

In 1:16,17, the apostle Paul proclaimed the salvation of God in the Gospel and the wrath of God revealed against the guilty. Then, in 1:18-3:20, the apostle charged all humanity to be guilty of breaking God’s Law. While “*the doers of the Law will be justified*” (2:13), nobody can do God’s Law: “*...by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight*” (3:20). How, then, can we be justified (declared righteous before God by God’s standard of the Law)? Judgment is coming. How shall we sinners be acquitted? We need God’s right wrath against our sin to be satisfied. We need a righteousness that will permit us to stand before Him forever in His blissful glory.

## He Has Come (3:21)

<sup>3:21</sup>But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets...

### Don’t Misunderstand: the Law is **NOT** Unrighteous

- Don’t read this as a criticism of the Law of God, for “*the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good*” (7:12). The problem is not with the Law. Remember: the Law was never given to show us how to be saved, but to show us that we were sinners incapable of saving ourselves. The righteous Law shows that we are unrighteous and need a Savior.
- Paul even testifies that he has a righteousness according to the Law – in other words, no one could look at Paul’s life and bring an accusation from the Law against him. This “*righteousness which is in the Law*” was insufficient: READ Philippians 3:6-9.
- “*Apart from the Law*” means that our status before God as righteous (justification) receives nothing from our obedience to the Law. Justification (be declared righteous before God) is not accomplished by the Law, but the Law did witness to justification by faith.
- The Old Testament is important! Remember that Paul said the greatest benefit the Jews experiences was “*that they were entrusted with the oracles of God*”

(3:2), which “*witnessed*” to “*the righteousness of God*” by faith.

## The Righteousness of God

- How are we to be found righteous before God (justified)? This is the central theme of Paul’s letter to the Romans (and the Bible). If 1:18-3:20 showed that we cannot be found righteous before God on our own, Paul is now returning to the theme he first gave us: READ 1:16,17.<sup>1</sup> The “*Gospel*” reveals “*the righteousness of God.*”

<sup>3:22</sup>...even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction...

- The apostle has told us that the Gospel, which reveals “*the righteousness of God,*” is the “*power of God to everyone who believes*” (1:16,17). But he didn’t tell us what the object of belief was – instead, he’s been building to this crescendo: “*...the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe.*” It is not faith/belief in general, but specifically “*faith in Jesus Christ*” which results in a righteous that allows us to stand before God unto eternal life and bliss.
- This is important! We are not saved by a general faith in God, but by a faith in the God of the New Testament, Who is only approached by those whose righteousness comes specifically by faith in Jesus Christ. Belief in a “bare deity” saves no one.

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<sup>1</sup> Remember, **Paul wrote his letter to the Romans to unify the local church for global mission through the right understanding and application of the Gospel.** The local church cannot hope to truly have impact on the world for Christ without “the right understanding and application of the Gospel,” for it is the Gospel which is “*the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes*” (1:16). Nothing else is the power of God but the Gospel. We must understand it rightly, apply it truly, and never cease to grow in our understanding of it and maturing in it.

### What’s in a Name?

- While the name and title “*Jesus Christ*” doesn’t tell us everything about the Son, it tells us a lot!
- The name “*Jesus*” is an adaptation of the Old Testament name “Joshua,” or “Yahweh saves.” Yahweh is the name God gave Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3:13-15, shown by an all-capital “*LORD*” in our English Bibles). Jesus is the salvation of Yahweh-God of the Old Testament. The angel reveals this to Joseph in a dream: “[Mary] will bear a Son; and you shall call His name *Jesus*, for He will save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21). So the name “*Jesus*” identifies Him as the way the God of the Old Testament saves His true people (both Jew and Gentile who believe in Him). The name “*Jesus*” also points to the Son’s human nature, as “*born of a descendant of David according to the flesh*” (Romans 1:3). Later Paul will speak of “*the Israelites...from whom is the Christ according to the flesh*” (9:5). In summary, the name “*Jesus*” identifies the Son as the divinely-given salvation promised in the Old Testament, and is the name given to the Son upon His being born as a fully human baby.
- If “*Jesus*” is the name, then “*Christ*” is the title. It means “anointed,” and is the Greek translation of the Hebrew word “Messiah” (which also means “anointed”).
  - Jesus is “anointed” as God’s chosen King over all the rulers and authorities of the world. This title is ultimately rooted in God’s promise to David to use one of his “seed” (Jesus) to reign forever over all.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> READ 2 Samuel 7:8-17; Psalm 89:19-37; Luke 1:31-33. The Davidic covenant and its importance to Jesus’ identity as King of kings is hugely important. The New Testament begins (Matthew 1:1) and ends (Revelation 22:16) with a reference to Jesus as David’s

- Jesus is “anointed” as the only High Priest Who can both represent us as sinners before God, but can also bring us with Him into the presence of God.

### The Greatest Gift Ever (3:23)

*3:23...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,  
3:24being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption  
which is in Christ Jesus...*

- Justification is “*a gift by His grace.*” There is nothing in us or what we have done or will do that will merit this “*gift.*” The sole motivating factor in God to justify us is “*His grace.*”
- Why did God save us? Solely to display His beautiful glory through the “*gift*” of His amazing grace to us.<sup>3</sup> He didn’t save you because you were worthy. He didn’t save you because you did good things. He didn’t save you because He looked forward and saw

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reigning Son. For Jesus’ current and comprehensive authority over all powers everywhere, READ Matthew 28:18; 1 Corinthians 15:25; Ephesians 1:20-23; Revelation 1:5; 17:14; 19:11-16. No, seriously - go read these verses. You need them in this world. You need to always remind yourself about Who’s in charge right now and forever over everything. When we confess “*Jesus is Lord*” (Romans 10:9), the only saving confession, we are not merely confessing Him as our “personal Lord and Savior.” He’s not Lord only over individuals in their private, subjective religious experience. He is Lord over all – no limits or qualifications or selective jurisdiction. “All” means all.<sup>3</sup> READ Exodus 33:18,19. How does God display His glory? See also Psalm 79:9; Isaiah 43:25; 48:9-11; Ezekiel 20:9,14,22,44; 36:22-32. God shows His glory by graciously saving those unworthy of salvation. In Ephesians 1:3-14 (one long sentence in the Greek), the motivation of God to save us through His Son is identified in the refrain: “*to the praise of the glory of His grace...to the praise of His glory...to the praise of His glory*” (1:6,12,14).

that you would believe. He saved you solely because of His graciousness. Praise Him with great praise!

### Wrath Publicly Satisfied (3:25a)

3:25a... *Whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith.*

- PLEASE notice that it is God Himself Who provides His Son to satisfy His wrath against our sin (and the Son agrees to be put forth).

#### Why Is Biblical Religion So Bloody?

- God created humanity to glorify, love, and enjoy Him through an eternal relationship framed by obedience. In the beginning, humanity had one prohibition and was warned that violation meant a forfeiture of life (Genesis 2:17). If God created us for a relationship displayed in obedience, and we did not obey, then our reason for living was removed. Disobedience to God results in death.
- The serpent tempted Eve with the suggestion that God was a liar and that there was no death penalty for disobedience (Genesis 3:4). Eve (and Adam after her) chose to believe the lie that God will not punish disobedience. That has affected all of their children after them, including you (Romans 5:12).
- Paul’s letter to the Romans repeated describes death as the divine penalty for sin: READ 1:29-32; 6:16,23. The breaking of God’s Law (lawlessness) is sin (1 John 3:23), and the penalty for any and all sin is death.
- God, from the very beginning, instituted a system of substitution. The death of an innocent can take the place of the death of the guilty. God kills an animal to provide coverings over the guilty Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:21). From the earliest days, humanity understood that a substitute was needed to atone for their guilty before God (Genesis 4:4).
- Why blood? *“The life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make*

*atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement”*

(Leviticus 17:11).<sup>4</sup> Blood represents the life forfeited by the sin-earned death penalty.

*“According to the Law...all things are cleansed [from guilt] with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness”* (Hebrews 9:22).

- The unpleasantness of the shedding of blood highlights the seriousness of sin before a holy God and the fact that sin demands death. The penalty shows the grave nature of the violation against God’s glory.

#### Propitiation

- Like so many concepts in the New Testament, it is most deeply understood when we see the foundation in the Old Testament. The word “*propitiation*” is the same as the word for the “*mercy seat*,” or lid on the Ark of the Covenant (Hebrews (9:5). This was where, on the Day of Atonement, the High Priest would enter the Holy of holies, where God manifested His presence. Under the mercy seat, inside the Ark of the Covenant, was the Ten Commandments. God’s Law condemns us all as sinners before Him. How could God dwell in the midst of a people who could not help but violate His Law? Another life was substituted for theirs: **READ Leviticus 16:13,14**. Sin merits the wrath of God, since it is an affront to His eternal glory. The blood was the representation that a life had been taken to absorb God’s wrath against sin -

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<sup>4</sup> Notice that God says He **gave** the shedding of blood for atonement. It is graciously-given by God Who would have been totally within His rights just to destroy anyone who sins (all of us). The sacrificial system of the O.T. is not a system of salvation by works (sacrifices being the works), but a means of pointing to the final and only adequate Sacrifice, Jesus Christ. It is given by God (a gift), showing the glory of His grace.

propitiation.<sup>5</sup> It pointed to Christ, Who took the right wrath of God against our sin upon Himself on the cross.

- This is why Jesus cries out, “*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?*” (Psalm 22:1// Matthew 27:46//Mark 15:34). Those “*who do not know God*” through “*the gospel of our Lord Jesus...will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power*” (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). Jesus accepted the forsakenness of the Church in Himself on the cross.
- READ Romans 5:9.

## God’s Righteousness Demonstrated (3:25b,26) In the Old Testament (3:25b)

<sup>3:25b</sup>*This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed...*

- READ Exodus 12:1-13. Why don’t the Israelites suffer the same fate as Egypt and its false gods? The blood of the Passover lamb over their doorposts: “...***when I see the blood I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.***” When Paul says “*God passed over the sins previously committed,*” it is a reference to the Passover. The blood of a lamb could not cause God’s wrath against sin to pass by, but the One Whom the lamb represented: Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God (John 1:29,36) Who is our forever Passover (1 Corinthians 5:7).<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> READ Luke 18:13; Hebrews 2:17; 1 John 2:2; 4:10.

<sup>6</sup> “...man having brought himself under the curse of the law by his fall, it pleased the Lord to make a covenant of grace, wherein he

- The non-Jews (Gentiles/Greeks) were not destroyed from the face of the earth in the past, despite their idolatry.<sup>7</sup> Why? God is determined to honor His Gospel promise to Abraham (Genesis 12:3), which is fulfilled in the saving of a remnant out of all nations through Christ (Revelation 5:9). As all humanity fell with Adam, God is redeeming out of lost humanity a new humanity that will dwell with Him forever.

## In the New Testament (3:26)

<sup>3:26</sup>*...for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the Justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.*

- God is “*just.*” He punishes sin as it deserves. God is “*Justifier.*” He proclaims those who believe in His Son justified (acquitted). Believe, and Jesus the Innocent is dead in the place of you, the guilty sinner – and He lives forevermore that you may have life before God in heaven!

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freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in Him, that they may be saved...His covenant is revealed in the gospel; first of all to Adam in the promise of salvation by the Seed of the woman [Genesis 3:15], and afterwards by farther steps, until the full discovery thereof was completed in the New Testament...although the price of redemption was not actually paid by Christ till after His incarnation, yet the virtue, efficacy, and benefit thereof were communicated to the elect in all ages, successively from the beginning of the world, in and by those promises, types, and sacrifices wherein He was revealed, and signified to be the Seed which should bruise the serpent's head; and the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, being the same yesterday, and to-day and forever...the justification of believers under the Old Testament was, in all these respects, one and the same with the justification of believers under the New Testament” (1689 Baptist Confession, 7.2,3; 8.6; 11.6).

<sup>7</sup> READ Acts 14:15-17; 17:30,31.