

Romans 3:21-26

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[0 : 00] The reading is from Romans chapter 3 and I hope that all the references that you need are on the page as well.! Apostle Paul writes, but now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the law and the prophets bear witness to it.

The righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified by his grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 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. 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.

Theon Morris, the great New Testament scholar, said this is the greatest sentence, and it is a very long sentence, isn't it, that has ever been written. If you were to go onto the website of the criminal justice system, there are five tabs, there are five buttons on the website that you can press, you can tick.

Five ways in which you might come into contact with the criminal justice system. Number one is as a victim of the criminal justice system.

[2 : 09] You could find yourself sitting inside a courtroom. Some of you may have been at a court. I've been a couple of times, I won't tell you why. But maybe you just cannot imagine you yourself appearing in court as a defendant.

Nor the offender. Not me, you just can't believe it. You can't believe that you would ever be summoned to be in the criminal justice system of England and Wales.

That you would stand in the dock as the accused. But in the criminal justice system of God and heaven, you are the defendant. And you are charged with the most serious of crimes.

And you are destined to be convicted as the offender. All of us are. All of us. And that has been the message of the first three chapters of Romans. Do you remember God has clearly revealed himself to us.

So you have no excuse. All of us have rejected the God who is there. And we put idols in his place. We've lived for other things.

[3 : 24] For work, for family, for success. For relationships maybe. And we put them in the place of God. And as a result, Paul tells us in the letter to the Romans.

We are under his judgment both now and in eternity. But one day, all of us will see the inside of a courtroom.

That is the heavenly court. Where God himself is the judge. And you and I will not have a leg to stand on. And we will be found guilty as charged on the day of wrath.

When God's righteous judgment will be revealed. And the sentence for our crime will be eternal separation from God.

It will not be a custodial sentence for a few years. It will not be a suspended sentence where in the end you can get off. But it will be eternal separation from God.

[4 : 24] What the Bible calls hell. There's two words our passage begins with. That are good news, aren't they? Look at verse 21. But now.

But now. This is the best news you'll ever hear. And in these six verses, the gospel is summed up. The good news of the Lord Jesus Christ. And it asks us two questions.

How can the defendant possibly be justified? Bear in mind, that defendant is you. And me. And me. So it's a question that's important.

Let me turn my phone off. Is it my phone? It is my phone. Let me turn it off. But let that be a lesson to you. So bear in mind that the defendant is you.

And the defendant is me. It's a question that's very important, isn't it? How can the defendant possibly be justified before God? It may not be keeping you awake at night.

[5 : 24] Certainly not keeping most people in the evening awake at night. But it should be. Because it's at the heart of the Bible's message. Justified is a legal term. And justified means to be the opposite of being condemned.

In the court of law. So in Deuteronomy 25 verse 1. I've written it on your sheet there. If there is a dispute between people. And they come into court. And the judges decide between them. Are quitting the innocent. And condemning the guilty. It speaks of the innocent being justified. Of being acquitted. And the guilty being condemned. So as the guilty person according to Deuteronomy.

How can I escape? How can I be just rather than condemned? Well for starters. For certainty that is not through the law. Let me read you verse 20.

It says this. Chapter 3 and verse 20. For by the works of the law. No human being. No one will be justified in his sight.

[6 : 29] Since through the law comes knowledge of sin. No one is going to be justified in God's court. Nobody is going to be declared innocent in God's court. By law. But by. In God's court by keeping the law.

That is by being religious. By doing good things. But many people assume. Don't they? That they will be justified. They will be acquitted on that last day. Because they're religious.

Or they're good people. But that verse says no. You will be guilty as charged. And verse 23 sums up why.

Can you see it? It's so all encompassing. It says. For all have sinned. And fall short of the glory of God. That is all of us without exception. We break God's law.

And we fall short of God's glory. Morally speaking. There is some criminal out there. Isn't there? Probably in Ealing. Who might be in the deepest ocean. Alright?

[7 : 25] And morally speaking. You. Compares to him. Might be on the highest mountain. That there is. But that is no consolation. Is it? If you're reaching for the stars.

Which are 4.3 million light years away. How far short we fall. You might in your own little mind. Be far better. Than other people. And yet.

You. And I. Fall short of the glory of God. By the works of the law. No human being can be acquitted. No human being can be justified. So how can anyone be justified? How can you.

On that final day. Be declared. To be in the right with God. Look at how verse 20 continues. For all have sinned. And fall short of the glory of God. And are justified by his grace.

As a gift. It's a free gift. That God is offering. I don't know. If you're anything like me. You are very highly suspicious. Of a free gift.

[8 : 20] Don't you? There's normally lots of hidden strings. When somebody offers you a free gift. Or you just think. It's not worth it. But this free gift.

Is for real. And it is infinitely valuable. Because what could be more precious. Than knowing on the last day. When you stand before God. You will be acquitted. And not condemned. It's a gift you don't deserve.

Which is why. It's called. A gift of grace. That's what grace means. You don't deserve it. But it is a genuine offer. From God. So the justification.

That acquittal. That declaration of innocence. Is offered to us. By God himself. Another way of putting it. Is that God offers to us.

His own righteousness. Righteousness. Is to be in the right. And God offers to us. His own righteousness. Look at verse 21. But now the righteousness of God. Has been manifest.

[9 : 17] It's been shown. Apart from the law. Although the law. And the prophets. Bear witness to it. So it's not a righteousness. That you attain.

By being good. Or by being religious. Or by being moral. But it is a righteousness. It is a right standing. That is given to us. As a free gift. And it means to see.

That it's being justified. It's being declared. To be in the right with God. And all we have to do. Is fix up the gift. And that is what faith is. Can you look with me. At the passage again. Three times in the passage.

that a right standing before God is not something you earn. It is a free gift from God. And righteousness is not something that you bring to the party but something that God gives you. And all you do is humble yourself and receive it and say thank you. And now if you are the defendant standing in the dark what if turn around?

The case was watertight against you. The charge that you have not lived with God over your life. And it was damning and all the evidence the verdict of guilty was inevitable.

The sentence of eternity separated from God's love in hell unavoidable. But now you are justified by God and that is wonderful news. How can I be justified by God's grace which I accept?

[15 : 15] But it raises a big question. How can God possibly be just in doing that? How can God be right in doing that? That the guilty are declared not guilty.

The defendant goes free he walks out of a courtroom. That means that God is acquitting a guilty person and God is justifying God is declaring in the right the ungodly.

Chapter 4 and verse 5 says this. It says unto the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly his faith is counted as righteousness.

Now that's a problem isn't it? What sort of judge would do that? It's a dilemma. Would you like a judge like that? Would you like a judge that acquits the guilty? So imagine imagine Jimmy Savile imagine Jimmy Savile had actually been brought to justice and all the evidence that's come out in the past three years was presented before the judge the horrific abuse the testimonies of ladies and children boys and girls and teenagers which is so overwhelming and at the end the judge says I've reached my verdict I've considered all the evidence not guilty you can leave Mr. Savile what would happen?

There would be screams of horror wouldn't there? There would be outrage people would be outside screaming for justice even now at the end of the go home justice had not been done justified the ungodly well if that would be an outrage how much more in the heavenly courtroom because according to Deuterion 25 verse 1 can you just have a new sheet again the job of a judge is what?

[17 : 05] What's the job of a judge? It's to quit the innocent and condemn the guilty so God isn't doing his job properly or Proverbs chapter 17 verse 5 can you see he who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous are both alike an abomination to the Lord it is a dilemma you've got to feel it the Lord himself is doing what he calls an abomination Exodus 23 verse 7 is very clear keep away from a false charge and do not kill the innocent and righteous for I will not acquit the wicked and yet Romans chapter 3 tells us that is what God does so is God himself unjust is there an unrighteous God sitting on the throne of the universe what a terrifying prospect that is because in justifying the ungodly God leaves himself open to the charge that he is unworthy to rule how can the judge possibly be just in justifying the ungodly and the key piece of the jigsaw is how

God has provided the justification how God has provided that you could be declared right with him verse 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified by his grace's gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood and is to be received by faith it's saying what God has done in Jesus and specifically in the death of the Lord Jesus justifies the ungodly he is perfectly just in doing that in fact the death of Jesus in our place proclaims God is just and that he is righteousness and he is righteous look at verse 25 this was to show the middle of the verse God's righteousness look at verse 26 it was to show his righteousness God is righteous speaking about his justice his character now the key is how are we justified we are justified through the death of the

Lord Jesus in our place that Jesus has paid a penalty for our wrongdoing and so God can acquit us with perfect righteousness Paul to explain this he takes you out of the courtroom and he walks you round another part of town he takes you to the marketplace of business and commerce and he says to you in verse 24 he says let's go to the slave market and the key idea is redemption which is setting someone free through the payment of a price slaves in order to be set free in order to be redeemed a price has to be paid and the Bible tells you that we are slaves to sin and we are redeemed through the death of the Lord Jesus the ransom of Christ sets us free so God's acquittal God's declaration of not guilty is perfectly just because Jesus paid the price for our release Jesus paid it all all to him

I owe second Paul takes us from the marketplace to the temple and he says in verse 25 he says there's a propitiation whom God put forward as propitiation by his blood to be received by faith what was propitiation people get really hit up about this word it's a very very simple word it was a sacrifice that turned aside the anger of God it was a sacrifice that turned aside the anger of God you

see me going home one day and I got a bunch of flowers in my hand and you say why have you got a bunch of flowers and I say I'm going to propitiate Claire because what do I hope will happen I hope that by the giving of those flowers the anger of my wife will be turned aside a propitiation you times that by infinity but I want you to see this God in Jesus God provided the sacrifice God has not turned a blind eye to your sin and mine

God has paid for your sin and mine at enormous cost for himself and it is telling you and I that God takes our sin infinitely more seriously than you and I do in the death of Jesus Christ we see the extent of God's commitment to justice that is what it took for the penalty for our sins to be paid when God acquits the guilty he is not saying it doesn't matter your sin doesn't matter he can only justify the ungodly because Jesus paid the price he is not saying just faith is required please don't understand me on that it's not faith that saves you but faith in Jesus Christ alone is required look at verse 22 the righteousness of God is through faith in Jesus Christ verse 26 the justifier of the one who has faith in

[22 : 16] Jesus those who are acquitted those who are justified put their faith in Jesus not some big and woolly faith but in the fact that Jesus died in our place now where does this leave you how can I possibly be justified the day will come the court will rise and God will not sweep your sin under the carpet the penalty for your sin has to be paid and it will either be paid by God's offer of the Lord Jesus or you will face judgment on your own and for those of us who have accepted God's offer of Jesus we have to realize three things number one I want you to realize there is great assurance there are many many people that live uncertain about God's verdict on the last day there are many many people that face death with terror because they do not know whether they will be accepted by God and God wants you to enjoy certainty that if you have trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Lord Jesus Christ alone you are already justified and you have that justification and you can enjoy that justification because for those who are in Christ Jesus Paul tells us there is no condemnation the second thing I think it helps us is again with telling others chapter 1 verse 16 to 17 in some ways those key words in the book of Romans for the gospel is the power of God to salvation for all who believe first to the Jew and then to the Gentile people and the gospel of the Lord Jesus is the only way it is the only way that somebody can be justified rather than condemned on the last day and thirdly I think again one of the messages of Romans is it teaches us humility and so we are all on a level and so the Jew cannot look down on the Gentile and neither can the Gentile look down on the Jew because we have all fallen short of the glory of God whether we have! gone to church all our lives or whether we have never done the doors and you are no better than anyone else and neither am I but if you have received the gift you have just come with open arms and you have said thank you to God and that should make us some of the most humble and thankful people around let's praise Thank you.