

Romans 3:25-28

²⁵ *Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;*

²⁶ *To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.*

²⁷ *Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.*

²⁸ *Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.*

Last week we defined two words which are fundamental to our understanding in the mechanical means by which God the Father could lawfully, legally forgive and justify sinners: *redemption* and *propitiation*.

We saw that redemption is simply *to buy back*, and therefore carries the implication that something was forfeited or lost. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 says that *we are not our own*, and that *we are bought with a price*.

Propitiation however is that by which one party is made *propitious*, or *favorably disposed*, to another party. In the context of Romans 3, it is the faith of Christ (the work He faithfully performed) that is the propitiation or payment by which God the Father was made favorably disposed to mankind (the manner by which we receive Christ's work on our behalf has not yet been disclosed, but will be in verses 26-28).

The payment, or propitiation (the -ion suffix in English indicating an action *is* being or *has been* performed)—that payment itself did not change God's nature or character, or what was already in God's heart, but only rendered it consistent with His character to dispense that which was in His heart, namely, His love, forgiveness, and grace.

The Holy Spirit has now laid a foundation of condemnation to all according to their works, and has presented the perfect righteousness of God *by* Jesus Christ unto all; in verse 24 He states that justification is *free*, and that it's by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ, whom God set forth as a propitiation *through faith in His blood*.

Again, believing that Jesus was a real man, that He really died, even that He was God incarnate and that He rose from the dead—this alone does not constitute salvation. Salvation inherently requires faith in Jesus' blood, and trust in the work He did as sufficient; ultimately, in JEHOVAH as the sole provider of everything we need.

Romans 3:25

...Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God...

We've discussed how the gospel demonstrates God's righteousness, but the gospel also *declares* God's righteousness in having *previously remitted* men's sins prior to the cross.

Have you ever wondered how men's sins were forgiven before Christ? Well, the simple answer is, they weren't. They were *remitted*. This remission was a temporary reprieve of guilt based upon faith, until the fullness of the time when that by which actual forgiveness could be purchased could take place, namely, the cross.

The word here in Romans 3:25 for *remission* is *paresis* in Greek and can mean to *pass over*, or *suspension*. Every other time *remission* is used in the New Testament it's from the word *aphesis*.

Both come from the root word *hiemi*, which means *to let go*.

The reason I include this information is because some will say that because remission can mean *forgiveness* in the full sense of the word, then remission must *always* mean forgiveness in that sense. Thayer's Greek lexicon however includes a definition for *aphesis* as *remission of penalty*, and remission can mean suspension.

Were men's sins permanently forgiven by John's baptism of repentance, before the cross was accomplished, before they even knew about the cross? The obvious answer is no.

Remission comes from the Latin word *remissio*, which can literally mean *to send back*. This could indicate something with temporary or permanent results, and can carry the idea of relaxing, moderating, or slackening—and thus the idea of *forbearance*, the word used in Romans 3:25.

When the gospel of the kingdom was being preached in the gospels, John the Baptist preached a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins (**Mark 1:4, Luke 3:3**).

Again, nowhere in the context of these verses is there any indication of the cross or a working knowledge of it.

The book of Hebrews, making a contrast between the Old Testament and New Testaments as the basis for their Old and New Covenants, explains that in both cases blood was necessary for remission:

Hebrews 9:22-23

And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

The shedding of blood was necessary for *remission* under the Law of Moses, as a shadow and picture of the True Tabernacle, which would require blood.

The Law and the prophets however, Jesus says, were until John (**Luke 16:16**). The time that John the Baptist began to preach anticipated the time of reformation (**Heb. 9:10**), where those temple sacrifices under the old covenant were no longer going to be accepted by God.

That the blood of animals however did nothing in themselves to deal with sin is evident—or else why would Christ have to die and shed His blood? The issue was their faith in God's revealed will.

Consider Psalm 103:

Psalm 103:17-18

*But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children;
To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.*

God's mercy was to those who feared Him, that is, had faith in Him, kept His covenant, and remembered His commands.

(Notice Psalm 103 says "the *mercy* of the LORD." This is because that remission is a form of mercy in that it suspends judgment.)

In John's baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, there was no shedding of blood at all. The blood of bulls and goats, Hebrews says, cannot take away sin in the first place (**Heb. 10:4**).

And so the blood sacrifices themselves did nothing; it's evident also that one could not keep the commandments perfectly. Nor did being baptized in water somehow inherently wash away sin.

And so what we see is that the primary issue for saints was faith. The water, the blood, the commands, were simply objects of faith that saints were to be exercised by. If one say they believe, they must have something or someone to believe *in*, faith must always have an object. And if God says to jump, and you believe what He says, you jump, figuratively speaking.

God made promises to Abram, and it is written that Abram believed God, and God counted it to him for righteousness (**Gen. 15:6**).

Notice, God *counted it to him for righteousness*. It does not say Abraham was righteous, nor does it say God imputed to Abram *His own* perfect righteousness. There was not yet a legal means by which to do so. It was counted to him, it was *credited* to him.

And through this credit of righteousness based upon faith, one could still be justified, God choosing to forebear and temporarily pass over their sins until the blood of Christ could be retroactively applied. We see Abraham in a place of blessedness after his death described in Luke 16:20-31, with the story of the rich man and Lazarus, and so we know God was choosing to pass over Abraham's sins temporarily, suspending judgment, until they could be finally and permanently dealt with by the cross.

1 Peter 4:6 speaks to this very issue:

For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.

Why did the gospel need to be preached to the dead saints? That they may live according to God in the spirit. That they might receive true life through the work of Christ that had not been completed in their mortal lifetime.

We have looked at other passages before of how God justified men in times past, and how it was often accompanied by a work of faith, seeing as yet there was no perfect Work performed by Jesus Christ in which to trust. But though justified in the sense that their judgment was suspended, *remitted*, they did not yet receive *eternal* forgiveness as we are inclined to think of it today.

This is because it was not forgiveness in the sense that we understand it today, but was a *passing over* in God's forbearance. And this is exactly what Paul is saying in **Romans 3:25**.

And so, if we wonder how believers' sins were "remitted" in ages before Christ, it was on the basis of God's forbearance.

Romans 3:26

To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

And so, in verse 25 God set forth Christ to be a propitiation, a payment, accessed by faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God...

Verse 26, to declare *at this time* His righteousness; that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

We see here in verses 25 and 26 time elements, dealing with times past in verse 25 and the present time in verse 26. In both cases God's righteousness is maintained by the work of Christ, and the Holy Spirit *declares* His righteousness. One of the main issues the book of Romans tackles and decisively solves is how a God who by nature demands perfect justice can forgive a sinner and still maintain perfect righteousness, perfect justice, and perfect judgment.

Verse 26 says "that He might be *just*." To be "*just*" is to exercise justice, to render that which is merited; to reward appropriately that which was earned, whether good or bad. It is to have balanced scales. It is to do no unrighteousness in judgment:

Leviticus 19:35-36

Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in meteyard, in weight, or in measure. Just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin, shall ye have: I am the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt.

And so the faith of Christ—the faithfulness of Christ, which declares God's righteousness, demonstrates that God is *just*, executing perfect justice. Not only does it maintain that He is just, but allows Him to be the justifier of him which believes in Jesus.

Starting in verse 22 we had the righteousness of God first specifically stated to be upon those *which believe*; which was the first mention of our personal responsibility in this process in Romans. Now in verse 26, God specifically states that God will justify them which believeth in Jesus.

That suffix, *-eth*, denotes third person, singular, present tense in regards to a verb. It therefore signifies the *personal, present tense* importance of *individual belief here and now*. One must choose *presently* and individually *for themselves* to either believe in Jesus, or else reject Him.

When it says, *believeth in Jesus*, remember we have already discussed that phrase *faith of Christ*, and how that it maintains and demonstrates the righteousness of God, and how it is based upon Christ's faithfulness to perform everything necessary to attain and offer salvation for man—it is not simply our faith spoken of in that phrase, it is the package deal that Christ offers that we must believe in. And so when it says here *believeth in Jesus*, it does not mean simply believe in Him as a historical figure, or that He even died, was buried, and rose again, but, as we have said, it means to believe in Him as faithfully performing that sufficient work which could singularly manifest the righteousness of God (verses 21-22). It is the righteousness of God *without the Law* because that package deal, so to speak, is being offered independent of the Law. It is an offer unto all, and upon them that believe.

Consider **Ephesians 1:12-13**,

*That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.
In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in
whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise*

Note that we must trust Christ first and foremost over anything and everything, even ourselves, and then equates trust with our belief in verse 13.

It is important that the Scripture makes clear that our justification comes not from our “faithfulness” but from our faith and defines that as *belief* in Jesus.

Romans 3:27

Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.

Where is boasting then? It is excluded. No one can boast in themselves today, as all the world has become guilty before God (Rom. 3:19), and all have sinned (Rom. 3:23). This was not entirely true historically.

Even though Israel was dead in sin just as the gentiles, they had the covenant of circumcision and the covenant through Moses.

As we have seen, Moses says in Deuteronomy 6 to the children of Israel that if they were to observe the Commandments they were commanded to do, it would be their righteousness.

David writes in **Psalm 7:8**,

The LORD shall judge the people: judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness, and according to mine integrity that is in me.

This is not something anyone today can rightfully pray.

Boasting, Paul writes, is excluded by the *Law of faith*.

A law as expressed here is not simply a rule. In the world of men, a law is something enforced but can perhaps be broken. In that regard it is arbitrary; the power of that rule resides with the will of man or men collectively to enforce it, but can still be violated. Here, a law is not simply a “rule.”

In Romans, the word law carries with it the same meaning as when we say there exists in the physical world the law of gravity. It's not a “rule,” it's an absolute law by which God governs creation. It's unchanging. It will always work. It's part of the fundamental basis for reality. In this way the laws spoken of in Romans are the same. They are absolutes.

The Law of Conscience and Moses produce judgment, knowledge of right and wrong, condemnation or justification—that is their function.

What we will see here is that, because of the unprofitableness of man's flesh, God is going to operate according to another Law entirely, and that is the Law of faith. Faith is the mechanism by which God is going to operate in the lives of mankind. And when we say “faith,” again, this faith has substance, it has form, it's not subject to one's own will or imagination, but it's what God has revealed as the only mechanism by which He can forgive sin, impute righteousness, and still maintain His justice, Holiness, love and other attributes.

And if boasting is excluded by the Law of faith—if *personal merit* is excluded by the Law of faith, and not the Law of works (that is, Moses's Law, or any other man made substitute), then no one can come to God with any privilege or status above another, and no one can hold their works up to God for an appeal. There is no appeal to God on the basis of works because He has excluded them. If he hadn't, boasting would still be theoretically possible.

Romans 3:28

Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

Therefore is a word that denotes logical deduction; it points to everything that was stated previously and connects the sum to a final conclusion. *Therefore*, Paul writes, we *conclude*.

The conclusion by inspiration of the Holy Ghost is this, that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Notice also that nowhere does Paul mention a distinction in moral and “ceremonial” law, nor does he anywhere insert any man made code of morality in place of the law, but concludes it is by *faith alone*.