

Romans 3:21-31
“But Now”

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I. Intro

After Paul’s assessment of the human condition, you can almost hear a sigh of relief. Paul has proved that all humans are sinners; now he explains how all sinners can be saved.

- In verse 21 God’s answer to man’s failure
- In verse 22-24 How the gift of righteousness is obtained
- In verse 25-26 How and why this works
- In verses 27-31 The results of it working

“The Law forbids disobedience and requires obedience, but it cannot provide the power needed to prevent the one or guarantee the other!” What God’s justice demanded His love provided and His provision for both was His Son Jesus Christ! Poet Elizabeth Clephane wrote: “Lord, you have here the 90 and 9, are they not enough for you? But the Shepherd answered, “This of mine has wandered away from Me; and though the road be rough and steep, I go to the desert to find My sheep”. But none of the ransomed even knew how deep the waters were crossed; nor how dark was the night that the Lord passed through until He found His sheep that was lost.”

Sin is not so much breaking God’s Law as it is breaking God’s heart! That is why on his death bed American missionary to the Native Americans David Brainerd said, “*I do not go to heaven to be advanced, but to give honor to God!*”

II. Vs. 21 God’s answer to man’s failure

Vs. 21 “*But Now*” appears on our pages like the sun after a hurricane as the righteousness of God is revealed. Having proved the “*unrighteousness of mankind*” Paul can reveal the “*righteousness of God*”. God's righteousness is not offered to us as a supplement our own righteousness, it is given completely apart from our own attempted righteousness.

People often misinterpret the meaning of words like the word “*righteousness*”. Many people think that this word means “*to behave the right way*” but **biblically “righteousness” isn’t about what you do it is a declaration about what you are!** The real idea behind the word is “*worth*” which resonates with lots of people as they seem to be always struggling with their sense of “*self-worth*”. Most people think they have to do something to get “*self-worth*”, but the Bible tells us that we can’t earn our “*self-worth*” we can only receive it. **The gospel deals with not only with happens to us when we die, it sets us right now as we are given “self-worth”!** **And this worth isn’t based upon some genetic trait or special talent it is completely based upon the character and nature of the God who values us.** To emphasize this Paul makes two points:

- a. Vs. 21a **It is “self-worth” apart from the Law:** That means that our “*self-worth*” is not predicated upon our obedience, **it’s a gift.** You do not “*earn*” it by doing your best to please God as His standard isn’t our best its perfection!
- b. Vs. 21b **It is not a “new self-worth” it’s foundational “self-worth”:** The religious Jews knew they didn’t measure up by the law that’s why they had the sacrificial system. Since God has always had in place our “*self-worth*” as a gift than He isn’t going to change His mind or come up with a new improved way that we may obtain our “*self-worth*”. Under the Old Testament Law, righteousness came be man behaving, but under the gospel it comes by believing.

III. Vs. 22-24 How the gift of righteousness is obtained

Vs. 22-24 Paul told us how this righteousness **does not come**; (through the deeds of the law). It is through faith in Jesus Christ to all and on all who believe. **The righteousness of God is not ours BY faith; it is ours THROUGH faith. We do not earn righteousness by our faith. We RECEIVE righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ.** Along the way Paul developed his teaching about salvation around three themes.

- **Justification**: “An image from the court of law”! Justification solves the problem of man's guilt before a righteous Judge.
- **Redemption**: “An image from the slave market”! Redemption solves the problem of man's slavery to sin, the world, and the devil.
- **Propitiation**: “An image from the world of religion, appeasing God through sacrifice”!
Propitiation solves the problem of offending God our creator.

There is one way expressed in four different aspects:

1. **Vs. 22a Through faith in Jesus Christ**: Faith is only as good as the object it trusts in! Our justification comes from our being linked not to God generally but to Jesus personally. Paul stresses the truth that you can only receive the gift of “self-worth” by trust in a person. The gift of self-worth involves a relationship to a living person, a time when you opened up your heart and life to Jesus and asked Him to be what He is, Lord. In all the religions of the earth the emphasis is upon man’s self-effort to bring self-worth only in Christianity do we see man’s self-worth a gift by way of a relationship.
2. **Vs. 22b To all who believe**: Paul explains that you are saved and gain a sense of self-worth when you personally believe. Whether heathen or Hebrew, Buddhist, or Baptist

- there is only one way to salvation; by faith. **It's not what I've done or who I am; it's who Jesus is and what He's done!** Faith is the hand that receives the gift offered by God and knowing that God is offering a gift does no one any good if they won't receive it. He has declared all people guilty so that He can offer His salvation equally to all people.
3. **Vs. 24a Declared of value freely by grace:** It is God who freely and wholly saves us we cannot contribute a thing to it. Hey, did you notice that this verse says that we are “*being justified*”? In the Greek that is in the aorist tense which means that our justification is continually happening. The word “*freely*” means without a cause and that is how it should be translated here.
4. **Vs. 24b Finally we are told that it is Jesus that accomplished the work of redemption which is why we have self-worth:** We are brought face to face with the cross of Christ. Saints, if our brand of Christianity doesn't emphasize the cross, then we are listening to the wrong gospel. “*It is no gospel that speaks much on Christ but little of the cross. To speak on the beauty of His life without speaking of the sacrifices of His death has no power to free people from their sin.*” Salvation is free but it is not cheap! Three words in these two verses tell us that “*redemption, propitiation and blood*”. Propitiation means to satisfy God's Holy and just demands so that He can freely forgive our sin.

IV. Vs. 25-26 How and why it works

Vs. 25-26 Paul now moves to a brief explanation of “**HOW**” and “**WHY**” this redemption works. ***If God loved us so much that He overlooked our sin choosing not to punish us for it He would no longer be holy. Ah but if He punished us for it though He would be Holy He wouldn't***

demonstrate His love. The only solution being Jesus Christ's sacrifice whereby He would both be just and the justifier to those who put their trust in Jesus.

A. Vs. 25a **How:** First Paul says that God Presented His only Son a “*sacrifice of atonement*”.

The word “*propitiation*” is a Greek word used in the Septuagint for the mercy seat, (the lid that covered the ark of the covenant), upon which sacrificial blood was sprinkled as atonement for sin. As a theological term which carries two ideas

1. *To satisfy justice*

2. *To release love*

What Paul is saying here is that *human sin injured God and justice demands that we be punished for that injury but Jesus' death on the cross paid our penalty thus justice was satisfied. Ah but it was more than justice satisfied it is love released as God reaches out to those who injured Him by their sin and grants us as sense of self-worth, acceptance, and value as He showers His love upon us.*

B. Vs. 25b **Why:** Paul is referring to all the thousands of years where God hadn't done anything about mankind's wrong doings. What he is saying is that justice wasn't compromised it was settled at the cross. Through the animal sacrifice those who looked in faith to the coming Messiah had their sins "*covered*" by a sort of an "*IOU*" or promissory note. Because of Jesus God's love is free to act towards us consistent with His character and nature to love sinners without breaking His own nature of holiness. No one can claim that God is unfair when the price paid for our forgiveness was the blood of His Son.

- *It's easy to see how God could only be just by sending every guilty sinner to hell, as a just Judge.*

- *It's easy to see how God could only be the justifier by telling every guilty sinner, you're pardoned.*
- *But only God could find a way to be both just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.*

V. Vs. 27-31 The results of it working

Vs. 27-31 Paul raises **three questions with regards to the self-worth** we have in Jesus Christ.

1. Vs. 27 **Who can brag?**: Because we are justified freely by His grace, there is no room for self-congratulation. In heaven no one will say, *“Look what I have done, what I accomplished!”* Our boasting will be *“Look what the Spirit of God accomplished in spite of me!”* Jesus is the Savior we are the save-ees. You can't be self-righteous about the gift of righteousness we have in Jesus.
2. Vs. 28-30 **Is anyone excluded from grace?**: Saving faith has a distinct character. It is not just agreeing with certain facts, but it is directing the mind and will in agreement with God. There are two groups in Christianity today: Those who emphasis **behaving** and those who emphasis **believing** but the truth is **the way we believe will affect the way we behave**. No one person has *“favored person status”* all are alike before God. There is One God, and he is equally the God of Jews as well as the gentiles.
3. Vs. 31 **Do we no longer need the Law?**: We can see how someone might ask, *“If the law doesn't make us righteous, what good is it?”* The law anticipated the coming gospel of justification by faith, apart from the deeds of the law. ***The gospel is that Jesus Christ came to fulfill the righteous requirement of the Law.*** The very righteousness the law demanded is the very righteousness given to us by faith in Jesus. The purpose of the law according to Galatians 3:24 is to be our *“teacher to lead us until Christ came. So now,*

through faith in Christ, we are made right with God.” The manager at a lakeside hotel had a problem even though signs were posted on the balconies “*No fishing*” people still continued to do so. After some research it was found that no one ever fished from the balconies until after the signs were posted as they never thought of it. That’s often the case with the Law as it sets a standard that we are unable to keep.