

# Justification by Grace Through Faith

Romans 3:21-31

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Part of Paul's Letter to the Romans Chapters 3-5

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**My ability to judge ice cream quality was very limited by my experiences and knowledge, and I didn't know what I didn't know.**

**In chapters 1:18 - 3:20, Paul laid out just how bad sin was in our lives.**

**It's hard to realize just how good the good news of the gospel and God's grace is until we realize just how bad the bad news regarding our sin is.**

**Starting in vs. 3:21 Paul changes direction to begin to show just how good and amazing God's grace is.**

*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.*

—Romans 3:21-26 (NLT)

**The Good News after all the bad news is that “the righteousness of God has been manifested” or revealed or made known to humanity.**

**This “righteousness of God” speaks of God's complete rightness, His holiness, His total goodness and how He always is *and acts* that way.**

**Paul says this “righteousness of God” *can be ours*, that we can be made right with God by receiving God's very own righteousness.**

**As Paul's been showing us in earlier verses, this “righteousness of God” *for us* did not come through the**

**Law, through human efforts to keep the law.**

**How do we overcome our sin and become righteous, when we can't do it ourselves?**

**Vs. 24 tells us that “the righteousness of God” comes through something called “justification.”**

**The Greek word for justification was used in law courts, as a legal term, as a pronouncement by a judge that a person was declared “just” or right with the legal system, as opposed to being condemned or guilty.**

*The righteousness of (or from) God is a combination of his righteous character, his saving initiative and his gift of a righteous standing before him. It is his just justification of the unjust, his righteous way of “righteousing” the unrighteous.*

—John R. W. Stott

## **PAUL TEACHES US THREE BASIC TRUTHS ABOUT JUSTIFICATION (vss. 24-26):**

**1. The *source* of our justification: God and His grace. (vs. 24)**

**2. The *basis* of our justification: Christ and his cross.**

**How can God declare us, the unrighteous, to be righteous while, at the same time, not compromising His own righteousness nor condoning our sinfulness and unrighteousness - the cross!**

*... [God] who justifies the ungodly...*

—Romans 4:5 (ESV)

*He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous are both alike an abomination to the LORD.*

—Proverbs 17:15 (ESV)

*Without the cross the justification of the unjust would be unjustified, immoral and therefore impossible. The only reason God “justifies the ungodly” (Romans 4:5) is that Christ died for them (Romans 5:6). Because he shed his blood (Romans 3:25) in a sacrificial death for us sinners, God is able justly to justify the unjust.*

—John R. W. Stott

### **Paul lays out what God did for us through the death of His Son on the cross in our place with three ideas:**

- a. God justifies us “through the **redemption** that is in Christ Jesus.” (vs. 24)
- b. God “put forward [Christ Jesus] as a **propitiation** (sacrifice of atonement) by his blood, to be received by faith.” (vs. 25)
- c. God did this “to **show** his righteousness..., so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.” (vs. 26)

### **Three Key Words We Need To Understand To See All Paul Is Saying:**

- a. **Redemption** – a commercial term in the original Greek language that was typically used in the marketplace.

*Jesus: For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*

—Mark 10:45 (ESV)

- b. **Propitiation** (or Sacrifice of Atonement) – to placate God’s wrath or anger because of our sin.

God’s wrath or anger is against evil and its sin that result in damage to us.

God’s unconditional love did for us what we could not do for ourselves.

*In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our*

*sins.*

—1 John 4:10 (ESV)

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

—1 John 4:10 (NIV)

This act of propitiation, this sacrifice of atonement, or (at-one-ment) sacrifice to restore us as one with God, has always been provided by God.

**The LORD:** *For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life.*

—Leviticus 17:11 (NIV)

Jesus' atoning death allows God to both satisfy His unconditional love and mercy for us while at the same time not compromising His justice and righteousness.

*God, because in his mercy he willed to forgive sinful men, and being truly merciful, willed to forgive them righteously, that is, without in any way condoning their sin, purposed to direct against his own very Self in the person of his Son the full weight of that righteous wrath which they deserved.*

—Charles Cranfield

c. **Show** – the cross served not only as a revelation of what God was doing in Christ, accomplishing the propitiation of God and the redemption of sinners, but it also vindicated God's justice and righteousness.

*...This was to **show** God's righteousness...*

—Romans 3:25 (ESV, emphasis added)

*It was to **show** his righteousness...*

—Romans 3:26 (ESV, emphasis added)

*... in his divine forbearance he had passed over former*

*sins.*

—Romans 3:25 (NLT)

*It was to show his righteousness at the present time....*

—Romans 3:26 (NLT)

At the time of Christ, the sins of all people, of all times, including those who lived *before* Christ as well as *after*, were now judged on the cross as a propitiation for our sins and the sins of the world, who choose to receive this gracious gift by faith.

*For Christ... entered into heaven itself to appear now before God on our behalf. And he did not enter heaven to offer himself again and again, like the high priest here on earth who enters the Most Holy Place year after year with the blood of an animal. If that had been necessary, Christ would have had to die again and again, ever since the world began. But now, once for all time, he has appeared at the end of the age to remove sin by his own death as a sacrifice. And just as each person is destined to die once and after that comes judgment, so also Christ was offered once for all time as a sacrifice to take away the sins of many people. He will come again, not to deal with our sins, but to bring salvation to all who are eagerly waiting for him.*

—Hebrews 9:24-28 (NLT)

### **3. The *means* of our justification: faith.**

*...through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe....*

—Romans 3:22 (NLT)

*...to be received by faith....*

—Romans 3:25 (NLT)

*...[God] might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.*

—Romans 3:26 (NLT)

**As Scripture makes clear, our justification is by faith alone.**

*No other system, ideology or religion proclaims a free forgiveness and a new life to those who have done nothing to deserve it but a lot to deserve judgment instead. On the contrary, all other systems teach some form of self-salvation through good works of religion, righteousness or philosophy. Christianity, by contrast, is not in its essence a religion at all; it is a gospel, the gospel, good news that God's grace has turned away his wrath, that God's Son as died our death and borne our judgment, that God has mercy on the undeserving, and that there is nothing left for us to do, or even contribute. Faith's only function is to receive what grace offers.*

—John R. W. Stott

*Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law. Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since God is one—who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.*

—Romans 3:27-31 (NLT)

**Justification by faith alone humbles everyone, not just Jews and not just Gentiles, so no one can brag about their place in Christianity, and, instead unites all of us.**

### **Amazing Grace**

*Amazing grace how sweet the sound  
That saved a wretch like me  
I once was lost, but now I'm found  
Was blind but now I see*

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**Next Week:** *Romans 4*