

THROUGH FAITH IN HIS BLOOD

Romans 3:21-31
Key Verse: 3:24,25a

Lesson 3

"...justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement through faith in his blood."

The great problem of all human beings is sin. We have many small and large problems in our lives, but sin is at the root of all problems. Sin separates us from God. So, because of our own sins and the sins of all mankind, we must live without God in a world under curse. All people are under the power of sin. There are no exceptions. Sin demands our lives. The wages of sin is death. Physical death is not the end. After death is God's righteous judgment. But God is merciful. He has provided a way of salvation.

1. God's righteousness

Our Creator God is righteous. He created the world for his own glory and he created people in his own image, to glorify him. He, himself, is the absolute standard of goodness and truth. The tragedy is that because of man's sin, no one can measure up to his standard. Romans 3:23 says that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Because of our sins we miss the mark; we are weighed on the scales against God's perfect standard, and found wanting.

God cannot look on sin and be indifferent, because he is righteous. He cannot ignore the situation of man whom he created and loves. God hates sin, but he loves sinful men and wants to save them. He is just and righteous in all his dealings with us.

God gave us his law so that we might know what we are to believe about him and what he expects of us. His righteous requirements are revealed in the law. The law requires of us strong willpower and perfect discipline. The problem is that, although we know what God requires, we fail to do it because of our weakness and stubbornness. So we deserve God's judgment. God's judgment on all sinners shows his righteousness. Because he is righteous, he cannot ignore sin. Either the problem of sin is solved, or we are condemned to death and hell on the day of judgment. The whole world is accountable to God; no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather through the law we become conscious of sin. (3:19,20)

So God revealed his righteousness in another way, apart from law. The Law and Prophets testify to it. (This means that the Bible tells us about it.) It is the righteousness from God which comes through faith in Jesus Christ. (21,22) We cannot solve our sin problem or live up to his perfect standard, so he gives us his righteousness as a gift. Jesus Christ is God's righteousness; he is God's gift to us. When we accept him in

faith, God forgives our sins and we are clothed in his righteousness. In sending Jesus, God extends to us his hand of mercy; we take hold of it by faith.

2. Costly grace

God's mercy and grace to us is free; we receive it as a gift because it costs too much for us to buy. It is free to us, but costly to God, for it cost him the life blood of his only Son Jesus. We are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood."

(i) Justified

We are "justified freely by his grace." (24) He "is just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus." (26) To be justified means to be declared innocent. Sometimes people try to solve their guilt problem by self-justification. They find many reasons and excuses for their sins, and try to justify themselves. But when we stand before God's judgment throne, we have no mouth to say anything. We stand there as condemned sinners, deserving the death penalty. But God looks at Jesus' blood sacrifice and says, 'Not guilty.' He forgives us for Jesus' sake. We are guilty and deserve to die, but God covers us with his own righteousness when we accept Jesus' death on the cross for our sins. He justifies those who have faith in Jesus. He gives us life instead of death.

(ii) Redeemed

Redemption is a term used in the slave market. A slave is redeemed when someone pays the price to set him free. He cannot set himself free. Roman 1:18-32 describes our slavery to sin. When we do not thank God or honor him as God, we become slaves to our own passions and emotional feelings. Romans 6:16 says that when we obey the demands of sin we are slaves to sin. Sin is a cruel taskmaster. He harasses us to death. If we are not joyfully and freely serving God, we are under the power of sin and Satan. When I do as I please, following my own feelings and ideas, I seem to be free; but when I try to change my way and obey God's law and will, I discover that the chains of sin's slavery are too strong to break. I am condemned to a useless, meaningless life and I must live under the shadow of the fear of death, judgment and hell.

Jesus paid the price of our redemption by his blood. 1 Peter 1:18,19 says that we were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to us from our forefathers, not with perishable things like gold and silver, but by the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish. He died the death I deserved to die. He offered his own life as a ransom for mine. (" ... the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." --Mk 10:45) Because he died in my place I am free from the power of sin and death. I am free to love God and serve him and walk in his

righteous way, led by his Spirit.

(iii) Sacrifice of Atonement

When the people of Israel were living as slaves in Egypt, Egypt and Israel alike were under the Judgment Of God because of sin, God saved Israel and delivered them from slavery by the blood of the Passover lamb (Ex 12). Jesus is our Passover Lamb (1Co 5:7).

Romans 3:25a says, "God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood." In the Old Testament, blood represents life (Lev 17:11; Ge 9:4). The sacrificial system of the Old Testament lies behind the word that is translated "sacrifice of atonement" (NIV) or "expiation" (RSV) or "propitiation" (NAS).

In Exodus 25 God instructs Moses to make the ark, into which was put the Bible, the Law of Moses. This Law contains God's righteous requirements. The ark was covered by the atonement cover (mercy seat), which, once a year was sprinkled with blood from the altar. It was here that the righteous God met sinful man. Here righteousness and mercy met. God does not compromise with sin but he met man at the ark with its blood-sprinkled atonement cover, and unconditionally forgave him. This whole sacrificial system points to Jesus the Lamb of God. (Jn 1:29) It is the blood of Jesus that covers our sins and brings us into the presence of the Holy God. Because of Jesus' blood, we are we are forgiven. Through Jesus' blood, God's hand of wrath and judgment becomes his hand of mercy.

Jesus shed his blood to take away my sin. When I accept his blood and apply it to my heart by faith, through the work of the Holy Spirit, I am forgiven, cleansed, set free. God is righteous. He justifies those who have faith in Jesus. This is how he reveals his righteousness.

2. The universal requirement of faith

God's forgiveness is by grace alone, on the basis of faith alone. It is a free gift. There is no religious or charitable work that we can do to deserve God's grace. We must humbly accept what God has done.

So, there is no room for boasting. The ground is cut out from under all our pride. Pride is at the root of sin. When we accept God's forgiveness by faith in the blood of Jesus, we are humbled. We come to God as sinners, with no righteousness of our own. We confess our sin and receive his gracious forgiveness.

There are only two kinds of people in the world--forgiven sinners and unforgiven sinners. We are forgiven when we accept God's grace by faith. There are no exceptions. Race, nationality, material prosperity or poverty make no difference. God is one and he has chosen to forgive all sinners on the basis of their faith in Jesus Christ.

There is no other condition. The righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no distinction.