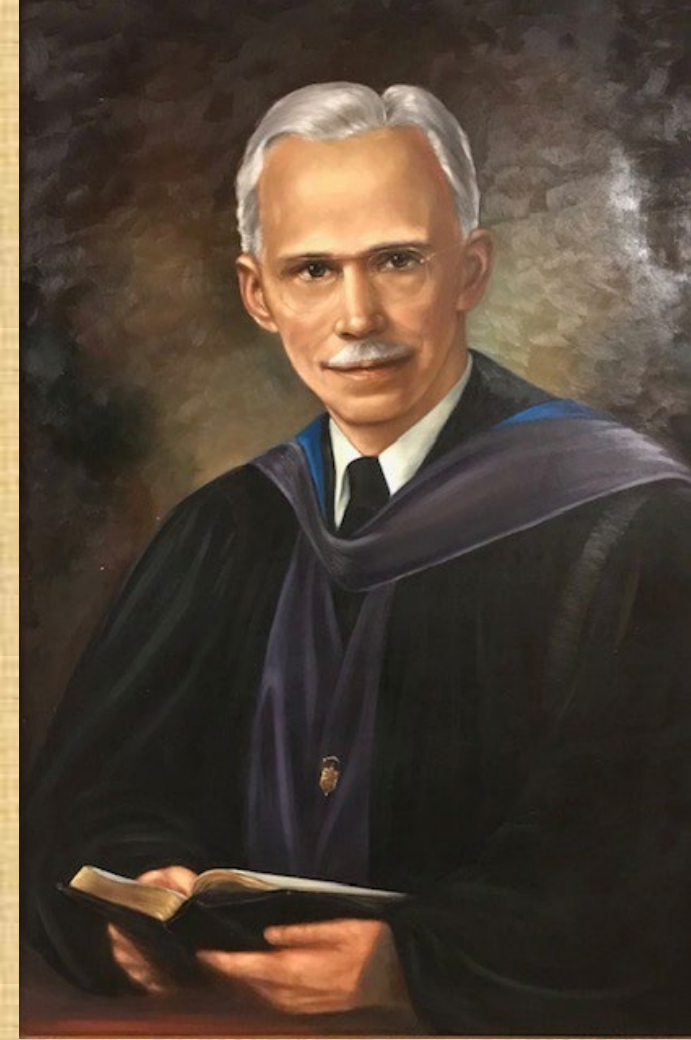


PROBLEMS IN THE GOSPEL PACKAGE

ROMANS 3:21-26

Rom 3:19–20 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.



Alva J. McClain

1888 – 1968

founder of Grace Theological
Seminary and Grace College

This section is the very heart of the book of Romans. For this reason, all Christians ought to memorize verses 21-26. If someone should ask me, "Brother McClain, if you could have just six verses out of the Bible, and all the rest be taken away, which would you take?", I would select these six verses. All of God's gospel (Good News) is there, and in a way found nowhere else in the Word of God.



Romans 3:21-26 is “possibly the single most important paragraph ever written,”

Leon Morris
1914 – 2006

Rom 3:24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

“In all Scripture there is probably no verse which captures the essence of Christianity better than this one. Here is the heart of the gospel, the mighty Nevertheless, the momentous divine reversal. Everything in verse 23 was due to humanity; everything in verse 24 depends on God.”

James Edwards, *Romans*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1992) 102.

Several interpretive difficulties in Romans 3:21-26

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1. What is the meaning of “righteousness of God”?
2. What is the meaning of “faith in Jesus”?
3. What is the relationship of Romans 3:23 to Romans 3:24?

THE FOUNDATION OF JUSTIFICATION 3:21–26

Romans 3:21 **But now** the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets

But now -- Νυνὶ δὲ --

1. temporal marker with focus on the moment as such, now
2. temporal marker with focus on a prevailing situation, with the idea of time ... entirely absent, now, as it is. BDAG

The righteousness of God –
δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ [dikaiosune theou]

"Righteousness of God" is used with two distinct meanings in the New Testament. Context determines the intended meaning.

- (1) God Himself is righteous (Rom. 3:25, 26).
- (2) The righteousness of God which is said to be imputed to the one who believes: "A righteousness **from** God which is to all and on all who believe" (Rom 3:22).

δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ [dikaiosune theou]

δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ -- Genitive of Source (or origin): the *source* from which the head noun derives or depends—*out of, derived from, dependent on, or “sourced in.”*

Wallace, D. B. (1996). Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics - Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament (p. 728). Zondervan Publishing House and Galaxie Software.

δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ [dikaiosune theou]

A righteousness from God

- a. It is God's own righteousness credited to the believer in Jesus (Rom 3:22; 4:5).**
- b. It is not produced in life by the Spirit; and is unrelated to self-righteousness in every form.**
- c. It is in no way related to right conduct (Phil 3:9)**
- d. It is that which we become when we are vitally joined to Christ (2 Cor 5:21).**

A righteousness from God

This righteousness is declared to be a gift:
For if by the one man's offense death reigned
through the one, much more those who receive
abundance of grace and of **the gift of
righteousness** will reign in life through the One,
Jesus Christ. Rom 5:17

Philippians 3:9 speaks of the **righteousness which
is from God** by faith

apart from the Law -- refers to the Mosaic Law. The law cannot make you righteous. But there is righteousness from God which is separate from the Law.

apart -- χωρίς [choris] -- occurring separately or being separate, apart from, independent of

A righteousness from God

is revealed -- φανερόω [phaneroo] (perfect passive indicative = “stands manifested”). -- has been revealed.

being witnessed -- μαρτυρέω [martureo] – pres pass pt. To confirm or attest something; bear witness, be a witness

by the Law and the Prophets -- The law requires two or three witnesses to establish the truth of a matter (Num. 35:30; Deut. 17:6; 19:15; Matt. 18:16; John 8:17; Heb. 10:28).

NKJV Romans 3:22 even the righteousness of [from] God, through faith in Jesus Christ to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference

NIV Rom 3:22 This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile,

NET Rom 3:22 namely, the righteousness of God through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction,

**through faith in Jesus Christ -- διὰ πίστεως
Ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ [dia pisteos Iesou Christou]**

Some have translated this as “the righteousness of God through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ. (e.g., Net Bible).

Though pistis, “faith,” can also mean “faithfulness,” Paul almost always meant “faith” when he used this word. Strong contextual clues indicate when he meant “faithfulness.”

through faith in Jesus Christ

Faith -- πίστις [pistis] is used 8 times in Romans 3:20-31. It cannot be understood as “faithfulness” in any of the other uses in context.

Paul is not speaking of the faithfulness of Christ but of the object of faith that results in the imputation of divine righteousness when one puts faith in Christ for salvation.

Rom 3:22 even the righteousness of God, through
faith in Jesus Christ, **to all and on all who believe.**
For there is no difference;

Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God

have sinned -- ἁμαρτάνω [hamartano]. aorist act ind.

What is the significance of the aorist tense here? Is this talking about personal sins?

The aorist tense “presents an occurrence in summary, viewed as a whole from the outside, without regard for the internal make-up of the occurrence.”

Gnomic aorist: The aorist indicative is occasionally used to present a timeless, general fact. When it does so, it does not refer to a particular event that did happen, but to a generic event that does happen. Normally, it is translated like a simple present tense. This usage is rare in the NT

Constative Aorist: The aorist normally views the action as a whole, taking no interest in the internal workings of the action. It describes the action in summary fashion, without focusing on the beginning or end of the action specifically. This is by far the most common use of the aorist, especially with the indicative mood.

Daniel B. Wallace, [*Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics - Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*](#) (Zondervan Publishing House and Galaxie Software, 1996), 554.

If this is a gnomic aorist we would translate this, “all sin.” Timeless truth. Simple statement.

If it is constative aorist we would translate this: “all sinned.” Simple statement of something that occurred in the past without regard to its beginning or end, whether it was a single occurrence or a repeated occurrence. This simply says, “it happened.”

It is likely that this is not speaking of personal sins, but of imputed sin. The original sin of Adam is imputed to every descendent of Adam. This is taught in detail in Romans 5:12-21. All sinned when Adam sinned. All sinned in Adam. This is not personal sins

Rom 5:12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned--

Rom 5:19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.

Romans 3:23 for all sinned and fall short of the glory of God

fall short -- ὑστερέω [hustereo] – present passive indicative

- to miss out on something through one's own fault, to miss, fail to reach, to lack.

The present tense of the verb here is a dramatic contrast to the aorist of the verb for sinning. The aorist tense says, "it happened." The present tense says, "It's still going on."

We all sinned in Adam, and we continue falling short of the glory of God.

the glory of God ἡ δόξα τοῦ θεοῦ [he doxa tou theou]

This is all that God is in His perfection, the aggregation of His infinite attributes

Rom 3:24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus

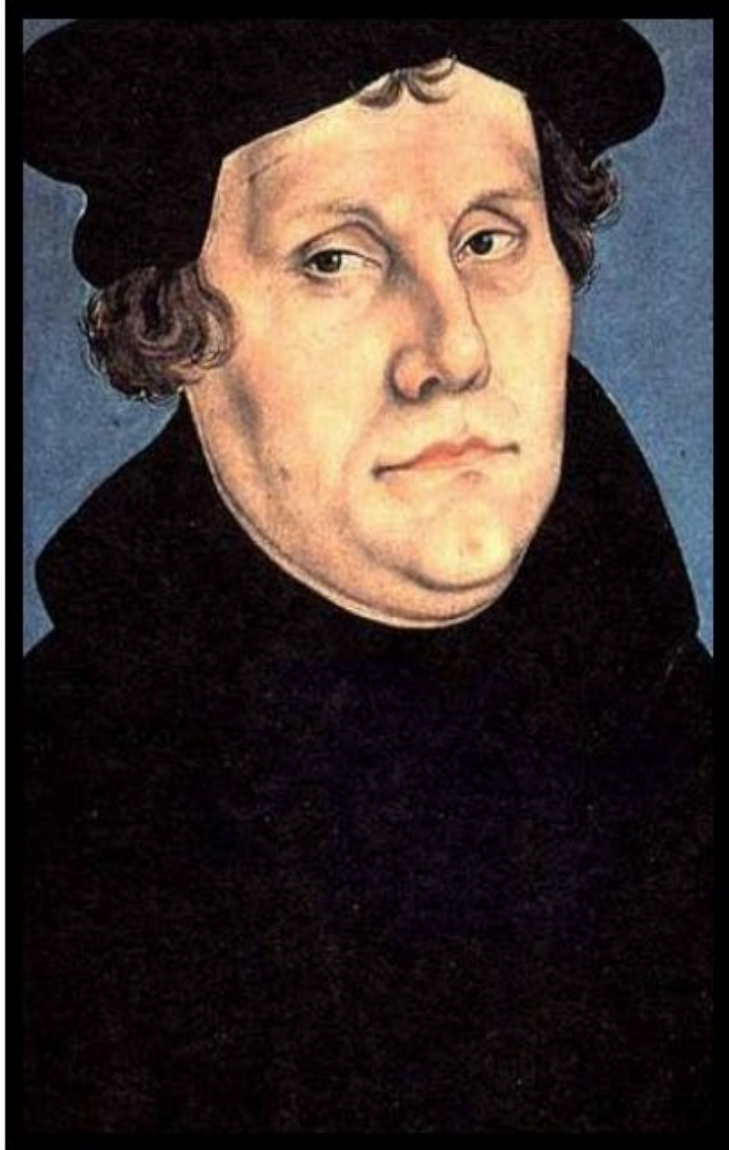
Being Justified -- δικαιόω [dikaioo] -- pres pass pt--
to render a favorable verdict, vindicate, to declare
righteous

“*although* they are being justified freely.” Or “*while* they are being freely justified.”

The most natural way to read this text is to see the ‘all’ who sinned of v. 23 as the “all” who are justified.

Does this mean that all will be saved – a universal salvation?
-- we know that isn't right.

But the ‘all who believe’ (v. 22) are also the all who have sinned and continue to fall short of the glory of God (v. 23).
And those who fall short are also those who are justified—
while they are falling short!



Simul Justus Et Peccator

(Simultaneously righteous and sinner)

-Martin Luther

for all sinned and are falling short of the glory of God while being justified freely by His grace...

Being Justified – δικαιόω [dikaioo] –
present passive participle

How should we understand the participle δικαιωω?
Is it independent or dependent, and if dependent,
on what it is dependent?

Morris notes that “Grammatically δικαιούμενοι
should go with πάντες [in verse 23]. But while it is
certainly the case that all sin, it is not the case that
all are justified.

The grammar of v. 24 naturally shows the participle δικαιούμενοι to be dependent on the πάντες of v. 23.

Thus, “all have sinned ... being freely justified” would be the natural sense to get from the construction.

Such a sense, though grammatically correct, seems to be theologically incorrect because not all sinners are saved. Universal salvation is not in view in these verses.

The most common explanation is that verse 23 is parenthetical and the participle in v. 24 is dependent on verse 22.

So that, if we ask, ‘Who are the justified?’ we must answer, “all who believe” in verse 22.

But grammatically this doesn’t work because there is not an agreement in case.

22 δικαιοσύνη δὲ θεοῦ διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ
εἰς πάντα καὶ ἐπὶ πάντα τοὺς
πιστεύοντας· [accusative] οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶν διαστολή·

23 πάντες [nominative] γὰρ ἥμαρτον καὶ
ὕστεροῦνται τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ,

24 δικαιούμενοι [nominative] δωρεὰν τῇ αὐτοῦ
χάριτι διὰ τῆς ἀπολυτρώσεως τῆς ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ·

So the ones who are justified in verse 24 are also the ones who sinned and who are falling short of the glory of God.

Even though they sinned in Adam and even though they continue falling short of the glory of God, they are still being justified freely by God's grace.

Rom 3:24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

Justified: is this righteousness imparted or righteousness imputed?

If righteousness is imparted God makes us righteous.

If righteousness is imputed, God declares us to be righteous.

If righteousness is imparted, then there is no assurance of salvation since God does not make us righteous immediately.

If righteousness is imputed, there is indeed assurance of salvation since the legal declaration of our righteousness is the divine statement about our status, not about our practice.

Justification

1. Justification means to vindicate, acquit, declare free from a penalty, to declare righteous.
2. Justification is the judicial, legal act of God in which He declares, on the basis of the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, that all the claims of divine righteousness and justice are satisfied with respect to the sinner.
3. The one who believes in Christ is declared righteous. This is based on imputation.

Justification

4. Justification is the recognition by God that the believer in Jesus has His perfect righteousness. Therefore, God then makes the declaration that we are righteous and therefore free from the penalty for sin.
5. The declaration of God in justification applies to all sins of the believer, past, present and future; and therefore includes the removal of every penalty (Romans 5:21; 8:1, 32-34; Hebrews 10:14; Psalm 103:12; Isaiah 44:22).

God declares righteous the ungodly man who ceases to trust in his works and believes in Christ – He ‘justifies the ungodly’

Romans 4:5 But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness,

being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

Freely – δωρεάν [dorean] adverb. Pertaining to being freely given, as a gift, without payment, gratis

By his grace -- χάρις [charis]

being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

Redemption -- ἀπολύτρωσις [apolutrosis]

There are 8 different Greek words related to redemption.

They fall into 3 groups.

1. the payment of a **price** to secure the release of a prisoner.
2. the **liberation** of the one who has been captive.
3. **both** the payment of the price and the liberation are in view.

The redemption that is in Christ Jesus

The word in this verse is about the liberation. Everywhere in the New Testament this Greek word, when used metaphorically, refers to deliverance effected through the death of Christ.

“Before you leave verse 24, apply it to yourself if you are a believer.

Say of yourself: ‘God has declared me righteous without any cause in me, by His grace, through the deliverance from sin’s penalty that is in Christ Jesus.’

Don’t just learn Scripture, but if it is talking about you, put yourself into it. Make it personal.

NKJV Rom 3:25 whom God **set forth** as a propitiation by His blood, through faith...

NAS Rom 3:25 whom God **displayed publicly** as a propitiation in His blood through faith.

NIV Rom 3:25 God **presented** Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood -- to be received by faith.

NET Rom 3:25 God **publicly displayed** him at his death as the mercy seat accessible through faith.

set forth-- προτίθημι [protithemi] ao mid ind – to set before.

(1) for public display; (2) middle voice: for mental consideration; to plan something; to purpose

In the two other instances in which this verb is used in the New Testament the sense clearly points to a purpose. Rom. 1:13 (many times I planned to come to you) and Eph. 1:9 (which he purposed for himself)

set forth-- προτίθημι [protithemi] ao mid ind – to set before.

Wherever in the New Testament the cognate noun πρόθεσις [prothesis] is used, (except when it occurs in connection with showbread), the meaning is always “purpose.”

set forth-- προτίθημι [protithemi] ao mid ind – to set before.

BDAG gives the meaning “to publicly display” but they give no viable proof for this. [they cite one place in Josephus and one place in Justin Martyr – but these are not convincing. Nowhere else in the New Testament does this word mean to set forth or publicly display -- and this translation differs substantially from the sense of the cognate noun in every comparable New Testament usage. To translate this as “present” [NIV] or “display publicly” [NAS] is questionable.

Whom God *purposed* or *planned* to be a propitiation

Propitiation -- ἱλαστήριον [hilasterion] mercy seat; place of propitiation, satisfaction, means of expiation= reparation for an offense or injury: satisfaction.

It is the place where the justice of God was satisfied because He poured out His righteous judgment on Christ who paid the penalty for all sins.

The LXX uses ἱλαστήριον of the lid on the ark of the covenant, כַּפֹּרֶת [kapporet] which was sprinkled with the blood of the sin-offering on the Day of Atonement (Ex 25:16ff). This word is translated “mercy seat” in Heb 9:5.

The word *seat* does not indicate that upon which one sits, but the place where something takes place, as in the seat of government or the county seat.

Propitiation is the satisfaction of divine justice by the payment of the penalty. The word can also indicate the place where satisfaction is made

Propitiation demonstrate the consistency of God's character in saving the worst sinner who ever lived. Because the justice of God is satisfied, God who is holy can save sinful man (Romans 3:25) and can forgive the sinning Christian (1 John 1:7; 2:1-20)

by His blood, through faith

The NIV translation of this phrase, "through faith in His blood" correctly represents the word order in the Greek text.

However, Paul declares faith in the person of Jesus Christ (vv. 22, 26) and not faith in His blood is the object of faith for justification.

"Blood" is a metonymy, (the name of one thing appears in the place of another associated with it). His blood represents His life poured out as a sacrifice. His substitutionary death is what make His sacrifice effective (cf. 5:9; Eph. 1:7; 2:13; Col. 1:20)

by His blood ἐν τῷ αὐτοῦ αἵματι.

Does the preposition ἐν [en] indicate sphere or means? In His blood or by means of His blood?

Notice Romans 5:9 where we find the same expression: Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. (ἐν τῷ αἵματι αὐτοῦ). Cf Heb 10:19; Rev 1:5 et al.

God planned that Jesus would satisfy divine justice by means of His blood, His death on the cross.

whom God planned as a satisfaction by His blood,
through faith,

The idea is this: God planned for Jesus Christ to be the sacrifice that would satisfy God's wrath by paying for our sins. His sacrifice becomes efficacious for those who put faith in Him.

to demonstrate His righteousness -- εἰς ἔνδειξιν τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ, [eis endeixin tes dikaiosunes autou]

to demonstrate -- ἔνδειξις [endeixis] is translated as a verb, but it is a noun: “for a demonstration” something that compels acceptance of something, ... demonstration, proof [BDAG]

Why would God need a demonstration or proof of His righteousness?

because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed,

forbearance ἀνοχή [anochē]. The Greek word is used in a legal context to describe what happens when, for example, a banker or someone who is owed money, abstains from enforcing or collecting the payment of a debt

God chose to abstain from collecting the debt payment from everybody from Adam to the cross because He knew the solution and the debt payment would be made when the 2nd person of the Trinity entered into human history to go to the Cross and pay the penalty for all sins of all people of all time.

God had passed over the sins that were previously committed

had passed over: διὰ τὴν πάρεσιν – [dia ten paresin] only here in the NT. “Because of the passing over” literally. The word does mean “passing over,” but not in the sense of “overlooking, disregarding.”

Rather it has the more strictly legal sense of “letting go unpunished, remission of penalty [BDAG]

Rom 3:26 to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

The greatest question is not, “How can a loving God cast His creatures into the lake of fire?”

The greatest question is, “How can a righteous God save anyone and still be righteous?”

to demonstrate – for a demonstration, proof

at the present time – in contrast to the past when God withheld the judgment on sins.

His righteousness -- this is the character of God, His holiness.

that He might be just -- δίκαιος [dikaios]– righteous.
God can never be rightly accused of wrong doing in anything – even when he declares the sinner to be righteous.

and the justifier -- δικαίωω [dikaiōō] pres act pt – the one justifying or declaring righteous.

of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Characteristics of justification (a legal declaration)

- it is apart from the Law (v. 21),
- through faith in Christ (v. 22a),
- for all people (vv. 22b–23),
- by grace (v. 24),
- at great cost to God (vv. 24b–25),
- and in perfect justice (v. 26).

Rom 3:28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.

