

## X. HOW WERE BELIEVERS SAVED WHO LIVED UNDER THE OLD COVENANT? Romans 3:21-26

### INTRODUCTION/CON(TEXT).

**Brothers and sisters in Christ, friends and visitors:**

No one has ever been forgiven of their sin and counted righteous before God on the basis of their works, but, rather, through faith in Jesus Christ. **BOYS AND GIRLS**, pay careful attention for this introduction to the sermon (repeat first sentence). How then was any one saved before Christ came to earth? Man was on the earth at least four thousand4 thousand years before Christ became man, lived without sin, died on that cross, and arose from the dead. So was everyone before that saved in a different way? NO! So was no one saved until the New Covenant was established? NO!

**DOCTRINE.** Old Covenant believers were saved by looking forward to what Christ would do, and New Covenant believers are saved by looking back to what Christ has done.

Read **Romans 3:21-26**.

### I. OLD COVENANT BELIEVERS HAD THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST PREACHED TO THEM IN THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS (Romans 3:21-22a).

**Romans 3:21** "But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—22a the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe."

**Paul is not here speaking of the attribute of God's righteousness; He is speaking here of the righteousness of God which He imputes to sinners through faith and then declares them righteous.**

- **Genesis 15:6** "And [Abraham] believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness."
- **Jeremiah 23:5-6** "5 "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. 6 In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called:

'The LORD is our righteousness.'

**This is the righteousness of God that Christ wrought for believers in His sinless life, submissive death, and victorious resurrection and that we get to wear like a robe to make us acceptable to God!**

- **Isaiah 45:8** "Shower, O heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain down righteousness; let the earth open, that salvation and righteousness may bear fruit; let the earth cause them both to sprout; I the LORD have created it."
- **Isaiah 61:10** "I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness..."
- **HENRY:** "There were types, and prophecies, and promises, in the Old Testament, that pointed at this. The law is so far from justifying us that it directs us to another way of justification, points at Christ as our righteousness, to whom bear all the prophets witness."

**However, the full manifestation of the righteousness of God through faith is revealed in Christ in the New Covenant.**

**Romans 3:21** "But now the righteousness of God has been *manifested* apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets *bear witness* to it—22a the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe."

- **ROBERT HALDANE:** "[The righteousness of God through faith in Christ] was darkly revealed in the shadows of the law, and more clearly in the writings of the Prophets; but now [in the New Covenant] it is revealed in its accomplishment. It was manifested in the life and death of Jesus Christ, and was, by His resurrection from the dead, openly declared on the part of God. By Him, who was God manifest in the flesh, it was wrought out while He was on earth. He fulfilled all righteousness; not one jot of the law, either in its precepts or threatenings, passed from it, but all was accomplished."

## USE FOR EXAMINATION

**Q1. Do you possess the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ?**

Do you trust in Christ Jesus alone—*His life, His death, His resurrection*—to take away the guilt of your sin and count you righteous before God?

**BOYS AND GIRLS,** \*clarify and help them memorize justification through faith alone\*

**Q2. What does God see when He looks at you?** Does He see you in your miserable sin or Christ in His perfect righteousness? If you united to Christ by faith, God sees righteousness!

**Q3. Do you realize how good you have it in the New Covenant?**

**Adam** and his posterity had Genesis 3:15.

**Abraham** and his had that plus "in your offspring all nations shall be blessed."

**Moses** and those who came after him had that plus the shadows of Christ in the Mosaic Law.

**The Prophets** and those who came after them had that plus promises of what was to come.

They had promises, prophecies, and shadows of a body hitting the ground from the man standing around the corner. They could tell His shape and size but could not make out His face or give Him a firm embrace.

**But you and I now in the New Covenant!**

The Man has come around. He is no longer vaguely known through promises, prophecies, and shadows. We can see the lines in His face. We can see the color of His eyes. We can smell the scent of His clothes. We can hear the sound of His voice. We fall down at His feet, hold on to them, and worship Him.

## **II. OLD COVENANT BELIEVERS KNEW THEY WERE SINNERS IN THEMSELVES, UNABLE TO BE RECONCILED TO GOD BY THEIR WORKS (Romans 3:22b-23).**

**Romans 3:22b-23** "22b For there is no distinction: 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,"

### **I) Old Covenant believers knew they were sinners in themselves.**

**Romans 3:10-19**

10 as it is written:

"None is righteous, no, not one;

11 no one understands;  
no one seeks for God.

12 All have turned aside; together they have become worthless;  
no one does good,  
not even one."

13 "Their throat is an open grave;  
they use their tongues to deceive."

"The venom of asps is under their lips."

14 "Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness."

15 "Their feet are swift to shed blood;

16 in their paths are ruin and misery,

17 and the way of peace they have not known."

18 "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

### **II) Old Covenant believers knew they were unable to be reconciled to God by their works.**

**Psalms 51:1-2**

"1 Have mercy on me, O God,

according to your steadfast love;  
according to your abundant mercy  
blot out my transgressions.  
2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,  
and cleanse me from my sin!"

**OLD COVENANT BELIEVERS KNEW THEY WERE SINNERS IN THEMSELVES, UNABLE TO BE RECONCILED TO GOD BY THEIR WORKS (Romans 3:22b-23).**

### USE FOR WARNING

You were created to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. That is your intended purpose. In your sin, you are fighting against glorifying God and seeking to glorify yourself or someone else or something else. **This will not work out well for you.**

*The King does not remedy treason with winks but with wrath.*

"The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23a).

### BOYS AND GIRLS

You need to be forgiven of your sin through Christ so you can be reconciled to God, and then both glorify Him and enjoy Him! This is true joy.

"The wages of sin is death but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus" (Romans 6:23).

## III. OLD COVENANT BELIEVERS WERE JUSTIFIED BY GOD'S GRACE AS A GIFT, AS THEY LOOKED TO CHRIST IN FAITH, AND THE PROPITIATION BY HIS BLOOD, THROUGH THE SHADOWS (Romans 3:24-25a).

**Romans 3:24-25a** "24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith."

- **HENRY:** "[Christ] is all in all in our reconciliation, not only the maker, but the matter of it—our priest, our sacrifice, our altar, our all. God was in Christ as in his mercy-seat, reconciling the world unto himself."

### I) Old Covenant believers were justified by God's grace as a gift.

- **Psalms 32:2**

"1 Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven,  
whose sin is covered.

2 Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity. . ."

- **Genesis 15:6** "And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness."

**II) Old Covenant believers looked to Christ in faith through the promises and types and prophecies.**

- **John 8:56** "Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad."

**III) Old Covenant believers knew that the animal sacrifices could not take away their sin and that they needed a better propitiation.**

- **Psalms 40:6** "In sacrifice and offering you have not delighted, but you have given me an open ear.  
Burnt offering and sin offering  
you have not required."

*OLD COVENANT BELIEVERS WERE JUSTIFIED BY GOD'S GRACE AS A GIFT, AS THEY LOOKED TO CHRIST IN FAITH, AND THE PROPITIATION BY HIS BLOOD, THROUGH THE SHADOWS*

ON THE OTHER HAND,

**New Covenant believers are justified by God's grace as a gift, as we look to Christ in faith, and the propitiation by His blood, at the body.**

- **Colossians 2:17** "[The Law was] a shadow of the things to come, but the body belongs to Christ."

**IV. OLD TESTAMENT BELIEVERS WERE FORGIVEN OF THEIR SINS BECAUSE OF WHAT CHRIST WOULD DO; NEW TESTAMENT BELIEVERS ARE FORGIVEN BECAUSE OF WHAT CHRIST HAS DONE (Romans 3:25b)**

**Romans 3:25b-26** "25b This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. 26 It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."

**I) Old Covenant believers were forgiven of their sins because of what Christ would do in their future.**

- **Romans 3:25b** "in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins."

**II) New Covenant believers are forgiven of our sins because of what Christ has done in our past.**

- **Hebrews 12:1-2** "1 Let us...lay aside every weight, and sin which clings

so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."

### **BOYS AND GIRLS, recap points.**

**Romans 11:33-36** "Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

"For who has known the mind of the Lord,  
or who has been his counselor?"

"Or who has given a gift to him  
that he might be repaid?"

For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen."

## **CONCLUDING QUESTIONS**

**Q1.** Do you see the righteousness of God through faith born witness to in the Law and the Prophets? Do you see the righteousness of God perfectly manifested in Jesus Christ?

**Q2.** Do you see that there is no distinction; that you have sinned and fall short of the glory of God?

**Q3.** Do you see justification by God's grace given to the Old Covenant believers, as they looked through the shadows to Christ (Lev. 16)? Do you see the substance, the very body, Christ Jesus Himself who cast the shadows, who made propitiation for a sinner like you? ***DID HE MAKE PROPITIATION BY HIS BLOOD FOR YOU?*** Then what grace God has given you, and will never take it away!

**Q4.** Do you see God's manifest justice, having forgiven Old Covenant believers by what would happen to Christ, and New Covenant believers because of what has happened to Christ?

***Oh that we would sit at the feet of God and wonder at this glorious gospel!***

***God has made a way to be both just and the justifier!***

***He can receive you into His love without compromising His justice.***

***This is glory that you can never exhaust. These are things into which the angels long to look.***

***Look! Look at Christ! Cling to Christ! Celebrate Christ! Preach Christ! Glory in Christ!***

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## **PURITAN AND REFORMED QUOTES ON ROMANS 3:21-26 AND JUSTIFICATION**

### **John Calvin (1509–1564)**

- "This is the hinge on which the whole epistle turns... Here Paul explains how God is righteous and yet justifies the sinner."  
Calvin, John. 1960. *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and to the Thessalonians*. Translated by Ross Mackenzie. Edited by David W. J. G. McDonald. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 299.
- "The righteousness of God is not that by which He Himself is righteous, but that by which He makes us righteous... It is called the righteousness of God because it is bestowed upon us by God."  
Calvin, John Calvin. 1960. *Romans*, 301–302.

### **Thomas Goodwin (1600–1680)**

- "In this text is the sum of the gospel... All the attributes of God meet here in their highest glory: justice satisfied, mercy triumphant, truth vindicated."  
Goodwin, Thomas. 1861–1866. *The Works of Thomas Goodwin*. Vol. 8, *An Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans*. Edinburgh: James Nichol, 314.
- "God is 'just, and the justifier.' Here is the great mystery of the gospel: that the Judge Himself provides the ransom, and so remains just while He justifies the ungodly."  
Goodwin, Thomas. 1861–1866. *Works*, 8:318.

### **John Owen (1616–1683)**

- "The righteousness whereby we are justified is the righteousness of Christ imputed unto us... This is the righteousness of God in Romans 3:21–22."  
Owen, John. 1850–1853. *The Works of John Owen*. Vol. 5, *Justification by Faith*. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth (reprint 1965), 178.

- "Propitiation is the appeasing of the wrath of God by the blood of Christ... This is the plain meaning of ἱλαστήριον in Romans 3:25."  
Owen, John. 1850–1853. *Works*, 10: *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*, 208–209.

### **George Whitefield (1714–1770)**

- "Romans 3:25 is the very marrow of the gospel... Here you see God just and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus."  
Whitefield, George. 1771–1772. *The Select Sermons of George Whitefield*. London: Edward & Charles Dilly, 184–185 (Sermon: "The Lord Our Righteousness").

### **Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758)**

- "The justice of God that is glorified in this way of salvation is His distributive justice... This is eminently manifested in the gospel scheme in Romans 3:26."  
Edwards, Jonathan. 1834. *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*. Vol. 2. Edited by Edward Hickman. London: Ball, Arnold & Co., 563 (Miscellany No. 987).

### **Charles Hodge (1797–1878)**

- "The grand doctrine of justification by faith alone... is the hinge on which the whole Pauline system of doctrine turns. Romans 3:21–26 is the most complete statement of it in the Bible."  
Hodge, Charles. 1835. *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*. Philadelphia: Grigg & Elliot, 1835 (reprint Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950), 93.
- "The words 'just and the justifier' contain the whole gospel in a nutshell."  
Hodge, Charles. 1950. *Romans*, 99.

### **Robert Murray M'Cheyne (1813–1843)**

- "Learn to know Christ crucified... Learn to look at the cross until Romans 3:26 becomes the sweetest verse in the Bible: 'that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.'"  
M'Cheyne, Robert Murray. 1848. *Additional Remains of Robert Murray M'Cheyne*. Edinburgh: William Whyte, 312 (letter dated 1840).

### **Charles Spurgeon (1834–1892)**

- "I have often said, and I shall keep on saying it, that Romans 3:26 is the greatest verse in the Bible: 'To declare, I say, at this time his



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

Spurgeon, Charles H. 1858. *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*. Vol. 24. London: Passmore & Alabaster, 188 (Sermon No. 1,398, "Just and the Justifier").

- "If you take away the doctrine of the imputed righteousness of Christ, you have robbed the gospel of its choicest jewel."  
Spurgeon, Charles H. 1860. *New Park Street Pulpit*. Vol. 6, 337 (Sermon No. 336).

### **John Murray (1898–1975)**

- "Romans 3:21–26 is the heart of the Epistle and the citadel of the Christian faith... Here is the divine solution to the divine dilemma."  
Murray, John. 1959. *The Epistle to the Romans*. Vol. 1. New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 110.
- "Propitiation presupposes wrath... The doctrine of propitiation is precisely the doctrine that God loved the objects of His wrath so much that He gave His own Son to avert His wrath from them."  
Murray, John. 1959. *Romans*, 116.

### **Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899–1981)**

- "Romans 3:21–31 is the most important passage in the whole of Scripture on the doctrine of justification... If you get this wrong, you have got everything wrong."  
Lloyd-Jones, D. Martyn. 1970. *Romans: An Exposition of Chapter 3:20–4:25 – Atonement and Justification*. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 17.
- "This passage is the 'mighty Atlas' upon which the whole of Christianity rests. Everything stands or falls here."  
Lloyd-Jones, D. Martyn. 1970. \*Romans 3:20–4:25, 18.

### **R. C. Sproul (1939–2017)**

- "Romans 3:21–26 is the center of the center of the Bible... Here we see the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith."  
Sproul, R. C. 1994. *The Gospel of God: An Exposition of Romans*. Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus, 89.
- "The greatest exchange in human history took place at Calvary: Christ became sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor 5:21; cf. Rom 3:21–26)."  
Sproul, R. C. 1994. *The Gospel of God*, 93.

## **Historic Confessions & Catechisms**

- "Those whom God effectually calleth, he also freely justifieth... by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them, they receiving and resting on him and his righteousness by faith" (1689 London Baptist Confession 11.1, quoting Rom 3:24–25).
  - "Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein he pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone" (Westminster Shorter Catechism Q. 33, citing Rom 3:24–25; 4:6–8).
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## STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### Foundational Questions (Humanity's Need and the Impossibility of Salvation by Works)

1. According to the sermon, what two things does every human being desperately need in order to stand before the holy God?  
(Answer: forgiveness of sins + a perfect positive righteousness.)
2. Why is it impossible for any mere human being (including Adam, Abraham, Moses, or David in themselves) to provide these two things through their own obedience?
3. The preacher says, "No one has ever been forgiven of their sin and established a perfect righteousness...through their own works." How does this truth destroy every form of works-righteousness (Moralism, Roman Catholicism, Arminianism, Judaism, Islam, etc.)?

### One Way of Salvation in All Ages

4. The sermon strongly rejects dispensationalism's "multiple ways/plans of salvation." In your own words, explain the Reformed Baptist answer to the question: "How were Old Testament saints saved?"
5. What does the preacher mean when he says Old Testament believers were saved by "looking forward to what Christ would do" while New Testament believers are saved by "looking back to what Christ has done"? Is this a difference in method or only in clarity?
6. Read Genesis 15:6, Psalm 32:1–2, and Romans 4:1–8. How do these verses prove that justification by faith alone (imputed righteousness) was the way of salvation even under the Old Covenant?

### Exegetical Questions on Romans 3:21–26

7. In verse 21 Paul says the righteousness of God has been "manifested apart from the law." What does "apart from the law" mean, and how can

Paul immediately add “although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it”?

8. What is “the righteousness of God” in this passage? Why is it critical to understand that Paul is not speaking of God’s attribute of justice but of the gift-righteousness earned by Christ and imputed to believers?

9. Explain the meaning of the three key salvation words in vv. 24–25:

- Justification
- Redemption
- Propitiation

How do these three words summarize the entire gospel?

10. Verse 25 says God “passed over former sins” in His divine forbearance. How does the cross of Christ vindicate God’s justice for forgiving David, Abraham, and every other Old Testament believer?

11. Verse 26 is the climax: God is both “just and the justifier” of the one who has faith in Jesus. How does penal substitutionary atonement solve the greatest problem in the universe—namely, how can a holy God declare guilty sinners righteous without compromising His own justice?

### **The Continuity of the Covenant of Grace**

12. Why does the preacher say the Judaizers, the Pharisees, and first-century Jews who demanded circumcision + faith in Christ were actually misunderstanding the Old Covenant rather than correctly understanding it?

13. Read Hebrews 10:1–4 and Psalm 40:6–8. Why did no true Old Testament believer ever ultimately trust in animal sacrifices for the final removal of sin?

14. How does the sermon use John 8:56 (“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day...”) to prove that Abraham was consciously looking to Christ?

### **Personal Application & Examination**

15. The preacher repeatedly calls the congregation to self-examination: “Do you possess the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ alone?” How would you answer that question right now, and what evidence in your life demonstrates that you are resting in Christ alone?

16. When God the Father looks at a justified believer, what does He see (use Isaiah 61:10 and the sermon’s “robe of righteousness” imagery)?

17. Why do Christians (especially in the Bible Belt) constantly drift back toward works-righteousness, and how does the doctrine of justification by faith alone function as daily medicine for the soul?

18. The preacher says we in the New Covenant era have far greater clarity than Old Testament saints. List at least five ways the gospel is clearer to us than it was to David or Isaiah. How should this produce humility or pride in us?

## **Polemical / Confessional Questions**

19. Martin Luther called justification by faith alone "the article on which the church stands or falls." Why did the preacher say Roman Catholicism, by anathematizing this doctrine (Council of Trent), proves itself to be a false church?
20. If someone says, "I trust in Jesus, but I also have to be baptized / take the Lord's Supper / obey the law / do penance, etc., to be finally saved," how would you use Romans 3:21–26 to show that they are still under God's wrath?

## **Evangelistic Questions (for use in small groups or personal witnessing)**

21. Imagine a friend says, "People in the Old Testament were saved by keeping the Law and doing animal sacrifices, but now we're saved by faith in Jesus." How would you correct them using this passage and sermon?
22. Using only Romans 3:21–26, explain the gospel in 3–4 minutes to an unbeliever as clearly as you can.

## **Bonus Pastoral / Preaching Question**

23. The preacher quotes Lloyd-Jones, Luther, and Calvin calling this passage "the hinge on which the gospel swings," "the mighty Atlas," and "the article on which the church stands or falls." Why is Romans 3:21–26 worthy of such exalted language, and why must every single sermon in a Reformed Baptist church make justification by faith alone "abundantly clear"?

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## **SERMON TRANSCRIPT**

Brothers and sisters in Christ, friends, visitors, mankind stands in great need because God created us in his image and likeness. He created us to glorify him and to enjoy him. And our very first parents, Adam and Eve, almost immediately rebelled against the Lord. Fell into sin and chose not to glorify and enjoy the Lord, but to rebel against the Lord. And Adam as our representative, our first father, plunged all of us through sin into death, decay, and darkness. And the thing that every single person needs is to have their sin taken away forgiveness. Every single person who has ever lived other than the God man Jesus Christ needs to have their sin taken away. both Adam's sin, Adam's guilt that we inherit because he represented us and our actual sins that we have committed. We need to have forgiveness and not only forgiveness and like have our slate wiped clean. Every single person needs to have perfect righteousness by which they can actually

stand before God and be acceptable to the thrice holy God who is not just holy, not just holy, holy, but holy, holy, holy. So that is the great need of everyone since the fall is to have sins taken away through forgiveness and have a righteousness established. And the only way you have righteousness like that is perfect obedience to the perfect law of God that you were created to obey and that you were designed to function in accordance with. And no one, hear me, no one has ever been forgiven of their sin and established a perfect righteousness by which they can be acceptable to God through their own works. No ordinary human being has ever been able to do something that God will say, "You deserve forgiveness."

So, no one has ever had their sin taken away and been accepted as righteous before God on the basis of their works. Adam, no. Abraham, no. Moses, no. David, no. You, no. Me, no. No one ever. The only way anyone has ever been forgiven of their sin and counted righteous before God is through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Adam, Abraham, Moses, David, anyone who is ever been saved, reconciled to God, forgiveness and righteousness has been saved through trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ. Boys and girls, look up here at me. Pay careful attention to this. Every one of you and me, everyone who is ever lived needs to have their sins forgiven and have righteousness by which they can stand before God. We can stand before God and he would see no sin but see perfect righteousness like we have done exactly what we should do. What is right? Everyone needs that. And no one has ever been able to achieve that. No mere man or mere girl or boy like you and me. No one has ever been able to do that through their own effort, their own works. The only way anyone children, the only way anyone goes to heaven, the only way anyone is saved is by trusting in Jesus Christ and what he has done in their place. You understand that? Nobody can be saved by their own works, by their own effort. So, boys and girls, adults, does that mean before Jesus Christ came to the earth and lived without sin, died on the cross for the sins of rebels and arose from the dead? Does that mean before he came and did that that no one was ever saved? If the only way anyone has ever been saved is through faith in Jesus Christ, what do you do with the at least 4,000 years of mankind living on this earth before the Lord Jesus Christ became a man, lived, died, and arose. Now, many people, especially in the last couple of hundred years, have fallen prey to something called dispensationalism. And it is a false teaching that teaches that God has dispensed different ways of human beings being saved all throughout history. And so traditional dispensationalism uh would teach that there are like seven different ways that you would be forgiven of your sin and counted righteous before God and you know different dispensations. And so that is how they would try to work through that problem. was like, "Uh, how does anybody get saved before Jesus came?" we are like, "Well, if they obeyed this covenant, they would be saved. This covenant, this covenant, different dispensations." that is just totally false. Totally wrong. No one is ever been saved except through faith in Jesus Christ. So, if you are saying Jesus had to come, live, die, and arise before anybody could be saved, then the answer would be like no one was saved before Christ

came. Period. But we know that David was saved. We know that Moses was saved. We know that Enoch was saved. We know that multiple people in the Old Testament were actually saved. Elijah went to char went to heaven in a chariot of fire. He did not even die. So, how were they saved before Christ came? This these are questions that you may think are silly but you need to understand that a majority of Christians especially in the Bible belt do not really understand this. They read in the New Testament to where the whole book of Hebrews is written particularly to Jewish Christians in the first century helping them understand that you cannot be saved through the law. You cannot be saved through the animal sacrifices. You cannot be saved through all these means. You could only be saved through Jesus Christ. And what those things pointed to and what people think is, okay, so they could be saved before Jesus came, they could be saved in those ways, but now that Jesus came, they cannot be saved in those ways anymore. No, no, no. Or you go read the book of Galatians and it was the Judaizers who were Jewish people in the first century who were infiltrating the churches and trying to say you have to be circumcised and trust in Jesus to be saved. You have to follow these specific Mosaic laws and trust in Jesus in order to be saved. And Christians today go, "Well, that is how it used to be, but now that Jesus has come, we are not saved in those ways anymore." like no that is that is not it either. The whole point of Hebrews is the apostle to the Hebrews is writing and saying you guys have totally missed the point of the old covenant. No one was ever saved through those ways. So the first century Jews had so far distorted the truth of the old covenant that Paul has to write Galatians and that Paul I believe Paul wrote Hebrews. Whoever wrote Hebrews wrote the letter to the Hebrews to help them understand. it is not as if adults, I hope you are following me. it is not as if he is saying, "It used to be like this, but now it is different." he is saying, "You do not even understand how it used to be." The Judaizers in Galatia, they did not understand it properly. The Pharisees in Jesus day when Jesus has to combat them, it is not as if they were understanding it properly. And Jesus is saying, "I am switching it all up and it is new." His conflict with the Pharisees is not they properly understood it and he is like, "You guys do not understand. I am switching everything up." No, he is constantly combating them because like you guys do not understand this. You do not understand the old covenant. you are misinterpreting it, misapplying it. you are trying to teach people that they are saved through their obedience to the law. And that is never been how it was. So the conflict in with the Galatian churches that Paul has to write the book of Galatians to correct the whole letter to the Hebrews and Jesus constant conflict with the Pharisees is not Jesus saying you guys do not get it. I am changing things. No, it is Jesus saying you guys do not get it. You were totally wrong in your application of the old covenant because no one has ever been saved through their own works but always through faith in Jesus Christ. So, the questions that come up uh was man was on the earth at least 4,000 years before Christ came. Does that mean everyone before Christ came uh was saved in a different way than through Christ? Answer, no. Okay. Does that therefore mean since no one is ever been saved except through Christ, does that therefore mean

no one was saved before Christ came? Also no. And this passage of scripture, Romans 3:21-26 that we are looking at today, this is one of the clearest passages to help you understand. No one is ever been saved except through Christ. And there were people before Christ came who were actually saved by what Christ would do. So it helps piece together all these things and understand the old covenant, how people were saved while they lived under the old covenant in the Old Testament, how people are saved now. And just you need to know that this is one of the clearest and most important passages on the clarity of the gospel in all of the Bible. Romans 3:21-26. It answers so many. It answers how you can be saved. It answers what God has done in sending Jesus. What particularly what was happening on the cross? Why did Jesus die? What was going on? If you are like me and you like CS Lewis, I love CS Lewis, but he was super wrong about some stuff. Lewis says about the cross of Jesus Christ, there are a bunch of different theories about what is happening there. All we know for sure is that God saves us through what was happening there. So he did not want to say no it was penal sub God saved us from like Lewis stick to other stuff. We do know exactly what was happening there and this is one of the clear passages of what was happening on the cross. So this is something that John Calvin, the great reformer of the 16th century, said this passage is the hinge on which the gospel swings. Like you take the hinges off, the door falls down. This is the clear, very clear passage on the gospel. It answers how you can be saved. It answers how people were saved before Christ came. Why? And it just leaves us, if we read it and understand it in faith, just going, "Wow. just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. So it is the hinge Calvin said on which the gospel swings. Uh Martin Luther said this article the doctrine of justification through faith alone. Luther an other great reformer of the 16th century said justification is the article upon which the church stands or falls. If you do not get this passage right, if you do not understand justification through faith alone, I think Luther was right. The church totally false. that is why the Roman Catholics are not a true church. it is a false church. Why? Because they get justification wrong. They not only kind of get it wrong, they anathematize the right understanding of justification. Meaning, they say, "If you believe justification through faith alone in Christ alone, you are going to hell. what we believe, what we understand, what the scripture teaches, especially here in Romans 3:21-26. Rome says, "If you believe that, you are going to hell. If you teach that, you are going to hell." This is the article upon which the church stands or falls. Martin Lloyd Jones was, I think, the greatest preacher of the 20th century. He preached through the book of Romans on Friday nights at his church building when he finished preaching through Romans and like tediously very very slowly. You can still listen to the recordings today and it is amazing. he is phenomenal preacher. preaches through the entire book of Romans and when he finishes it, he starts taking his notes and writing them up so that it can be published as books. And now I believe it is like eight volumes of just the written sermons that he walks really slowly through the book of Romans. He finishes this long series. I cannot remember how many years it took him. It was unreal. But he finishes that and

wants to turn all these sermons into written form so that it is more easy to pass down to people like us. And he did not start in Romans 1:1 because he was a little bit older when he finished it. He started transcribing it in Romans 3:21. Said, "I might die soon. And if I am going to write down and publish something, what I have got to get written down and published is this passage of scripture. Romans 3:21-26. that is where we got to go first because this is the clearest and most important passage to really understand how amazing the gospel is. This passage especially in the doctrine of justification, how believers were saved under the old covenant, how we are saved in the new. This is the mighty atlas. This passage is what holds it up and shows with great clarity that holds the weight of what Christ was doing on the cross, why it matters. So read it with me. I will tell you what the doctrine is and then I will show you in particular what we need to learn. Romans 3 21- 26. This is God's word. But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law. Although the law and the prophets bear witness to it, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified by his grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness because in his divine forbearance, he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. This is God's word. Praise be to God. So what is the doctrine we should understand from these verses? Especially when we are considering how were believers saved who lived under the old covenant. This is the summary of what you should understand from these verses. Old covenant believers were saved by looking forward to what Christ would do. And new covenant believers are saved by looking back to what Christ has done. Old covenant believers were saved by looking forward to what Christ would do. And new covenant believers are saved by looking back to what Christ has done. Now look and let me point out the specifics that you and I should grab here and try to understand what he is saying. Look starting at verse 21. But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law. Although the law and the prophets bear witness to it, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. But now he means in the times of the gospel. Now that Christ has come, lived, died, arisen. But now, that is what he is talking about. But now, now that the new coven covenant has been established, the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law. Although the Old Testament bears witness to it. So the righteousness of God, what does he mean by the righteousness of God here? This is crucial. If you want to understand this passage, look in my eyes. Really lock in right here. When he says the righteousness of God, he is not talking about God's attribute of righteousness. God is righteous. that is God's perfection of righteousness. that is not what he is talking about right here. When he says the righteousness of God has been manifested now in the gospel, he is talking about the righteousness of God by which he gives to believers so that they are accepted in his sight. he is not talking



about the attribute of God's righteousness. he is talking about the righteousness of God that Christ worked in his life, death, and resurrection by which you and I receive his righteousness and were counted righteous before God. he is not talking about the attribute. he is talking about the works of Christ that are called the righteousness of God that are given to us. How do we know that he is not talking about God's attribute of righteousness, but he is talking about the righteousness by which we are saved? Look again. But now in the gospel, in the new covenant, the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law. Although the law and the prophets bear witness to it. Now he clarifies the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. So he is talking about the righteousness that gets imputed, gifted to believers and that we receive through faith in Christ and are made accepted acceptable to God. But notice that he says this righteousness, the righteousness by which we are saved, we need our sins taken away and we need our righteousness. And that righteousness is what Christ worked in his life in our place as our substitute. Not only on the cross, Christ is our substitute in his perfect life in obedience to God's law. What he is saying here is it has been manifested now clearly apart from the law. But then he says, notice although the Old Testament, the law and the prophets, they also make clear the righteousness by which anybody can be saved. It also bears witness to it. The law and the prophets bear witness to the fact that we can be counted righteous before God through faith. that is what he is saying. Now, the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law. Although the law and the prophets preach it. The law and the prophets also preach justification through faith alone in Christ alone. Listen to Genesis 15:6. Abraham believed the Lord. Believed, trusted the promise of God. Abraham believed the Lord and he counted it to him as righteousness. Abraham trusts in the Lord's promise and just through faith in the promise, the Lord declares him righteous, gives him the righteousness of God. So it is revealed even in the law and the prophets. But now it is been manifested apart from *that*. The righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. here is the point you need to grab from verses 21 and the beginning of verse 22. Old covenant believers had the righteousness of God through faith in Christ preached to them in the law and the prophets. No one who properly understood the scriptures while they lived under the old covenant thought that you could be counted righteous before God through your own works. No, no one ever thought that. No believer. In the same way today, no Christian, no actual born again Christian thinks that you can work your way up to salvation through your own works. Like no one thinks that who is actually a Christian. If you think that, you are not a Christian. A true Christian knows. We rest. We trust in Christ alone for salvation. I do not trust in my effort. Not through my effort am I forgiven, but through trusting in what Christ has done am I forgiven and counted righteous. But there are people who profess to be Christians today who live and believe that I can be acceptable to God through my works. and we would just say, "Yeah, they are just wrong." But they are not a real believer. So it was in the Old Testament and even especially in the first century, there were people who

are wrong and said, "I can make myself acceptable to God through my obedience to the law." it is like, well, that was not right. They were wrong about it because they had the same thing preached to them in the Old Testament. Abraham is the prime example of that and that is what Paul goes to in Romans 4, proving it especially to the Jews. it is like you guys who think you can be acceptable to God through your law-keeping. it is like Abraham was not. Abraham believed the Lord and the Lord counted it to him as righteousness. Listen to Jeremiah 23:5 and 6. So we have it in the law. that is Genesis. And he also says the law and the prophets bear witness to the fact that we can be counted righteous before God through faith in Jesus Christ. Jeremiah 23:5-6. Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous branch. This is talking about the Lord Jesus Christ. He shall reign as king and deal wisely and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days, Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called. The Lord is our righteousness. Not the Lord is righteous. Not the Lord reveals righteousness. Not even the Lord provides righteousness. The Lord is our righteousness. The righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. So old covenant believers had this same message preached to them. you are not saved through your works. you are saved through the righteousness of God being given to you as you trust in Christ. Isaiah 45:8, "Shower, O heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain down with righteousness. Let the earth open that salvation and righteousness may bear fruit. Let the earth cause them both to sprout. I the Lord have created it." Salvation and righteousness are all are frequently connected together under the old in the revelation of God in the old covenant. Isaiah 61:10, I will greatly rejoice in the Lord. My soul shall exalt in my God for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation. He has covered me with the robe of righteousness. Salvation. Righteousness. This is the righteousness of God that he is talking about in verse 21. Not the attribute, but the righteousness he gifts to us through faith in Jesus Christ. So, they had it preached to them while they lived under the old covenant. And we have the same thing preached to us now that we live in the new covenant, though with much greater clarity. They had I mean, just think with me. We have passages like this. God put forward Jesus Christ as a propitiation. And when you understand what that word means, which I will explain to you in a few minutes, you get it clearly to be received by faith. it is like, wow, that is simple. All who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ will be saved. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree. it is like, that is pretty clear. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whosoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. Look, that is pretty clear.

We have the clarity of this preached to us in the New Testament. It was revealed under the Old Covenant, but now in the New, it is just crystal clear right before our eyes. So the full manifestation of the righteousness of God through faith is revealed in Christ in the new covenant. I want you to examine yourself by this. Old covenant believers had the righteousness of God through faith in Christ preached

to them and the law and the prophets. Now we have it still preached to us in the full manifestation of it, the clarity of it because Christ has accomplished that righteousness that we need to stand before God. I want you to just ask yourself, do I possess the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ? You do not need to simply only understand what I have said so far, that you need to have all your sins taken away and you need to have a righteousness given to you. You do not need to just understand that. You need to possess that. That needs to belong to you. You have to have the righteousness of God. And the way you have the righteousness of God given to you is that you trust in Christ alone for salvation as he is offered to you in the gospel. that is it. If you try to earn it, if you try to work for it, if you say, "If I get baptized, then I will be justified. If I take the Lord's supper, then I will be justified before God. If I whatever, fill it in. Fill in the blank. Anything other than trusting faith in the Lord Jesus Christ alone for salvation, you do not have the righteousness of God." Look again at the verse. The righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law. Although the law and the prophets bear witness to it. The righteousness of God through what? Through what? Faith. that is it. that is the only way you can have the righteousness of God given to you. Faith. Resting, trusting in Christ alone. For who? In Jesus Christ. For who? What does the text say? For all who believe. So, it is offered to every single one of you, boys and girls. You need to have your sins forgiven. And you need to have a perfect righteousness given to you. And that righteousness of God that he will gift to you, that will become yours by which God will see you as if you had done everything perfectly. it is given to you through simply trusting in Christ and what he is done. So trust in Christ alone for salvation and you have the righteousness of God through faith for all who believe. Believers, do you possess or just friends in general? If you are a believer, you do possess it. But all of us examine yourself. Do I possess the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ? Another point of examination. What does God see when he looks at you?

What do you think God sees when he looks at you? If you are outside of Christ, if you are an unbeliever, the only thing God sees when he looks at you is a rebel. A rebel who deserves death.

You do not have the righteousness of God given to you. You have the unrighteousness of Adam. You have your own sins, your own rebellion against God. that is what God sees when he looks at you, unbelievers. But what is offered to you is the righteousness of God, a perfect righteousness, a complete forgiveness. If you turn from your sin and trust in Christ alone, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe, that is what is offered to you. But believers, it does not matter how young you are, how old you are, does not matter what your week was like.

If you are united to Christ through faith, God the Father looks at you and sees his own perfect righteousness. You need to just meditate Christians on the fact that

he calls it the righteousness of God. The righteousness of God. The perfect righteousness of God is gifted to you. So when God looks when God the Father looks at you, he sees his son's perfect righteousness. You wear it like a robe. there is a reason RC Sproul was so fond of saying we get to wear the righteousness of Christ like a robe. Well, it is because here Isaiah 61:10 again, I will greatly rejoice in the Lord. My soul shall exalt in my God for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation. He has covered me with the robe of righteousness.

Believer, the simple truth of justification is something that I am going to try to beat into your heads every single week. Luther said, "We have to beat it into the heads of those that we preach to because they forget it so frequently."

When we teach men to preach in shepherd school, that is something that I tell them every single sermon. You have to make sure justification through faith alone in Christ alone is abundantly clear. That you are accepted and forgiven through faith in Jesus Christ and what he is done. Christians, you need to remember that frequently. And that when the father sees you, he sees his own righteousness in you, clothing you as a robe. Another point of examination. Do you realize how good we have it in the new covenant?

The law and the prophets bore witness to the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe that it did. But the full manifestation of it, the clarity of it is now ours. They had to look forward to what Christ was promised to do. We get to look back at what Christ has done.

Adam and his posterity had Genesis 3:15. Can you imagine if that is the only good news you had? Well, one day the seed of the woman will crush the head of the serpent. that is all the good news you had. it is like that is good news. that is all you got. that is all Adam and his posterity had. Abraham and his had that plus in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. Like, so they had the promise of the serpent crusher, then they had the promise of the nation blesser. Like, that is cool. that is all they had. Moses and those who came after him had those plus the shadows of Christ in the Mosaic law. That Christ will actually be a substitute like this animal is for your dwelling in Canaan. That was the shadow of what Christ would do on the cross as our substitute. They had that; that is it. The prophets and those who came after them had those things plus more promises and prophecies of what was to come. They had promises. They had prophecies. They had shadows of a body hitting the ground from the man standing around the corner. They could tell the shape of the man and the size of the man, but they could not make out his face or give him a firm embrace. I just saw a shadow on the ground and he is behind a wall. But not so with you.

You need to realize how great you have it that you were born in the new covenant. In the times of the new covenant, the man has come around the corner and we can

look straight at him. we are no longer looking at shadows or promises. we are not looking at prophecies. The man has come around. He is no longer vaguely revealed. We can see the lines in his face. We can see the color of his eyes. We can smell the scent of his clothes. We can hear the sound of his voice. We can fall down at his feet, hold on to them, and worship him.

Praise God that you were born in the time you were born with the clarity and the full manifestation of the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. It has been manifested now. It has been more fully revealed though it was revealed under the old covenant. But the second thing you need to make note of in this passage, look at the second part of verse 22 and then into verse 23. For there is no distinction. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

That is a really famous verse. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Right? But look at his argument. His argument is it begins with for which means because. And remember his argument right before that was no one is ever been saved through their works. Only way anybody has ever been saved. It was revealed in the law and the prophets. It was revealed in the Old Testament. The righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. So no one is ever been saved through their works in the Old Testament. It was always through faith in Christ. And then he argues because there is no distinction. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. His point is Old Testament believers knew the truth of Romans 3:23. Old Testament believers knew they were totally lost as sinners in themselves and their only hope for salvation was the mercy of God. Nobody in the Old Testament rightly thought they could be saved through their works. that is his point. Romans 3:23 is him saying Old Testament believers know this. They were only saved through faith in the promises, the prophecies. They were only saved through looking forward to Christ. They knew it. there is no distinction. it is only these modern-day—in the first century—Jews who were believing they could be saved through their works. And it had just taken over Judaism. And it totally became something and still to this day is something that it was not supposed to be. they have totally deviated from what God says in the scriptures. that is his point. His point is that old covenant believers knew they were sinners in themselves, unable to be reconciled to God. They knew it.

So you need to look just previous and see how he can just say that so simply and not quote anything from the Old Testament. Like he can just say that and he does not quote anything to back it up. Well, part of part partly because he just said it in verses 10-19. Look at Romans 3:10-19 in your own Bible. he is showing that everyone has sinned and fall short of the glory of God in verses 10-19 by quoting multiple passages from the Old Testament. As it is, excuse me, as it is written, none is righteous, know not one. that is an Old Testament passage. that is not just an exclusive New Testament thing. No one is righteous. No, not one. No one understands. No one seeks for God. All have turned aside. Together they have

become worthless. No one does good, not even one. Their throat is an open grave. They use their tongues to deceive. The venom of asps is under their lips. Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood. In their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes. Stop there.

Old covenant believers knew the same thing that you and I as new covenant believers know that we are sinners in and of ourselves, fallen, lost in Adam. And we are unable to be reconciled to God by our works. They knew it and we know it. So no one thought they could be saved through their works. This is clear in Psalm 51:1-2. You remember when David sins and is convicted of his sin through the ministry of the prophet Nathan and then he has to go write a psalm. He writes Psalm 51. And Psalm 51 starts with this. Have mercy on me, oh God, according to your steadfast love. According to your abundant mercy, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. Hear it again. He has sinned. he is convicted of his sin. How does he respond? Well, I need to offer some animal sacrifices because those can take away my sins. that is not how David responds. I need to obey the law good enough to where I can be forgiven of my sins and counted righteous before God. that is not how they operated. that is how unbelievers operate, not believers. David while living under the old covenant sins and his response is have mercy on me oh God according to your steadfast love according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. Old covenant believers knew the only way they could be reconciled to God was through his mercy and his promised savior, not through their works. So they knew they were sinners in themselves, unable to get back to God by their own works. They knew it had to be through faith. You need to use this truth though. For all have sinned. There is no distinction. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. that is not just true for people living under the old covenant. that is true for you and me today. You need to know the clarity of this. This actually helps us see what sin really is too. What is sin? Think of how normal just everyday people in our c culture in the Bible belt would answer that. What is sin?

Well, in its really specific nature, our catechism says it well. it is lack of conformity to or transgression of the law of God. You do not conform to what God says to do or you do something God says not to do. Right? that is true. that is what sin is and it is a very specific form. But in its essential nature, sin is not glorifying God. that is what sin is. Not glorifying God. that is what he means when he says, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." You and I are meant to aim all of our life in living, thinking, speaking, feeling, choosing everything of who we are and what we do is meant to show how amazing the Lord God is. Meant to get all of our satisfaction from him, to trust in him, to praise him, to delight in him, to glorify him. that is what righteousness really is. To live for the glory of God. And sin is to live or act for the glory of yourself or someone or something else. that is what he means

by fall short of the glory of God. All of sin. what is sin? Not glorifying God. that is why obedience to the law of God is important because how do I glorify God? I love him and keep his commandments. How do I make God look as he truly is? Amazing. I do what he says. You glorify God by loving him and obeying his commandments. But sin is not just like breaking arbitrary rules that God says, "I get to make the rules because I created everyone." Sin is not glorifying God. So you need to learn you were created to glorify God. and enjoy him forever. That is your intended purpose. In your sin, you are fighting against glorifying God and seeking to glorify yourself or someone else or something else. it is more than just you have broken God's rules. Sinner, you who are not yet reconciled to God through faith in Jesus Christ, you are living for yours or someone else's or something else's glory. And this will go very badly for you. The Lord will not permit you to try to rob him of the ascribed glory that he is due. You are fighting against your creator. This will go very badly for you. The wages of sin is death. The king does not remedy treason with winks, but with wrath.

So, you need to be warned away from sin. The wages of sin is death, and all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

You need to be forgiven of your sin through Christ so that you can be reconciled to God and then both glorify him and enjoy him. This is what true joy is. Is glorifying and enjoying God. The wages of sin is death but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus.

Look thirdly and see in verses 24 and 25 that old covenant believers they were justified by God's grace as a gift as they looked to Christ in faith and the propitiation by his blood but they looked to Christ through the shadows. They saw his shadow. They saw the promises. They saw the prophecies. That was it. They did not see the body. They saw the shadow of the body while they were under the old covenant. But anybody who is ever been saved has been justified as his by his grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood to be received by faith. You see that in verses 24 and 25. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. And all anybody who is justified is justified by his grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood to be received by faith. So old covenant believers were justified by God's grace as a gift. David writes of this. We already have it in Genesis 15:6. Abraham believed the Lord and he counted it to him as righteousness. We have David writing about the same thing in Psalm 32:21 and 2. Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity. So David knew it. He was justified by God's grace as a gift. So is Abraham. So were all Old Testament believers. Old covenant believers. What Romans 3:24-25 is saying is they were they looked to Christ through faith and the promises and types and prophecies. They were trusting what Christ was promised and

prophesied to do. This is why in John 8:56, Christ is talking to these first century Jews who are rejecting him, who are saying, "We have Abraham as our father." And he says, "Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad. What? Abraham lived thousands of years before Christ was on the earth. At that point when he said that Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day and he says he saw it. He saw my day and he was glad. Abraham saw with the eyes of faith. He saw Christ through the promise of God that Christ would come and bless all nations. So, old covenant old covenant believers were saved through looking to Christ, though they are looking through the shadows, looking at the promises, looking at the prophecies. Old covenant believers also very explicitly knew that the animal sacrifices could not take away their sin and that they needed a better sacrifice. No one in the old covenant who was actually a believer thought that the animal sacrifices like an animal can actually be a substitute for a human being. They knew that this is pointing to some greater sacrifice that has to come. The only a goat cannot substitute itself for me.

They knew that they were not actually trusting in animal sacrifices even on the day of atonement, but they through those were looking through them to the promised Christ who would come. that is why things like this pop up all the time in Psalm 40:6. In sacrifice and offering, you have not delighted, but you have given me an open ear. burnt offering and sin offering you have not required. it is like why are they degrading the animal sacrifices of the old covenant? Because they know it is like that cannot take away my sin. I need a greater sacrifice. I need a greater propitiation. So look at the word propitiation in verse 25. Whom speaking of Christ God put forward as a propitiation by his blood. This is a word that is only used four times in the New Testament, but the point of this word is all throughout the scripture. Some translations take that Greek word *Hilasterion* and try to translate it into sacrifice of atonement. that is fine. Propitiation though is one of those good words that is an old word we do not use anymore, but we just need to learn it and use it. It means a sacrifice in place of someone else that turns anger into delight. it is a substitute sacrifice that turns the anger, the wrath, the judgment into favor and kindness and delight. So what he is saying is Christ on the cross was a substitute sacrifice by which the father poured out all of his wrath and anger due to us for our sin. And through Christ absorbing that wrath and justice that we deserve. it is taken away and all that is left for us who believe is the delight of God the Father. It turns wrath into favor. that is what propitiation means. it is very clear what he does mean by the fact that he adds he became a propitiation turning wrath to favor by his blood. Like what is he talking about? he is talking about the crucifixion. he is talking about the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. Penal substitutionary atonement. Penal. Christ was being penalized in our place. that is what substitution means as our substitute. Atonement. He was actually paying the price that our sin deserves so that we could be freed from it to be received by what? Faith. God put forward Christ as a propitiation, a sacrifice, turning wrath to favor by his blood. And that sacrifice that Christ offered on the cross becomes



yours through faith, trusting in what Christ has done. And even old covenant believers knew that was coming. They knew that was coming. And so they were saved through what Christ would do for them.

So old covenant believers were justified by God's grace as a gift. They look to Christ in faith and the propitiation by his blood, but through the promises, through the prophecies, through the shadows. On the other hand, we are justified by God's grace as a gift. As we look to Christ in faith and the propitiation by his blood, we get to see the body. They looked at shadows. We see the substance. We see the body. We look at what Christ has done. Now look at the next part of verse 25 and more quickly. See, Old Testament believers were forgiven of their sins because of what Christ would do. Future. New covenant believers are forgiven because of what Christ has done past. This is what I have been telling you the entire time. And now let me show you very clearly in these verses. This was to show God's righteousness, the same righteousness that he talked about in verse 21. Because in his God's divine forbearance, he had passed over former sins.

Christ was, this is what he is saying, Christ was put forward as a propitiation. Christ died on the cross as a substitute of everyone who has ever or will ever believe. And he did that because God had passed over former sins and not carried out the penalty due to Old Testament people for their sins. He had not carried out his wrath on them, but he allowed them to go to heaven. He counted them righteous. He forgave them of their sin and allows them to go to heaven even though Christ had not even died yet. that is what he is talking about. God passed over former sins. And it almost seems like God is unjust because there was no sacrifice in place of those people under the old covenant that was actually an acceptable substitute for them. The blood of bulls and goats cannot take away sins. So, how is God not unjust for allowing David, a murderer, adulterer, to go to heaven? How is God not unjust? there was no sacrifice for David. he is saying, well, God passed over those former sins and took out the penalty due to David and Moses and Abraham and all Old Testament believers, he took it out on Christ on the cross.

So the reason that old covenant believers were saved through the work of Christ is because God in his divine forbearance did not carry out his wrath on those people that he saved under the old covenant, but he stored it up and took it down on Christ. it is amazing. Amazing the mind of God, the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. what is even more amazing is that you and I know the particulars that David and Abraham and Moses and Jeremiah and other prophets and believers under the Old Testament, they did not they did not have any idea. We get details of what Christ went through for us. We get seven things that he spoke out while he is hanging on the cross, paying for our sins.

It was to show God's righteousness because in his divine forbearance, he had

passed over former sins. Verse 26. It was to show his righteousness at the present time so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. This is the dilemma that he answers here. He shows us how Old Testament believers were saved because Christ paid. that is why God saved them by what Christ would do for them. Now we are saved by what Christ has done for us. But he also answers a big question like how can God possibly be just and look at you and declare you just declare you righteous? it is like, how can a judge be just if he has a murderer, a criminal brought before him and all of the evidence is presented and beyond a shadow of a doubt, this man murdered and it is a bench trial and the judge just says, you know what? Innocent. Like, how is that a just judge? he is he is not he is an unjust judge. If he declares someone who is guilty, someone who is defiled, someone who is a traitor, righteous, that is the dilemma Paul's dealing with. it is like, how can God look at you and declare you perfectly righteous as if you had never sinned and as if you had always done perfectly according to his law? How can God be just and still accept you? His point is the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. Because when you trust in Christ alone for salvation, every one of your sins is taken away because Christ paid for it. When you trust in Christ alone for salvation, all of his perfect righteousness that he wrought, that he worked in his life is gifted to you. the righteousness of God so that he can still be just and say justified to someone like you who is not just in and of yourself. it is what Luther called the great exchange. All of our sins go to Jesus. All of Jesus righteousness comes to us so that God can be just, can be righteous and still declare rebels forgiven and counted righteous. That is the article upon which the church stands or falls that we are justified through faith alone in Christ alone. This is the article upon which Old Testament believers stood or fell. They were justified through faith alone in Christ alone by what Christ would do alone. Oh the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways? For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen. Romans 11:33 through 36. Our father in heaven, we ask you to help us properly understand this passage and justification and Christ being put forward as a propitiation. I ask you to give faith to every single person that is here. Open their eyes to the wages of sin, that it is death, that you do not wink at treason, but you pour out your wrath on those who continually rebel against you. Help them to flee from your wrath and go to your son.

We ask you to save all who are unbelievers. Open their eyes to behold your glory shining in the face of Jesus Christ. Cause them to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Help them to see and savor and trust that Jesus himself bore our sins in his body on the tree so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.

Those of us who are already united to Christ through faith, help us to appreciate

the new covenant that we stand in, appreciate that we have all this clarity of how amazing Christ is. Help us to appreciate the day that you have sovereignly chosen to put us in. And help us to make this glorious gospel known far and wide. Save and sanctify. Amen.