

Romans

Chapter 3

I. The Jew and the Justice of God - Romans 3:1-8

In this section of Romans Paul completes his condemnation of all men. We have seen how he has proven the condemnation of the heathen man, the condemnation of the moral man, and the condemnation of the religious Jew. Just so no one is exempt, he summarizes the condemnation of God against all men by listing specific charges that apply to all. Before he does this, however, he reveals the advantage of the Jew and answers two specific arguments regarding the justice of God. This is necessary to Paul's argument since if it can be proved that God is not just, then the condemnation of men before God is invalid.

A. The Advantage of the Jew - Romans 3:1-2

3:1 What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? 3:2 Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.

At this point in Paul's letter, the Jewish reader would have been absolutely devastated. In the last part of Romans 2 Paul has not only proven that Jewishness does not mean anything, but that Jewishness only results in greater condemnation because the Jew has the greater light. The natural question that the Jewish reader would have at this point is "Since I have the greater condemnation, what is so great about being Jewish?"

Paul's single answer to this question is that they have been the recipients of God's law. It is through the Jewish nation that we have the Bible. In fact, all but two books (Luke and Acts) of the New Testament were written by Jewish authors and all of the Old Testament, (with the possible exception of part of Daniel 4), were written by Jews. God chose the Jewish nation as the channel for his special revelation.

The word "oracles" in verse 2 is the Greek word *logia*, which means "divine utterances." It is used that way in Acts 7:38, 1 Peter 4:10, and Hebrews 5:12. The word "committed" is the Greek word *episteuthasan* which means "to be entrusted with." The word "chiefly" is the Greek word *protos* which carries the idea of the foremost or the most important. Thus, this verse can be rendered:

Much every way, most importantly because God entrusted them with his very words.

This is something the Jew could be proud of. God gave them His very words. A little study in the background of how the Scriptures were copied by the Jew helps us understand the great care they gave the word of God. In those days, the Bible was copied by hand onto scrolls. After a scroll was completed, another scribe would count the letters in the scroll. If they did not add up to the correct amount, the scroll was destroyed. Next, the middle word of the Old Testament was found and compared to what it should be. If it did not match, the scroll was destroyed. Any mistake, no matter how trivial, would result in the destruction of the scroll. This

copying process was so exact, that a comparison of the Isaiah scroll found by the Dead Sea which dates from the second century B.C. and the Masoretic text of the ninth century A.D. shows little discrepancy. The Jewish nation was the nation God chose as the originator and caretaker of His words to mankind.

B. Arguments Regarding the Justice of God - Romans 3:3-9

Before Paul presents the final indictment of mankind in verses 10 through 18, he addresses a critical issue, that of the justice of God. The reason this is so critical at this point is that Paul needs to establish the credibility and fairness of God's justice. If God is not just, or not credible, then there is no reason to condemn the human race and no reason for us to fear God's judgment. In presenting this issue, Paul answers two unspoken questions regarding God's justice. These are 1) why are ungodly Jews punished since God promised blessing upon all Israel?, 2) since God enjoys displaying his forgiveness why would he judge us for sin since sin only displays his love and mercy? Since these questions are dealt with more fully later on in Romans, we will only begin to develop the answers at this point.

1. Question #1 - What about God's promises to Israel? - Romans 3:3-4

3:3 For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? 3:4 God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.

The first question Paul answers in developing the concept of the justice of God is the question of the promises of God to Israel. This is a very important question since all of the rabbis of Paul's day had completely misunderstood the promises of God regarding the Jew. Their idea was that God had specifically chosen the Jewish nation to be recipients of his blessing regardless of the choices of the individual Jews. In other words, salvation was based on your Jewish heritage alone and not on your faith. Some rabbis went so far as to teach that no Jew would ever see hell. Because of this mindset, the Jews had become very nationalistic and closed. They liked the idea that God would bless them so much that they failed to be the light of the world. They became self-centered and egotistical. They took the promises of God to be their's, and their's alone.

Romans 3:3

Paul's point in Romans 3:3 is that the unbelief of some Jews does not invalidate the promises of God. The phrase "faith of God" is more easily understood when translated as "God's faithfulness." The contrast being drawn in this verse is between man's faithlessness, and God's faithfulness.

In Romans 9, we will find that Paul argues that God's promise of blessing was never to the nation of Israel as a whole, but to a believing remnant only. Just because God condemns some Jews does not invalidate the promises of blessing.

This misunderstanding was a major stumblingblock to the Jews. The Jews had to be brought to the awareness that their Jewishness did not guarantee them the blessing of God. In Matthew 8 we have the account

of the centurion coming to Jesus and requesting that he heal his servant. Since the centurion did not want to bother Jesus, he asked him to merely speak the word and his servant would be healed. Christ's response is very interesting:

Matthew 8:10-13

When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour.

Basically, Jesus said that Gentiles would enter into the kingdom while the children of the kingdom, that is the Jews, would be cast into outer darkness. John the Baptist confronts this same issue in Luke 3:7-8 where he makes the point that God can raise up children to Abraham from stones. He warned the people not to trust in their national heritage but to bring forth fruits of repentance.

Romans 3:4

Paul's scriptural answer to this assault on God's justice is a quote from Psalms 51:4. Psalms 51 is David's prayer to God for forgiveness after being confronted by Nathan regarding his adultery with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah. Verse 3 of this passage sets up verse 4. Basically, David is saying that he has sinned and that God is justified when he speaks regarding David's sin and is fully exonerated when he judges that sin. In other words, David says that he is guilty as charged and God is free from any accusation of unfairness or injustice. Joshua confronts Achan with the statement "confess your sin and give glory to God." Joshua wanted everyone to understand that Achan was being judged for his sin and God was free from any accusation of unfairness.

Paul is saying the same thing in Romans 3:4. God is completely above reproach when judging sin and confronting the sinner. We have nothing to say since we are guilty as charged.

2. Question # 2 - Why not sin so God can reveal his love and forgiveness? - Romans 3:5-8

3:5 But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man) 3:6 God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world? 3:7 For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner? 3:8 And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just.

Romans 3:5

The second question Paul answers in defending the justice of God is "Since God delights in forgiving sin why not sin so he can exhibit His love and forgiveness?." Paul's statement of the question in verse 5 is "if the blackness of our sin shows off the brightness of God's righteousness, is God wrong when he takes vengeance on our sin?."

Romans 3:6

This question shocks Paul. His answer starts with the most forceful negative expression in the Greek language *me genoito*, may it never be, no way! Paul says that this question and implication should never be made. The reason is simple. If the assertion that our sin exhibits God's forgiveness then how can God judge the sin of the world? Judgment becomes meaningless since it is our sin that displays God's forgiveness.

Romans 3:7-8

This idea is expanded in these two verses. Paul asks in verse 7 that if the truth of God is revealed through the lie of himself, then why is he judged as a sinner. If it wasn't for Paul's "falseness", God's "truthfulness" would not be visible. In verse 8 we find that some had even accused Paul of doing wrong so that good may come, in other words, sinning so that God's grace and forgiveness may become evident.

This thinking, as condemned by Paul in verse 8b, is most destructive. Some people feel that since God is a God of grace and forgiveness, they can sin all they want, after all, God will forgive them. What they fail to realize is that we find nowhere in Scripture any passage where the true child of God is encouraged to sin so that God could reveal His grace. In fact, we find the exact opposite in I John 3:6, those who are children of God "do not practice sin." Antinomianism (the belief that we can sin all we want because God will forgive us anyway) is a heresy that strikes a blow at the Biblical doctrine of sanctification.

The bottom line in this whole argument is that it is never right to sin. Just because God can display his forgiveness when we sin does not make it right for us to sin. When we look at this issue, we need to realize that every sin ever committed in the universe must be punished. This question makes the assumption that God just overlooks sin without ever exacting the penalty. When we realize that every sin we have ever done, or will do, has been paid for by Christ on the cross, we will see that it is folly to consider this question as valid. God's forgiveness is only made possible by the cross.

II. The Indictment and Guilt of All Mankind - Romans 3:9-20

3:9 What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; 3:10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: 3:11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. 3:12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. 3:13 Their throat is an open sepulcher; with their

tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: 3:14 Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: 3:15 Their feet are swift to shed blood: 3:16 Destruction and misery are in their ways: 3:17 And the way of peace have they not known: 3:18 There is no fear of God before their eyes. 3:19 Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. 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. 3:19 Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. 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.

Romans 3:9

In this single verse we find the fourth and final group of men, believers. Undoubtedly many believers who read this letter by Paul felt pretty good by now. The heathen man, moral man, and religious man have been shown to be under God's divine judgment, but the believer, that's a different issue. After all, our sins are forgiven, therefore we must be somewhat better than the other groups. Right? Paul's answer is no. His reasoning behind this answer is simple, he has shown that all categories of humanity are hopelessly lost and under God's judgment. We are not sinners just because we have believed in Christ. The only difference between us and others is that we have accepted Christ's payment for our sins as opposed to paying for them ourselves. All humanity is in the same boat, lost and condemned without Christ. There are only two classes of sinners, forgiven and unforgiven, not good sinners and bad sinners.

Romans 3:10-18

Paul wraps up his condemnation of the human race by listing thirteen specific indictments against the human race quoted in the Old Testament.

1. **There is none righteous, no, not one - Romans 3:10 cf. Psalms 14:1**

The first charge is a general one, there is none righteous. The "no not one" is added just to make sure that no one can say "except me." No flesh is righteous in the sight of God.

Psalms 14:1

To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David. The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good.

2. **There is none that understandeth - Romans 3:11a cf. Psalms 14:2**

Not only is there none righteous, there is none that understandeth. The Greek word translated "understandeth" is *sunion*. It carries the idea of discernment, spiritual wisdom, sensible, and clear perception. Man is hopelessly lost in a fog and has no spiritual discernment or ability to see his way out as well as no ability to understand God on his own.

Psalms 14:2

The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God.

3. There is none that seeketh after God - Romans 3:11b cf. Psalms 14:2

This indictment clarifies number 2. Not only is man lost in a spiritual fog, he is also not seeking God. God says that we will find him if we search for him with all our heart. Man's problem is he does not seek God and therefore he has no ability to find God.

Psalms 14:2

The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God.

4. They are all gone out of the way - Romans 3:12a cf. Psalms 14:3

Man is on the wrong road. Christ himself pictured two roads, the broad road to destruction and the narrow road to life eternal. Proverbs 14:12 says that there is a way which seems right unto man, but the end of it is the way of death. Man is in a spiritual fog refusing to seek God and heading down a path that leads to death. See also Isaiah 53:6.

Psalms 14:3

They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

5. They are together become unprofitable - Romans 3:12b cf. Psalms 14:3

The word translated "unprofitable" is the Greek word *hachreiothasan* which was used to describe sour milk. Man has gone sour. He has become unfit for the purpose God created him to fulfill.

Psalms 14:3

They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

6. Their throat is an open sepulcher - Romans 3:13a cf. Psalms 5:9

This indictment begins four charges regarding the speech of man. The imagery is that of an open tomb. Out of the mouth of man proceeds vileness and bitterness that is like the stench coming from an open grave.

Psalms 5:9

For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is very wickedness; their throat is an open sepulchre; they flatter with their tongue.

7. With their tongues have they used deceit - Romans 3:13b cf. Psalms 10:7

The second charge regarding the speech of man is that it is full of deceit. Men do not tell the truth. Jesus, in confronting the Pharisees in John 8:44, tells them that they were of their father Satan who is the father of lies. God is absolute truth, men are absolute liars.

Psalms 10:7

His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and fraud: under his tongue is mischief and vanity.

8. The poison of asps is under their lips - Romans 3:13c cf. Psalms 140:3

Not only are men liars, but their speech rivals that of a venomous snake. Many times gossip has been able to destroy what nothing else could. Ungodly men spew venom from their mouths to poison anyone who hears them.

Psalms 140:3

They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent; adder's poison is under their lips. Selah.

9. Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness - Romans 3:14 cf. Psalms 10:7

The speech of unregenerate man is full of curses and bitterness. Man is utterly unable to control his speech without the power of God. It is interesting to compare this verse to Colossians 4:6 where we are told to have our speech be full of grace.

Psalms 10:7

His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and fraud: under his tongue is mischief and vanity.

10. Their feet are swift to shed blood - Romans 3:15 cf. Proverbs 1:16

Men are murderers. From the time Cain killed Abel to our day only God knows how many men have died as a result of murder. In fact, it is more probable that a person living in one of America's largest cities will be murdered than it was for an American soldier to die in World War 2. Men are murderers following in the steps of the "murderer from the beginning", Satan (John 8:44).

Proverbs 1:16

For their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood.

Isaiah 59:7a

Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood: their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity...

11. Destruction and misery . . . way - Romans 3:16 cf. Proverbs 1:10-19

One good look at the world around us will convince anyone that ungodly men wreak havoc and misery. All of the wars throughout the centuries have caused untold misery and heartache. Men are destructive and create misery. In fact, vandalism accounts for untold billions of dollars a year.

Isaiah 59:7b

...wasting and destruction are in their paths.

12. And the way of peace . . . known - Romans 3:17 cf. Proverbs 1:10-19

Men cry for peace but there can be no peace until the Prince of Peace comes. The greed and lust of men preclude the possibility of peace. Only when righteousness reigns will peace be a reality.

Isaiah 59:8a

The way of peace they know not...

13. There is no fear of God . . . eyes - Romans 3:18 cf. Psalms 73:11, 10:13

This is the reason men are so sinful, they have no fear of God. When God becomes a crutch to those who need him and just a vestigial remnant of our past, the deterrent to sin is removed. Without a God to be accountable to there is no reason to live a holy life. Probably the single reason men commit sin is that they think they will never be called into account. A healthy respect for the judgment and chastening of God is the best deterrent to sin.

Psalms 10:13

Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God? he hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not require it.

Romans 3:19-20

These two verses are the conclusion of Paul's indictment of men. They encapsulate the entire content of Romans 1:18 to 3:18 and form the bridge to God's remedy for sin.

Verse 19 gives the concluding statement of the prosecution. Paul succinctly states that the end result of the law is the silence of men. He has proven beyond doubt that men are guilty. Men have no defense! They stand condemned before God without any excuse. Verse 20 contains volumes of theology. Since it is beyond our ability to deal with all of the implications of this verse, we will look at two specific points, both of which will be developed later in Romans.

The first point is that no man can be justified on the basis of the law. The reason for this is evident. Only perfect obedience to the law of God can merit

justification. Since it is impossible to keep the law, we become guilty. It is true that some men are more guilty than others, however, all men have fallen short of God's standard of perfection. The Bible does acknowledge two ways to be justified, that of perfect obedience to the law of God, and that of trust in Christ. Unfortunately, men have no ability to keep the law of God, therefore, the only other alternative available is faith in Christ.

The second point is that the purpose of the law was to reveal sin. Paul expands this concept more fully in Romans 7, however, he notes at this point that the law gives us a knowledge of sin. If God had not revealed his standard, we would have no concept of sin. The law shows what the standard is and since that standard is impossibly high, it shows us how inadequate we are.

It is a shame that the single thing that keeps most men out of heaven is their refusal to acknowledge their sin and their inability to merit God's forgiveness. All God desires is that man own up to the fact that they cannot please him. Once men do this, God's mercy is activated and forgiveness becomes available through the sacrifice of Christ. The law was originally designed to show us the way to God, unfortunately, it often becomes the stumblingblock that keeps us from God.

III. The Doctrine of Justification

Paul, having finished his presentation of the bad news, now turns to the good news, that of salvation by faith. He develops this doctrine in the remainder of chapter 3 through chapter 11. He does this by presenting the doctrine of justification by faith (chapter 3:21-31), showing that salvation by faith was universally applied by God in the Old Testament (chapter 4), the results of justification which are sanctification and glorification (chapters 5-8), and last of all an apology showing that the doctrine of justification by faith is consistent with God's plan for Israel (chapter 9-11).

A. Justification Founded in Grace - Romans 3:21-31

This section of Romans chapter 3 contains the presentation of the doctrine of justification by faith. Paul presents this doctrine by revealing the characteristics of justification by faith, the reason for justification by faith and not works, and the place of the law in justification.

1. The Characteristics of Justification - Romans 3:20-25b

The first thing Paul does is to present the characteristics of the doctrine of justification in verses 21 through 25a. These are 1) justification is not by law, 2) it has been witnessed by the law and the prophets, 3) it is by faith in Jesus Christ, 4) it is for anyone who believes, 5) it is freely given by grace, and 6) it is by Christ's propitiatory sacrifice.

a. Justification is not by the Law - Romans 3:21a

3:21a But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested . . .

This element of the doctrine of justification by faith is probably the most difficult for the average person to comprehend. In fact, it was this

element of justification that caused the Pharisees and Jewish leaders the most trouble. The reason for this is that the unregenerate man has a very difficult time seeing himself as a sinner before God. He is constantly measuring himself against others in an attempt to justify himself. What he fails to understand is that he does not measure up to God's standard of holiness, a standard that is so far above him it is impossible for him to attain. This concept is a recurrent theme in the New Testament since it is the basis of justification. Note the following passages:

Luke 16:15

And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.

Acts 13:39

And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.

Galatians 2:16

Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

Galatians 3:11

But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.

The point is clear, no man is justified by the law. All the law does is to point out just how far man falls short of the standard of God. Another way to look at this concept is to ask the question "Why can't the law justify man?"

1. The law of God is not merely external observances but internal attitudes. A man may be able to control his external behavior, but that does not do anything for his heart (Matthew 15:18-20).
2. Keeping the law does not do anything for past sins. Just because a man decides to start keeping the law still leaves him in a deficit situation with God. No amount of law-keeping can remove the debt of past sins.
3. Unregenerate man, apart from the indwelling Spirit, cannot please God even by obeying the law. All his righteousnesses are as filthy rags in God's sight (Isaiah 64:6).
4. No man has a perfect understanding of the law of God. In other words, it is possible to sin without knowing since we may break

God's law because we have an imperfect or incomplete understanding of his requirements.

5. The law was never given to save man. The reason the law was given was to show man just how far short he comes of God's perfect standard of righteousness (Romans 5:20, Romans 7:8-14).

b. Justification by Faith Was Witnessed by the Old Testament - Romans 3:21b

3:21b ...being witnessed by the law and the prophets;

The second characteristic of justification by faith is that it is witnessed by the law and the prophets. The phrase "law and the prophets" is a common rabbinical term for the Old Testament. This must have startled the religiously pious Jew reading the book of Romans since he was taught from youth that a man is justified by works, not grace. Paul states that this belief is wrong. In supporting this argument, Paul uses two examples of justification by faith, Abraham and David.

In Romans 4:3 we read that Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Romans 4:7 states "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered." Contrary to all Jewish religious thought, Paul shows that Abraham and David were both justified by believing God. (This will be explored further in studying chapter 4 of Romans).

c. Justification is Through Faith in Jesus Christ - Romans 3:22a

3:22a Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe:

The third truth revealed about justification by faith is that it is founded in Jesus Christ. The reason for this is evident, since it is not founded in keeping the law, it must be founded in something else. That something else is faith in Christ. To get the full meaning of these two verses, we need to answer three questions. First, what exactly is the righteousness of God, secondly, what does it mean to believe, and thirdly, to what does the redemption that is in Christ refer?

First, to what does the righteousness of God refer? The word "righteousness" comes from the Greek word *dikaïosuna* which means "the state of rightness." The righteousness of God is not a collection of good deeds, it is an innate state of being that is in complete harmony with God himself. Paul refers to this righteousness in Philippians 3:9 where he states:

And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

Paul did not want his righteousness, he wanted God's righteousness. Paul's righteousness would have had to come by the law, something that produces external morality but does little for the internal

corruption of sin. Another way to look at it is that God's righteousness is perfect, ours is imperfect.

Secondly, what does it mean to believe? There are a lot of people who believe in Christ but who are lost. Probably the best way to understand faith is to see it in light of five concepts; facts, affirmation, internalization, total trust, and hope.

1. Faith is first of all grounded in facts. Although these facts do not necessarily lend themselves to tangible proofs, they do exist and can be understood. Saving faith is based in the fact of Christ's substitutionary sacrifice for our sins and the fact that we can escape condemnation for our sin by placing our trust in Christ. Salvation is not a leap into the unknown, it is based on facts revealed by God in the Scriptures.
2. It is not enough to believe the facts of the gospel, one must go further and affirm the truth of those facts. There are many people in the world today who are aware of the facts of salvation, but they have not taken the second step of affirming the absolute truths of those facts. James 2:19 states that "**the devils believe and tremble.**"
3. The third element of true faith is internalization. This is when the facts are considered, affirmed as true, and incorporated into the life of the one believing. There are people who are aware of the facts of salvation and even affirm them as true, but have not internalized them in their lives.
4. Fourthly, one must believe the facts, affirm their truth, internalize them, and put their total trust in those facts. This is the point at which the grace of God is activated. We must totally trust God even though we may not understand the full implications of that trust.
5. Lastly, true faith looks forward to the day when faith becomes sight. We have labeled this concept hope. In doing this, however, we must understand hope in the New Testament sense and not in our modern English sense. The word "hope" in the New Testament comes from the Greek word *elpidos*. It refers to something that is certain but waiting for fulfillment. In other words, when we "hope" for salvation we are not questioning whether or not we will be saved, we are merely waiting for the complete fulfillment of that salvation.

Thus, to believe means to know the facts, affirm their truthfulness, internalize them into our life, put our total trust in those facts, and hope for the fulfillment of our trust.

Thirdly, the redemption in Christ refers to the act whereby Christ purchases us unto himself. The word "redemption" comes from the Greek word *apolutrosis*. *Apolutrosis* refers to the act of buying a slave for the purpose of setting that slave free. It is a rich word that describes the fact that Christ purchased us with his blood in order that

we might be set free to worship him (See Luke 21:28, Romans 3:24, 8:23, 1 Corinthians 1:30, Ephesians 1:7, 14, 4:30, Colossians 1:14, Hebrews 9:15 and 11:35 for the other New Testament occurrences of this word).

Putting these three concepts together, we find that the kind of righteousness required by God is His righteousness. It is imparted to us by putting our total trust in the facts of the gospel which results in our redemption from the power, penalty, and someday presence of sin.

d. Justification is Available to All Who Believe - Romans 3:22b-23

3:22b . . . unto all and upon all them that believe, for there is no difference: 3:23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

The fourth major truth of justification is that it is available to all who believe regardless of nationality or any other label. As far as God is concerned there is no difference between the best and worst of sinners since we all come woefully short of the divine standard.

The word translated, "come short" is the Greek word *husterountai* which carries the idea of falling short, of being in want, of lacking. The idea is that we all have fallen short of the glory of God, none of us measures up.

e. Justification is Freely Given by Grace - Romans 3:24

3:24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

The fifth characteristic of justification is that it is free. There is nothing we have to do to earn the justification of God. We can best understand the grace of God as his treatment of the guilt of sin just as his mercy is his treatment of the results of sin. The word translated "freely" is the Greek word *dorean*. *Dorean* is the verb form of the noun *doron* which means "gift." The justification of God is a free gift to those who exercise the faith to believe and accept God's offer of salvation.

We must also make careful note that although our redemption is free, it is not cheap! It is free to us in the sense we can do nothing to earn or merit it, but it was expensive to God in the sense that it cost Him His Son to bring it about.

f. Justification is by Christ's Propitiatory Sacrifice - Romans 3:25a

3:25a Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, . . .

The last characteristic of justification mentioned by Paul is that it is made available through the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ. The word "propitiation" comes from the Greek word *hilastarion* which is used in Hebrews 9:5 to refer to the mercy seat. The idea is that the sacrifice of Christ is the "covering" of our sin which results in our justification. If we look back at the furniture of the tabernacle, we find that the mercy

seat is where the Shekinah glory of God dwelled. On the Day of Atonement, the high priest would go into the holy of holies where the Ark of the Covenant was kept and would sprinkle blood on the mercy seat (the lid of the Ark of the Covenant). This signified that forgiveness of sin would be available for the coming year since God would see the sin through the blood on the mercy seat.

Christ became the perfect lamb of God and thus became the mercy seat for us. It is on the mercy seat in the Old Testament, and on the sacrifice of Christ in the New, that the justice of God was satisfied for the sinner. When God sees us today, he sees us through the sacrifice of Christ. Because of this, God sees us as perfect as Christ is.

Note that the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ is available only through faith in His blood. The idea of blood refers not to the hemoglobin that coursed through Christ's veins, but it refers to His very life. Throughout the Bible blood is used synonymously with life. It is Christ's death, not just his blood, that provides our justification.

Lastly, it is interesting to note that the word "set forth" comes from the Greek word *protithimi* which carries the idea of "purposed." The same word is used in Romans 1:13 and Ephesians 1:9. The word carries the idea of a predetermined intent. Christ was predetermined by God to provide the covering for our sins. That was the whole purpose Christ came into the world.

2. The Reasons for Justification by Faith - Romans 3:25b-27

After presenting the characteristics of justification by faith, Paul turns to the reasons for justification by faith.

a. It Exonerates God's Forgiveness of Past Sins - Romans 3:25b

3:25 . . . to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;

The first reason God has designed justification to be by faith is that it exonerates His forgiveness of past sins. The pagan gods of Paul's day were very much like men. They had weaknesses, flaws, and were considered to be very capricious at times. They required a code of conduct from men that they themselves broke. To counter the argument that the God of Israel was just as capricious as the pagan gods, Paul states that the death of Christ not only provides forgiveness for current sins, but it also provides forgiveness for sins that are past.

Probably the best way to think of this is in terms of the accounting world. Whenever we sin, we incur a debt with God that must be paid. This holds true for all men, even for those men of God in the Old Testament. Because the sins of the Old Testament saints were not "paid for", they were unable to enter the presence of God at death. Instead they went to a place called paradise, there to remain until their debt of sin was paid for by the coming sacrifice of Christ. In a sense, God held their "bill" until Christ paid it in full on the cross. In Romans 4:3 the word translated "reckoned" is the Greek word *logizomai*. It was used

commonly to refer to the crediting of payment to one's debt. We get our word "logistics" from this. In other words, as each Old Testament saint sinned, that sin was put on an account with the entry "to be paid for by Christ." When Christ died on the cross, all of those debts were canceled as well as the debts of any man that by faith accepts Christ's payment for their sins. Thus Paul's argument is that God is not unjust in forgiving the sin of the Old Testament saints since that sin was paid for by Christ. All God did was to hold the debt until payment was made.

b. It Declares God's Righteousness - Romans 3:26a

3:26a To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness . . .

The second reason for justification by faith is that it declares the righteousness of God. This somewhat connects with the idea expressed in verse 25b since Paul needs to show that God was in no way unrighteous by overlooking the sins of the past. Since the gods of the pagan world were fickle in their exaction of justice, it would be a logical conclusion for the pagans to accuse the God of Israel of the same fickleness. They would point out the gross sin committed in the Old Testament as a "proof" that God was not too serious about sin. After all, David did not die when he committed adultery and murder.

Paul, by showing that the sacrifice of Christ provided covering for the past sins of the Old Testament, shows that God is not unrighteous at all. In fact, the very necessity of Christ's death proves the righteousness of God since sin had to be paid in full.

c. It Declares God's Justice - Romans 3:26b

3:26 . . . that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

The third reason for justification by faith is that it declares God's justice. Since God required payment for sin he was not unjust in forgiving sin. In other words, since the justice of God on man's sin was satisfied by the death of Christ, he is not unjust in forgiving our sin and becoming the justifier of anyone who believes in Jesus.

d. It Excludes Boasting - Romans 3:27

3:27 Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.

The last reason for justification by faith is that it excludes man's boasting. We need to understand that everything in the universe exists solely for the glory of God. Every being, every event, every thing exists for one purpose, God's glory.

Because of this, God designed a plan for salvation that would once and for all exclude the possibility of man boasting about his righteousness or what he did to earn the justification of God. By justifying man through the death of Christ on the cross, God removed the possibility of man earning salvation. Also, because salvation does not depend on

anything man does, it reduces every single human being to the same level. In other words, since we can't earn salvation, it is available to all regardless of personal abilities. If salvation required great intelligence or great strength, many would be disqualified. This is part of the message of Paul in 1 Corinthians 1 and 2 where he shows that salvation is accomplished through the "foolishness" of the cross. Because of this, he says, there are not many mighty, wise, or noble in the body of Christ. By providing salvation solely on the basis of faith, God has made it available to anyone and has excluded the possibility of man boasting for eternity how he earned salvation.

3. The Place of the Law in Justification - Romans 3:28-31

3:28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. 3:29 Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: 3:30 Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. 3:31 Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.

Before launching into a discussion of Abraham as an example of faith, Paul concludes this brief introduction to justification by showing the true place of the law. The reason for this is that by showing a man is justified by faith leaves questions as to the place of the law. Why have a law if justification occurs apart from it's keeping? Since this is a subject of volumes by itself, we will only look briefly at the place of the law in salvation.

Basically, Paul states that the place of the law in justification serves two purposes, 1) it shows man just how far short of the divine standard he falls, and 2) it serves as a basis for conduct for those who have believed in Christ. In fact, Paul show in Romans 7 that it is impossible for him to keep the law of God in his own flesh. He must rely on the indwelling Spirit to give him the power to overcome the sin principle and live in holiness. There is a lot of theology in the preceding sentences so let us look at the major points.

Romans 3:28

The word "therefore" builds on the previous argument, namely that justification is by faith, and since it is by faith, it cannot be by law. This point is made very clear in Romans 11:6 which states "**And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.**" In other words, grace and law are mutually exclusive. If righteousness (or justification) comes by the law, then it cannot come by grace. Conversely, if it is by grace, then it cannot be by law. It is one or the other, but not both.

Romans 3:29-30

The argument that can be made at this point is that there are actually two ways of justification, one by law for the Jew, and the other by grace for the Gentile. Paul emphatically answers no! The mystery of the New Covenant is that both Jew and Gentile are made one body through faith in Christ. As stated so well in Ephesians 2:12-19, especially

verse 14 which reads "**For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us.**" In Christ the division between the Jew and Gentile is dissolved, and both become heirs of the New Covenant through faith in Christ.

Why is this so? Because He is one God (v. 30). God is not two Gods, one for the Jew and the other for the Gentile. He is the same God for both, and both come to Him the same way, through faith.

Romans 3:31

This verse stands as a transitional verse between the arguments of the last part of chapter 3 of Romans and chapter 4. After Paul's exacting treatment of justification by faith, the Jew could argue that the law was meaningless, something that went against everything he was ever taught. In order to counter this argument, Paul states that the doctrine of justification does not nullify the law, in fact it establishes the law. By this, he means that the law attains its true purpose for existence only when understood in light of justification by faith.

Why is this so? It is because the original purpose of the law was never that it become the means of righteousness before God. The law's purpose was to reveal God's divine standard, a standard no man could attain, and as a result force men to cry out to God for mercy. Justification is only available to those who see their need for forgiveness, those that are well do not need a physician. In Romans 5:20 we are told that "**the law entered, that the offense might abound.**" and in Romans 7:7 Paul's personal testimony states "**What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not know sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, THOU SHALT NOT COVET.**" In other words, the law serves as the spotlight in which our sinfulness is exposed. Once we see ourselves for what we really are, God can move in grace to redeem us. Once we are "slain" by the commandment (Romans 7:9), we can become alive to God through faith (Ephesians 2:1-2).