

## Righteousness Through Faith (*Part Two*)

### *Romans 3:21-26*

**Sermon-in-a-Sentence:** We receive God's gift of righteousness (right standing and right relationship with Him) through faith in the all-sufficient atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

In Romans 1:18-3:20 Paul has demonstrated that Righteousness is Needed by all people because all of us have rejected God and rebelled against the authority of His Word over our lives. Consequently, we are the objects of God's well-deserved wrath, judgment and condemnation; we are separated from Him for all eternity. In the next major division, Romans 3:21-8:39, Paul declares the Good News that Righteousness has been Provided.

#### **I. The Divine Provision of Righteousness**

- How do we obtain a right standing and right relationship with God? Through good works or by faith?

##### **A. God is the Source of Righteousness (3:21-22, 24-26)**

1. God took the initiative to provide righteousness for us.
2. He did all the work; He did everything that is necessary to make it possible for us to be in right standing and right relationship with Him.
3. We cannot earn a right standing with God by means of the works of the Law nor through the good works of Religion.

##### **B. God Has Revealed His Provision of Righteousness to Us (3:21)**

1. The O.T. law was never intended by God to be a means of obtaining righteousness.
2. Rather, it testified to, pointed to what the New Testament reveals, clarifies and explains: That righteousness is a gift, a provision from God.
3. The Old Testament sacrificial system, the various feasts, the prophecies concerning the Messiah, all pointed to God's provision of righteousness. (i.e., Isaiah 53)

##### **C. God Has Graciously Provided Righteousness for Man by Means of Justification, Redemption and Atonement / Propitiation (3:24-25a)**

1. **Justification** – The sovereign act of God whereby He declares that the person who puts his/her trust in Jesus Christ for salvation is not guilty.
  - a. "To justify is to declare righteous. It is a judicial term indicating that a verdict of acquittal has been announced, excluding all possibility of condemnation." (*The Ryrie Study Bible, p. 1965*)
  - b. Cf. Romans 5:1; 8:1.
2. **Redemption** – To set free from bondage by paying the ransom price.
  - a. In the case of the believer, Christ's death on the cross sets him/her free from the penalty, the power and ultimately the very presence of sin. (Cf. Ephesians 1:7)
  - b. "Christ purchased our freedom [from sin] and the price was His life." (*The Life Application Study Bible, p. 2033*)

c. "Christ Jesus died to provide redemption, which means He died to pay the price required to ransom sinners. By paying the penalty of their sin through His death, Jesus can free people from their sin and transfer His righteousness to those who believe in Him. On the basis of Christ's righteousness alone, believers can approach God's throne with praise. Through God's initiative, they have been restored to a proper relationship with Him." (*The New King James Study Bible, p. 1883*)

3. **Atonement / Propitiation** – Christ's substitutionary death on the cross for our sins satisfied the wrath of God against sin and the justice of God demanded by His holiness. Consequently, God is able to forgive those who repent of their sins and put their faith in Jesus Christ.

a. Atonement is "The reconciliation between God and human beings brought about by [the sacrificial death of] Jesus." (*The American Heritage Dictionary*)

b. Propitiation: "God's righteous anger needed to be appeased before sin could be forgiven, and God in his love sent his Son (who offered himself willingly) to satisfy God's holy anger against sin." (*The ESV Study Bible, p. 2163*)

#### **D. God's Provision of Righteousness Demonstrates His Justice (3:25b-26)**

1. God's justice, righteousness and holiness demanded that sin be punished by death. (Cf. Romans 6:23)
2. His justice was being called into question because, in His patience, He had passed over the sins previously committed.
3. But God was not overlooking sin; He was looking "forward to the cross of Christ where the full payment for the guilt of sin would be made, where Christ would die in the place of sinners." (*ESV Study Bible, p. 2163*)
4. Christ's death on the cross demonstrated that God is, in fact, absolutely just.

## **II. The Human Appropriation of Righteousness**

### **A. Our Sin Makes God's Provision of Righteousness Necessary (3:23, 25)**

1. "Glory of God" – perfection of His character—His perfect righteousness and holiness.
2. None of us, no matter how good we are, can attain to the perfection of God.
3. Therefore, God, in His love, grace and mercy, took the initiative to provide righteousness for us. (vs. 24)
4. In order to receive God's provision of righteousness, we have to admit that we are sinners who do not deserve His gift; we must acknowledge we are not good enough.
5. Sin separates us from God and condemns us to death and eternal separation from Him. (cf. Romans 6:23)

### **B. We Appropriate God's Gift of Righteousness Through Faith in Christ's Blood, His Atoning Sacrifice on the Cross (3:22, 25a, 26)**

1. God's means of salvation is crystal clear: Righteousness is a free gift from God given to those who place their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. Ephesians 2:8-9 – "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast."