



Scotts Hill Baptist Church

ROMANS • BUT NOW - GOD'S ANSWER FOR HUMANITY • ROMANS 3:21-31 • 10/15/2023

MAIN POINT

Despite humanities inability to escape sin on our own, God provides the needed answer to our problem!

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Share a story from your childhood about when you did something that damaged your home or room in some way. Did you admit fault? Did you try and fix the damage yourself? What does your response say about you?

How do you normally try to justify your decisions? Do you ever find yourself continuing to argue even after you realize you are in the wrong!?

Paul got the bad news over with first in his letter to the Romans. From 1:18 through 3:20 he painted a drastic, but accurate, picture of the spiritual and moral condition of the human race. ***But*** now (v. 21) he begins to paint a picture that is altogether different and superior. Our only hope of righteousness is in Christ alone.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ROMANS 3:21-26.

What does verse 21 tells us God has provided for all people? As you look back at the previous few verses in Romans 3, why is what God has provided so crucial?

Which testimonies of the biblical prophets stand out to you the most and why?

Paul stated what the Old Testament attests: God's righteousness can be received only through faith in Jesus Christ. The apostle was speaking of a righteousness from God that He granted to people, not one earned by works. Nevertheless, justification is conditioned on placing one's faith in Christ. Such righteousness is available to all who believe without distinction. By saying all who believe, Paul included Jews and Gentiles.

What do you think it means to fall short of God's glory? How can we bring glory to God even in our failures?

What motivated God to reveal righteousness? How did He do so?

Justify is a legal term meaning God declares the sinner not guilty. How does being declared not guilty impact your future? How does it impact you today?

No one is without sin; we all have sinned. Furthermore, as sinners we always and continually fall short of God's standard for us. Essentially, this verse declares why people can be justified only through faith in Christ. Human sin was catastrophic in its consequences. Our only hope was for God to mercifully offer us a way of salvation in Jesus Christ, His Son. God never offered to sell salvation to people for a price. On the other hand, no human being could even begin to pay the equivalent value of eternal salvation. Thus Paul declared that God acted to justify people freely by His grace. Not only can we never purchase salvation on our own, we are enslaved to sin and therefore we actually need to be purchased.

| HAVE ANOTHER VOLUNTEER READ ROMANS 3:27-31.

How might people try to make faith another work they accomplish? How can we combat this possibility? In reality, how do righteousness and forgiveness become ours?

If Jesus had not given us righteousness and we had to "work" to pay for it, what would our lives look like?

How does this passage explain the relationship between faith and works? In what area of your life have you experienced this truth?

What norms in a modern, prosperous society can influence the way believers think about performing to earn the grace of God? How can these temptations lead to subtle forms of spiritual “boasting”?

Paul enters into dialogue again with an imaginary opponent who is struggling with the idea that humans can contribute nothing to their own salvation. Faith as the way of salvation is the antithesis of salvation by works. We receive salvation as a gift through faith. Therefore, we cannot brag about it as if we did something to earn it.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Because the human race is completely unrighteous, the instigation for providing righteousness had to come from God. God satisfied his own standards of righteousness by offering a righteous sacrifice (his Son) for the sins of mankind. Every person who embraces by faith what God has done can be declared righteous in his sight.

What do we learn about God’s character from this passage? In contrast, what do we learn about our character?

Is there a sin in your life that causes you to question if God sees you as righteous? How can you incorporate the truth of this lesson into your life to help combat those feelings this week?

Is there anything you might be doing subconsciously as a way to earn righteousness? What do you need to do differently to approach that area of your life appropriately?

Who in your life needs to be encouraged to accept God’s (gift card)righteousness rather than trying to earn it or living with guilt? How can you help them this week?

How can our group pray for you this week?

PRAYER

As you close in prayer, ask that the reality of God’s gift of salvation by grace through faith in Christ will reach the depths of praise and gratitude in our hearts. Thank Jesus for descending to the depths of our need and taking upon Himself the penalty and

punishment for our sins. Pray that God will give us such understanding and humble appreciation for His gospel that we will be compelled to share it with others.

COMMENTARY

| ROMANS 3:21-31

3:21. Few passages in Scripture are as rich in theology and as important for understanding salvation as this portion of Romans 3. Paul had established that all people have sinned and that the law is inadequate for salvation. What then? What is the hope? Paul's answer would have surprised many people. Apart from the law God has revealed His righteousness. Last week's lesson explained the law's function: it reveals sin (see Rom. 3:20). The law diagnoses the spiritual disease of sin. This lesson shows God provides the healing apart from the law. Though the law is inadequate to save a person, it does testify to God's means of salvation. The Old Testament serves a valuable role in our faith. The arrival of the New Testament by no means rendered the Old Testament obsolete. The Law and the Prophets testify to the coming of Jesus as the Messiah. This prophetic role is indispensable to our faith.

3:22. The phrase in verse 21 "attested by the Law and the Prophets" is parenthetical, and Paul returned to his point in this verse with the words that is. He clarified that God's righteousness is through faith in Jesus Christ. Righteousness is first and foremost an attribute of God, but it is also an activity of God. He is in the business of making us righteous. God desires fellowship with us, and in order to enjoy that fellowship He makes believers right. How is this righteousness imparted? Not through works! Paul has already denied that works is the means to righteousness. Faith is the answer to the question and is the key to salvation. Faith is also an important part of the theme of the letter (Rom. 1:17), but this is the first time Paul explicitly referred to Jesus Christ as the object of faith.

The offer of salvation is available by faith, as to all who believe indicates. The word for believe and the word for "faith" in the Greek language are from the same root. To "believe in" is to "have faith in" something or someone. The English word believe is inadequate to convey the force of the Greek word. Faith involves intellectual assent as well as a thorough commitment of a believer's life. The early church wrestled with the question of how Gentiles were saved. Paul had seen clearly that God offered salvation to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews. There is no distinction in the matters of sin and judgment (Rom. 2:11), and there is no distinction in the manner of salvation. God makes it available on the basis of faith.

3:23. Paul repeated the need for salvation. People of every race and gender need to be saved because all have sinned. God's righteousness is pure. Our sin renders us completely incapable of reaching Him. The task of righteousness, of accessing the glory of God, is completely beyond our ability. Glory is a difficult word to pin down but essentially means "the full weight" of God's attributes. Glory is God's splendor. It defines, in part, who God is. In Jewish thought Adam and Eve possessed God's glory before they sinned. Now, through Jesus Christ, God is restoring His glory in His people.

3:24. This verse clarifies the result that "all who believe" (v. 22) enjoy. Justified means "to be declared right with God." The context is judicial; the scene is a courtroom. The divine judge declares all who believe to be innocent. Freely translates a Greek word meaning "gift" and underscores the difference between the attempt at salvation by works and the free offer of God. This offer of salvation is the pinnacle of His grace. Nothing surpasses it, and nothing is more important than for us to experience it. Being declared right with God comes only through His grace. Knowing we have this gift relieves our fear and grants us peace. The means by which God grants justification is through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ. Redemption has a twin focus of deliverance or emancipation on the one hand and payment of a ransom to secure that freedom on the other. The image portrayed by this word is that of a condemned prisoner whose freedom is secured and who is then declared innocent. The word clearly emphasizes the freedom from sin that believers enjoy.

3:25-26. Propitiation is a term borrowed from the sacrificial system and the temple. The Greek word hilasterion was used for the cover of the ark of the covenant. Luther translated it as the "mercy seat" (Heb 9:5). On the Day of Atonement, the high priest would sprinkle blood over the ark to atone for the nation. By this rite sins were deemed expiated; people became reconciled to God and God's wrath was averted. But human sins could not literally be atoned for by the death of animals. "For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins" (Heb. 10:4). Thus Jesus came to accomplish what no priest slaying an animal could ever hope to accomplish: full satisfaction of God's requirements for atonement. God the Father "made the One who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21). This involves a double imputation. Our sin was imputed to Jesus on the cross, and His righteousness was imputed to us. Justification is not a legal fiction; Christians are made righteous by the imputation of God's own righteousness in His Son.

3:27. A salvation based on works is human oriented and thus opens up the possibility of boasting. This Greek word can refer to unseemly boasting about legitimate

accomplishments. It also can mean trying to make oneself appear greater or better than is appropriate. The latter meaning likely applies here, for Paul had already excluded the possibility of salvation by works. Paul answered his rhetorical question of what kind of law by returning to the theme of faith. Faith as the way of salvation is the antithesis of salvation by works. We receive salvation as a gift through faith. Therefore, we cannot brag about it as if we did something to earn it. Salvation is not based on our ability but on God's grace.

3:28. Paul restated the conclusion of his argument to this point, that a person is justified through faith. Paul had tried the works of law and in his estimation had done it as well as anybody could (see Phil. 3:4-6). When he was confronted on the road to Damascus, however, Paul came to a new conclusion about salvation: because he was still a sinner, works could never justify him before God. That insight led to the magnificent understanding of God's grace and of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ.

3:29-30. There is only one God and only one way to be justified by Him, no matter your ethnic and national identity: by faith. The phrase who will justify does not mean that justification occurs at a future time (at the last judgment) and is therefore not a present reality for the believer. Rather, it points to the fact that God counts each of us justified as we come to faith. Thus God "will justify" your neighbor tomorrow if he comes to faith.

3:31. Does the gospel destroy the law? To answer this question, Paul considered the case of Abraham in the following chapter.