

Romans 3:21-31

Introduction

One of the false doctrines that arises within the church from time to time is that humanity is essentially good. Hence what people really need, is to look to Christ's example of selflessness and follow His example in order to attain their salvation. Such claims totally clash with the teaching of the Bible.

Christ is not merely an example of moral living, He actually came to save sinners who lie under the righteous condemnation of God and are thus subject to His wrath.

Summary

In Romans 3:21-31, Paul sets forth the very heart of his epistle and the essence of the gospel.

1. Righteousness apart from the Law vv. 21-25a

Previously in the Book of Romans, Paul indicted all humanity, Jew and Gentile alike. (**Rom 3:10; 20**). He then states: "But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe" (**Rom. 3:21-22a**). Sinful people lay hold of God's righteousness only by faith alone in Christ alone. This is the only means by which we can lay hold of this righteousness (**3:22b-23**). Only "the doers of the law will be justified" (**Rom 2:13**), but sinners by nature are incapable of perfectly fulfilling the law BUT God has poured out His mercy and we are "justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (**3:24**). Rather than look inwardly to our own moral efforts, Paul instead points us outside of ourselves to the redemption that comes through Christ.

The New Testament uses the term redemption in connection with liberating slaves (**Luke 24:21, Eph 1:7**). This language would have brought the Exodus; Israel's liberation from Egypt, to the minds of most first-century Jews. God freed sinners by one greater than Moses, Jesus Christ, "whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith" (**Rom. 8:25**).

Paul's use of the term 'Propitiation' (ESV, NASB, KJV, NKJV) is important. Christ's sacrificial work is not merely an expiation, something that takes away sin. His shed blood is a propitiation, something that also satisfies God's wrath against sin. When we acknowledge Christ's role as a propitiation, it means that once Christ forgives us of our sin, it can rise against us no more. Christ's sacrifice nullifies the law's condemnation against us.

This means that Christ's sacrifice conveys peace for all who seek shelter in Him.

2. God; Just and Justifier vv. 25b-31

Paul then explains why God would send His only begotten Son to bring eternal life to sinners like us (**Rom. 3:25b-26**). In Christ's sacrificial work, God reveals His righteousness. When Christ shed His blood on the cross, God demonstrated to the world that He was just, that He was righteous; He did not merely write off sin. He punished the sins of His people when Jesus willingly suffered on their behalf but at the same time, God mercifully granted access to Christ's substitutionary work through the gift of faith alone. For this reason He is also the justifier. God is both just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (**Rom. 3:26**). Paul goes on to say, "In His divine forbearance He [God] had passed over former sins" (**Rom. 3:25b**).

If all of these things are true, how can sinful man boast in anything that he might do apart from God's grace in Christ (**Rom. 3:27**)?

We are justified either by the law (or principle) of works or by the law (or principle) of faith. Given our sin-fallen condition, the principle of justification by works is out of the question (**Rom 3:28**). If we are justified by faith alone in Christ alone by God's grace alone, then we have no ground whatsoever for boasting in ourselves.

Paul's point applies universally to all, to Jew and Gentile as God will only justify both by faith alone in Christ alone (**Rom 3:29-30**). Paul's argument in no way overthrows the law (the collective teaching of the Old Testament) but rather upholds it (**3:31**).

God is our judge, and a guilty verdict and death sentence hang over us.

Rather than punish sinners as they rightly deserve, God lovingly and mercifully sent His Son, Jesus Christ, who willingly takes the place of sinners and bears their punishment.

God also gives sinners His righteousness in Christ as if it were their own.

It is an alien righteousness because it comes from outside of us.

God Himself saves sinners from His terrible wrath and destruction! God saves us from God.

3. Urgent Application

Do you realize this morning you need to be saved from God?

Who can save you from Him? Only God, Himself!

We either bear this judgment ourselves or we can take shelter in Christ for He has borne it and exhausted it for His people.

Therefore seek shelter in Christ and not in your own so called good works.

Rest in Him