

## The Heart of the Gospel: The Most Important Paragraph in the Bible (Romans 3:21–26)

Andrew David Naselli | June 14, 2009

21a 1.1	But now	Time of 21c
21b 1.2	apart from the law,	Disclosure of 21c
21c 1	the righteousness of God has been revealed,	Main clause
21d 1.2	being witnessed by the law and the prophets,	Support for 21c
22a 2	namely, the righteousness of God	Renames 21c
22b 2.1	through trust [i.e., faith] in Jesus Christ—	Means of 22a: trust in Jesus
22c 2.2	for <i>all</i> who trust [i.e., believe].	Availability of 22a: universal
22d 2.3	For there is no distinction,	Reason for 22c
23a 2.4	for <i>all</i> have sinned	Reason for 22d
23b 2.4	and are falling short of the glory of God,	Reason for 22d; result of 23a
24a 3	being declared righteous [i.e., justified]	Reintroduces theme in 21–22
24b 3.1	freely	Manner of 24a
24c 3.2	by his grace	Means 1 of 24a
24d 3.3	through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,	Means 2 of 24a
25a 4	whom God presented as a propitiation	Relative clause to 24d
25b 4.1	[accessible] through faith	Means of 25a
25c 4.2	by his blood	Means of 25a
25d 4.3	in order to demonstrate his righteousness	Purpose for 25a
25e 4.3	because of the passing over of sins previously committed in the forbearance of God	Reason for 25d
26a 4.4	in order to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time	Restated purpose for 25a
26b 4.4	so that he might be righteous [i.e., just] and the one who declares righteous the one who trusts in Jesus.	Explanation (or result) of 26a

## Introduction

- Marty
- Romans 3:21–26
- Romans 1:18–3:20

### 1. The righteousness of God has been revealed, and it relates to the OT (Rom 3:21).

This paragraph is dominated by a word-group:

- “Righteousness” occurs 4x (3:21, 22, 25, 26).
- “Declare righteous” or “justify” occurs 2x (3:24, 26).
- “Righteous” or “just” occurs once (3:26).

1.1. **“But now.”** The righteousness of God has been revealed at this point in salvation-history.

1.2. **“apart from the law . . . being witnessed by the law and the prophets.”** The righteousness of God has been revealed apart from the now obsolete law-covenant, and the OT (i.e., the law and the prophets) prophetically testifies to this shift in salvation-history.

### 2. The righteousness of God is universally available without ethnic distinction (Rom 3:22–23).

2.1. **“through trust [i.e., faith] in Jesus Christ.”** The righteousness of God is available only by trusting Jesus.

- For Roman Catholics, faith + works = justification.
- For Protestants, faith = justification + works.

2.2. **“for all who trust [i.e., believe].”** The righteousness of God is available for all who trust Jesus.

2.3. **“For there is no distinction.”** The righteousness of God is available for all people without any ethnic distinction. It is equally available to both Jews and Gentiles (cf. Rom 1:18–3:20).

2.4. **“for all have sinned and are falling short of the glory of God.”** The righteousness of God is available for all people without distinction because all people without exception are sinners.

### 3. The righteousness of God is free and expensive (Rom 3:24).

**“being declared righteous [i.e., justified].”**

- 3.1. **“freely.”** Believers are declared righteous freely, i.e., as a gift (neither earned nor purchased).
- 3.2. **“by his grace.”** Believers are declared righteous by God’s grace, i.e., his undeserved kindness (not because they are inherently better than others).
- 3.3. **“through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”** Believers are declared righteous through the redemption provided by Jesus.

### 4. The righteous God presented Jesus as a propitiation (Rom 3:25–26).

**“whom God presented as a propitiation.”**

- 4.1. **“[accessible] through faith.”** Jesus’ propitiation is accessible through faith.
- 4.2. **“by his blood.”** Jesus’ sacrificial death is the means by which God’s wrath is propitiated.
- 4.3. **“in order to demonstrate his righteousness because of the passing over of sins previously committed in the forbearance of God.”** God presented Jesus as a propitiation in order to demonstrate that he was righteous for leaving the sins committed before the cross unpunished in his forbearance.
- 4.4. **“in order to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time so that he might be righteous and the one who declares righteous the one who trusts [i.e., has faith] in Jesus.”** God presented Jesus as a propitiation in order to demonstrate that he is righteous even in declaring that sinful believers are righteous.

### Conclusion

- Praise God that his righteousness has now been revealed apart from the law-covenant.
- Praise God that his righteousness is universally available without ethnic distinction.
- Praise God that his righteousness is an expensive gift from God to us.
- Praise God that he presented Jesus as a propitiation and that he is righteous even in declaring that sinful believers are righteous.

## Recommended Reading on Romans 3:21–26

### Introductory

- Douglas J. Moo. [\*Romans\*](#). NIVAC. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000. [See esp. pp. 125–36.]
- John R. W. Stott. [\*The Cross of Christ\*](#). Downers Grove: IVP, 1986. [See esp. pp. 168–92, 208–12.]
- John R. W. Stott. [\*Romans: God's Good News for the World\*](#). BST. Downers Grove: IVP, 1994. [See esp. pp. 108–18.]

### Intermediate

- D. A. Carson. “[Atonement in Romans 3:21–26](#).” Pages 119–39 in [\*The Glory of the Atonement: Biblical, Historical, and Practical Perspectives: Essays in Honor of Roger R. Nicole\*](#). Edited by Charles E. Hill and Frank A. James III. Downers Grove: IVP, 2004.
- Douglas J. Moo. [\*The Epistle to the Romans\*](#). NICNT. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996. [See esp. pp. 218–43.]
- Thomas R. Schreiner. [\*Romans\*](#). BECNT 6. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998. [See esp. pp. 176–99.]

### Advanced

- C. E. B. Cranfield, [\*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans\*](#). Vol. 1. ICC. London: T. & T. Clark, 1979. Repr., 2004. [See esp. pp. 199–218.]
- Simon J. Gathercole, “Justified by Faith, Justified by His Blood: The Evidence of Romans 3:21–4:25.” Pages 147–84 in [\*The Paradoxes of Paul\*](#). Vol. 2 of *Justification and Variegated Nomism*. Edited by D. A. Carson, Peter T. O’Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid. WUNT 181. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004.