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**God's Remedy for Mankind's Condition  
(Part 1)  
Romans 3:21-23**

**Introduction:**

**Warren Wiersbe** once said that one of his friends gave the **best illustration of justification** he had ever heard, which was this: A man in **England** put his **Rolls-Royce** on a boat and went across to the continent to go on a vacation. While he was driving around **Europe**, something happened to the **motor** of his car. He cabled the **Rolls-Royce** people back in **England** saying, "I'm having **trouble** with my car; what do you suggest I do?" The **Rolls-Royce Company** immediately **flew** a mechanic from **England** to where he was in **Europe** to **repair** the car, so that the man could continue his vacation.

Upon **fixing** the car the mechanic **politely left** without giving him a **bill**. As you can **imagine**, the man was wondering, "**How much** is this going to **cost** me?" So when he returned to **England** from his vacation, he wrote the company a letter and asked how much he owed them. He received a letter from the office that read: "**Dear Sir:** There is **no record anywhere** in our files that **anything** ever went **wrong** with a **Rolls-Royce**."

**Justification** is the judicial act of God by which He declares those sinners who believe in Jesus Christ to be **righteous**, and **treats** them **just as if** they had never sinned. He has **no record** anywhere that "**anything**

ever went **wrong**.” This is what we are going to begin looking at this morning.

As we continue on in our study of **Romans**, remember that the **theme** of the book is: **The gospel of Jesus Christ**.” We saw this back in **1:16-17** where Paul said, “I am not **ashamed** of the **gospel**, for it is the **power of God** for **salvation** to **everyone** who **believes**, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the **righteousness of God** is **revealed** from faith to faith; as it is written, “**BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH**.”

Then **immediately** from **1:18-3:20** Paul made it **devastatingly clear** why the entire human race **desperately needs** the **gospel** by describing the **bad news** that **all mankind, Jew and Gentile** alike, is **guilty** before God, **under the wrath of God**, and presently **awaiting** the horrible sentence of **eternal punishment**. Therefore, **sinful man** in himself is utterly **hopeless** and **helpless** to do anything to **bridge** the **great gulf** that exists between **him** and the **holy God** of the universe.

However, as we now come to **3:21** a **radical change** occurs. Streaming into the **pitch black spiritual darkness** of mankind’s **hopeless** condition is the **bright light** of the **good news** of the **gospel** of Jesus Christ whereby **sinful man** is given the **hope** of **salvation**. And the **heart** of the gospel message is the wonderful doctrine of **justification**. Turn with me in your Bibles to **Romans 3**.

**In Romans 3:21-26** we see **six characteristics** of divine justification whereby God imparts the gift of righteousness to **believing sinners**. This morning we will look at only the **first three characteristics** in vv. **21-23**.

The **first characteristic** of divine justification is this:

## I. Righteousness is Apart from Legalism

A. Look at v. **21**: **But now** apart from the Law the **righteousness of God** has been **manifested...** (Stop there)

1. In **stark contrast** to all that Paul has declared about sinful mankind (1:18-3:8), and finally **resting** his case in **3:9-20**, he now declares in v. **21** the two words, “**But now.**” These words are similar to the “**But God**” passages in the New Testament and simply mean that **God Himself has intervened!**
2. In His **great love** (1 Jn. 4:8), God has **taken the initiative** to **do** what mankind could **never do** for himself. **John Stott** says it this way, “After the **long dark night** the **sun has risen**, a **new day** has **dawned**, and the world is **flooded** with **light.**” (pg. 108)
3. **Verse 21** is the great **turning point** of the letter. Drawing a **big heart** in his Bible over **vv. 21-26**, **Donald Grey Barnhouse** said, “I am convinced today, after these many years of Bible study, that **these verses** are the **most important** in the Bible.”
4. He is in good company. **Martin Luther** said that this passage was “...the **chief point** and the very **center place** of the epistle and of the whole Bible.”
5. **C.E.B. Cranfield** rightly calls it, “The **center** and **heart** of the **main division** to which it belongs (pg. 199)
6. And **Leon Morris** states that it may be “...possibly the **most important** single paragraph ever written.” (pg. 173)
7. No wonder **Martyn Lloyd-Jones** declared, “There are no more **wonderful words** in the whole Scripture than just these two words ‘**But now.**’”

B. Now notice that Paul goes on to say, “...apart from the Law the **righteousness of God** has been **manifested...**”

1. Although **righteousness** is an **attribute** of God Himself, here the “**righteousness of God**” refers to the God-given **status** of a **right standing** before God, which is also known as **justification**. **Righteousness** is the **key word** in this whole passage, occurring **four times** (vv. 21, 22, 25, 26).
2. The Greek the word “**righteousness**” (dikaiosune) is practically **identical** to the word “**justified**” in **v. 24** (dikaioumenoi), for they come from the same **root word** and both emphasize the idea of **righteousness**.
3. The phrase “**righteousness of God**” (dikaiosune theou) takes us back to **1:17** where the focus is on the **saving righteousness** of God that is continually **revealed** through the preaching of the gospel. However, in this **context** God’s righteousness “**has been manifested.**”
4. The word “**manifested**” (pephanerwtai) is in the **perfect tense**, instead of the **present tense** of **1:17**, which means that God **revealed** or **made known** His righteousness **in the past** two thousand years ago at the **cross of Christ** and it has **on-going, continuing consequences** in the present.
5. And the **passive voice** of the word “**manifested**” shows that it is **God Himself** who has manifested this saving righteousness. This is all **part** of God’s **predetermined** redemptive plan.
6. Now with the coming of Jesus Christ and His **death** on the cross a **new epic** of salvation has **dawned**. The cross is the **pivot**

**point** of all history upon which everything turns, for history itself is divided into **before Christ** and **after Christ**.

7. **Thomas Schreiner** accurately states, “The **Mosaic covenant** belonged to an **era** of redemptive history that has now passed away (2 Cor. 7-11; Gal. 3:15-4:7). Its passing away is inextricably bound up with its **inability** to effect **righteousness**....The OT acknowledged that the promises of salvation would not come to fruition under the **covenant** with Moses (Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:26-27; Deut. 28:30). A **new covenant** would **fulfill** and **surpass** that covenant.” (pg. 180)
8. In Christ the **era** of the **Old Covenant** has passed and the **era** of the **New Covenant** has **arrived**.

C. Therefore, God’s saving righteousness cannot be **obtained** by **keeping** the law. Notice again that Paul says righteousness is, “**apart from the Law**.”

1. The Greek word translated “**apart from**” (choris) is a very **strong word** that means righteousness is totally “independent of” and has “no relation to” law. The same word is used of Jesus in **Hebrews 4:15** where He was “...tempted in all things as we are, yet **without** (or **apart from**) sin.”
2. Paul makes it very clear that God’s saving righteousness can never come by **trying harder** in our own **self-effort** to earn God’s favor by law-keeping, which is called “**Legalism**.” We saw last time in **v. 20** that “...by the **works of the Law** no flesh will be **justified** in His sight; for through the Law comes the **knowledge of sin**.”

3. Therefore, just as **sin** and **Jesus** have absolutely nothing in common, so too, **righteousness** and the **Law** have absolutely nothing in common. And as **good** as God's Law is, all it can do is **show** us that we don't have the ability to keep it, and thus we are **sinner**s.
  4. God's **standard** for mankind is the **absolute perfection** of **Christ's righteousness** who kept the Law perfectly in every part. Therefore, it doesn't matter how **moral** a person may be, **James 2:10** says, "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet **stumbles in one point**, he has become **guilty of all**."
  5. God **demand**s sinless perfection, therefore being **right with God** can never be achieved by **human effort**. The **cross of Christ** is God's **final refutation** of all of mankind's attempts at a works-righteousness system of salvation.
  6. There are only **two religions** in the world—the religion of **divine accomplishment** or **Biblical Christianity**, and the religion of **human achievement**, which includes all of the world religions and cults. But even under the **Old Covenant**, **good works** based on God's own standards were **worthless** as far as salvation was concerned.
  7. God's plan of salvation "**apart from** the Law" **was** and **is** the **same** throughout all salvation history. This isn't anything new.
- D. Look at what Paul says at the end of **v. 21**, "...being **witnessed** by the **Law** and the **Prophets**."
1. God has always planned to save people "**apart from** the Law." This was not some **divine afterthought**.

2. The Greek word translated “being **witnessed**” (marturomene) here means “to give testimony to, to render evidence to the fact.” The **present tense** of the word indicates that God Himself in His Word has **continuously** made this clear.
3. Therefore, Paul **proves** his point stating “the **Law** and the **Prophets**,” which is often used to refer to the **entire Old Testament** (Matt. 5:17; 7:12; 11:13; 22:40; Lk. 16:16; 24:27; Jn. 1:45; Acts 13:15; 24:14; 28:23).
4. The **Law** (the first five books—the Pentateuch) is the **heart** of the Jewish religious system and the **Prophets** (the other books) are its **religious teachers**. **Both** point to the **fact** that God’s **saving righteousness** or **right standing** before Him has absolutely nothing to do with the Law.
5. Paul will **illustrate** this **beautifully** and **irrefutably** by referring to the lives of **Abraham** and **David** in **chapter 4**.
6. The Old Testament looked forward to the day God’s **saving promises** would be **fulfilled** through the work of the **Messiah**, Jesus Christ, not through the Mosaic Law. Although the **full revelation** of salvation through Christ was not given in the Old Testament, He had always been the **way of salvation** to which that testament pointed (Isa. 53).
7. For example, the entire **sacrificial system** bore witness to the righteousness of God in Christ. **Alva J. Mclain** said it well, “When a man **took** his **sacrifice** as a sin offering to the Temple, **laid** his hands upon the animal, **confessed** his sin, then **killed** the animal, he **witnessed** by that very act to the **fact** that he had **faith** in a righteousness that was not his own; and by **faith** he

looked **forward** to the **cross of Christ** where the righteousness of God was manifested.” (pg. 103)

8. Even Jesus Himself said to the Jews in **John 5:39**, “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that **testify** about **Me**.”
9. Now it was during the **Reformation** that the true, biblical gospel was **recaptured**. And one of the **watchwords** of the **Reformation** that we see here was *sola Scriptura*, which means **Scripture alone**.
10. If we are going to have a **correct understanding** of salvation then we must **strictly stay** with **only** what the Bible says, not some writing of man. For **2 Timothy 3:16** tells us, “**All Scripture is inspired** by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness.”
11. The *second characteristic* of divine justification is this:

## **II. Righteousness requires Faith in Christ**

- A. Look at **v. 22**: even the **righteousness of God** through **faith in Jesus Christ**... (Stop there)
  1. God’s saving righteousness comes only to sinners through the **channel** or **means** of **faith**. From the human side **faith** is the **requirement**.
  2. The word “**faith**” (pisteos) here is not faith in **general**. It is not simply having faith or even having **intellectual faith** in the **belief** that there is a **God**, such as the well-known **deist Benjamin Franklin**.

3. **James 2:19** says, “You believe that God is one. You do well; the **demons** also believe, and shudder.” And obviously they aren’t saved!
4. **Faith** is only as **good** as its **object**. Here we see that the object of faith is “**Jesus Christ**.”
5. True **saving faith** is relying upon and putting our trust and confidence “**in Jesus Christ**” to forgive our sins and to make us right with God. Therefore, our salvation does not depend on the **greatness** of our faith but on the **greatness** of the One we believe in.
6. Jesus Himself is the very **embodiment** of God’s righteousness as He lived a perfect sinless life. And it is Christ’s righteousness that is **imputed** to believer’s account in justification.
7. For we read in **2 Corinthians 5:21**, “He (God the Father) made Him (God the Son) who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”
8. And **1 Corinthians 1:30** states, “But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us **wisdom** from God, and **righteousness** and **sanctification**, and **redemption**.”
9. **Faith’s** only **function** is to **receive** the saving righteousness that God has offered. It is **personal, individual faith** in Jesus Christ that **saves** the lost sinner.
10. This is why another **watchword** of the **Reformation** was ***sola fide***, which means **faith alone**. To **believe in Jesus** is the same as **receiving Him** as one’s personal **Savior** and **Lord**.
11. For **John 1:12** says, “But as many as **received** Him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who

**believe** in His name.” (Rom. 4:5; 10:9-13; Gal. 2:16; 3:26; Eph. 1:15; 2:8; 3:12; Phil. 1:29; Phil. 3:9; Col. 1:4; 2:5; 2 Tim. 3:15; Philem. 5)

B. The Bible makes it very clear that Jesus Christ is the **only way** of salvation. There is no other way!

1. We see this in numerous place in the New Testament:

- **Before His birth** an angel said to Joseph in **Matthew 1:21**, “...She will bear a Son; and you shall call his name Jesus, for He will **save** His people from their sins.”
- **At His birth** an angel proclaimed to some shepherds in the field in **Luke 2:11**, “For today in the city of David there has been born for you a **Savior**, who is Christ the Lord.”
- Jesus Himself declared in **John 3:16**, “For God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, that whoever **believes in Him** shall not **perish**, but have eternal life.”  
**(v. 36)** “He who **believes** in the Son has eternal life; but he who **does not obey** the Son will not see life, but the **wrath of God** abides on him.” **(14:6)** “...I am the way, and the truth, and the life; **no one** comes to the Father but **through Me**.”
- Speaking of Jesus Christ, Peter said in **Acts 4:12**, “And there is salvation in **on one else**; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.”

2. Therefore, God’s saving righteousness or right standing before God comes only according to **Scripture alone** through **faith**

**alone in Christ alone** (Sola Christos). Have you **received** Jesus Christ as your personal **Savior** and **Lord**?

3. The **third characteristic** of divine justification is this:

### **III. Righteousness is Available for Everyone**

A. Look again at **v. 22**: even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ **for all** those who **believe**; for there is **no distinction**.

1. God's **remedy** for mankind's condition is available "...for **all** those who **believe**." The word "**all**" (pantas) here refers to the entire world, regardless of one's **background** or **past behavior**.
2. This is why Paul states, "...for there is **no distinction**." God's saving righteousness is available for everyone, both **Jews** and **Gentiles**, on an **equal basis**.
3. There is only **one plan** of **salvation**—not **one** for the **Jews** and **another** for the **Gentiles**. The saving righteousness of God **fulfills** the promise made to **Abraham** in **Genesis 12:3** that in him "...all the families of the earth will be blessed."
4. Therefore, Christ's saving work on the cross can be stated like this: "**Sufficient** for **all**, but **effectual** for the **elect**." Christ's atonement is both "**general**" in that Christ died for all men (2 Cor. 5:19; 1 Tim. 2:6; 2 Pet. 2:1; 1 Jn. 2:2) and "**particular**" in that Christ's death has special reference to the elect (Jn. 10:11; Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:25).
5. We see **both** in **1 Timothy 4:10**, "For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the **Savior** of **all men**, especially of **believers**."

6. Since we as believers don't know who the **elect** are that God will **draw** to Himself (Jn. 6:44) according to **Mark 16:15** we are to "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation."
- B. Paul then states **why** the whole world needs "**faith** in Jesus Christ." Look at **v. 23**: for **all** have **sinned** and **fall short** of the **glory of God**.
1. The word "**all**" (pantes) speaks of the **universality** of **sin** for both the **Jews** and the **Gentiles**. Paul is again **summarizing** what he has said in **1:18-3:20** about the **sinfulness** of all mankind.
  2. The word "**sinned**" (hemarton) here literally means "to **miss** the **mark**" and is the most comprehensive term for moral deviation from God's righteous standard. It is in the **aorist tense**, indicating all of the sin of the entire world from Adam to the present is viewed as an **historical fact** of the **past**.
  3. Now not only "**all have sinned**" in the **past**, but also they "**fall short**" (husterountai—**present tense**) "of the **glory of God**" **continuously** in the **present**. Sin is an **on-going reality** in everyone's lives, and in doing so they "fall short of the **glory of God**."
  4. The "**glory** (doxes) of God" here refers to "**falling short**" or **failing** to reflect the **perfect moral image** of Jesus Christ. God created us in His own **image**, so that in **dependence** on Him we might **reflect** His personal and moral excellence thereby bringing **glory** and **honor** to Him in **everything** we do (1 Cor. 10:31).

5. However, sin **destroyed** all of that. Since the **fall**, everyone **continually falls short** of reflecting the moral image of God. Even we as **believers** fail to do this when we **sin**.
6. **Hadley Moule** dramatically said it this way, “The harlot, the liar, the murderer, are **short** of God’s glory; but so are **you**. Perhaps they stand at the **bottom** of a **mine**, and you on the **crest** of an **Alp**; but you are as **little able** to touch the stars as they.” (Stott FN pg. 109)
7. Although we as believers **belong** to Christ and have been **imputed** His righteousness, we are **still sinners** who **struggle daily** with the **on-going reality** of sin. To those who **deny** this, and I have met some with such a shallow and unbiblical view of sin, John makes it clear in **1 John 1:10**, “If we say that we have **not sinned**, we make Him a **liar** and His word is not in us.”
8. John then goes on to say in **v. 9**, “If we **confess** our sins, He is faithful and righteous to **forgive** us our sins and to **cleanse** us from all **unrighteousness**.” Keeping short sin accounts with God and living in dependence on Him is how we as believers maintain intimate fellowship with God and conform us more and more into the image of Christ.
9. This is what God is **all about** in our lives. He is more interested in our Christlike **character** than our **comfort**.
10. We see this in **Romans 8:28-29**, “And we know that God causes all things to work together for **good** to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become **conformed**

to the **image** of His **Son**, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren”

11. In **2 Corinthians 3:18** we read, “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the **glory** of the Lord, are being **transformed** into the **same image** from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.” (Col. 1:27-28; 3:10; 2 Thess. 2:14)
12. And **one day** every believer is promised to be **conformed completely** into Christ’s image. For we read in **1 John 3:2**, “Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when he appears, **we will be like Him**, because we will see Him just as He is.”
13. What a **day** that will be!

### **Conclusion:**

In closing, we have seen that divine justification or God’s saving righteousness is **apart** from legalism, requires **faith** in Christ, and is **available** for everyone. Have you personally **received** this wonderful **right standing** before God through **saving faith** in Jesus Christ? This is the **only way** of salvation!

If not, you can! And if you already have, I **encourage** you to lovingly take the **initiative** to **share** the **good news** of the **gospel** of Jesus Christ with those who haven’t, just as God Himself took the **initiative** to make it known to you.