

Romans 3.21-31

“No Better News”

AFTER LONG DARK NIGHT – SUN has RISEN – DAY of GRACE DAWNED
Seems LONG AGO - 1.17 For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed
3.21 BUT NOW a righteousness from God...has been made known

“NOW” – word FILLED WITH MEANING – From the Context of Romans
NOW we know w/out X - DESPERATELY LOST, ABSOLUTELY HOPELESS
3.21 BUT NOW a righteousness from God...has been made known

NOW at this Time in God’s History of Redemption
- that we live in “Day of the Lord” > Covenant fulfilled > Salvation Accomplished

From the Advance of the Gospel to the Nations
NOW that we have the OPPORTUNITY to hear and believe the Gospel of Jesus

1. Good News Proclaimed (2. Good News Practiced)

v. 21-26 Six Tightly Packed Vss / “center and heart of the letter”
LEON MORRIS “possibly the most important single paragraph ever written”

1st time in Letter > Righteousness from God > identified with JUSTIFICATION
v 24 justified freely by his grace v 26 GOD justifies those who have faith in Jesus
v. 28 For we maintain that a man is justified by faith

WORD – comes from LAW COURTS – familiar to those under Roman Law

OPPOSITE = Condemnation – Both Spoken by Judge – ULTIMATE VERDICTS
Movie “Gladiator” – Caesar could give either Thumbs Up or Thumbs Down

JUSTIFICATION is an ACT – not PROCESS – God DECLARES us Justified
GOD makes us “Just as if” WE NEVER SINNED

MORE THAN PARDON – Pardon is NEGATIVE – Removal of Penalty or Debt
Justification is POSITIVE – Receiving a Righteous Status / Restored Relationships

Pardon says “You may go” / Justification says “You may come”
Pardon removes Punishment / Justification means no ground for punishment exists

CALVIN – Justification is “the main hinge on which salvation turns”

a. Planned by God v. 24 (all) are justified freely by his grace

“freely” = WITHOUT A CAUSE / Nothing in us to Merit Salvation > GRACE

FIRST MOVE in the PLAN OF SALVATION – God the Father / before Creation

DO NOT THINK OF GOD AS STINGY GIVER – pull fingers apart to open hand
John 3.16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son

NOT DIVINE After THOUGHT – v. 21 to which the Law and the Prophets testify.

1.2 the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures

ANTICIPATED BY PROMISES > Shocking when it Occurs / Shocking VERSE
4.5 “However, to the man who does not work but trusts *God who justifies the wicked*, his faith is credited as righteousness.”

Appears to CONTRADICT STANDARDS OF OT – Justifies the Wicked!?

Israel’s Judges were WARNED AGAINST THIS > Perversion of Justice
Exodus 23.7 Have nothing to do with a false charge...for I will not acquit the guilty

Proverbs 17.15 “Acquitting the guilty and condemning the innocent-- the LORD detests them both.”

HOW can Paul EXALT IN what God says he will Never Do? – Pervert Justice

GOD DID NOT PERVERT JUSTICE – HE SATISFIED IT COMPLETELY
God can justify the wicked / because He satisfied justice on their behalf

b. Provided by Christ OBEDIENT Response to Father’s Initiative

Heb 10.7 `Here I am--...-- I have come to do your will, O God.'"

“Grace is God loving, God stooping, God coming to the rescue, God giving himself generously in and through Jesus Christ.” STOTT

FOUR IMPORTANT THEOLOGICAL TRUTHS IN THIS PARAGRAPH
Justification – Redemption – Propitiation – Vindication > from the Cross of X

1. **Redemption** – commercial term, borrowed from the marketplace
v 24 justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

OT – used in setting Slaves Free > Israel redeemed from Egypt, Babylon
Isaiah 43.1 “this is what the LORD says-- he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine.”

REDEEMED – set free through payment of a price / frequent OT word, not so NT

THIS WAS HOW JESUS DEFINED HIS MISSION

Mark 10.45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." **RANSOM – REDEMPTION’S PRICE**

BECAUSE JESUS PAID THE PRICE OF OUR SIN > We Belong to Him
KEITH GREEN “There is a Redeemer, Jesus God’s Own Son”

2. **Propitiation** - Religious term, borrowed from the temples

THIS IS THE PROBLEM – for some idea more HEATHEN than Christian
Some believers are embarrassed, even shocked, that this word is applied to God

In fact – unless you are using KJV – will not see term “Propitiation”
RSV – “Expiate” or “expiation” / NIV “sacrifice of atonement”

v. 25 “a sacrifice of atonement” / word appears only 4 times in NT
NIV Note “turn aside his wrath” – Meaning of Propitiation

REASON WHY – term is Unpopular with Some > WRATH of God

“Expiate” – means Cover over Sin – a more comfortable thought
“Propitiate” – turn away God’s wrath, protect from God’s wrath

BUT WE NEED NOTHING LESS

IF 1.18 “The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men”

AND IF 2.5 “you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath”

AND IF 3.5 “God is...bringing his wrath on us”

THEN WE NEED NOTHING LESS THAN A FULL REMOVAL of His WRATH

We have seen – God’s Wrath is PERFECT, PERSONAL, and PUNITIVE

PERFECT – He punishes sinners with clean hands, He remains holy and just

PERSONAL – God is grieved by sin, it is a slap in His face, He responds in wrath

PUNITIVE – just penalty for our sins and offenses

STOTT 3 Distinctions btwn Xtian propitiation & pagan or animistic superstitions.

1) The Need – Pagans say their gods are bad-tempered, moody, need appeasement
Xtian – God’s holy wrath is his principled, predictable, controlled response to evil

2) The Author – Pagans say we must appease the gods we have offended, but how?
Xtian – We cannot please our offended God, Christ must offer Himself in our place

v. 25 “God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement”

3) Accomplishment – pagans say we bribe gods: sweets, offerings, sacrifices
Xtian – no adequate gift, “nothing in my hands I bring, simply to thy cross I cling”

5.8 “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this:

While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

1 John 4.10 “This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.”

STOTT “In sum, it would be hard to exaggerate the differences between the pagan and the Christian views of propitiation. In the pagan perspective, human beings try to placate their bad tempered deities with their own paltry offerings. According to the Christian revelation, God’s own great love, propitiated, his own holy wrath through the gift of his own dear Son, who took our place, bore our sin and died our death. Thus God himself gave himself to save us from himself.”

3. Vindication or Demonstration / PUBLIC REVELATION of God’s Justice

25 He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished, he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just & the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus

CROSS accomplished our Justification, Redemption, and Propitiation
AND the Cross vindicated or demonstrated God’s Just Nature

PAST – sins were left unpunished / some charged God with injustice

Prophet Habakkuk - questioned God's justice - "How long, O LORD, must I call for help, but you do not listen?... Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrong?... the law is paralyzed, and justice never prevails. The wicked hem in the righteous, so that justice is perverted." (1.2-4)

Paul explained to Athenians > NOW is Day of the Lord > Time of VINDICATION
 "In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. 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." (17.30,31)

CROSS reveals God's Justice (attribute) and His Justification (saving activity)

In Christ we are Declared Righteous / by the Cross God justifies the wicked

Through His Blood we are Redeemed / He has propitiated His Righteous Wrath

NO WONDER THAT THOSE WHO GET TO HEAVEN WILL PRAISE HIM!

The APOSTLE JOHN "looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. In a loud voice they sang:
 "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!" Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing:
 "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!"
 (Revelation 5.11-13)

c. Procured by Faith

What price must we pay for this four-fold gift of Salvation? What sacrifice give?

**THAT'S THE VERY REASON THE REDEEMED SAINTS WORSHIP
 WE COULD NEVER PAY THE PRICE – grace freely given by FAITH**

v. 22 righteousness from God comes thru faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe

v. 25 through faith in his blood v. 26 justifies those who have faith in Jesus

v. 28 For we maintain that a man is justified by faith

Definition: Faith > Forsaking All I Trust Him

CALVIN – Faith is “a firm and certain knowledge of God’s mercy toward us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise of Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts through the Holy Spirit”

FAITH is not a WORK > Faith has NO MERIT before God

LAW RIGHTEOUSNESS = Reward for Works

GOSPEL RIGHTEOUSNESS = Gift through Faith

FAITH OF ITSELF IS EMPTY – Issue: Who or What is your faith in?

Man was interviewed for church membership by the Church Board

“What do you believe about salvation?” “I believe what the church believes”

“But what does the church believe?” “The church believes what I believe”

“But just WHAT do you and the church believe?!” “The SAME THING”

“I believe in God!” > NOT ENOUGH – So do the Demons (James 2.19)

FAITH is only AS GOOD AS ITS OBJECT > the Lord Jesus Christ

Justification by Faith Alone = Justification by Christ Alone

LUTHER “Faith apprehends nothing else but that precious jewel Christ Jesus”

JAMES BOICE “Christianity is distinguished categorically from every other human religion. All religions have their distinguishing points, of course. Some call God, the Supreme Being, by a different name. Some emphasize one path to God, some another. Some are mystical, some very ritualistic. But all except Christianity, suppose that there is something human beings can do for the Deity to convince him to save them. They teach a human way to achieve eternity, a man-made ladder to the bliss of the life to come. Only Christianity humbles man by insisting that there is nothing at all we can do to work out our salvation.”

Frank Sinatra sang the theme song for every other religion “I Did it My Way”

2. Good News Practiced

v. 27-31 Paul DEFENDS the Gospel against JEWISH CRITICS

ASKS & ANSWERS 3 Anticipated Questions / on Application of Gospel

What should believers in this gospel look like?

a. **Humble Sinners** - Question 1: v. 27 “Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded”

Paul EXEMPLIFIED Jewish Boasting > brags of his Hebrew Pedigree – Philipp 3
Until he EMBRACED “the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus” 3.8

Ch 1 GENTILES are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant & boastful

PRIDE AFLICTS – Jew and Gentile > Language of our Fallen Self-Centeredness

v. 22 There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God

EITHER YOU GIVE GOD GLORY / OR CLAIM IT FOR YOURSELF

FOOLISH BOASTING – Drowning swimmer boasted when saved by Lifeguard
All swimmer did was lie still and be dragged to safety

ERIC ALEXANDER “The only thing we contribute to the plan of salvation is the sin to make it necessary”

v. 27 Boasting excluded on principle of faith.

v. 28 For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.

BISHOP HANDLEY MOULE “The harlot, the liar, the murderer, are all short of God’s glory; but so are you. Perhaps they stand at the bottom of a mine, and you are on the crest of an Alp; but you are as little able to touch the stars as they”

b. **Second thing the Gospel should do - Unite Believers**

Question 2 About Privileges - v. 29 “Is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith.”

JEWS were very proud of their Privileges

3.1 “What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew...Much in every way! First of all, they have been entrusted with the very words of God.”

LAW given to the Jews – GOSPEL given to all people

PROMISE TO ABRAHAM “all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”

PREACHING OF JESUS “this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations” Matthew 24.14

GROUND AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS IS LEVEL – no privileged positions

Scottish Preacher named Mackay “Someone was once speaking to a rich English lady, stressing that every human being is a sinner. She replied with astonishment, “But ladies are not sinner!” “Then who are?” the person asked her. “Just young men in their foolish days,” was her reply. Then the person further explained the gospel, insisting that if she was to be saved, she would have to be saved exactly like the footman of her coach – by the unmerited grace of God in Christ’s atonement – she retorted, “Well then, I will not be saved!”

TOM WRIGHT “The message is simple; all who believe in Jesus belong to the same family and should be eating at the same table. That is what Paul’s doctrine of justification is all about”

c. 3rd Result of Gospel Faith - Obedient Discipleship – Question 3 / vs. 31

Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law

CONCERN – if you guarantee people they’re going to heaven, they’ll live like hell

LAW can WITNESS to God’s Righteousness > but Can NOT PROVIDE IT

FUNDAMENTAL DEBATE OF REFORMATION

Roman Catholics said – and continue to say

Justification is the ACT OF MAKING A PERSON RIGHTEOUS

JUSTIFICATION occurs at Baptism > cleansed from sin, given righteousness

MOTIVE > FEAR that believers would ABUSE free grace & Live in Sin

CHARGE Paul is addressing in v. 31 and will do later in Chapter 6

LAW says man must BEHAVE / GOSPEL says BELIEVE, Behavior Results

WILLIAM COWPER had Miserable Childhood – 6 yrs old Mother DIED
 Sent to Orphanage – Small & Sensitive Boy – Badgered, Bullied, & Beaten
 Early Years filled with TERRORS and FEARS – Mind Failed / 2 Suicide Attempts

Cowper cried through many dark nights of the soul - “My sin! My sin! Oh for
 some fountain open for my cleansing!” BUT THERE WAS NO FOUNTAIN

1756 – 25 year old William Cowper committed to Asylum run by Dr. Cotton
 At that time in England – Most Asylums were known for Terrible Treatment

Dr. Cotton – WONDERFUL EXCEPTION – gracious, kind, Christian gentleman
 Led Cowper to the Lord Jesus – Our Justification, Our Redeemer, Our Propitiation

COWPER “The happy period which was to shake off my fetters and afford me a
 clear opening to the free mercy of God in Christ Jesus was now arrived. I flung
 myself into a chair near the window, and seeing a Bible there, ventured once more
 to apply to it for comfort and instruction. The first verses I saw were on the third
 chapter of Romans: ‘Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that
 is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his
 blood, to manifest his righteousness.’ Immediately I received strength to believe,
 and the full beams of the Sun of Righteousness shone on me. I saw the sufficiency
 of the atonement he had made, my pardon in his blood, and the fullness and
 completeness of his justification. In a moment I believed and received the gospel.”

Then Cowper wrote his hymn of testimony –

“There is a fountain filled with blood, Drawn from Immanuel’s veins;
 And sinners, plunged beneath that flood, Lose all their guilty stains.

The dying thief rejoiced to see That fountain in his day;
 and there have I, as vile as he, Washed all my sins away.

E’er since by faith I saw the stream, Thy flowing wounds supply,
 Redeeming love has been my theme, And shall be till I die.