

THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

INTRODUCTION

A. Outline of Romans

1. Introduction (1:1-17)
2. The need for God's righteousness (1:18-3:20)
3. The provision of righteousness from God ((3:21-4:25)
 - a. A description of justification (3:21-26)
 - b. A defense of justification of by faith in Christ alone (3:27-31)

B. Concerning Romans 3:21-4:25

1. James Stifler, *In a court of justice it is only after every defense has failed and the law itself has been shown to be broken, it is only at this point that the appeal is made to the judge for his clemency. The epistle has brought us to such a point.*
2. John Witmer, *In God's condemnation of the human race His own personal infinite righteousness was revealed along with the fact that not a single human being—the Lord Jesus Christ excepted—has ever or will ever be able to meet that standard and be accepted by God on his own merit. Now in this second major section of Romans Paul discussed God's "provided righteousness" for people through Jesus in justification.*
3. Leon Morris, . . . possibly the most important single paragraph ever written.
4. It has been called *the center and heart* of the letter.

ROMANS 3:21-26, A DESCRIPTION OF JUSTIFICATION

A. The righteousness of God is not revealed by the law but is affirmed by it (21), ***But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—***

1. *But now*
 - a. Paul starts to explain his point in verse 20, that . . . *by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight,*
 - b. The means of receiving the God's righteousness will be revealed.
 - c. Grant Osborne, . . . *moving from the old era of Jews and Gentiles under the law and sin to the new age of salvation.*
2. *the righteousness of God*
 - a. Some translate this important term as *the righteousness from God* since mankind is justified by receiving righteousness from God.
 - b. Tom Constable defines *the righteousness of God, . . . as the act by which God brings people into right relationship with Himself.*
 - c. John Stott, *The righteousness of God' is God's just justification of the unjust, his righteous way of pronouncing the unrighteous righteous, in which he both demonstrates his righteousness and gives righteousness to us.*
3. *has been manifested apart from the law*
 - a. It means to *become visible or known, be revealed.*
 - b. Louw-Nida's translation, *But now, God's way of putting people right with himself has been made known apart from the Law.*
 - c. As noted in verse 20, the purpose of the law was not to justify but to show the need for justification.
 - d. Warren Wiersbe, *The Law could witness to God's righteousness, but it could not provide it for sinful man.*
 - e. The Old Testament identified the need and now Paul will identify the means.
4. *although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it*
 - a. The Law and the Prophets
 - 1) The term encompasses the entire Old Testament.
 - 2) The Law refers to the first five books and the Prophets refers to the rest.
 - 3) Matthew 5:17, *Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.*

- b. The Old Testament affirms that righteousness from God is apart from works.
 - 1) Genesis 15:6, *And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.*
 - 2) Psalm 32:1-2, *Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity. . .*
 - 3) Isaiah 53:11, *Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.*
 - 4) Douglas Moo, *If the Jews, with the best law that one could have, could not find salvation through it, then any system of works is revealed as unable to conquer the power of sin.*

- B. The righteousness of God is only received by faith in Jesus Christ as a gift (22-25a)
 - 1. God's righteousness is received by faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe (22a-23), ***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,***
 - a. God's righteousness is only received by faith in Jesus Christ.
 - 1) Jesus Christ, the object of faith, is mentioned here by Paul for the first time since Romans 2:16.
 - 2) 2 Corinthians 5:21, *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*
 - 3) Philippians 3:9, *and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—*
 - 4) Tom Constable, *Many writers have described faith as the hand of the heart. It does no work to earn salvation but only accepts a gift that someone else provides. . . Faith simply takes what God gives. It adds nothing to the gift.*
 - 5) Warren Wiersbe, *It is personal, individual faith in Jesus Christ that saves and justifies the lost sinner.*
 - b. It is for those who believe (saving faith)
 - 1) Belief demands more than simple knowledge, James 2:19b, *Even the demons believe—and shudder!*
 - 2) Components of saving faith
 - a) It is intellectually accepting the truth of the message, 1 Corinthians 15:3-8, *For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.*
 - b) It is emotionally acknowledging personal need, Acts 16:29-30, *And the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"*
 - c) It is willfully choosing to receive Christ alone, John 1:12, *But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,*
 - c. All mankind lacks God's righteousness because all are sinners.
 - 1) *for there is no distinction*
 - a) The way to receive God's righteousness is the same for Jews and Gentiles.
 - b) Romans 3:9, *What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin,*
 - c) John Witmer, *Any prior privilege the Jews had is gone in this Age when God is offering a righteous standing before Him to all sinful people on the basis of faith in Christ alone.*
 - d) Since everyone is a sinner, everyone must receive the righteousness from God by faith and not by works.
 - 2) Everyone falls short of the glory of God.
 - a) Mankind is not judged based on performance in comparison to others.
 - 1] We are judged in comparison to God Who is glorious in Who He is and in everything He does.
 - 2] Grant Osborne, *In our own strength, we can never attain a right relationship with God because of the weight of sin that at all times forces us to fall short.*
 - 3] Tom Constable, *Sin separates people from fellowship with a holy God. We lack both the character of God and the fellowship of God because of sin.*
 - 4] John Witmer, *Not only did all sin, but also all fall short. This single Greek verb is in the present tense, stressing continuing action. It can be translated "keep on falling short." The simple fact is that as a sinner not a single human being by his own efforts is able to measure up to the glory of God.*

- b) *the glory of God*
 - 1] Descriptions
 - a] Grant Osborne, *The “glory of God” is his majesty, splendor, and wondrous presence.*
 - b] John 1:14, *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*
 - 2] The glory of God was lost by mankind because of sin but is restored through faith in Christ.
 - a] *Adam and Eve shared it in the garden but lost it when they fell into sin. . . It will not be fully gained until the end of history, when evil is destroyed and eternity begins.*
 - b] Corinthians 3:18, *And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.*
 - c] 2 Thessalonians 2:14, *To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.*
 - d] Colossians 1:7, *To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.*

2. God’s righteousness is a gift of His grace through Jesus Christ (24), ***and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,***

a. *justified*

- 1) It means *acquit, to set free, to remove guilt, to be pronounced and treated as righteous.*
- 2) The clearest expressions concerning man being made right with God is *declared righteous.*
- 3) 2 Corinthians 5:21, *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*
- 4) Ronald Fung, *To be justified means to be declared righteous before God, that is, to enjoy a status or standing of being in a right relationship with God, of being accepted by him.*
- 5) Tom Constable, *Justification is an act, not a process. And it is something God does, not man. . . Justification describes a person’s status in the sight of the law, not the condition of his or her character. The condition of one’s character and conduct is that with which sanctification deals.*
- 6) Warren Wiersbe, *Do not confuse justification and sanctification. Sanctification is the process whereby God makes the believer more and more like Christ. Sanctification may change from day to day. Justification never changes. When the sinner trusts Christ, God declares him righteous, and that declaration will never be repealed. God looks on us and deals with us as though we had never sinned at all!*

b. *by his grace as a gift*

- 1) *Grace*
 - a) It means *unmerited favor, especially from one who is superior to one who is inferior.*
 - a) In verse 24, it speaks of God’s choosing to justify one solely based on His choice.
 - b) It speaks of Christ and His work which secures justification of those selected by God, Acts 15:11, *But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.*
 - c) Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Grace means pure unrecompensed kindness and favor.*
- 2) Justification is a gift, Tom Constable, *God bestows justification freely as a gift. The basis for His giving it is His own grace, not anything in the sinner.*

c. *through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*

- 1) *through*
 - a) It addresses the objective basis on which one is declared righteous.
 - b) That basis is the work of Jesus Christ.
 - c) Grant Osborne, *The free grace-gift of salvation is effected by the payment of the blood of Christ. His sacrificial death has paid for our sins and purchased our forgiveness and freedom.*
- 2) *redemption*
 - a) It means *to set free, acquittal, the state of being redeemed, a ransom payment, liberation through payment of a price.*
 - b) Ephesians 1:7, *In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace,*

- c) John Witmer, *The death of Christ on the cross of Calvary was the price of payment for human sin which secured release from the bondage of Satan and sin for every person who trusts God's promise of forgiveness and salvation.*
- d) William Newell, *Before you leave verse 24, apply it to yourself, if you are a believer. Say of yourself: 'God has declared me righteous without any cause in me, by His grace, through the redemption from sin's penalty that is in Christ Jesus.*

3. The blood of Jesus Christ is the means of forgiveness which is received by faith (25a), ***whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.***

a. Jesus Christ is the One Who secured redemption.

1) He is the *propitiation*.

a) Propitiation

- 1] It means, *a sin offering which appeases the wrath of God, the mercy seat (the cover of the ark of the covenant).*
- 2] Jesus Christ is the sacrifice that satisfied God's wrath and removed the sins of believers.
- 3] 1 John 4:10, *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.*
- 4] Douglas Moo, *What in the OT was hidden from public view behind the veil has now been "publicly displayed" as the OT ritual is fulfilled and brought to an end in Christ's "once-for-all" sacrifice.*

b) *by his blood*

1] Christ's blood is the means by which God's wrath was propitiated.

- a] Hebrews 9:22, . . . *without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.*
- b] Romans 5:9, *Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.*
- c] Ephesians 2:13, *But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.*
- d] Colossians 1:20, *and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.*

2] Tom Constable, *Jesus Christ was the sacrifice, but the place where God made atonement was the Cross.*

3] John Witmer, *There (the tabernacle's ark of the covenant) a goat's blood was sprinkled on the Day of Atonement to cover (atone) Israel's sins (Lev. 16:15), and satisfy God for another year. Jesus' death is the final sacrifice which completely satisfied God's demands against sinful people, thus averting His wrath from those who believe.*

c) John Stott, . . . *God himself gave himself to save us from himself.*

b. *to be received by faith*

- 1) Jesus' payment is sufficient for every sinner but efficient (effective) for those who receive by faith Christ's work on the cross.
- 2) Romans 3:22, *the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. . .*
- 3) Warren Wiersbe on faith in Christ alone, *Dr. G. Campbell Morgan was trying to explain "free salvation" to a coal miner, but the man was unable to understand it. "I have to pay for it," he kept arguing. With a flash of divine insight, Dr. Morgan asked, "How did you get down into the mine this morning?" "Why, it was easy," the man replied. "I just got on the elevator and went down." Then Morgan asked, "Wasn't that too easy? Didn't it cost you something?" The man laughed. "No, it didn't cost me anything; but it must have cost the company plenty to install that elevator." Then the man saw the truth: "It doesn't cost me anything to be saved, but it cost God the life of His Son."*

- C. The righteousness of God is demonstrated in the death of Christ (25b-26), *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.*
1. *This was to show God's righteousness, because*
 - a. *This refers to the redemption God provided in Christ in verse 24, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,*
 - b. Now, Paul explains why Jesus had to come and die.
 - 1) One, it was for the sins of mankind.
 - 2) It was to vindicate God's character.
 - 3) Tom Constable, *Another reason God provided a sacrifice of atonement was to justify (declare righteous) God's own character (i.e., to vindicate Him).*
 2. *in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.*
 - a. *Forbearance*
 - 1) It means *clemency, delay, holding back, restraint in judgment.*
 - 2) Douglas Moo, *The word we translate "passing over" does not mean "forgiveness," but, when applied to legal charges or sins, "postponement of punishment. . .*
 - 3) William Barclay, *No one can sin forever without facing the consequences.*
 - b. God passed over former sins not by forgiveness but by delay.
 - 1) Tom Constable, *God had shown forbearance, not out of weakness or sentimentality but because He planned to provide a final sacrifice in the future, namely at the Cross.*
 - 2) John Witmer, *Here God is said to be forbearing because He anticipated His provision for sins in the death of Jesus Christ. Such forbearance was an evidence of His grace (cf. Acts 14:16; 17:30), not of His injustice*
 - a) Acts 14:16, *In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways.*
 - b) Acts 17:30, *The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent,*
 - c. Paul emphasized the importance of vindicating God's righteousness Who justifies and is just.
 - 1) He repeats the phrase in verse 25, *to show God's righteousness,* in verse 26, for emphasis.
 - 2) Robert Wilkin, *Christ's death demonstrates God's righteous standards (cf. 2:11). Sins were paid as God's justice demanded, but at the same time, Jesus' death on behalf of sinners allows God to declare a sinner righteous immediately upon faith in Christ.*
 - 3) Grant Osborne, . . . *the effect of Christ's sacrificial death on the cross reached back to the old covenant as well as forward to the new covenant. All of human history, both before and after the central event of the cross, points to Jesus' atoning sacrifice as the basis of salvation.*
 - 4) Warren Wiersbe, *A God of love wants to forgive sinners, but a God of holiness must punish sin and uphold His righteous Law. How can God be both "just and the justifier?" The answer is in Jesus Christ. When Jesus suffered the wrath of God on the cross for the sins of the world, He fully met the demands of God's Law, and also fully expressed the love of God's heart. The animal sacrifices in the Old Testament never took away sin; but when Jesus died, He reached all the way back to Adam and took care of those sins. No one (including Satan) could accuse God of being unjust or unfair because of His seeming passing over of sins in the Old Testament time.*
 - d. Justification is by faith in Christ alone.
 - 1) John 14:6, *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*
 - 2) 2 Timothy 3:15, *and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.*
 - 3) Grant Osborne, *God is sovereign over salvation, and God's salvation is only experienced by faith.*
 - 4) William Barclay, *Paul is insisting that nothing we can ever do can win for us the forgiveness of God; only what God has done for us can win that; therefore the way to a right relationship with God lies not in a frenzied, desperate, doomed attempt to win acquittal by our performance; it lies in the humble, penitent acceptance of the love and the grace which God offers us in Jesus Christ.*

CONCLUSION

James Stifler, . . . *the direct exposition of the righteousness by faith ends with the twenty-sixth verse. If the epistle had ended there it would not have been incomplete.*