

WALKING THROUGH ROMANS - PART 6

RIGHTEOUSNESS DISCLOSED

This lesson marks a major shift in the argument of Romans. Paul has already spent several lessons exposing the human condition. He has shown that the human condition is real, universal, and not isolated to one particular group. Not the Jew. Not the Gentile. No one is exempt. All are confronted by the power of sin, and all need God.

The driving question remains the same: Has God remained faithful in a fractured world? Paul now answers that question by shifting from the problem humanity could not solve to what God has done about that problem.

THE SHIFT - 'BUT NOW'

Paul makes the turn in Romans 3:21 with two powerful words: but now. That phrase signals the shift in the letter. Up to this point, Paul has shown what humanity could not do. Humanity could not solve the problem of sin. Humanity could not keep itself right through the law. Humanity could not fix the wedge that sin created between itself and God. But now, Paul says, something has changed.

This shift moves from human inability to divine action. Paul is saying that if the law could not make people right, then where does righteousness come from? If the law could expose sin but could not rescue humanity from sin, then how does humanity get into right standing with God? That is the issue Paul now addresses.

BUCKET 1 - ROMANS 3:21-22

Paul says, but now, apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and it is attested by the law and the prophets. He then says that this righteousness of God comes through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe, for there is no distinction.

The phrase righteousness of God points to being made right or placed in right standing with God. Paul is not only describing who God is. He is describing what God does. God makes a way for humanity to be restored into right relationship with Him despite sin.

The word disclosed carries the idea of something being made visible, brought into the open, unlocked, or revealed. Something that had previously been hidden has now been brought into view. Paul is saying that God has now made visible how people can be made right with Him.

This is why the phrase but now matters so much. The law had its place, but the law could not make people right. The law could identify what was right and expose what was wrong, but it could not give humanity the power to stand right before God. So Paul says the righteousness of God has now been disclosed apart from the law.

Paul is also careful to say that this was not random or disconnected from what came before. The law and the prophets testified to it. In other words, this shift does not throw away everything that came before it. Rather, it

reveals what everything before had been pointing toward.

Paul then makes it plain: this righteousness comes through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. Faith here is not mere agreement. Faith is not shallow intellectual acceptance. Faith is full trust and reliance upon Jesus Christ. It means depending on what God has done in Christ rather than depending on self. It means trusting Him when it feels uncomfortable, trusting Him when life feels shaky, and trusting Him when the road feels uncertain.

Paul also insists that there is no distinction. No group has autonomy over this righteousness. No group can claim exclusive possession of right standing with God. The righteousness of God is made available through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.

BUCKET 2 - ROMANS 3:23-26

Paul now explains why this was necessary. He says, all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. That statement removes every illusion of spiritual superiority. All means all. Everyone has sinned. Everyone has fallen short. Everyone has created that wedge between themselves and God through sin.

Paul then says that people are justified by God's grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. The word justified means to be declared right with God. It points to being placed in right standing. The word grace means this is not earned. It is not achieved by effort. It is not purchased by performance. It is freely given. Paul wants the audience to understand that right standing with God comes as a gift.

Paul also introduces redemption. Redemption carries the idea of release or deliverance. Humanity is delivered through what Christ has done. Jesus Christ becomes the means by which sin is dealt with.

Paul says God put Christ forward as a sacrifice of atonement by His blood, effective through faith. Atonement points to how sin is dealt with. God did not overlook sin. God did not act as though sin was insignificant. God addressed sin through Christ. Sin was real, and God dealt with it by putting Christ forward.

This reveals the dual reality of God. God is just because He deals with sin. God is also the one who justifies because He makes people right. He does not ignore the problem, and He does not leave humanity trapped in the problem. He addresses sin, and He provides the means for people to be restored.

Paul is clear that standing with God is never based on what people do. It is based on what Christ has already done. Humanity does not become right with God by trying harder. Humanity becomes right with God by trusting in what God has already done through Christ.

This is why the lesson presses so strongly on trust. The issue is not checking more boxes. The issue is not trying to impress God through endless effort. The issue is relying on the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. Christ is the one who redeems. Christ is the one through whom grace is given. Christ is the one through whom sin is dealt with. Christ is the one through whom people are justified.

BUCKET 3 - ROMANS 3:27-28

Paul now asks, what becomes of boasting? Boasting here refers to confidence in self. It is self-congratulation. It is the attempt to take credit for something that one did not accomplish. Paul answers his own question by saying that boasting is excluded.

Why is boasting excluded? Because a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law. If right standing with God is received through faith, then there is no room for personal pride. No one gets to take credit for what God has given as a gift.

Paul is teaching that righteousness is not the product of self-performance. It is not the reward for human achievement. It is received through faith. Therefore, self-boasting has no place in relationship with God.

This matters because people often try to become right with God by trying harder. Paul says that is not the way. People do not become right with God by pushing themselves harder into performance. They become right with God by trusting what God has already done.

This also means that the center of the relationship shifts away from self. The issue is no longer what people can manufacture on their own. The issue is whether they will trust the work of Christ. Faith becomes the means by which boasting is removed and dependence on God is restored.

BUCKET 4 - ROMANS 3:29-31

Paul then widens the scope and asks whether God is the God of Jews only. He answers that God is not the God of Jews only, but also of Gentiles. There is one God, and He justifies both the circumcised and the uncircumcised through faith.

This reinforces the universality of the gospel. There is not one gospel for one group and another gospel for another group. There is one God, one way, and one means of right standing: faith.

Paul then anticipates another possible misunderstanding. If righteousness comes through faith, does that mean faith overthrows the law? Paul answers, by no means. On the contrary, faith upholds the law.

Paul is not saying the law was useless. He is saying the law must be placed in its proper context. The law shows what is right, but it cannot make people right. The law exposes the problem, but it does not solve the problem. The law can guide, but it is not the source of freedom. The source of freedom is in Christ.

So faith does not abolish the law. Faith places the law where it belongs. The law helps reveal truth, but Christ is the one who brings restoration. The law points to what is needed, but Christ is the one who provides what is needed.

Paul's argument is now unmistakably clear. There is not a different way for different people. Nobody earns right standing with God. Nobody is left out of the possibility of right standing with God. The way is through faith. God has remained faithful, and He has made a way to make people right through Jesus Christ.

FINAL TAKEAWAY

Romans 3:21-31 is the turning point from human inability to divine provision. The law could not make humanity right, so God disclosed His righteousness through Jesus Christ. All have sinned, all have fallen short, and all need grace. Humanity is justified as a gift, redeemed through Christ, and restored by trusting what God has already done.

The point is not trying harder. The point is trusting deeper. The point is not human performance. The point is divine provision. God has remained faithful in a fractured world, and the way to right standing is through faith in Jesus Christ.