

### God's Wonderful Plan of Salvation for Everyone

#### Romans 3:21-31

Romans 3:21-31 - *"But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. <sup>22</sup> This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, <sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup> and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. <sup>25</sup> God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— <sup>26</sup> he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.*

*<sup>27</sup> Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith. <sup>28</sup> For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law. <sup>29</sup> Is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, <sup>30</sup> since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith. <sup>31</sup> Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law."*

#### Background Notes

Let's begin this second half of Romans 3 with some background notes. The theme of Romans is the righteousness of God and the gospel of God. In Romans, the gospel of God is not only proclaimed, it is taught. Romans answers the big question: "How can a righteous and holy God save unholy and unrighteous people?"

To set the stage for the answer to that question, the apostle Paul wrote the first two and a half chapters of Romans to prove, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that all the world is guilty before God. In chapter 1, the uncivilized and uneducated and immoral person is shown to be guilty before God. Romans 1 takes into account the godless heathen and the idolatrous pagans – all are guilty and without excuse before God, because God says that He has given them enough evidence of Himself to respond to the true God. So if anyone ever asks you the often-asked question: "What does the Bible have to say about the poor, ignorant person in Africa or New Guinea?" you should tell them to read Romans 1.

In Romans 2, Paul goes on to show that it is not only the uncivilized and immoral person that is guilty before God, but the good, morally upright, self-righteous person is also guilty before God. Why? Because God's standards are much too high for **anyone** to attain them.

In Romans 2 and in the first half of Romans 3, the religious Jew is also found to be guilty before God. The Jews had the Law of the one true God, but they couldn't keep that Law, so they too are guilty before God.

So all the world is shown to be guilty before God. There is no one who is righteous -- no, not one (Roman 3:10). There is no one who does good -- no, not one (Romans 3:12). So naturally speaking, all hope is gone -- it's only a matter of time before the wrath of God will come and we will all perish. But wait a minute! There is a **"but"** in Romans 3:21 *"But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify."* Praise the Lord! There is a way out! God has a plan of salvation. Salvation is through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. What a wonderful plan of salvation for helpless mankind!

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. God's plan of salvation does not compromise the righteousness of God.

Verse 21: *"But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify."* God's plan of salvation for sinful people doesn't lower God's standards of righteousness. God's righteousness is actually revealed in the gospel. In verse 26 we see that God's plan of salvation demonstrates the righteousness of God, that God might be just and the Justifier of the one who has come to Jesus. To be justified is to be **declared righteous**. God's plan of salvation is so wonderful that God can declare the sinner who believes in Jesus to be righteous -- and yet, at the same time, He can maintain His own righteousness, and not in any way compromise His righteousness!

In verse 31 we read *"Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law."* In other words, does God's plan of salvation in anyway lower the standards of God as seen in the Mosaic Law?" What is the answer? No way! Certainly not! God's plan of salvation actually establishes and upholds the Law because the righteousness of God is not compromised in any way. God's plan of salvation does not compromise the righteousness of God.

### 2. God's plan of salvation is not foreign to the Old Testament.

Verse 21 again: *"But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify."* God's way of salvation, which is by grace through faith, is not something that God dreamed up on the spur of the moment. It is witnessed by the Law and the Prophets -- that is, by the Old Testament Scriptures.

How is God's plan of salvation witnessed by the Old Testament? First of all, think of the sacrifices in the Old Testament. They all pointed forward to the one great Sacrifice to come -- the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. And then, of course, there are the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament that pointed to the Messiah to come and the salvation that He would bring. And think of how God saved people in the Old Testament -- not by works, but by grace through faith. About Abraham's faith, Genesis 15:6 says: *"And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness."* Abraham believed God and it was accounted unto him for righteousness -- by grace through faith.

We will see this point emphasized in Romans 4. God's plan of salvation is not foreign to the Old Testament.

### 3. God's plan of salvation requires faith, but no works.

Verse 22: *"This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe."* Notice that it doesn't say, "The righteousness of God who all who work hard to be good," and it doesn't even say, "the righteousness of God to all who believe and work." No! It says, *"This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe."* Our righteousness comes from God through **faith**! What a wonderful truth! Verse 24: *"and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus."* Notice, no works! Justified **freely** by his grace!

And verses 27-28: *"Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith. For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law."* In other words, faith yes, but **no works**. Now some of you might be thinking, "But what about James 2:26 which says that '*faith without works is dead*'?" Well, in that verse James was talking about or describing the **kind** of faith that saves. Saving faith is not real if it's just mere words, or a mere profession. Saving faith is the **kind** of faith that gives **evidence** of itself by works. But those works don't save -- they are the **result** of salvation! God's plan of salvation requires faith -- but no works.

### 4. God's plan of salvation includes redemption and propitiation.

Verses 24-25: *"And are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished..."* Redemption is the idea of buying or redeeming someone out of the "slave market of sin." We were slaves to sin - - that was our condition before salvation. That is your condition today if you have never trusted Jesus Christ as your Savior.

But the price of our redemption has been paid. What was it? The blood of Christ! The blood of Christ satisfied, or propitiated, the righteous demands of a Holy God, so that the mercy of God and not the wrath of God can be shown to the guilty sinner. That's why God can be just and the Justifier of the one who believes in Jesus. This propitiation was foreshadowed in the Old Testament on the Day of Atonement, when the blood of the atoning sacrifice was placed before God on the Mercy Seat on the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies. God's plan of salvation includes redemption and propitiation.

**5. God's plan of salvation covers sins committed before the cross.**

Verse 25: "God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished..." Does that mean that God swept sin under the rug in Old Testament times? No, certainly not! The idea is that God "passed over" these sins **in the sense of time**. God is not limited by time. God is outside of time. Therefore, when Christ died on the cross for sin, He died for the sin of the world – past, present, and future! So God's plan of salvation covers sins committed before the cross.

**6. God's plan of salvation is for all people.**

Verse 23: "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,<sup>24</sup> and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus." That's the bad news. But now look at verses 29-30: "Is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too,<sup>30</sup> since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith." So God's plan of salvation was not just for the Jews, but for Gentiles also. It's for the whole world! God's plan of salvation is for all people.

**Practical Application**

**You can't jump across the Grand Canyon!**

Let's just suppose that we all decided to try to jump across the Grand Canyon. Of course we would all manage to jump out a few feet, some farther than others -- but we'd **all** die! The best jumpers in the world would jump out much farther than the rest of us, but they would still fall far short of the other side!

We can certainly see this illustration in Romans 3:23: "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God..." We all fall far short of God's standards of perfection -- **far** short! Everyone, no matter how moral they are, falls far short of God's perfect standards. Trying to attain perfect righteousness on our own is like trying to jump across the Grand Canyon – we can't do it!

But God has provided a "Bridge" for us to get across the canyon and attain His righteousness. That Bridge is Christ! Why not take the Bridge -- and live -- because you can't jump across the Grand Canyon!