

## RIGHT THIS WAY

### "JUST SALVATION"

#### ROMANS 3:21-31

We all know how it feels when a relationship goes wrong. Suspecting there's a problem, we typically ask, "Are we all right? Is everything OK between us?" If the answer back is "No! We're not all right. Everything isn't OK between us," the follow up question is usually something like, "What can I do to make things right?"

When it comes to humanity's relationship to God, we're not all right; everything isn't OK between us. That's Paul's point in Romans 1:18-3:20. Generally speaking, the apostle argues that some people are grossly immoral and idolatrous (1:18-32), some relatively moral but judgmental (2:1-16), others confidently religious yet hypocritical (2:17-29). The one thing they all have in common is sin. None of them is righteous, not even one (3:10). None of them is right with God, and none of them can do anything to make themselves right with him, since Paul states emphatically that no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by observing the law, either that of Moses or that of conscience. Only God can make things right between himself and humanity by his grace through our faith in Jesus Christ.

### **This Week's Core Competency**

**Salvation by Grace** – I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by his grace,

*Christ's death satisfied and turned aside the wrath of God, making redemption possible.*

– Paul Enns

through faith in Jesus Christ.

Salvation is a gem with many facets. One of them is *redemption*. Paul mentions this doctrine in Romans 3:22b-24 where he writes, "There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus." This passage teaches that Jesus is the redeemer, and we who are justified are the redeemed. The two thoughts are juxtaposed in Ephesians 1:7-8 where the apostle writes, "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight."

On the definition of redemption, one theologian writes: "The word redemption (Gk. *apolutrosis*) is a particularly Pauline term; it is used ten times in the New Testament, seven of them in Pauline writings. Redemption means to set free by the payment of a price. The background of the term related to the Roman slave market where a slave was put up for sale and the purchaser paid the necessary price to set the slave free. Paul employs the term to describe the believers' release from bondage and enslavement to sin. But Paul also establishes the payment for redemption—the blood of Christ. His death was necessary to accomplish deliverance from sin. Romans 3:24 emphasizes that Christ's death satisfied and turned aside the wrath of God, making redemption possible. The passage also links justification with redemption; because redemption was accomplished man can be declared righteous (cf. Rom. 8:23; 1 Cor. 1:30; Gal. 3:13; Eph. 1:7, 14; Cl. 1:14" (Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, 110).

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# day 1

## ENCOUNTER – read God’s word to put yourself in touch with him.

### Romans 3:21-31

21 But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. 22 This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. 25 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- 26 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.

27 Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. Because of what law? The law that requires works? No, because of the law that requires faith. 28 For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law. 29 Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, 30 since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith. 31 Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law.

### Cf., another translation

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. (ESV)

## EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- \* Box "but now" indicating *contrast* in v. 21.
- \* Circle "law" in vv. 21, 27, 28, 31.
- \* Underline "righteousness" in vv. 21, 22, 25, 26.
- \* Highlight "faith" in vv. 22, 25, 26, 27, 28, 30, 31
- \* Bracket "glory of God" in v. 23.
- \* Circle "redemption" in v. 24.
- \* Double underline "justified" in vv. 24, 28, and "justify" in v. 30.
- \* Bracket "sacrifice of atonement" in v. 25.
- \* Box "so as" indicating *result* in v. 26.

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day **2**

**EXPLORE** – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. The "righteousness of God" refers to an *activity* rather than *attribute* of God. Explain (see note; cf., 1:17).
2. This *activity* of God has been made known "apart from the law." How so?
3. In what two ways are Jews and Gentiles the same?
4. How would you respond to the belief that being *justified* is a joint effort; God does his part, and people do theirs?
5. What is "to be received by faith" in verse 25?
6. Verse 26 begins "he did *this*." Did what?
7. One reason "he did this" pertains to the *past* (v. 25b). Explain.
8. Another reason pertains to the *present* (v. 26). Explain.
9. **Discussion:** Talk about how justification by faith alone debunks boasting and upholds the law.

Romans 3:21-31 isn't easy reading due in large part to its extraordinarily dense content and its appeal to extraordinarily deep theological truths behind expressions like "righteousness of God," "justified freely," "through redemption," and "sacrifice of atonement." In it, Paul elaborates on the good news he introduced in 1:16-17, which contains the thesis or proposition of his epistle. One commentator refers to the passage as a "recapitulation." He writes: "This recapitulation can be divided into two parts: the proclamation (vv. 21-26) and the diatribe (vv. 27-31) . . . Vv. 21-26 contain the expanded recapitulation of 1:16-17, vv. 27-31 set out in brief fashion the consequences of the thesis statement" (Ben Witherington III, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 99). And while it isn't easy reading, reading it carefully and actively will unlock its meaning.

The fact that all have turned away from God (3:12) and no one is righteous, not even one (v. 10), creates a twofold problem that only God can solve. First, sinful people, whom God loves, need to be set right with him but other than by observing the law—something they are incapable of doing. Put differently, they need to be justified. Second, God needs to set them right with himself but other than by simply overlooking their sin—something he is incapable of doing. Put differently, he needs to remain just.

In verses 21-26, Paul puts forward God's solution to the problem—a solution not made evident in the law but now made evident in the gospel—being careful to clarify that this solution is not foreign to the Old Testament, as the appeal to Abraham in chapter four will show. One commentator agrees saying, "While God's justifying activity in the new age takes part outside the confines of the Old Covenant, the OT as a whole anticipates and predicts this new work of God: God's righteousness is 'witnessed to by the law and the prophets'" (Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT, 223).

In his presentation of the solution, Paul identifies the means whereby God sets people right with himself, namely "faith in Jesus Christ" (vv. 22-25a). The means is the same for Jews and Gentiles alike for all have sinned, and all likewise are justified freely by God's grace. But that's not to

say that justification itself is free; in fact, it's unimaginably costly. Christ Jesus paid an infinite price to redeem sinners, to wit, set them right with God and emancipate them. Peter writes: "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect" (1Pe 1:18-19). In other words, justification is God's free gift to all who believe, an act of sheer generosity on his part that demands no payment whatsoever on their part; it's not a joint effort.

God presented Christ as a "sacrifice of atonement," the NIV's rendering of the Greek term *hilasterion*, variously translated in other versions. It's the word used in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament to refer to the "mercy seat," the cover over the ark where the LORD appeared (Lev 16:2) and on which the blood of the sacrifice was poured (vv. 14-15). The commentator above explains, "By referring to Christ as this 'mercy seat,' then, Paul would be inviting us to view Christ as the New Covenant equivalent, or antitype, to this Old Covenant 'place of atonement,' and, derivatively, to the ritual of atonement itself. What in the OT was hidden from public view behind the veil has now been 'publicly displayed' as the OT ritual is fulfilled and brought to an end in Christ's 'once-for-all' sacrifice" (Moo, 232). His words suggest that the "propitiation" (ESV) or appeasement of God's wrath is entirely Jesus' doing through his death on the cross. He is both the place and the person responsible.

Paul also explains the divine rationale behind the solution (vv. 25b-26). God sent Christ to redeem humanity for two reasons. He did it "to demonstrate his righteousness," that is, to vindicate his character by proving he is just. This was necessary because he left humanity's pre-cross sins unpunished until Christ died. However, "his 'forbearance' is not to be thought of as sentimentality or weakness but as an indication that meeting the demands of his righteous character would be accomplished in due season. This happened at the cross" (Everett F. Harrison, "Romans," in *The Bible Expositor's Commentary*,

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10:44). He did it also "to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time," that is, "so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus." "Paul's point is that God can maintain his righteous character ('his righteousness' in vv. 25 and 26) even while he acts to justify sinful people ('God's righteousness' in vv. 21 and 22) because Christ, in his propitiatory sacrifice, provides full satisfaction of the demands of God's impartial, invariable justice" (Moo, 242).

In verses 27-31, Paul debunks human boasting—likely with the Jews in mind. Justification by faith ("alone" added Luther), rather than by the law "that requires works" (v. 27), precludes it. As the apostle tells the Ephesians, "For it is by grace you have been

saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast" (2:8-9). What's more, since Jews are saved by faith "apart from the works of the law," Gentiles must be saved the same way. After all, isn't God the God of both the Jews and the Gentiles? Of course, he is. So, does justification by grace alone, sola gratia, and by faith alone, sola fide, nullify the law? No, Paul says. It upholds the law, in that it fulfills the purpose of the law. As Paul says elsewhere, "the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith. Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian" (Gal 3:24-25).

## day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

### *The Message of the Passage*

*People are put right with God through faith alone in Jesus Christ, sent to redeem humanity through his death, so that God might be just and the justifier of those who believe, thereby fulfilling the law.*

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Reflect on the message of Romans 1:1-7 and your response to it.

”Put right” implies people are *not right* with God. Relate this to the gospel.

Relate this message to the teaching that salvation is a joint divine-human effort.

Relate this message to the notion that God is loving and will not punish anyone.

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# notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 2 **but now** "As in 6:22, 7:6 1 Cor. 15:20, Eph. 2:13, and Col. 1:22, 'but now' marks the shift in Paul's focus from the old era of sin's domination to the new era of salvation . . . with the cross as the point of transition between old era and new" (Moo, 221).

v. 21 **apart from the law** The phrase could go with "righteousness of God" (see Charles Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 88) or with "has been manifested" (see Moo, 222). Commentators and translators are divided as to whether Paul is contrasting two ways righteousness is manifested or two different kinds of righteousness. One commentator narrows the gap between the two views when he writes: "Apart from the law' might mean, then, 'apart from doing the law': God's righteousness is now attained without any contribution from 'works of the law' . . . [but] it is not the manner in which God's righteousness is received that Paul is talking about here, but the manner in which it is manifested—the divine side of this 'process' by which people are made right with God. This phrase, then reiterates the salvation-historical shift denoted by 'but now.' In the new era inaugurated by Christ's death God has acted to deliver and vindicate his people 'apart from' the law. It is not primarily the law as something for humans to do, but the law as a system, as a stage in God's unfolding plan, that is in view here" (Moo, 222-23).

v. 21 **the righteousness of God** "The words may mean, 1. A divine attribute, the justice, mercy, or general rectitude of God. 2. That righteousness which is acceptable to God, which is such in his estimation. 3. God's method of justification; compare i. 17. The last interpretation gives here a very good sense, and is one very commonly adopted" (Hodge, 88). One commentator sees both 1 and 3. "It has two aspects, represented by the two clauses of v. 26, 'that he might be righteous himself' and 'that he might justify'" (C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 73).

v. 22 **through faith in** "Here Paul introduced the object of faith (Christ Himself) for the first time (cf. 1:16-17). He never said that people obtain salvation because of their faith in Christ, by the way. This would encourage the idea that our faith makes a contribution to our salvation and has some merit" (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Romans," 2017 ed., 53). Or "through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ" (see The NET Bible, 28<sup>tn</sup> on 3:22). The alternative translation is possible; the traditional more likely.

v. 23 **glory of God** "Possibly the best interpretation is to associate the glory with the divine presence and the privilege man originally had of direct communion with God . . . To be cut off from this fellowship is the great loss occasioned by sin" (Harrison 41). Another adds: "The absence of glory involves a declension from the 'image of God' in which human beings were first made . . . Paul, then, is indicating that all people fail to exhibit that 'being-like-God' for which they were created" (Moo, 226). "We lack both the character of God and the fellowship of God" (Constable, 54).

v. 24 **justified** "As Paul uses it in these contexts, the verb 'justify' means not 'to make righteous' (in an ethical sense) nor simply 'to treat as righteous' (though one is really not righteous), but 'to declare righteous.' No 'legal fiction,' but a legal reality of the utmost significance, 'to be justified' means to be acquitted by God from all 'charges' that could be brought against a person because of his or her sins" (Moo, 227).

v. 24 **redemption** Cf., Mt 20:28; 1Ti 2:6; 1Pe 1:18. "'Redemption' means, basically, liberation through payment of a price.' Thus, in the second and first centuries B.C., 'redemption' often refers to the 'ransoming' of prisoners of war, slaves, and condemned criminals. If 'redemption' has this connotation here, then Paul would be presenting Christ's death as a 'ransom,' a 'payment' that takes the place of that penalty for sins 'owed' by all people to God" (Moo, 329). "Taking v 24 as a whole, it this becomes clear that God's act of acquittal is not an act of arbitrary caprice. There was a cost to pay, a ransom to be secured. The acquittal depends on this ransom having been given" (James D. G. Dunn, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol.38a, *Romans 1-8*, 180).

v. 25 **sacrifice of atonement** "There are two possible meanings of 'propitiation' (NASB) or 'sacrifice of atonement' (NIV). The Greek word (hilasterion) is an adjective that can substitute for a noun. It means having placating or expiating force. It could refer to Jesus Christ as the place where God satisfied His wrath and removed our sins. This is the substantival usage, translated 'propitiation.' In favor of this interpretation is the use of this Greek word to translate the mercy seat on the ark of the covenant (Exod. 25:17, LXX; Heb. 9:5). However, it seems more natural to take hilasterion as referring to Jesus Christ Himself as the sacrifice that satisfied God's wrath and removed our sins (cf. Luke 18:13; Heb. 2:17). This is the normal adjectival use, translated 'sacrifice of atonement' (cf. 1 John 2:2; 4:10). Jesus Christ was the sacrifice, but the place where God made atonement was the Cross" (Constable, 56-57).

v. 27 **law** "Nomos in Paul's question, while meant to have a general reference, would naturally bring to mind *the law*, the torah. Paul then adds the contrasting modifiers to make clear his point: no, it is not through the torah, that law which demands works, through which boasting is excluded; it is through the 'rule' of faith, the 'ordinance' or 'demand' of God for faith as the basis for justification (v. 28)" (Moo, 249).

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### Family Talk

#### Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

"When Lily Pinneo, a missionary nurse, was in West Africa, she contracted a deadly disease called Lassa fever. After Lily was flown to New York for medical treatment, her temperature soared to 107°F. To reduce the fever, doctors packed her in ice and fed her intravenously. The fever subsided. After 9 weeks, she had lost 28 pounds and most of her hair. Yet somehow, she survived. In a laboratory, Dr. Casals carefully isolated and analyzed the Lassa virus. But he too fell ill from his exposure to the disease. At the time, no known treatment was effective. Fortunately, Nurse Pinneo was convalescing and had built up antibodies to the dread disease. She donated blood plasma to Dr. Casals and he recovered too. Her blood saved his life" (from Our Daily Bread, June 30, 2008). As we have learned in the last 2 chapters of Romans, you and I were born with a fatal disease as well. It's called sin. No one is immune from it and there is only one cure - Jesus. Through His sacrifice - His blood - we are made whole. We are made right with God because He has accepted Jesus' death on our behalf. How do we receive this cure for our sin problem? Simply by faith in the work of Christ on the cross. Parents, don't overcomplicate this truth. It is with childlike faith that we come to the Father and receive new life.

#### What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Romans 3:21-26

1. Who has sinned?
  
2. What did Jesus do so that you could be declared innocent before God?
  
3. Those who are saved have \_\_\_\_\_ in Jesus. (v. 26)

#### What Do You Think

Explain in your own words what you think "faith" means. Talk to your parents about it, too.

#### What R U Going To Do

Have you trusted Jesus as your Savior? If so, write down when and where you were. If not, ask your parents or small group leader to tell about when they trusted Jesus.

#### Core Comp

Salvation by Grace - I believe that I become a child of God through faith in Jesus, not because of anything I do.

#### Memory Verse

Romans 3:23 - *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*

### KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized my verse \_\_\_\_\_, completed *Scrolls* \_\_\_\_\_, brought Bible \_\_\_\_\_, brought a friend \_\_\_\_\_.

Series Discipleship Challenge located in KidPix Store.

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_ Parent's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Earn 1 token by completing the PantegoKids Bible study and another token by reciting the memory verse.

Questions: Kids@pantego.org

# 30 CORE COMPETENCIES

## 10 CORE BELIEFS

### **Trinity** 2 Corinthians 13:14

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

### **Salvation By Grace** Ephesians 2:8-9

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

### **Authority of the Bible** 2 Timothy 3:16-17

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

### **Personal God** Psalm 121:1-2

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

### **Identity in Christ** John 1:12

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

### **Church** Ephesians 4:15-16

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

### **Humanity** John 3:16

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

### **Compassion** Psalm 82:3-4

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

### **Eternity** John 14:1-4

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

### **Stewardship** 1 Timothy 6:17-19

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

## 10 CORE PRACTICES

### **Worship** Psalm 95:1-7

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

### **Prayer** Psalm 66:16-20

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

### **Bible Study** Hebrews 4:12

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

### **Single-mindedness** Matthew 6:33

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

### **Spiritual Gifts** Romans 12:4-6

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

### **Biblical Community** Acts 2:44-47

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

### **Giving Away My Time** Colossians 3:17

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Money**

#### 2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Faith** Ephesians

#### 6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Life** Romans 12:1

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

## 10 CORE VIRTUES

### **Joy** John 15:11

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

### **Peace** Philippians 4:6-7

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

### **Faithfulness** Proverbs 3:3-4

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

### **Self-Control** Titus 2:11-13

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

### **Humility** Philippians 2:3, 4

I choose to esteem others above myself.

### **Love** 1 John 4:10-12

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

### **Patience** Proverbs 14:29

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

### **Kindness/Goodness** 1 Thess. 5:15

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

### **Gentleness** Philippians 4:5

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

### **Hope** Hebrews 6:19-20

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

## About the Authors

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**Wendy Hollabaugh** (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.



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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you Belong, Become, and go Beyond as follower of Jesus Christ through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is [tbulick@pantego.org](mailto:tbulick@pantego.org).