

## Romans 3:21-31 “Redemption in Christ Jesus”

### Introduction

What doubts do you have about Christianity? Many ask questions like, “Is there even really a God in the first place?” “I can’t believe there’s only one God...” “If God loves us why are there sicknesses like the corona virus that cause so much death and suffering?” “If there’s a God, why do wicked people flourish and good people suffer? That’s not fair.” “Christ raising from the dead – surely that’s just a myth!”

A sociologist says this about Jesus’s death on the cross bringing about God’s love and forgiveness: “This is sacrilegious but if I can be so bold, it makes me want to suggest to God, ‘without going all the way around and sacrificing your own son, couldn’t you just instantly forgive? After all it’s up to you whether to forgive or not.’”

The Bible says that God is righteous, and all people are sinners. To solve this fundamental problem in our lives and our world, God showed his righteousness through the redemption of the cross of Jesus Christ. Through Jesus’ death. Our main theme of today’s message is looking at what that means.

### Romans 3:21-31

21 But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—

22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction:

23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

25 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.

26 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.

27 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.

28 For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.

29 Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also,

30 since God is one—who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.

31 Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.

This passage repeats the words “righteousness of God” and “justified”. So first, let’s look at what God’s righteousness is. It says it is through God’s righteousness that we are justified, or deemed righteous. Second, how can we be justified, that is, how can we receive God’s blessing? The focus of this second point is redemption through Jesus Christ.

And thirdly, we’ll look at how we can be changed when God’s righteousness is brought about to those who believe, through redemption in Christ Jesus. ①What is God’s righteousness? ② Redemption in Jesus Christ ③ Life change. From these 3 points, let’s look back at God’s word.

### 1. Righteousness of God

- From the second half of chapter 1 through chapter 2 Paul writes focusing on human sin. “None is righteous. No, not one” he declares. He condemns both Jews and Gentiles alike as sinners. No matter how much we keep the law and follow God, no matter how much we strive to do good, to contribute to society, on a fundamental level those things cannot change our hearts and lives.
- And so the God of love prepared another way, a different solution. Look at verse 21, “But now”. God intervenes in our lives and this world in a new way. Verse 21: “But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it”

- When it says “the righteousness of God” here it doesn't just mean righteousness as in the rightness of the holy God being manifested. Because if we were just shown God's righteousness, perfect, holy nature, it would entirely destroy all sinners. That would be common sense, right?
- However, that's not what today's passage says. Rather, through believing in Jesus, far from being judged it is the exact opposite. We are instead forgiven, given God's righteousness, blessed. It means instead of being judged guilty we are given the verdict “not guilty” and blessed by God. Or to put it another way, you could say we become truly happy, it is truly well with us.
- Paul uses legal terminology here. An image of trial being held with God as judge. All people are brought out as the accused. Our charges, our record of sin, our history/resume are read.
  - What kind of resume would you usually prepare? Your good qualities, great qualifications, the good work you've done in the past. And call attention to how much you are suited for this new position, in order to get the job. Of course we wouldn't write our weaknesses or negative things. We try our best to show how great and worthy we are.
- This is not only in looking for a job, but in a similar way all aspects of culture and religion are asking for our resume. In other words, in order to earn God's blessing, happiness and prosperity, we have to appeal to how morally and spiritually worthy we are. In that way we try to earn God's blessing and success in life.
- However, Paul says something completely opposite here. It is not us ourselves, but God who prepares and gives us a perfect resume. What we need, what we are dying to have, is right here. This is good news like we don't hear anywhere else but the Bible.
  - “For the first time in history— and the last— an unheard of approach to God has been revealed. A divine righteousness— the righteousness of God, a perfect record— is given to us.” (Keller, Romans For You, p. 73)
- God has prepared perfect righteousness for us. So that no one is excluded from salvation; no one despairs that they cannot do it themselves. Isn't this the Gospel? It is impossible for us, but through long years of history God himself prepared it and Christ fulfilled it.
- In this way, God's righteousness, the gracious God rich in love, is not only a righteous and holy God, it shows clearly that he is a faithful God who keeps his promises. “The righteousness of God” could also be translated or expressed through the phrase “the faithfulness of God”.

## 2. Redemption in Jesus Christ

- So how does God's righteousness become ours? There are 3 important points in verses 22 – 26 we should keep in mind. 1) Through belief in Jesus Christ 2) Through the free gift of God's grace 3) Through the propitiation, or atoning sacrifice of the redeeming blood of Jesus Christ.
- Modern man has a tendency to take knowledge as more important than faith or belief. Of course knowledge and faith are not at odds with each other, nor things you have to choose between. They are not exclusive, and are both important. Talking about faith may remind us of the Japanese saying, “even a fish's head can be revered through faith” (meaning even something worthless can seem valuable to the person who believes in it).
- Before properly verifying the object of faith, there is a tendency to write off faith as nonsense. But the faith the Bible tells us of, it is not the power of our faith, but the *object* of our faith that is most important. In other words, Jesus Christ!
- The Bible knows well that our faith is inconsistent, has ups and downs, and our knowledge of faith is insufficient, lacking. Our faith is easily shaken when we face suffering, or something we don't like. But no matter how we may be shaken, Jesus is

reliable, unshakable. He is the God who fulfills perfect righteousness, and is able to save us all.

- Therefore God's righteousness is a free gift of grace. To be freely received. There is absolutely no reason, nothing you could do to earn it. God loved you. Faith is like an empty vessel. A vessel that can receive God's love and mercy, God's victory and eternal life, forgiveness of sins and resurrection hope, God's limitless, eternal blessing.
  - Remember how your parents generously, freely provided the things you needed. Didn't they provide for your needs regardless of how much you trusted them, or how good of a kid you were? Those of you who are fathers or mothers understand this all the more – it is not because of something they have done that you provide for their needs.
- Sometimes as a pastor I worry that many people may focus too much on their own faith. I'm not saying faith isn't important. Growing and maturing in faith is extremely important. However, do we sometimes forget that salvation is a free gift of God's grace? Faith is not about you (looking at yourself), but about looking to Christ.
  - Hebrews 12:2 "looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."
- Who (what kind of person) is this Jesus Christ who we should look to for God's righteousness? Paul emphasizes here Jesus as propitiation, who accomplished redemption through death on the cross. "Propitiation" means to soften and appease wrath or displeasure. Because God is angry with our sins. No one is righteous, not one person. Many people may be uncomfortable hearing the "wrath of God" because it's hard to accept that a God of love would be angry with our sins and errors.
  - There's a well-known hymn, "In Christ Alone", that we often sing at Grace City. In the second verse we clearly sing of this propitiation of Jesus. "Till on that cross as Jesus died, The wrath of God was satisfied; For ev'ry sin on Him was laid—Here in the death of Christ I live."
  - Several years ago, some people were putting together a new hymnal and didn't feel "the wrath of God" was appropriate to say of a loving God, and asked the authors, the Gettys, if they could take that phrase out. But the Gettys could not accept taking out the line "the wrath of God was satisfied". Because God's holy wrath satisfied by Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, that is the heart of the Biblical Gospel message, the foundation of forgiveness.
- Think about this carefully. If a child shoplifts at a store, and the parent who catches them doesn't scold them (is not angry with them) at all, what would you think? "That parent is incorrect"? No, you would probably feel anger yourself as you said, "What an unloving parent!" So Jesus becoming the propitiation, satisfying God's wrath, shows his love for us.

### 3. Changed Life

- That is how God gave us righteousness through Jesus Christ, by faith. In other words, our relationship with God was recreated, made right. Our relationship with God was restored, reconciled. This means we are not bound through doubt or fear, but through love and trust.
- Paul relates this change to his pride; he says boasting is excluded. In other words, it changes what we boast in. What we boast in, is the thing that is the strength and joy of our life. It is our reason to live, the goal we are aiming for. It is also our identity, instills our self-confidence and conviction.
- Boasting, pride, is indispensable. However, *what* do we boast in? That will completely change our lives. Paul writes this remembering how he used to boast in the law of works and circumcision.
- The boasting Paul writes of here divides people. Boasting in your own people (Jews), your standing in society, your own achievements, brings about prejudices. It spreads an attitude of looking down on others. It provokes hostility and conflict.

- And if we boast in ourselves, we become blinded to our own faults and shortcomings. If we convince ourselves we are keeping God's law and become proud, we don't notice our own sin and selfishness. If others point out our problems we deny them. And if what we are boasting in is in danger, we are overcome by anxiety and worry.
  - Peter was one of Jesus' disciples; a leader. He was proud that of all the disciples he was always number one in following Jesus. The night before Jesus was crucified, Peter said, "Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death." He was proud of his faith, his obedience to Jesus.
  - Because of that, he did not see his own weakness and sin at all. And even though Jesus warned him, "I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day, until you deny three times that you know me" out of self-preservation Peter betrayed Jesus.
- However, if we understand the righteousness of the Gospel that God gives, isn't our complete way of thinking changed? A boasting in the cross of Jesus that is called "a new creation". Galatians 6:14-15:
  - "But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation."
- If we trust and boast in the Gospel Jesus accomplished, we are filled with deep peace. We are always in a frenzy to make a good resume, to be approved, but there's no need to do that anymore. Because we are accepted by Christ, we can boldly live taking each challenge not in worry or fear, but in joy and peace.
- If we believe and accept God's righteousness, even if we get bad news about ourselves, are judged, or spoken of negatively, we can handle it in a positive way. Before we would be angry, hate, ignore, or avoid criticism. But if we know we are loved by God, through God's righteousness, even if we are showered in negative criticism, we can have victory over the darkness of self-loathing.
- Christ became the propitiation, atoning sacrifice on the cross, but three days later he rose again, and he lives today. He can help you still today.