

Paul's Letter to the ROMANS

UNIT THREE

How God Meets our Need

Salvation through the death of Christ (3:21-26)

- Paul introduces many key words and concepts here.
- The central idea is that the righteousness of God is shown in the present time through the death of Jesus.
- Paul pictures God acting to justify sinners and put them in a right relationship with himself.
- 'Justify' in this usage means to acquit or to declare righteous.
- Apart from the law (3:21)
 - These words appear to take up the idea that 'no human being will be justified in his sight by works of the law' (3:20).
 - Paul has already shown that both the Gentiles and Jews have failed to obey the law of God.
 - On the other hand, 'the law and the prophets' bear witness to the righteousness of God which the gospel reveals.
- Through faith (3:22-23)
 - The righteousness of God is 'through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe (3:22).
 - The Greek is better translated 'through the faith of Jesus Christ'.

- God acted to save us through the faith/obedience of Jesus which led him to die for us.
- The benefits of God's saving action through Christ are for 'all who believe'.
- Righteousness is a gift from God, a righteous status that is the result of God's action of justifying.
- A right relationship with God is granted only to those who have faith in Jesus – all have sinned and so all must be justified by faith.
- By God's grace (3:24-26)
 - God has acted decisively to make redemption possible 'through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus'.
 - The language here recalls the acts of deliverance by which God saved his people from bondage in Egypt and Babylon.
 - God's act of deliverance from the slavery and consequences of sin is in the death and resurrection of Jesus.
 - It is highly likely that Paul means that Christ's death is the ransom which is paid to release us from the control of sin.
 - God provided Christ as a means of atonement 'by his blood' (3:25).
 - In the Old Testament, animal blood was used on the Day of Atonement, but here Jesus' blood makes him the sacrifice by which sin is actually, not symbolically, dealt with.

Event	Involved death of	Which resulted in
EXODUS	Passover lamb	Rescue from slavery in Egypt to serve God in the Promised Land
DAY OF ATONEMENT	bull and goat	Atonement for sins
CRUCIFIXION	Jesus	Rescue from sin's penalty (justification) and from slavery to sin (redemption)

Salvation through faith in Christ (3:27-4:25)

- Faith in the God who justifies the ungodly (3:27-4:12).
 - The boasting of the Jews about their relationship with God has already been shown to be invalid.
 - The gospel and the Old Testament make faith the basis of a right relationship with God.
 - Without questioning the special role of the Jews, Paul asserts that God is also concerned with the salvation of the Gentiles.
 - Both Jew and Gentile must be justified on the same basis – by faith alone (3:28-30).
 - Paul focuses on Abraham, who was considered by some Jews to have been justified on the grounds of his works.
 - He uses the Old Testament to show that this was not the case – God graciously takes the initiative to establish the relationship with Abraham, who responds by believing God.
 - 'To reckon' in this context signifies 'a free and unmerited decision of divine grace.
 - In order to explain more fully, Paul quotes Psalm 32:1-2, where the same verb is used.
 - For God to reckon righteousness to a person involves not taking account of their sin – an incredible act of grace.
 - Some may have thought the blessing of Psalm 32 applied only to the circumcised.
 - Paul argues that when Abraham's faith was 'reckoned to him as righteousness', he was not circumcised.
 - Circumcision was an outward sign of a relationship which already existed.

- Faith in the God who gives life to the dead (4:13-25).
 - The promise to Abraham and his descendants is summarised by Paul in terms of 'inheriting the world'.
 - God's ultimate purpose is to restore to Abraham's spiritual offspring that which was lost by sin.
 - This promise was not given through the law but 'through the righteousness of faith'.
 - If the inheritance is for 'the adherents of the law', there will be no heirs as the law exposes transgressions and brings God's wrath.
 - Verse 16 asserts that God's plan of salvation depends on man's side on faith, and on God's side on grace.
 - Abraham's faith is described as a response to the God who 'gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things which do not exist'.
 - Although his immediate reference is to Isaac's birth, ultimately Paul's point is to show Abraham's faith as a pattern for true Christian faith.
 - From a human point of view, Abraham's hope for a child in his old age was foolish, but his hope was in a God who could do such things.
 - Genesis 15:6 shows that God is prepared to count righteousness to the person who shares the faith of Abraham.
 - This involves:
 - believing that we have no ground of appeal to God on the basis of works.
 - believing that God can justify the ungodly because of the work of Christ and trusting in him to do so.
 - Paul adds a final perspective:
 - believing that God raised Jesus from death and is able to give eternal life to those who are justified through faith in him.