

In Acts of the Apostles Chapter 16 Verses 29-30, the desperate jailer, made witness to the power and authority of The Holy Spirit, asked Paul the quintessential question, what must I do to be saved? This inquiry reverberates throughout the history of mankind, especially when confronted with the various attributes of Almighty God. Paul's letter to the Roman Christians, a thorough and extensive theological work, effectively answers this crucial salvific probe; salvation is only found by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

In Romans, Paul examines the pervasiveness of sin, expounds upon the fallenness of all humanity, and explains how God the Father has revealed His righteousness through His Son. God has magnanimously made salvation possible. A way for the guilty to be pardoned and justified before Him. By His grace, through faith in Jesus, the pathway to deliverance is now known; and this salvation is available to both Jews and Gentiles alike. Romans 1:17, which is often regarded as the thesis of Paul's letter, says, "For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to the last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith." This important understanding is further advanced in Romans Chapter 3 verses 21-31. This portion of scripture significantly develops Paul's thesis statement of faith and repentance from the first chapter.

Romans 3:21 says, "But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify." The righteousness of God is now revealed, and Paul made clear, it is separate from the works of the law of Moses. Paul also indicates that this righteousness accomplishes what was promised in the Old Testament Scriptures. The emphasis on faith in Christ is crucial and it has doctrinal significance. Paul differs from his challengers as he asserts that righteousness is not obtained by obedience to the law, since it is impossible to practice it adequately. Believing in Christ Jesus is the only pathway to the saving

righteousness of God (Schreiner). The major question drawn from the first verse in this section of the text lies in the intended definition of righteousness. Was this a reference to God's judging righteousness, His saving power, or an acquitted/justified standing before Him? What did Paul mean by the righteousness of God?

God, in His grace and mercy, has revealed how sinful man is made right with Him. God has chosen to demonstrate His righteousness in supplying the salvation mankind could never accomplish (Osborne). Paul painstakingly expounded upon sin in the beginnings of this letter; he proficiently explained the corrupt nature and utter depravity of mankind. Paul wrote that not a single person is righteous. In fact, the picture painted earlier in Chapter 3 leaves little room for self-justification or delusion. Human beings are described as unrighteous, mistaken, God-hating, worthless liars that intentionally practice deception, with mouths full of cursing and bitterness, quick to afflict and kill others, while opposing God openly, without any fear or reverence for The Lord (Romans 3:10-20). Paul makes clear that man has absolutely no merit to stand on before a righteous, perfect, and holy God; and only now, because of Jesus Christ, has God lovingly made a way to come into right standing before Him. So, the righteousness Paul has written about here refers to an acquittal. Paul writes to believers explaining that God has graciously provided the method of justification/acquittal of their trespasses against Him, and this way is found in Jesus, not in the law of Moses, which was foretold by the prophets and the scriptures. (Goreman).

Chapter 3:22-23 reads, "This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Justification (righteousness) is given through faith in the Messiah to all people that come to Him. At the onset, these verses call specific attention to the sheer magnitude of God's graciousness. Having sufficiently laid out the destitution of humanity, Paul evidences the

compassionate nature of God by highlighting how it is that He bestowed the way of righteousness to a morally corrupt and bankrupt people. The way of redemption was made by God; salvation is His to give, and God is truly the ultimate benefactor. This beautiful picture of grace, made vivid by the Apostle Paul, is clearly on display in this section of text. Over against the absolute depravity of the Gentiles and the legal self-righteousness of the Jews, God has shown his grace—the sacrificial death of Christ has brought redemption out of hopelessness (Osborne). Next, Paul details that access to this gifted righteousness is achieved through faith in The Lord Jesus Christ. The gift of grace is made available by way of faith in The Son of God. As Jesus claimed in John Chapter 14 Verse 6, He is the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Him. Those who place their faith in Christ are in right standing before The Father, not on the basis their own work, but simply by virtue of their faith in Christ Jesus. As the Messiah, He represents the people of God and has effected their liberation (Schreiner). Sinners receive justification through their faith in Jesus.

Succeeding this understanding, Paul directly dispels any notion of preferentialism or prejudice in God the Father. He wrote, “there is no difference between Jew and Gentile, all have sinned, all have fallen short of the glory of God.” Again, Paul previously wrote that none are righteous. To further that claim, Paul explained the function of the law in Verse 20, “Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God’s sight by the works of the law: rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin.” The law made sin apparent. In essence, Mosaic law could be compared to a mirror, helping the Jewish people to recognize sin within themselves. All of humanity lack the glory of God, which is eschatological gift for believers who will take hold of it at the consummation of the age (Schreiner). Paul establishes sin as both prevalent and ubiquitous, and this is true for the Jews and the Gentiles; no human being can be counted

justified before The Lord on their own merit. Paul makes plain that God's glory is thoroughly lacking in all people, regardless of ethnicity. Human dilemma is life apart from God—when we have turned our backs, we become ungodded. We need the glory of God. It is restored to us in justification (Goreman). Only in Christ Jesus can God's glory be restored to believers. Osborne explains that both Jews and Christians believe the glory was lost in Adam, and God's glory is in the process of being restored to those who are in Christ. Paul references the future revelation of this glory that will be revealed in Romans Chapter 8 Verse 18, "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us." Peter also wrote about the glory to be revealed (1 Peter Chapter 5 Verse 1). Hebrews Chapter 2 Verse 10 references Jesus bringing many sons and daughters to glory. Romans 3:22-23 demonstrates that the stain of sin, and humanity's common lack of God's glory, are both consistent and universal.

In Verses 24-26, Paul presents the remedy for the world; there is divine and available grace, justification, and redemption realized in Christ Jesus. "...and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus." In this section of his letter, Paul expounds upon salvation, how it is secured by the effectual death of God's Son, and how it is applied by gifted grace through faith in Jesus. Paul centered upon the gift of salvation made possible by Christ's atoning death that paid the penalty for sin so that God might acquit the repentant sinner. The righteousness of God accomplished what humans could not via the sacrificial death of The Lord Jesus Christ (Osborne).

The gift of grace has been freely given by God; The Father is the initiator of this gift. Sin has been committed against Him, and in an ultimate act of love and mercy, God has provided freedom from condemnation and the permanent penalty of sin. Paul refers to the liberty God has to dispense this merciful gift. Grace is not contingent on mankind. It is the will of The Father to gift humanity with His love, grace, and mercy. Grace is given of God's own volition, and He has chosen to make it known through The Lord Jesus.

John 3:16 reminds the world that it is only by God's love that He sent His Son, and it is by faith in His Son Jesus, through this grace, that eternal life is accomplished. As Romans 3:25 states, God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement; a price was owed, a penalty was required, a ransom was necessary, and as Romans 6:23 says, the wages of sin is death. God determined payment was due and Christ was offered up as propitiation. The appeasement of God's wrath is accomplished through the blood of His Son. God took the initiative to satisfy and appease his own wrath (Schreiner). The death of The Son has quelled The Father's anger, which is His righteous response to sin. Lovingly and willingly, The Father put forth His one and only Son to die; the perfect and innocent One crucified for the guilty.

This presentation both personifies and exemplifies the magnitude and breath of God's love. God chose love all before Himself. Imagine, the Creator of all things, The One who is complete within Himself, The One who sustains all things, willingly chose to lay down His life. Jesus was presented as a ransom for the sins of all humanity. The weight of every single atrocity committed by man, the utter hatred and loathing perpetuated by every human being, was placed upon the spotless, holy, righteous, perfect, and blameless Son because of the love of The Father. This type of love is incomprehensible. It defies logic and it supersedes explanation. It is tremendous and miraculous that God would select Jesus to atone for the willful, consistent, and

repetitive disobedience of mankind. Schreiner wrote, “God set forth Jesus as a sacrifice to satisfy his wrath, wipe away sin through his blood, and it is a gift available to us by faith...so let me say it again that he set forth Jesus as a sacrifice to demonstrate his judging righteousness in the present era of salvation history.”

Verses 25b and 26 underscore another facet to The Father’s decision to put forth The Son. Romans 25b-26 reads, “...He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.” God demonstrates a rich and divine patience with humanity. Paul referenced His patience earlier in his letter to the Christians in Rome. Paul reminded these believers that God is patient and kind, and His kindness and forbearance are intended to bring humanity to repentance. What God contends with for the sake of humanity is indeed supernatural, but there are limitations to His patience. Yes, God is patient, but He is also holy and righteous. In Galatians 6:7-8a, it reads, “Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please the flesh will reap destruction...” The sacrifice of The Son uniquely and completely demonstrates the just nature of The Father. Osborne wrote, “Allowing the sacrificial system to suffice rather than punishing them to the full extent they deserved, namely, by eternal death, prepared for Christ. Osborne further explained that Christ enabled God to maintain His righteous character as He justifies those who, in the age of salvation, place their faith in Jesus.”

God is love, but He is also much more than this; The Father is also just. Sin has been deliberately committed by man, and thus recompense is rightly owed to Him. Atonement is justifiably necessary for the sin of mankind; penitence is required. God, the just, has freely chosen to acquit the irreconcilably guilty by presenting His perfect and blameless Son as a final,

complete, and atoning sacrifice. It is by faith in Jesus that pardon is secured once and for all. Schreiner wrote, “God vindicates his righteousness in the cross...He tolerated the sin of humans only because he looked ahead to the death of his son as an atonement for sin.” The wrath of God is satisfied in the death of Christ for all those that will come to faith in Jesus. The Just and Justifier has compassionately provided His Son as propitiation for all those that believe in Jesus.

In Romans 3:21-26, Paul labored to fully express the righteousness of The Father. Paul explains that God’s righteousness (his saving justice) has manifested in Christ’s death and made available to all through faith (Goreman). Paul focused on the gracious gift of salvation, made possible only by God putting forth Jesus as an atoning sacrifice, who paid the penalty for sin so that right standing could be achieved between God and man through faith. Schreiner writes, “The saving promises of God have not been fulfilled via keeping the law, since both Jews and Gentiles fall short of the glory of God...both groups have replicated the sins of Adam throughout history. Nevertheless, God fulfilled His promise through the death of Jesus.” Paul has made clear, God’s righteousness is now accessible to all people that put their faith and trust in The Son, Christ Jesus.

In the next section of his letter, Paul shifts into a piercing and determined diatribe format. Paul directly combats the collective offenses, hesitations, and misconceptions of the believers in Rome. He uses quick-fire questions and answers to remind the brethren that no one has right standing with God except through faith in His Son. Paul reminds the church that God is Lord of all, both Jews and Gentiles, and he further informs the believers that the law is not abolished, but it is upheld. Romans 27-31 reads, “Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. Because of what law? The law that requires works? No, because of the law that requires faith. For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law. Or is God the God of Jews

only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith. Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law.” Osborne authored, “Faith is necessary for experiencing justification...justification by faith removes boasting. Faith rather than works predominates in the new covenant, justification is now entirely by faith, and so righteousness is now attained apart from observing the law.” Paul had to cut through the defensiveness of believers in Rome. When confronted with the righteousness of Almighty God, while owning the collective nothingness of individual merit, and in full recognition of depths of human depravity, how could anyone boast of entitlement or a justified position? As believers look intently in the mirror of the law, while noting each and every instance of personal and moral lack, the impossibility of atoning for their own sins should become evermore clear. God has made a way where there was absolutely no way. People often grasp at straws when confronted with the illegitimacy of their own moral standing. Humans look for certainties; they long for security and assurances. Paul worked to dispel the validity of such arguments. He explained that the playing field was leveled, God has made the only way of right standing before Him. It is only by God’s grace, through faith in His Son Jesus, that can people receive this justified position. Ethnicity, and failed adherence to the law, even by way physical circumcision, cannot not save or fulfill God’s righteous requirements. Salvation is only found in Jesus.

Paul’s first question is stunning, and his answer is equally as cutting. Where is boasting? Where is the moral high ground? Who can point to any human merit? After being confronted with the absolute unrighteousness and degeneracy of mankind, where would the capacity to boast come to bare? Paul made clear, there are no grounds for boasting because all are without merit. Boasting is excluded in light God’s means for justification. All need His grace, all require Jesus

as the atoning sacrifice for sin, all have sinned and lack the glory of God. There is no other means of redemption and salvation. Heritage does not save; It cannot save. Goreman explains, “There are no grounds for boasting if justification is by means of what God has graciously done through Christ’s faithful death. It is available for all on the basis of the same law of faith.” Paul has explained that believers are justified freely by the grace of God through redemption which is only found in Christ. The requirement for access to righteousness is faith in The Lord Jesus; the law of faith, not works. Believe in The Son who was set forth by The Father as the atoning and acceptable sacrifice for sins. God has sufficiently demonstrated the way of salvation, and no human being possesses the capacity to attain it outside of faith in Jesus. God has eliminated all other misconstrued attempts at self-justification, be it Heritage and ethnicity, circumcision, or any other attempted and failed observance of the law. Verse 28, “For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.” Schreiner indicates, “There is a shift in salvation history. Works of the law don’t save since human beings fail to keep the law. One could boast if one could keep the law. The inability to obey the law serves as another reason for the nullifying of boasting...righteousness is obtained by faith in Christ.” Paul has effectively drawn a line in the sand, and with verse 28, he has essentially doubled down on his claims. Verses 27 and 28 are conservators of Paul’s assertions about how humanity is declared justified; it is by faith.

Paul continues this intense line of questioning in the next few verses. Verses 29 and 30 ask, “is God the God of the Jews only? Is he not God of the Gentiles too, since there is one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith.” There is only one God. The Jewish believers would immediately recognize this reference as coming from The Shema, which is an ancient and very important prayer in Judaism. Deuteronomy 6:4

reads, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one." This shrewd reference by Paul would prompt the Jews to remember a fact already made known by The Lord. Paul wants them to hear and recall what The Lord has made plain about Himself. God is One. This understanding has already been accepted. The Lord God has already confirmed this, God is the Lord of all. Paul is correct, God is Lord over both the Jews and the Gentile believers. These Jewish Christians have likely heard and prayed the words of the Shema for most of their lives, and Paul is working to close all arguments against inaccurate distinctions between both believing groups. God is One, not just God to the Jews. Osborne specifies, "God is the God of Jews and Gentiles. They stand equally before God as sinners in need of grace, since both are justified by faith, then it stands to reason He is the God of both, and they are justified in the same way." Osborne further emphasizes this point with reference to Old Testament texts regarding all nations being drawn onto The Lord. God made His intentions know regarding the Gentiles, and Paul is appealing to this understanding as well. Isaiah 49:6b, "I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth." Jesus also referenced the drawing of all people onto Himself in John 12:32b. God is drawing both the Jews and the Gentiles unto Himself. God has demonstrated His love for the entire world, and the people that come to faith in Jesus will know redemption secured by His perfect and complete sacrifice. Schreiner elaborates further, "The promise given in the Old Testament about the salvation of Israel has been fulfilled in the one person of Jesus Christ. Now Jews and Gentiles can by faith enter into the new people of God. The oneness of God demands that Jews and Gentiles are justified in the same way, by faith. Righteousness is only obtained by faith in Christ." As Paul wrote in his letter to the church in Galatia, Chapter 3 Verses 26 and 28, "So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through

faith...there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

The last verse of this important theological passage has been reported as difficult to interpret by Schreiner. Verse 31 reads, “Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law.” Is the law of Moses nullified by faith in Jesus? Has the law lost legitimacy for belief in the propitiatory work of Jesus Christ on the cross? Paul’s answer in this diatribe is absolute and emphatic, he says, “by no means!” In other words, not even in the slightest. In Matthew Chapter 5:17-19a, Jesus says, “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. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Therefore, anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teachers others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven...” Believers have not been called to ignore nor dismiss the law of God; not one of the laws should be revoked or nullified according to The Savior Jesus. When asked which of the commandments was the most imperative, Jesus said, believers are to love The Lord their God with all their heart, soul, and strength, and to love their neighbors as themselves. The implication is profound. If followers of Christ could keep these two commandments, all the other commands would be maintained as well. If Christians could love The Lord God with all their heart, soul and strength, and their neighbor as themselves, then believers would never bear false witness, there would be no coveting, or murder, parents would always be honored, and the Sabbath would be kept holy. Schreiner wrote, “The moral norms of the law still function as the authoritative will of God for the believer since they are part of the law of Christ. The idea is not precisely that the law is fulfilled by faith in Christ, but rather that those who have faith in Christ

will keep the law.” Believers are ambassadors of Christ, and the collective should seek to emulate the behavior of their Lord and Savior. Followers of Jesus should uphold the law as Christ has fulfilled the law. Christians have freely been given grace, but it is grace unto faith, not freedom to circumvent or willingly disregard the laws as specified by The Father. Paul wrote in his letter to the church at Corinth, “follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.” The law does not save, but by the gift of grace, faith in Jesus will. The law cannot save, but it should be upheld.

The book of Romans is regarded as a very most important epistle in The Bible. It has been described as Paul’s masterpiece. The Apostle outlines crucial Christian theological concepts and tenants in this noteworthy letter. One of the most significant teachings is how justification before God was gifted by His grace through faith in His Son Jesus. Dr. Grant Osborne wrote, “It is impossible to overstate the importance of faith as the only basis of knowing God...work will never suffice to produce salvation. We can never earn eternal life.” The only hope in this world is found in The Savior King Jesus. God has graciously made known the way of salvation; The Father has glorified The Son, and all those that put their faith in Jesus will not perish but be granted eternal life.