpunished.
 - a. God tolerated and granted forgiveness of sins to the people of Israel under the Old Testament sacrifices, not because those sacrifices pleased Him in themselves.
 - b. He tolerated and accepted the sacrifices because He was looking ahead to the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus.¹
 2. But Jesus' death did not only satisfy the demands of justice. Paul says that Jesus' sacrifice makes God both "just and the justifier."
 - a. God is both righteous in His dealing with sin and the righteousness-giver in giving Jesus' righteousness TO us.
 - b. Through Jesus' death, God transfers the righteous character of Jesus to the one who believes in Jesus.
- B. If you trust Jesus, you have not just been pulled out of the deep pit and placed on the ground level in a neutral position to God. You're not just forgiven of the unrighteous things you've done.
1. Much more than that, the perfect righteousness of Jesus Himself is transferred to you!
 2. Not only have you been pulled up from the pit up and placed at ground level, you have been lifted up to the Mt. Everest summit of Jesus' righteousness.
 - a. By faith in Jesus, God is not just tolerating you, He is PLEASED with you!
 - b. Jesus' righteousness is now YOUR righteousness, not because you earned it but because you RECEIVED it by FAITH.
- VI. *Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law. Or is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since God is one—Who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. (Romans 3:27-30)*
- A. The conclusion of this passage makes a couple main points:
1. The Gospel of Jesus kills pride.
 - a. In essence, Paul asks, "What 'system' saves you? A system of law or of faith?"
 - b. The Gospel of Jesus answers that it is by faith, and if that is the case, you can't earn it by your own merit. If so, you could boast about your accomplishment.

¹ Schreiner, Thomas R. 1998. [*Romans*](#). Vol. 6. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

- c. But we are saved by CHRIST'S accomplishment. Therefore, the Gospel of faith removes boasting. It would be really weird for a person to brag about how awesomely they let the fireman carry their unconscious body out of their burning house, especially when THEY set it on fire!
 - d. There is no place for pride in the life of Jesus' disciples, except in the death of Christ their God.
 - 2. There is ONE true God and He saves in ONE unified way: Jesus' death.
 - a. There are not multiple ways to be saved. Every person who populates the Kingdom of Heaven will have the identical answer when asked, "How did you get here?" Jesus.
 - b. No person on this planet will be saved through any other way except trusting in Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross.
- B. Invitation
- 1. I can't help but believe that there are people in this room who are so tired of trying to be good enough. The burden of thinking you can somehow earn God's favor is crushing you. Every two steps forward is followed by three steps back.
 - 2. This is a burden you cannot bear, and God KNOWS that you can't bear it.
 - 3. So He offers you grace instead of wrath, a Savior in place of judgment.
 - 4. A Savior Who says to you, *Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.* (Matthew 11:28-30)
 - 5. You cannot pay for a gift that's already been bought. You can only receive it with faith and a thankful heart.