

IV. The New Man – Appropriation (3:21 – 31)

Paul now turns the corner. He has clearly laid out the fact that all of us share in the fallen condition. Our NEED is clear. We are left hopeless. The New Man still has the old influence. That old influence is judged by the Law and clearly revealed to be the enemy of God. We cannot overcome it, clean it up or distance ourselves from it.

It will take divinity to deal with our old influence. No Human Being can fix it.

Vs. 21...”BUT NOW” (Eph 2:4 – “BUT GOD”) I love it when Paul does this. He shares the overwhelming disaster of humanity and then says “BUT”. There is another side. There is an answer. There is DIVINITY!

Alva J. McClain says,

This section is the very heart of the book of Romans. For this reason, all Christians ought to memorize verses 21-26. If someone should ask me, “Brother McClain, if you could have just six verses out of the Bible, and all the rest be taken away, which would you take?”, I would select these six verses. All of God’s gospel is there, and in a way found nowhere else in the Word of God.



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A. The Fall hit All so that All may be saved by FAITH. (3:21 – 3:26)

God continues to display his righteousness:

- Revealed in his wrath against all ungodliness (1:18-30: 2:5)
- Revealed in God’s faithfulness in spite of man’s unrighteousness which is revealed in by the law (3:5,20)
- And now it is revealed separately from the law through FAITH (3:21-22)

The law couldn’t do it and thankfully God was not exclusively relying upon it. As a matter of fact, He wasn’t relying upon it at all! When Paul says “without the Law” he is using a very strong statement. It means “absolutely apart from”.

The Law and the Prophets is a common phrase used to refer to the whole Old Testament. Paul tells us that the Old Testament declared that salvation was by faith. Every OT sacrifice was based on faith that God would accept a replacement. Is 53:6, “All we like sheep have gone astray: we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all”. He will focus very heavily on the OT examples of salvation by faith in Chapter 4 when he talks about Abraham and David.

This is not plan B. It was God’s intent from the beginning. He will show us this in just a bit when he talks about “His divine forbearance he had passed over former sins”. He did this to show His righteousness at this present time. (vs. 26).

But what righteousness has been revealed completely distinct from the law?

Vs. 22 – The righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for ALL who believe.

This Righteousness is:

- Of God (no man can claim it)
- Through faith in Jesus Christ (man's only job = depend solely on Christ!)
- For ALL who believe. (everyone has the same condition, so everyone has the same solution)

Paul goes to great lengths to indicate that this is for ALL. NO DISTINCTION.

The verb "believe" is a participle that could be translated as "those believing". Paul is not talking to people who need to believe but those who have believed and are still. God's righteousness can be revealed today. We can live apart from our old sinful influence when we are believing.

Paul calls this God's gift of grace. Eph 2:8,9 says:

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works so that no one may boast.

The parallels between Eph 2 and this section are numerous:

- Paul builds a strong case for the fallen condition of man.
- Both occur within the sphere of God's Grace.
- Salvation is through faith.
- Here in Romans it is clear the gift is the fact that God has chosen to justify us by His grace. *(In Eph 2 there is some controversy over whether the gift is the whole act of Grace or specifically faith – which would indicate that man can't exercise faith until God gives it to him. There is a good precedence in the Greek to show the gift is grace. The similarity between these passages by the same author would also give weight to this view.)*
- Both reject boasting (see Rom 3:27)
- Both result in no barrier between Jew and Gentile (see Rom 3:28)

Christ Jesus is the "Ransom". Literally, He was the COST to buy us out of slavery. The same term is used to pay a fee to release a prisoner of war.

Romans 6:23 says that the "FEE" for sin is Death. The only price large enough to fully pay for our sinful life is the death of Christ. He paid it fully. How often we cheapen our sins. We take this for granted! When we recognize the high cost we see the righteousness of God revealed. How great is God's righteousness? SO GREAT THAT THE ONLY PAYMENT ABLE TO SATISFY IT IS THE DEATH OF CHRIST! To give a human life to save another is a high cost. But some humans would be worth more than others. What about GOD IN HUMAN FLESH? Can there be a higher payment? THAT'S HOW RIGHTEOUS GOD IS.

Propitiation = Atonement of the Mercy Seat. They are the same word (Heb 9:5). The mercy seat is where the priest would go once a year to sprinkle blood as a covering for all the sins of the nation. God was holy and there was a veil that separated the Mercy Seat. However the blood of sprinkling was never enough. Each year they had to do it again. God allowed man to continue to fellowship with Him even though he had not visited them with wrath equal to what their sins demanded.

- He "passed over" sins prior to the cross.
- He "paid" for sins at the cross.
- He "justifies" us when we believe.

God shows his righteousness –

HE IS JUST

HE IS THE JUSTIFIER

God could reveal He is just by justly punishing us for our sins – but then NO ONE would be saved.

God could reveal He is the justifier by simply overlooking our sins – but then HE WOULD BE UNJUST.

Ps. 85:9-11

⁹*Surely his salvation is near to those who fear him,
that glory may dwell in our land.*
¹⁰*Steadfast love and faithfulness meet;
righteousness and peace kiss each other.*
¹¹*Faithfulness springs up from the ground,
and righteousness looks down from the sky.*

B. Faith means no one can boast. (3:27 – 31)

Paul asks the question regarding our boasting. In 2:17 he talked about the Jew who boasted in their keeping the Law. In 3:1 he asked what advantage the Jew has. Here he says that there is no basis for boasting. If this is true for the Jew than it is equally true for the Gentile. No one has a basis for boasting.

Paul's answer is that it is excluded. This means that there is something standard used to determine this. When he says "law" he is referring more to a "principle" or standard. Is it a standard of works that excludes boasting? That doesn't even make sense. If there was a greater work that excludes boasting then we could boast for doing that work.

Instead, the law is the law of faith. It is the principle that man does nothing but simply depends on God's answer.

Someone has used the following analogy to try to explain a relationship between Law and Action:

If you were in a burning house and someone busted a hole in the side of the wall. They might tell you to follow them and you will make it to safety. If you believe them then you will follow them out of the house. However, you have to get up and follow.

This is not a good analogy for what God has done for us. Instead, let's modify the analogy:

You are in a burning house and God suddenly appears before you. He says, "My Son has already made a way of escape. If you will believe this then 'POOF' you will be carried through that way of escape without having to move." If you believe you do not need to do any work. Your faith is your dependence on God's Son to have done it for you!

This is what God has done. Vs 28 – "For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law." This apart is the same as we saw in vs.21. It means wholly separate. There is no connection!

His next question is rhetorical. If the Law was part, then God could only be God of Jews. But we know this is not the case. God is a God of the Gentiles as well. This is very clear by the time Paul is writing to the Romans. Their church is made up of Jews and Gentiles.

God is "ONE". This reminds the Jews of the shema. Deut 6:4 – Our God is one God. There is not two God's but only one God. And this one God justifies both Jews and Gentiles the same. No Distinction.

Finally he says that by our faith we "uphold" or "establish" the law. The Law declares us as guilty. It reveals our condition. If we have to come to God by faith, then we recognize we are guilty before the law. We uphold it. We establish it as a right standard. We see it correctly.

If we tried to justify ourselves by the Law we would actually have to cheapen the standard. We would have to say it really means "...[something less that we can actually accomplish]...". We would not establish or uphold the law. But by coming to God by faith we hold that the Law is a truly HIGH STANDARD. So high that only divinity can fulfill it.

God IS JUST and the JUSTIFIER. Gift of Grace allows me to be justified through faith in a just payment – a very costly payment – the death of His own Son.