

The Book of Romans - Part 16

Welcome, once again to "It's a Good Life." I trust that you'll have your Bibles open to Romans chapter 3, and we're going to pick up our study today in Romans chapter 3, verse 21.

Let me remind you that you can go to our Website, www.LRWM.org, and you can download a transcript of this program and other programs of "It's a Good Life." Today we're studying Romans 3 and verse 21, and this would be study number sixteen in our study of the book of Romans. I would remind you that when we get to chapter 4, we're going to pick up the pace just a little, but right now, we're into the foundation. And I believe it's very important that we do not rush through especially these first three chapters of the book of Romans.

Now, in chapter 3 and verse 21, it says, *But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets.*

"But now..." in this verse, these words indicate a turning point in this book. Up until this verse, what Paul has said has been bad news. And there's no doubt that Paul has shown man's guilt and condemnation. And Paul has shown every man to be a lost and doomed sinner, guilty before God according to Romans 3:19. "But now..." Paul says in this verse and he wants to share the good news.

The good news is that God has a wonderful plan of salvation: justification. This is whereby sinful men may be declared righteous before a holy God. "But now..." these words indicate a drastic change in the movement of this letter of Romans that Paul has written.

And the next six verses are crucially important. Dr. Alva J. McClain has said the following about Romans 3:21-26: He says, "This section is the very heart of the book of Romans. For this reason all Christians ought to memorize verses 21-26." He says, "I would select these six verses." He continues by saying, "All of God's Gospel... good news... is there and in a way found nowhere else in the Word of God." This comes from his writings, *The Gospel of God's Grace*.

Now, beginning in verse 21 and continuing to the end of the chapter, there is a keyword which is found repeatedly. It is the word "righteousness" or "justified." The word "righteousness" and the word "justified" mean the same thing. Verses 21 and 22 speak of the word and says the word "righteousness." In verse 24 we see the word "justified," verse 25, "righteousness," and verse 26, "righteousness," "just," and "justifier." "Justify" means to declare or pronounce righteous.

Now, the key question is this: How can a righteous God save an unrighteous man and still remain righteous in doing so? Now, this question is seen in verse 26. How can God be just and at the same time justify the sinner? That God can righteously judge a sinner is no problem, because this is what justice demands. But how can God justify and acquit a wicked person without compromising His own righteousness? Well, God will not at all acquit the wicked according to Naham 1:3, and that is, He will not leave the guilty unpunished, and yet, in order to save wicked sinners, God must do this very thing, and this is a problem that is solved and answered only by the cross, the death of Christ. Christ was

punished in our place as our substitute so that we might be acquitted.

Now, this verse 21 talks about the righteousness of God is manifested. In other words, it becomes clear. And this is what Paul stated in Romans 1:17: *For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.* And after Romans 1:17, God's righteousness is not mentioned again until this verse, verse 21 of chapter 3.

First, Paul wanted to show us how much we need the righteousness of God, in Romans 3:10: *As it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one.* But notice this, verse 21 uses the term "without law." Absolutely apart from is what this means, where "without" also means absolutely apart from. In Genesis 15:6, it says, *And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.* This is speaking of Abraham. This righteousness which Paul is speaking of here has nothing to do with keeping the law or with legal works of any kind. It has no connection whatsoever with the law. It is the grace of God, not the law of God, that gives man this righteousness. And once again, you go back to Genesis 15:6, God speaking of Abraham, He counted his righteousness by faith. He became righteous through faith.

Now, in the Old Testament Scriptures, we can learn about the righteousness of God that is apart from the law, and as we read in Romans 1:2, it says, *Which he had promised...* He witnessed, in other words... *afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures.* Note this: "without the law." Genesis 15:6 once again speaks of Abraham. In Genesis 7:1 and Hebrews 11:7, these verses point to God's righteousness before the law was given. Hebrews 11:7 says, *By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the*

saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. This is before the law was given. We read about faith producing righteousness, faith not just in anything or anyone but faith in God.

And secondly, we see "by the law." The law of the different sacrifices were insufficient in themselves to take away sins, and this pointed to the great sacrifice in which God would be fully glorified, as well as His righteousness satisfied. Hebrews 10:4 says this: *For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.* Sins can only be taken away by and through the blood of Jesus Christ.

And notice the faith of God, the righteousness of God, is also witnessed by the prophets. In Isaiah 53:11, it says, *He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities...* speaking of Jesus Christ.

Jeremiah 23:6 says, *In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.*

We are not saved by Christ keeping the law, according to Galatians 2:21, because righteousness does not and cannot come by the law. Salvation is totally because of the grace of God. Galatians 2:21 says, *I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.* In other words, you are not saved by works. You are not saved by anything that you can do. You are saved by and through Jesus Christ, by trusting Him as Savior.

Now notice verse 22 of Romans chapter 3. It says, *Even the righteousness of God which is*

by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference. Notice the term “by faith.” This is the righteousness of God and it is received by faith of Jesus Christ, the verse says. This means that, by faith, my faith has the crucified and risen Christ as its object. And Galatians 2:20, you can read that later on if you would.

And then we see in that verse the words “all who believe.” Romans 1:16 speaks of this. All who believe receive the righteousness of God. Nowhere in the Bible is universalism taught, that all men will eventually be saved. The Bible teaches us salvation is offered and made available to all but which benefits only those who believe. Read I Timothy 4:10 in comparison to this. God limits the benefits of His salvation only to those who appropriate them by faith.

Notice verse 23 of Romans 3 now. I would title this section that we're looking at right now as “Coming Up Short.” It says, *For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.* The last part of verse 22 and all of verse 23 may be thought of as a sharing thought, connected, for there is no difference. *For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.* All have sinned. All men are in the same boat and the boat's going down. “All” means all, and that's all “all” means.

And there is one exception... Jesus Christ without sin. In I Peter 2:21-22 it says, ²¹*For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:* ²²*Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.*

He did no sin. He's the only One who did no sin. All have sinned. How many are lost? Isaiah 53:6 says, *All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him...*

That's Christ... *the iniquity of us all.* So there's no doubt that Paul is saying all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. All have come short. We do not measure up to God's standards. We have missed the mark. On our own, we have missed God's target of righteousness.

And notice in that verse “the glory of God.” This refers to all that God is in His perfect character.

Do you know Him today as your Savior? Have you trusted Him? Have you received Him? Have you asked Him, “Lord Jesus, come into my heart. I receive You as my Savior. I know I can't save myself. I'm trusting You today to save me so that I can go to Heaven. Thank You, Lord, for saving my soul.”

And you know, when we get saved, it's not a question of whether we're saved from Hell. It's not a question of whether we're saved to go to Heaven. I mean, that comes into it, but when we get saved, we need to say, “Lord, I want to serve You. I want to get saved so I can be Your child, so that I can tell others how to be saved.”

Thank you for joining me today, and next week, we'll pick up with Romans chapter 3 and verse 24. Until then, may the Lord bless you richly is my prayer.