

The Righteousness of God and the Means of Justification
Dr. Michael A. Cox
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Text: Romans 3:21-26

Romans: [Bibliography](#) or [Manuscripts and Greek Exegesis](#)

UBS 4th Edition Paragraph Topic: Righteousness through Faith

Central Idea of Message: Righteousness comes only through faith in God and repentance.

Introduction: Having thoroughly exposed the sinfulness of mankind, Paul now turns to a discussion of the remedy for our sin through the provision of God. This proviso is called grace. God's grace makes justification accessible. Justification is acquired through faith. Faith in the son of God results in God imputing the righteousness of Jesus to the believer. God thus provides the necessary righteousness for unrighteous people through the atoning work of Christ. This redemptive activity reveals God as both the just one and the justifier.

- I. The Righteousness Required by God (vv. 21-23)
 - A. Even apart from the law the righteousness of God is still known (v. 21)
 1. Thank God for the "But now"!
 2. **No law can impart righteousness**
 - a) The gospel is "non-legalistic" (MacGorman, *Layman's*, 41)
 - b) Law has no part in salvation (cf. McBeth 116)
 - (1) People are saved by substitution
 - (2) People are saved by the righteousness of another
 - (3) That other is Jesus Christ
 - c) It is self-evident that law cannot save and that only God's righteousness can save (cf. McBeth 117)
 3. **God's righteousness and justification by faith have been made known**
 - a) Witnessed to by the law of Moses
 - b) Witnessed to by the prophets
 - c) Represents the entirety of the Old Testament (cf. Matt. 5:17)
 - d) **Mention of the Old Testament in the New**

continues to magnify the continuity and inspiration of both

- e) The gospel was no "innovation" (MacGorman, *Layman's*, 41)
 - f) **The righteousness of God and justification by faith are not contrary to the law or the prophets but are the fulfillment of the testimony given by both**
 - g) The law and prophets are subordinate (ὕπὸ) to him who saves
 - (1) The law and the prophets are merely witnesses, not vehicles of grace
 - (2) **Law revealed sin, the prophets revealed the sin-bearer, namely, the Messiah**
 - (3) Law demands justice
 - (4) The prophets promise mercy
- B. Righteousness is imputed through faith in Jesus Christ (v. 22)
- 1. **Righteousness is not imputed through works, baptism, ritual, or penance, but through faith**
 - a) For all who believe: none who believe are excluded
 - b) **We are not saved for our faith but through our faith**
 - (1) Faith does not do the saving
 - (2) Faith can only appropriate or activate the grace of him who does the saving
 - 2. "There is no distinction" indicates universal condemnation of Jew and Gentile
 - 3. **Acquitting the innocent and condemning the guilty is the norm in man's courtrooms, but acquitting the guilty who believe in Christ and repent of sin is the norm in God's courtroom!**
 - 4. Some profess faith in God but deny Jesus
 - a) This is "inadequate" (McBeth 118)
 - b) Denial of Jesus shows that one does not believe God who speaks in his son (cf. Heb. 1:2)
- C. All have sinned and are in need of the savior (v. 23)
- 1. All are guilty, so atonement is available to all
 - 2. **It would be ludicrous for Paul to argue so forcefully for the condemnation of the entire race and then argue for a cure available only to a few!**

3. **The drug dealer, the thief, the murderer, and the rapist all fall short of God's glory, but so do each one of us!**
4. All fall short of the glory of God
 - a) Glory is the splendor and perfection which God intends for all to bear here and now
 - b) Insofar as mankind falls short of this splendor, he/she is sinful (cf. MacGorman, *Layman's*, 42): present tense of the verb means all continue to fall short
 - c) We do not like to be told that we are not good enough; yet, this is clearly evident
 - d) There is no difference between the so-called best and worst of us
 - e) **All people fail miserably at earning or deserving merit with God**

II. Mankind Can Be Justified (vv. 24-26)

- A. Justified as a gift by God's grace through redemption found in Christ Jesus (v. 24)
 1. Justified
 - a) **Justified does not mean virtuous but "acquitted" (Barrett 76)**
 - b) **Believers are not *made* righteous but *declared* righteous and no longer guilty of sin**
 - c) Once dirty, but now washed
 2. As a gift
 - a) Freely, without cost to the believer
 - b) **Gifts cannot be earned: once accepted, a gift cannot be taken away; we cannot lose what we never deserved to have in the first place (cf. Eph. 2:8-9)!**
 3. By God's grace: undeserved love, unmerited favor
 4. Through redemption in Christ Jesus
 - a) Justice and mercy meet in the cross of Christ (cf. McBeth 118)
 - b) Redeemed means purchased or bought
 - c) A price was paid for human sin
 - d) The death of Christ was for all
 - (1) Man is ordered to love God with all his heart, soul, and mind (Deut. 6:5; Matt. 22:37)
 - (2) Since all are commanded to do so, it is necessary that all be capable of doing so

- (3) God does not issue commands to those who are incapable of following those commands, nor does God hold the incapable or unknowing responsible for keeping the commands
 - (4) Mankind is conscious and is held responsible
 - e) Scripture expresses God's love for the entire world (John 3:16)
 - f) God desires for all of mankind to be saved
 - (1) It is not the will of the Father that even one little child perish (Matt. 18:14)
 - (2) Jesus desires that the whole world would believe in him (John 17:21)
 - (3) God desires that all be saved and come to knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4)
 - g) Christ gave himself as a ransom for all
 - (1) **The iniquity of all fell upon Christ (Isa. 53:6)**
 - (2) **Christ gave himself as a ransom for all (1 Tim. 2:6)**
 - (3) **Jesus died even for false prophets and heretics (2 Pet. 2:1)**
 - (4) **God wants all to come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9)**
 - h) **Jesus is the potential savior of all of mankind but the actual savior of believers only (1 Tim. 4:10)**
 - (1) The Lamb of God takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29)
 - (2) Savior of all, but especially of believers (1 Tim. 4:10)
 - (3) Salvation has been brought to all of mankind (Titus 2:11)
 - (4) Jesus tasted death for everyone (Heb. 2:9)
 - (5) Jesus is the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him (Heb. 5:9)
- B. Christ was displayed publicly (v. 25)
- 1. The public death of Christ is a fact to be observed by all (cf. Mickelsen 1192)
 - 2. As a propitiation to be appropriated through faith: three angles

- a) **Propitiation: a sacrificial act to satisfy God's holy law and appease his anger**
 - b) **Expiation: a sacrificial act to cancel the guilt of sinful man whereby the righteous demands of holy God were satisfied**
 - c) **Mercy seat**
 - (1) Expanded explanation of expiation
 - (2) The word used in the Septuagint in Lev. 16:14 referring to the golden cover on the Ark of the Covenant
 - (a) Represented the throne of God
 - (b) Represented the place of judgment
 - (c) When animal blood was sprinkled thereon, the place of judgment became the place of mercy
 - (3) **When the sacrificial blood of Christ is appropriated by faith, the place of judgment becomes the place of mercy and grace as the guilt of the person is canceled because the righteous demands of the holy God are satisfied by Christ's blood!**
3. To demonstrate God's righteousness in passing over sins, not inflicting "the full measure of judgment for their sins" (cf. Acts 17:30; MacGorman, *Everyman's*, 63)
- a) God is not indifferent to sin; his forbearance and redemptive activity are intended to point people to the cross (cf. Rom. 2:4)
 - b) Forgiving of sin is a "commentary" on the righteousness and grace of God (McBeth 123) and the cross is a commentary on the justness of God
 - c) **The death of Jesus shows the world that sin cannot escape the punishment of God because he never relaxes his standards**
 - d) **All sin will be punished, either in the sinner or the substitute, the choice is ours**
 - e) **When a person accepts the death of the substitute, he/she also receives the life of the substitute, which happens to be eternal!**
- C. That God might be the justifier of anyone having faith in Jesus (v. 26)

1. God is just and he seeks to justify all: no one ever imagined that the just judge himself would pay the ransom to justify the guilty!
2. Only God's infinite resources of grace could accomplish such a large task (cf. MacGorman, *Layman's*, 45)
3. God does it through the cross of Jesus Christ (cf. MacGorman, *Layman's*, 45)
4. God only justifies the one who believes in Jesus
 - a) "... through faith in Jesus ..." (v. 22)
 - b) "... through faith" (v. 25)
 - c) "... who has faith in Jesus" (v. 26)

Conclusion: The Father, Son, and Spirit entered the arena of human sin. In so doing, God laid the groundwork upon which he could forgive sin, and upon which he could acquit sinners and still himself be righteous (cf. Mickelsen 1193). This is the nature of justification.

How can we be justified in light of the righteous requirements of God? Only by faith through the blood of the Lamb.