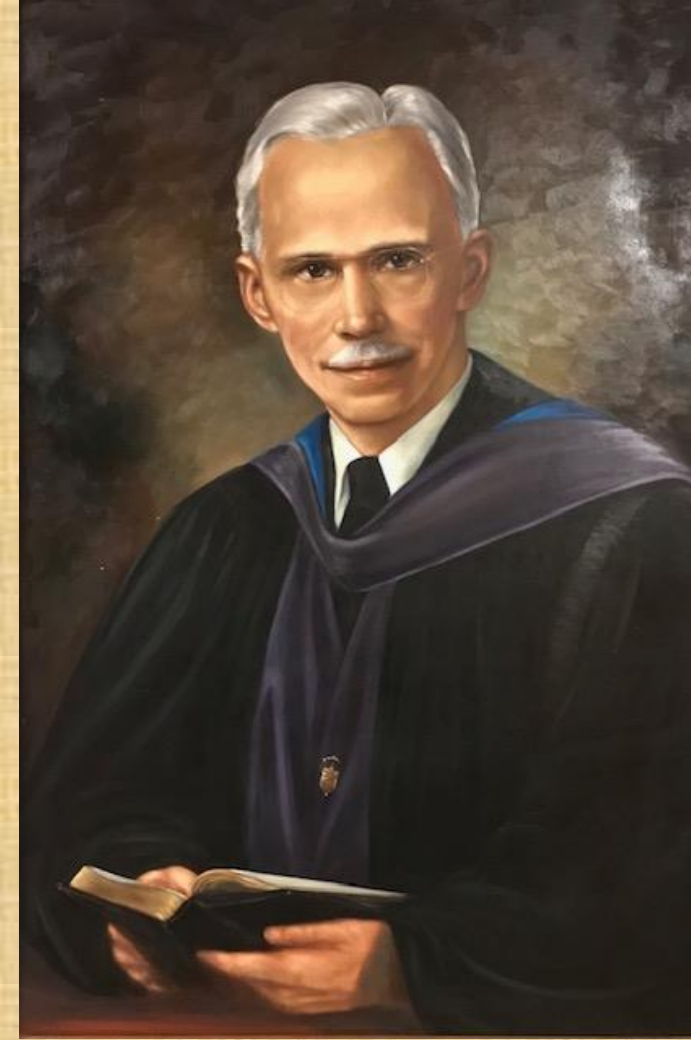


PROBLEMS IN THE GOSPEL PACKAGE

ROMANS 3:21-26

Rom 3:19–20 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.



Alva J. McClain

1888 – 1968

founder of Grace Theological
Seminary and Grace College

This section is the very heart of the book of Romans. For this reason, all Christians ought to memorize verses 21-26. If someone should ask me, "Brother McClain, if you could have just six verses out of the Bible, and all the rest be taken away, which would you take?", I would select these six verses. All of God's gospel (Good News) is there, and in a way found nowhere else in the Word of God.



Romans 3:21-26 is “possibly the single most important paragraph ever written,”

Leon Morris
1914 – 2006

Rom 3:24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

“In all Scripture there is probably no verse which captures the essence of Christianity better than this one. Here is the heart of the gospel, the mighty Nevertheless, the momentous divine reversal. Everything in verse 23 was due to humanity; everything in verse 24 depends on God.”

James Edwards, *Romans*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1992) 102.

Several interpretive difficulties in Romans 3:21-26

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1. What is the meaning of “righteousness of God”?
2. What is the meaning of “faith in Jesus”?
3. What is the relationship of Romans 3:23 to Romans 3:24?

THE FOUNDATION OF JUSTIFICATION 3:21–26

Romans 3:21 **But now** the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets

The righteousness of God –
δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ [dikaiosune theou]

"Righteousness of God" is used with two distinct meanings in the New Testament. Context determines the intended meaning.

(1) God Himself is righteous (Rom. 3:25, 26). This would be what is known as a genitive of possession. It is the righteousness which God possesses, i.e., His perfect character.

The righteousness of God –
δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ [dikaiosune theou]

(2) The righteousness of God which is said to be imputed to the one who believes: "A righteousness **from** God which is to all and on all who believe" (Rom 3:22).

δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ [dikaiosune theou]

This would be what is called a genitive of source (or origin): the *source* from which the head noun derives or depends—*out of, derived from, dependent on, or “sourced in.”*

Wallace, D. B. (1996). Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics - Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament (p. 728). Zondervan Publishing House and Galaxie Software.

δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ [dikaiosune theou]

A righteousness from (the source of God

- a. It is God's own righteousness credited to the believer in Jesus (Rom 3:22; 4:5).**
- b. It is not produced in life by the Spirit; and is unrelated to self-righteousness in every form.**
- c. It is in no way related to right conduct (Phil 3:9)**
- d. It is that which we become when we are vitally joined to Christ (2 Cor 5:21).**

A righteousness from God

This righteousness is declared to be a gift:
For if by the one man's offense death reigned
through the one, much more those who receive
abundance of grace and of **the gift of
righteousness** will reign in life through the One,
Jesus Christ. Rom 5:17

Philippians 3:9 speaks of the **righteousness which
is from God** by faith

apart from the Law -- refers to the Mosaic Law. The law cannot make you righteous. But there is righteousness from God which is separate from the Law.

apart -- χωρίς [choris] -- occurring separately or being separate, apart from, independent of

A righteousness from God

is revealed -- φανερόω [phaneroo] (perfect passive indicative = “stands manifested”). -- has been revealed.

being witnessed -- μαρτυρέω [martureo] – pres pass pt. To confirm or attest something; bear witness, be a witness

by the Law and the Prophets –

The law requires two or three witnesses to establish the truth of a matter (Num. 35:30; Deut. 17:6; 19:15; Matt. 18:16; John 8:17; Heb. 10:28).

The two witnesses will be identified in Romans 4 as Abraham and David

NKJV Romans 3:22 even the righteousness of [from] God, through faith in Jesus Christ to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference

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through faith in Jesus Christ

Faith -- πίστις [pistis] is used 8 times in Romans 3:20-31.

Rom 3:22 even the righteousness of God, through
faith in Jesus Christ, **to all and on all who believe.**
For there is no difference;

Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God

have sinned -- ἁμαρτάνω [hamartano]. aorist act ind.

Is this talking about personal sins?

It is likely that this is not speaking of personal sins, but of imputed sin. The original sin of Adam is imputed to every descendent of Adam. This is taught in detail in Romans 5:12-21. All sinned when Adam sinned. All sinned in Adam. This is not personal sins

Rom 5:12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned--

Rom 5:19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.

Romans 3:23 for all sinned and fall short of the glory of God

fall short -- ὑστερέω [hustereo] – present passive indicative

- to miss out on something through one's own fault, to miss, fail to reach, to lack.

The present tense of the verb here is a dramatic contrast to the aorist of the verb for sinning. The aorist tense says, “it happened.” The present tense says, “It’s still going on.”

We all sinned in Adam, and we continue falling short of the glory of God.

the glory of God ἡ δόξα τοῦ θεοῦ [he doxa tou theou]

This is all that God is in His perfection, the aggregation of His infinite attributes

Rom 3:24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus

Being Justified -- δικαιόω [dikaioo] -- pres pass pt--
to render a favorable verdict, vindicate, to declare
righteous

“*although* they are being justified freely.” Or “*while* they are being freely justified.”

The most natural way to read this text is to see the ‘all’ who sinned of v. 23 as the “all” who are justified.

Does this mean that all will be saved – a universal salvation? -- we know that isn’t right.

But the ‘all who believe’ (v. 22) are also the all who have sinned and continue to fall short of the glory of God (v. 23). And those who fall short are also those who are justified—**while they are falling short!**



Simul Justus Et Peccator

(Simultaneously righteous and sinner)

~Martin Luther

for all sinned and are falling short of the glory of God while being justified freely by His grace...

So the ones who are justified in verse 24 are also the ones who sinned and who are falling short of the glory of God.

Even though they sinned in Adam and even though they continue falling short of the glory of God, they are still being justified freely by God's grace.

Rom 3:24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

Justified: is this righteousness imparted or righteousness imputed?

If righteousness is imparted God makes us righteous.

If righteousness is imputed, God declares us to be righteous.

If righteousness is imparted, then there is no assurance of salvation since God does not make us righteous immediately.

If righteousness is imputed, there is indeed assurance of salvation since the legal declaration of our righteousness is the divine statement about our status, not about our practice.

Justification

1. Justification means to vindicate, acquit, declare free from a penalty, to declare righteous.
2. Justification is the judicial, legal act of God in which He declares, on the basis of the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, that all the claims of divine righteousness and justice are satisfied with respect to the sinner.
3. The one who believes in Christ is declared righteous. This is based on imputation.

Justification

4. Justification is the recognition by God that the believer in Jesus has His perfect righteousness. Therefore, God then makes the declaration that we are righteous and therefore free from the penalty for sin.
5. The declaration of God in justification applies to all sins of the believer, past, present and future; and therefore includes the removal of every penalty (Romans 5:21; 8:1, 32-34; Hebrews 10:14; Psalm 103:12; Isaiah 44:22).

God declares righteous the ungodly man who ceases to trust in his works and believes in Christ – He ‘justifies the ungodly’

Romans 4:5 But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness,

being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

Freely – δωρεάν [dorean] adverb. Pertaining to being freely given, as a gift, without payment, gratis

By his grace -- χάρις [charis]

being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

Redemption -- ἀπολύτρωσις [apolutrosis]

There are 8 different Greek words related to redemption.

They fall into 3 groups.

1. the payment of a **price** to secure the release of a prisoner.
2. the **liberation** of the one who has been captive.
3. **both** the payment of the price and the liberation are in view.

The redemption that is in Christ Jesus

The word in this verse is about the liberation. Everywhere in the New Testament this Greek word, when used metaphorically, refers to deliverance effected through the death of Christ.

“Before you leave verse 24, apply it to yourself if you are a believer.

Say of yourself: ‘God has declared me righteous as a gift to me, by His grace, through the deliverance from sin’s penalty that is in Christ Jesus.’

Don’t just learn Scripture, but if it is talking about you, put yourself into it. Make it personal.

NKJV Rom 3:25 whom God **set forth** as a propitiation by His blood, through faith...

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

NIV Rom 3:25 God **presented** Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood -- to be received by faith.

NET Rom 3:25 God **publicly displayed** him at his death as the mercy seat accessible through faith.

set forth-- προτίθημι [protithemi] ao mid ind – to set before.

(1) for public display; (2) middle voice: for mental consideration; to plan something; to purpose

In the two other instances in which this verb is used in the New Testament the sense clearly points to a purpose.

Rom 1:13 (many times I planned to come to you) Eph 1:9 (which he purposed for himself)

set forth-- προτίθημι [protithemi] ao mid ind – to set before.

Wherever in the New Testament the cognate noun πρόθεσις [prothesis] is used, (except when it occurs in connection with showbread), the meaning is always “purpose.”

set forth-- προτίθημι [protithemi] ao mid ind – to set before.

BDAG gives the meaning “to publicly display” but they give no viable proof for this. [they cite one place in Josephus and one place in Justin Martyr – but these are not convincing.]

Nowhere else in the New Testament does this word mean to set forth or publicly display -- and this translation differs substantially from the sense of the cognate noun in every comparable New Testament usage. To translate this as “present” [NIV] or “display publicly” [NAS] is questionable.

Whom God *purposed* or *planned* to be a propitiation

Propitiation -- ἱλαστήριον [hilasterion] mercy seat; place of propitiation, satisfaction, means of expiation= reparation for an offense or injury: satisfaction.

It is the place where the justice of God was satisfied because He poured out His righteous judgment on Christ who paid the penalty for all sins.

The LXX uses ἱλαστήριον of the lid on the ark of the covenant, כַּפֹּרֶת [kapporet] which was sprinkled with the blood of the sin-offering on the Day of Atonement (Ex 25:16ff). This word is translated “mercy seat” in Heb 9:5.

The word *seat* does not indicate that upon which one sits, but the place where something takes place, as in the seat of government or the county seat.



Ark of
the Covenant

Propitiation is the satisfaction of divine justice by the payment of the penalty. The word can also indicate the place where satisfaction is made

Propitiation demonstrate the consistency of God's character in saving the worst sinner who ever lived. Because the justice of God is satisfied, God who is holy can save sinful man (Romans 3:25) and can forgive the sinning Christian (1 John 1:7; 2:1-20)

by His blood, through faith

The NIV translation of this phrase, "through faith in His blood" correctly represents the word order in the Greek text.

However, Paul declares faith in the person of Jesus Christ (vv. 22, 26) and not faith in His blood is the object of faith for justification.

"Blood" is a metonymy, (the name of one thing appears in the place of another associated with it). His blood represents His life poured out as a sacrifice. His substitutionary death is what make His sacrifice effective (cf. 5:9; Eph. 1:7; 2:13; Col. 1:20)

by His blood ἐν τῷ αὐτοῦ αἵματι.

Does the preposition ἐν [en] indicate sphere or means? In His blood or by means of His blood?

Notice Romans 5:9 where we find the same expression:
Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.
(ἐν τῷ αἵματι αὐτοῦ). Cf Heb 10:19; Rev 1:5 et al.

God planned that Jesus would satisfy divine justice by means of His blood, His death on the cross.

whom God planned as a satisfaction by His blood,
through faith,

The idea is this: God planned for Jesus Christ to be the sacrifice that would satisfy God's wrath by paying for our sins. His sacrifice becomes efficacious for those who put faith in Him.

to demonstrate His righteousness -- εἰς ἔνδειξιν τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ, [eis endeixin tes dikaiosunes autou]

to demonstrate -- ἔνδειξις [endeixis] is translated as a verb, but it is a noun: “for a demonstration” something that compels acceptance of something, ... a demonstration, a proof [BDAG]

Why would God need a demonstration or proof of His righteousness?

because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed,

forbearance ἀνοχή [anochē]. The Greek word is used in a legal context to describe what happens when, for example, a banker or someone who is owed money, abstains from enforcing or collecting the payment of a debt

God chose to abstain from collecting the debt payment from everybody from Adam to the cross because He knew the solution and the debt payment would be made when the 2nd person of the Trinity entered into human history to go to the Cross and pay the penalty for all sins of all people of all time.

God had passed over the sins that were previously committed

had passed over: διὰ τὴν πάρεσιν – [dia ten paresin] only here in the NT. “Because of the passing over” literally. The word does mean “passing over,” but not in the sense of “overlooking or disregarding.”

Rather it has the more strictly legal sense of “letting go unpunished, remission of penalty [BDAG]

Rom 3:26 to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

The greatest question is not, “How can a loving God cast His creatures into the lake of fire?”

The greatest question is, “How can a righteous God save anyone and still be righteous?”

to demonstrate – for a demonstration, proof

at the present time – in contrast to the past when God withheld the judgment on sins.

His righteousness -- this is the character of God, His holiness.

that He might be just -- δίκαιος [dikaios]– righteous.
God can never be rightly accused of wrong doing in anything – even when he declares the sinner to be righteous.

and the justifier -- δικαιοώ [dikaiōō] pres act pt – the one justifying or declaring righteous.

of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Characteristics of justification (a legal declaration)

- it is apart from the Law (v. 21),
- through faith in Christ (v. 22a),
- for all people (vv. 22b–23),
- by grace (v. 24),
- at great cost to God (vv. 24b–25),
- and in perfect justice (v. 26).

Rom 3:27 Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith.

Rom 3:28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.

Conclude: λογίζομαι [logizomai] to reach a conclusion after careful consideration of facts, to reckon, consider, account, impute.

Gal. 2:16 nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified.

Rom 5:1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

Justified by faith

Rom. 1:17; 3:26, 28, 30; 4:5; 5:1

Gal. 2:16; 3:8, 11, 24

Heb. 10:38

Jas. 2:24

FAITH

1. How do we understand reality?

a. **Rationalism** is a belief system based on independent thinking apart from any outside source. Rationalism says that reality is what you think to be true.

b. **Empiricism** is a belief system based on observation and experience rather than by theory. All ideas are derived from some sensuous experience of sight, hearing, touching, tasting, smelling. Empiricism says that reality is what I observe.

c. **Mysticism** is a belief system based on intuition or direct insight and rejects reason and experience as inherent to truth. Mysticism is pure subjectivism and is often irrational and emotional. Mysticism says, “I just know....”

d. **Faith** is a belief system based on confidence in the authority and the veracity or ability of another. Faith is not based on one's own knowledge, as is rationalism or empiricism.

2. Faith is non-meritorious because it depends on the authority, veracity, or ability of someone else. Faith requires an object.
3. Faith means to trust, rely on, have confidence in, believe, accept something to be true.
4. Faith relies first on understanding a proposition, then volition to accept that proposition as reality.

Faith is always directed toward an object which can be expressed in a proposition. A proposition is the expression of a thought which can be verified or falsified. Therefore faith is not a function of emotion but of reason.

You believe with your mind only. There is not such thing as believing with your heart if that is connected with emotions or commitment or some vague idea of sincerity.

5. Therefore you do not believe directly in a person, or come to salvation through a relationship with Jesus, but you first believe the propositions in Scripture that inform you about Jesus and His saving work on the cross.
6. This means faith is rational not irrational. Although what is believed may be irrational, faith itself is not.

7. Faith as an intellectual activity excludes emotion, irrationalism, and mysticism
8. Faith that results in salvation must be placed in the One who can give salvation.
9. Faith is not a work we perform, but it is the channel by which we appropriate what God has done for us through His Son Jesus.

Rom 3:29-31 Or is He the God of the Jews only?
[since the Law was given only to Israel]. Is He not also the
God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also,

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

31 Do we then make void the law through faith?
Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law.

