

ROMANS 1-4

ROMANS 3:21 – 4:25 | WEEK 3: OCT 25, 2015

READ ROMANS 3:21-31

Up to now, Paul has made one thing abundantly clear. No one will be declared righteous before God by observing the law. God will hold all people accountable, and everyone deserves his wrath and judgment. (Review 3:19-20.) Now for some good news...

- 1) Verse 3:21 starts with, “But now...” They mark a major turning point. In 1:18-3:20 Paul emphasizes that the judging righteousness of God will be revealed on the last day. But we need not fear! Because already, NOW, God’s saving righteousness is here!
- 2) Romans 3:21-26 unpacks the thesis found in 1:16-17 and discounts any division or superiority between Jew and Gentile. What is Paul’s fundamental point about how a person becomes righteous before God? How is this righteousness received? In the words of Jeff Gibbs, “The answer to this question – to THIS question – is what the Reformation is about!”
- 3) Verse 3:22 can be translated “faith in Christ or “the faithfulness of Christ.” What are the implications of each?
- 4) For whom is this righteousness? State why, both negatively and positively. What does this say about Jew and Gentile distinctions?
- 5) In 3:24-26, Paul explains why “righteousness before God” works this way. To get the full flavor, we have to understand some concept he references: redemption and atonement.
- 6) In 3:26, God’s “judging righteousness” and “saving righteousness” are brought together. How is it possible for God to be true and righteous both in his promise to punish sin and his promise to save sinners?
- 7) What attitude is destroyed by the gospel? Why?
- 8) Gibbs writes, “Verse 3:31 leans forward into chapter 4,” and points out that the word “law” can have different senses (cf. 3:21). As you read chapter 4, figure out what Paul means in 3:31 when he says that he and his message of good news establish/confirm/uphold the law.

IN REVIEW...

- The heart of Paul’s letters is Romans. And the heart of Romans is the gospel (1:1-7, 16-17)
- The righteousness of God has been made known apart from law (3:21)
- This righteousness is through faith in/faithfulness of Jesus Christ to all who believe (3:22)
- All have sinned, but are justified freely by grace (3:23–24)
- God presented Christ as a propitiation so as to still be just in judgment (3:25)
- And so God, the Just, justifies those who have faith in Jesus (3:26)
- Boasting is excluding; justification is not the result of your conduct or character (3:27–31)

READ ROMANS 4:1-25

Paul ends chapter 3 by saying the gospel message he preaches is nothing new. In fact, it was testified by the Law and Prophets. Not only that, God justifies both uncircumcised and circumcised people in the same way; and this is also fully in line with the OT revelation. Chapter 4 shows why.

- 9) Paul begins by referring to two quintessential Jews—Abraham and David. Abraham is considered the “Father of Israel” and David “a man after God’s own heart.” How does Paul indicate each of these men got right with God?
- 10) Many Jews might agree with Paul, provided this is all placed in the context of the special covenant relationship held by the Jews. (See Genesis 12:1-3; 15:1-17:19 for context.) Who is righteousness available to and under what conditions? Put another way, who does this make Abraham the father of?
- 11) What implications does this have for Jew/Gentile distinctions? Who then are the covenant people of God/seed of Abraham/Israel?
- 12) Read 4:18-22. Describe the nature of Abraham’s faith. Using this as an example, what is the connotation Paul uses with the term “faith?”
- 13) Paul culminates his whole point in 4:23-25. What is the unshakable and powerful basis for our faith? Give a textual answer. What is the relationship between what we believe and what Abraham believed?
- 14) Many well-meaning Christians think of the OT as the law and the NT as gospel. Some, a little more nuanced, call the OT the old covenant and the NT the new covenant, usually with the connotation that the NT has rendered the OT obsolete. After reading chapter 4, what comment would God and Paul have on this line of reasoning? What is the proper relationship between the OT and NT for believers today?

IN REVIEW...

- God justifies both uncircumcised and circumcised people in the same way; and this message is fully in line with the OT revelation
- Abraham did not earn any blessing by working; he believed God’s promise.
- David was the same way!
- Abraham wasn’t even circumcised when he first believed and was blessed.
- Abraham’s true descendants, then, are people who believe as he did.
- This means Jew/Gentile distinctions break down. Israel, the covenant people of God, is redefined.
- Faith in God’s promise counts as righteousness before God; we believe in Jesus – the promise come true!