

**Romans 3:21-26**  
**The Provision of God for Justification**

Romans chapter 3 verses 19-26. Romans 3:19,

**19) Now we know that whatsoever the law says, it speaks to the *ones* in the law, in order that every mouth might be stopped, and all the world might become under judgment to God.**

**20) Because out of the works of the law all flesh will not be justified before Him, for through law *is the* full- knowledge of sin.**

**21) But now apart from law a righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,**

**22) and *a* righteousness of God through faith of Jesus Christ toward all and upon all the ones believing; for there is not *a* difference,**

**23) for all sinned and come short of the glory of God,**

**24) being justified freely *by* His grace through the redemption *which is* in Christ Jesus,**

**25) whom God displayed *as* a propitiation through the faith in His blood, for a show of His righteousness through the passing over of the sins which had happened before, in the tolerance of God,**

**26) for the showing of His righteousness in the present time, for Him and so that He will be just and the justifier the one who is out of the faith of Jesus.**

We keep running into those little phrases and I keep emphasizing them in Paul's writings. It is not a mistake when Paul says that God ministers His salvation to us through the faith of Jesus. Because it is His faith.

Last week, in commenting after verses 10 through 18 in this section, remember the first doctrine in the book of Romans that we are learning about is the Doctrine of Condemnation. And you might think we do not need to hear or understand that one. But the word *condemnation* is a judicial term that means *to have a sentence against you*. The judge, God, has already issued a sentence. And He says, "All are guilty." As we saw the first hour the Scripture locks us up in prison. It makes us a slave and a prisoner. And only Christ can set us free. God is doing everything that He can do other than violate our free will to bring us to surrender to Christ. And the first thing He has to do is show us why we need a Savior. We do not need a religion, we need a Savior.

We saw in verses 10 through 18 concerning the conviction. Paul said there are fourteen characteristics of the person - every person, every human being - in their natural nature without Christ. Fourteen things:

First of all, the condition of man in verse 10.

**There is no one righteous not one.**

Secondly, **no one understands.** No human being has the ability and capacity in and of themselves to understand the spiritual things of God.

Thirdly, **not one person is seeking God out.**

Fourthly, **everybody has turned away from God.** In other words, nobody is going towards Him His way, we have turned our own way. We do things our own way.

Fifthly, **all together we have become useless.** Not from a human standpoint but from a spiritual standpoint. God says, Because of sin you are useless. You cannot function in the purpose and design which I have made for you specifically."

Sixthly, **no one is doing anything profitable** - that is, *spiritual good* - **not as many as one.**

Secondly, in our conversation verses 13 and 14.

**The throat is an open grave.**

**Their tongue was deceiving.**

**The poison of asps, the cobra of Egypt, poison of asps is under their lips.**

**Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.**

Thirdly, our conduct verses 15 through 18.

**Our feet are swift to shed blood.**

Secondly, **destruction and misery are in their ways.**

**And a way of peace they did not know.**

And lastly, **there is no fear of God before their eyes.**

Just the last characteristic itself, *having no fear of God*. Having no care or concern about what God thinks. Is He pleased or is He not pleased with what I am doing? with who I am? With a respect and a reverence for what He wants me to do. He created me, He put me on this earth at a specific time in history for a specific purpose. For His Spirit to dwell in me so that He might use me for something in my generation for His sake and for His glory. But I cannot

function that way until He saves me. And after He saves me, He heals me, brings me back to an understanding of the things of Christ.

So last week, in verses 19 and 20 we took the purpose of the law. Just like the first hour, it is to bring conviction. Paul says that everybody, **Whatever the law says, every single person is required of that law**, the purpose: **in order that every mouth may be stopped, and the world might become under the judgment to God.** We have no defense. That is why the sentence has already been made. There is no, "Wait a minute, I did not have a chance to defend myself." There is not any. God has made the case so clear so that every mouth may be stopped and the whole world will stand guilty before Him. Verse 20, **All flesh will not be justified out of the works of the law before Him, for through the law is the knowledge of sin.** That is what the law is for.

But today, verses 21 to 26 is our transition section actually preparing us for the Doctrine of Justification. We are leaving the Doctrine of Condemnation and we are in transition looking ahead to the Doctrine of Justification in chapter 4.

Firstly, in verse 21 in preparing us for the Doctrine of Justification. He says, **But now apart from law.** Not *without the law* but *apart from the law*. It means separated from the law. The two having nothing to do with each other. **But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been manifested, revealed.**

So the righteousness of God and the law do not mix. Except that God says he added the law to give us the knowledge of sin. Instead of Him saying, "You need a Savior."

"Okay, we agree, whatever that means, what do we do now?"

He causes us to become aware of our condition and it is apart and separated from the law. I cannot experience or come to the righteousness of God through the law. It is impossible. Because I am already guilty. We have to understand that.

I used to think and believe that a person, if they rejected the gospel that I presented to them about Jesus Christ, that if they rejected it they were going to go to hell. In John chapter 3 in verses 17 and 18 it says, **Everyone who has not believed in the Son is condemned already.** A person is not going to hell because they rejected the message that I brought to them. The sentence has already been made. People are already on their way to hell with or without me. And I am like the person that is running up and down the river bank, they are already flowing along. Right now it is the calm waters, you can picture the person on a raft with a cup of coffee and a donut kind of sailing along. And I am on the side of the shore saying, "You do not understand! At the end of your journey you will be destroyed."

"Aw, it is such a beautiful day. I love the river. Sunshine out."

You get a little further, water starts getting rougher. And so you say, "See! it is coming. You do not understand." By me sharing the gospel with them it is like throwing a life preserver and if

they reject it they just keep right on going. Until we get to the end and then there is destruction and it is too late.

It says, **This righteousness of God has been manifested by being witnessed to by the Law and the Prophets.** Everything that Paul is sharing about the Doctrine of Condemnation and soon the Doctrine of Justification is found all through the Old Testament. It is nothing new. The Hebrew or Jewish people already had this message. It is nothing new. But remember what the Hebrew or Jewish problem is. The Hebrew or Jewish problem is that we are God's chosen people, and God gave the law to us, in order to teach you. And Paul says, "Well, do you teach yourself?" Hey, I am a Jew. I am a Hebrew. I am already on my way to heaven. I have eternal life. You guys are the sinners. And the Jews in Jesus' day considered every person who was not Jewish to be a sinner.

And Paul is spending more than two chapters in Romans convincing the Hebrew or Jewish person, "You are wrong. You have more responsibility because God has given you His law. It is not for you to tell others but for you to apply to yourself and then tell others." And he is summarizing that right now by saying - first of all, in preparedness let me say in leaving this subject that God's righteousness and His plan of salvation has been testified to by the law and the prophets. The law being the Torah, which literally means *instruction*. And the Neviim, the Prophets. God's prophets have already prophesied not against the Gentiles but against the Jews.

How many times does God have to show the Hebrew and Jewish people that they are his chosen people but they also are sinners? How many times does He have to put them into captivity to show them? See, I would be saying - a Hebrew person if I am functioning philosophically according to logic and reason - "If I am one of God's chosen people, why am I in bondage in Babylon?" Why does God allow Jerusalem to be destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians? Why did God allow destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D. according to the predictions of Jesus? If I am the chosen one, and if I am exempt, and I am not a sinner, why is God showing me I am a sinner? Why does God keep bringing judgment for everything we do wrong as we violate God's law?

Do you realize that up to Jesus' day the Hebrew or Jewish person still did not make the connection? Here is God's law. We violated God's law. He puts us into captivity and judgment. New generation comes around and same thing all over again. An eleven day trek through the wilderness took them almost forty years because God made them go around the mountain because of disobedience. Now something has to click up here, you know? "God is providing everything for me. I am one of God's chosen people. But I have been going around the same amount for twenty-five years. I mean I love mountains, but you know. Why does He not bring me into the Promised Land like He promised?" Judgment, that is why. And the icing on the cake is that when Messiah came, their Messiah came, they rejected Him. But that is okay. Because we are Hebrews and we are Jewish, we are God's chosen people. We can reject the Messiah and still to go to heaven, can't we? No. You have had the testimony of the law and the prophets.

Verse 22, **And the righteousness of God is through faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all of the ones who are believing; for there is not a difference.** That is, there is not a

difference between Jew and Gentile both are sinners. You might be asking, well then what is the advantage of being a chosen Jew or Hebrew? They have been chosen to study and apply and proclaim the word of God. But that does not make them exempt. And if you think that is their problem, and it is not a common human problem both Jew and Gentile, you are mistaken. Many Christians hold the same attitude. "I have received Christ, I am forgiven for all of my sins. I have His word. Sure, I make mistakes." But we preach at others as though God is not going to judge me with the same kind of judgment that I am talking about to you. But yet we are told whom God loves He disciplines. He is going to be dealing with me more than the nonbeliever because I'm His child. The nonbeliever is going to see God dealing with me more than himself but the righteousness of God comes through the faith of Jesus Christ.

Last Thursday we saw in Acts chapter 14 verse 27 that after Paul and Barnabas made their missionary journey and they came back and they came to the church in Antioch and they gathered all the church together to relate what happened on their missionary journey, how all these Gentiles were receiving Christ and being saved. So the outcome in response was, "Well, it looks like God has opened the door of faith for the Gentiles." God opened the door of faith, not people. If God were not to grant faith and open that door of faith the Gentiles would not have been saved. As simple as that.

We were also told in our study that repentance was also given to the Gentiles. *Repentance means to make a decision for change.* That is, I make a decision to change the direction of my life but I surrender to Christ and let Him make the change. I cannot do it. It is a decision that I make but He does it all. God's righteousness comes through the faith of Jesus Christ. It is His faith. And through - by means of - the faith that he gives to me is why I believe. Notice it is towards everyone and upon everyone who is believing. That is a present participle. It expresses the continuous condition of a true believer: they are continually believing. Not just one time, but are continually believing. For there is no difference. Jew and Gentile. We are not talking here just about one person.

So in summary, verse 23, the verse that we have heard so often: **For every one**, that is, **all sinned and came short of the glory of God.** Everybody. *Everybody* is every body. *Sinned* is past tense and to come short of the glory of God. See, that is what a sinner is. **ἁμαρτία** (hamartia) is the word for *sin* and it means - it is an archery term, actually, and it means for the arrow to fall short of its target. So it means *to fall short*. What is our target? The glory of God. *Glory* representing His nature, His Holiness, His person. And so, for each one of us He puts His holiness and the expression of His nature and person in front of us and says, "Here is the standard of holiness, do you measure up?" Well, of course not. I would have to be God in order measure up.

See, we have a habit of comparing ourselves to other people. Now I do not want to argue with you or try to convince you but I am convinced that I am more holy than my neighbors. But I can compare myself with other people, other people I cannot avoid because they put me to shame. You know we always compare ourselves, "Well, I am not as bad as that." God says He does not compare us with other people, He compares us with himself. Ooooooh.

If you are Evel Knievel's son and you have your ramp set up there over the Grand Canyon and you are going to ride your motorcycle up the ramp and attempt to land on the other side. And both of his sons, the first son takes off and flies up and then goes out as far as he can and he drops straight down in the canyon. The other son goes up the ramp, his motorcycle stalls, he goes right over the edge and straight down. Now one did better than the other but both have fallen short, and both experienced the same thing... [I think they just landed. What timing. I told them I do this.]

... So really, I have fallen short of the glory of God. That makes me a sinner. But everybody has. Even though you might have better qualities than I everybody has fallen short of the glory of God. Everybody is a sinner.

He says, (verse 24) **Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.** I have sinned and come short of the glory of God, but God has redeemed me through the redemption in Christ Jesus. The word *redemption* means to pay the sum of money that is owed for my debt. When a slave is sold down in the marketplace, if that slave has incurred debt not only do you have to pay for the slave, but you have to pay his bill as well. His debt. That is what redemption means. Whatever or however short I fall in comparison to the glory of God Jesus Christ came to pay for that debt. In the Bible *sin* is called a *debt*. In other words, once I sin I am guilty before the courts. That guilt has to be paid, it is a debt. Well, God sent His Son as redemption to pay my debt.

Verse 25, **Whom God displayed as a propitiation.** Then we are going to have several what are called *prepositional phrases* that are going to describe in detail for us, seven prepositional phrases that are going to describe this propitiation.

The word *propitiation*, in fact **ἱλαστήριον** (*hilastērion*) is the Greek word and it is the word for the Mercy seat in the Old Testament. In the Tabernacle they had a place called the holy of holies where no one was able to enter in except the high priest on the Day of Atonement once a year. And on the Ark of the Covenant was a Mercy Seat. That was the cover and they had two cherubim, two Angels, facing each other. And the high priest would go on in the Day of Atonement and sprinkle the blood of the sacrifice upon the Mercy Seat calling upon the mercy of God to forgive the people. Same word now is used for Jesus Christ. He is the Mercy Seat upon which the blood is sprinkled. Interesting it is His blood and He is the Mercy Seat.

*Propitiation* in general terms means *satisfaction*. In other words, in the tabernacle when the high priest put the blood on the Mercy Seat that was to satisfy God's requirement for the sins of the people. That is what it was for. Christ is the satisfaction to God the Father for all of my sins. But God displayed Christ as the propitiation. He put Him right out there and said, "Here is the sacrifice for redemption. Here is the Mercy Seat upon which the blood is sprinkled and I am displaying it publicly for all to know and all to see."

Now there are seven prepositional phrases that finishes us out.

He has displayed it **through faith**. Not the law, through faith. We will get more into that as we go along. But just in general, as I have told you for several years that our understanding of faith here in America and in the Western world is different than what the Bible teaches. There is

a faith that we live by that we as human beings exercise. All of you are dressed this morning, that meant you had some kind of faith that you are going to arrive. When you get on an airplane, you could be scared half to death of flying, but for some reason you brought your baggage with you, in case you made it, you know. There is some kind of faith that says, "Well, you know, I am trusting I am going to make it." That is human faith.

Spiritual faith the human being does not have. Galatians chapter 5 verse 22 says that faith is a fruit of God's Spirit. It is produced by God's Spirit. God opens the door and gives me the faith to believe, because I cannot believe on my own. I have a human religious faith but I do not have a spiritual faith. When God displays his propitiation it is through faith. The word *faith* in Greek means *persuasion*. God displays His propitiation, His satisfaction in His Son through God's Spirit ministering to me and showing me. He is persuading me. He is ministering to me. That is what faith is called. Faith is anything the Holy Spirit does. Being of the faith means that the Holy Spirit lives inside of you. You are of the faith. So it is through faith that He reveals Christ as the propitiation.

Secondly, **it is in His blood.** He displays the propitiation in the blood of Jesus Christ. Remember when Jesus instituted what we call *communion* with His disciples. He says that that his blood is the blood of the new covenant that is shed for you. So His shed blood is the blood that is sprinkled on the Mercy Seat.

Thirdly, **for a show of his righteousness.** God demonstrated - that is what the word *show* means - for a demonstration of his righteousness. God is fulfilling His righteous requirements openly and publicly to all people. "Look how guilty you are but then do not get all upset about it because I sent somebody, My Son, to satisfy My need for there to be a sacrifice for your sins." And He shows it openly and publicly.

Fourthly, **on account of the passing over of the sins which had happened before.** And He did it **in the tolerance** (or *endurance* or *forbearance*) **of God.** The fact that God passed over the sins of the past is found in His tolerance or forbearance.

Instead of wiping out the world with another flood, which God said He would never do, He tolerated based on His forgiveness. That is why you and I, if you ever read the law, it would scare you half to death. The little things that you would do wrong that you are supposed to be taken out and killed for. The ones I know the best are the ones I quote to my kids. If you sass your mother and father they take you out and stone you. I love to quote that one. But do you see God's grace, God's tolerance, and His forbearance? That punishment does not apply anymore to us because we are in Christ Jesus. But how much do we take advantage of with God? "Well, I am under grace, I am not under the law." Yeah, but God still is pained by and grieved by sin.

Sometimes I like to read the Old Testament just to find out and keep my mind remembering just how sensitive God is to sin. Which I commit but I do not even think about it because I am forgiven and going to heaven and we are under grace not under the law. That does not mean God is pleased.

**In the tolerance of God; (verse 26) to the showing of His righteousness.** Again, the putting out of his righteousness as a display through His tolerance.

Sixthly, **In the now time.** That is how it literally reads, *in the present time*. It is for now. All of the promises in the Old Testament were made through the prophets and to the Old Testament saints. They did not have the end result. They never experienced the end result. We do.

The last part of verse 26, the seventh thing, **for Him to be just, and the one justifying the one who is out of the faith of Jesus.** That is how it literally reads. That God might pronounce me just and that He might be the justifier. He is the one that pronounced people justified and righteous through His Son. He is God. He is the judge. If I have been pronounced righteous and just by Him that is official and that is final. As long as I am the one who is out of the faith of Jesus. Again showing source, from out of the faith of Jesus. I have not come to Him with my own human religious faith but it is actually the faith of Jesus.

I still to this day - I was saved over forty years ago - but still to this day as I continue to learn about Christ I look back on that time when the Lord saved me and realize that all those times that I went to a Bible study, instead of saying, "Well, I guess that is when I was interested," no, that is when God drew me by His Spirit. He has done it all. He has drawn me to Himself. His Spirit ministered to me and persuaded me that I need to surrender my life to Christ. So out of that persuasion, out of the persuasion of Jesus Christ, God pronounced me just and righteous. All part of His process. But the Bible continues to show us and reveal to us, the only thing we have before God that is really our part if you want to say that, is that God looks at the condition of our heart. That is it.

We should know that from the parable of the sower. All the different kinds of soil responded differently to the word of God. The Word of God is the same but the soil is different. And Jesus said that represents people's hearts. We used to have a little soil sampling kit in landscaping. If people wanted to plant certain things you had to test the soil because that soil had to have a certain formula and mixture in it. The dirt just sat there. It did not do anything. I was the soil tester. Put it through the process and find out if that soil can handle certain plants or trees. That is what God does with us.

Somehow, in some way God tested my heart and said, "Well, if we cultivate this a little bit your heart will be receptive to Christ." So through a process of months His Spirit through His word continued to cultivate my heart and one night Jesus saved me. He made the preparations. The seed was planted. And the fruit of that seed is salvation. But the more I look back on it, even after all these years, I see more and more that it was all Him and not me. How do I follow Christ? By faith. The only thing I do is make decisions in my head. I cannot do it. That is what faith is. I entrust myself to the Spirit of Christ, to God's Spirit to do what is pleasing to God sight. I cannot do it. The same way I got saved is the same way I live and walk with Christ and grow in Christ. It is by faith but it is His faith, not mine.

Next week we will finish out this chapter and move on into chapter 4 and start our next study and doctrine, the Doctrine of Justification. He has given us the preliminaries now we will dig into the doctrine itself.

Let's close with prayer.