

Date : 29 Sept 2024
Theme : Making our Salvation sure
Topic : God's Provision – His Righteousness
Passage : Romans 3:21-31
Key verse : Romans 3:23-24 – for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

In the earlier chapters of Romans, Paul does not shy away from the uncomfortable truth about our condition. He paints a grim picture of humanity, exposing the fact that every single one of us is hopelessly unrighteous. "None is righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:10). We are under the power of sin, separated from God, and no amount of moral effort or good works can bridge the gap. Without God's righteousness, no one can enter the Kingdom of heaven. The bad news is undeniable: we are spiritually bankrupt, and there's nothing we can do to save ourselves from God's judgement and the penalty of sin which is death and hell.

This leads us to one crucial question: How can sinful humanity be justified before a righteous and holy God?

We are in desperate need of a divine solution. Then, in Romans 3:21, Paul introduces a radical turning point with just two simple words— "But now." God Himself is about to reveal the solution to the problem of sin—the righteousness of God. Not a righteousness we earn or work for, but one that is freely given to us through faith in Jesus Christ. It is vital to understand this solution because, without it, we would continue striving in vain, relying on our strength to secure salvation.

The Problem: Humanity's Sinfulness (Romans 3:23)

1. Sin is a universal condition affecting all people.

- Sin is missing the mark. The mark is true righteousness. (Romans 3:23)
- This sin separates humanity from God and brings about His just wrath.

2. The insufficiency of human efforts

- Many believe they can earn God's favour through good works, religious practices, or moral living.
- But God's righteousness is not based on human performance; His perfect standard we can never meet through our works or merits. (Romans 3:20)

3. Eternal consequences

- Whether a person received God's righteousness through faith in Jesus determines their eternal destiny – either eternal life with God or separation from Him.

The Solution: The Provision of the God's Righteousness (Romans 3:21-25)

1. God's righteousness revealed through Jesus Christ

a) What is God's Righteousness?

- God's righteousness refers to His holy and perfect standard of justice, purity, and moral uprightness. It reflects His nature and character, where He always acts in accordance with what is right and just.

b) God's Righteousness is Rooted in the Old Testament

- Paul teaches that God's righteousness is not a new concept – it is witnessed by the Law and the Prophets. (Romans 3:21)
- God's righteousness in the Old Testament combines justice (punishing sin) and mercy (forgiving and showing compassion).
 - o In Deuteronomy 32:4: God reveals Himself as our righteous and just judge, whose ways are perfect.
 - o In Deuteronomy 3:26: God's righteousness also includes mercy and compassion when His people are weak.
- This righteousness is now fully revealed in Jesus Christ, who satisfies both God's justice and His mercy.

c) God's righteousness is given to all who believe

- This righteousness from God is available through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.
- Regardless of background or status, have equal access to God's. (Romans 3:22)

2. God's righteousness provided through Jesus Christ

a) Through Justification (Romans 3:24)

- **Declared Righteous:** Justification is where God declares a believing sinner righteous because of his/her faith in Jesus Christ. It is not about becoming morally perfect but about being seen as righteous in God's eyes.
- "Justified freely by grace" means that justification is a gift from God, given without cost to us, sinners. But it came at a great cost to Jesus Christ through His sacrificial death.
- This is purely an act of God's grace. We cannot earn it in any way through any work or effort on our part.
- **Our action:** Knowing that we are justified not by our works, but purely by God's grace, should lead us to a posture of humility. We should not boast in our own righteousness (Romans 3:27), because it is not something we have earned or deserved. Our motivation for living a righteous life is therefore not to earn God's favour (since that favour has already been freely given), but to respond in gratitude and obedience to His grace.

b) Through Redemption (Romans 3:24)

- **Paid the Price:** Redemption refers to the act of being "bought back" or "rescued" from slavery.
- In the ancient world, slaves were redeemed by paying a ransom to secure their release. In biblical terms, redemption means that Christ has paid the full price - the sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross. Through Jesus' sacrificial death, believers are freed from sin's power and penalty.
- Jesus is the Only Righteous One. Every person is sinful and cannot meet God's perfect standard. However, Jesus, being sinless, is the only one who fulfills God's righteous requirements.
- **Our action:** This redemption comes because of God's love for men, and it sets believers free from the penalty of sin, but it should not just stop at freedom. It should compel us to live differently. Christ's love and sacrifice, which purchased our redemption, now compels us to no longer live for ourselves but for Him who died for us. This is the effect of redemption: a life that is motivated and transformed by Christ's love. (2 Corinthians 5:14)

c) Through Propitiation (Romans 3:25)

- **Satisfies God's Wrath:** Propitiation refers to the act of appeasing or satisfying wrath, specifically God's righteous wrath against sin.
- God is holy and just, and demands that sin be punished, and His wrath is directed against unrighteousness.
- Jesus, through His shedding of His blood, took the punishment that humanity deserved and turned away God's wrath from us, making it possible for us to be reconciled to God.
- Through Jesus' propitiation, God remains both just and merciful. By punishing sin in Jesus, God upholds His justice. At the same time, He shows love and mercy by providing a way for sinners to be saved through faith in Christ.
- This propitiation is not automatically applied to everyone. It is received through faith by believing in Jesus' sacrificial work.
- God's love and justice meet at the cross: Jesus' death both satisfied the demands of justice (propitiation) and revealed the depth of His love for humanity.
- **Our action:** Jesus' death was an act of sacrificial love that not only took away God's wrath but also gave us a model for how we should love others. (1 John 3:16) Just as Jesus laid down His life for us, we are called to live out this same love by practising tangible acts of kindness, and showing grace, while seeking God's strength and guidance to love as Christ did.

Our Response: Exercising True Faith in God's Righteousness (3:27-31)

1. Faith that excludes boasting (Romans 3:27 – Where, then, is boasting?)

- True faith leaves no room for boasting or relying on personal righteousness. It is entirely dependent on God's grace and not on works of the law.
- This means that self-righteousness is a serious sin among Christians. When we look down on others—be it those involved in homosexuality, greed, gambling, or whatever — when we begin to think that we are better than they are — we deny the grace that God has extended to us and forget that we are all in need of His mercy.

2. Recognizing the One True God for All (Romans 3:29 – Or is God the God of Jews only?)

- Paul argues that if God were only the God of the Jews, it would imply there are two gods, which is impossible; there is only one God who is equally the God of both Jews and Gentiles.
- This equality is a beautiful aspect of the Gospel, emphasising that all humanity stands on the same ground before God, reliant solely on the work of Jesus Christ for salvation.

3. Uphold the Law by Faith (Romans 3:31 – Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith?)

- Faith does not nullify God's moral law; rather, it fulfills it. The Law serves to reveal our shortcomings and highlight what is wrong in our lives.
- By placing our faith in Christ, we acknowledge the Law's purpose and demonstrate that true righteousness comes from God, allowing us to live in a way that upholds the moral standards He established.

4. A life of Faith in Action

- **Going-out faith:** This is the faith that is born from genuine repentance, where we turn away from sin and enter into a covenant relationship with God. Our faith should be accompanied by actions that reflect our commitment to God—not to earn righteousness, but as an expression of our love and devotion to Him.
- **Going-on faith:** This is the faith that sustains us as we remain in our covenant relationship with God. It's a faith that continually trusts in Jesus as our Lord and Savior, leading us to serve and obey Him daily. Our obedience is not a means to gain righteousness but a joyful response to the love and grace we have already received.

Application

1. What do you understand about the terms – Justification, Redemption, and Propitiation?

Justification: _____

Redemption: _____

Propitiation: _____

2. What practical steps can you take to express your gratitude for receiving God's righteousness? Some suggestions:

- Intentionally practice humility by praying for someone you might be tempted to judge. Each time you catch yourself thinking you're better than someone else, pause, ask for God's grace, and remind yourself of your own need for His mercy.
- Set specific goals each week to live intentionally for Christ, such as sharing your faith with someone.
- Identify someone you need to forgive and take actionable steps to mend that relationship, reflecting the love Christ showed through His sacrifice.

