

THE MOST IMPORTANT PASSAGE IN THE BIBLE

Discover God's Grace Study Series

Study #3

(Romans 3:21-26) **“But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known...This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of His blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate His righteousness...so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.”** (NIV)

“I am convinced today, after 20 years of Bible study, that these verses are the most important in the whole Bible...Fail to comprehend their true meaning and you will be in darkness concerning most of Scripture.” (Donald Barnhouse - Romans Volume III)

“...If we fail to understand this passage accurately, we'll be unable to grasp the central message of the Scriptures. For it's here that we see who we are, who God is, and what God has done for us. If there's one passage of Scripture to become an expert on, let it be Romans 3:21-26. Before you spend lots of time looking for principles in the Bible on career success and personal affluence, before scouring the text for ideas on how to change your wife, your husband, your kids, your parents, your pastor, and your church, look at Romans 3:21-26. Meditate on it. Study it. It will change your life!
(Keith Krell - Professor Biblical Exposition, Moody Bible Institute)

E. The Cost of Our Salvation (Romans 3:24-25a)

In our last study, we looked at Romans 3:23 and the contrast that exists between God's righteousness and holiness and man's *self*-righteousness and sinfulness. “For all have sinned and fall short [infinitely short] of the glory of God.” Paul is making it clear that, if left to ourselves, we stand condemned before God with no righteousness of our own.

But notice that he doesn't stop there.

(vs.23-24) **“...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.”** (NIV)

This is the miracle of salvation. We are justified “freely by His grace”. We are pronounced ‘righteous’ by God as a deliberate act of His sovereign grace at absolutely no cost to us. This is what makes true Christianity (biblical Christianity) unique, unlike any other religion in the world!

Note: The Greek word translated “justified” means *to be pronounced perfectly righteous*. In the courtroom of heaven, justification is God's final verdict that a sinner is fully forgiven and has been credited with Christ's *own* righteousness on the basis of the cross (see Romans 1:16-17, 2 Corinthians 5:21). The Greek word translated “freely” means *without cost, without cause*. The righteousness that God credits is without cost to us and without cause in us. That's grace!

We must never conclude, however, that our justification is ‘cheap’ or that it came easily. Though absolutely free to us, the price paid on our behalf was immeasurable. In fact, it was the most expensive purchase ever made. This is because our justification was procured through “the redemption [the price paid] that came by Christ Jesus”.

Note: The word “redemption” refers to *a ransom price paid* to free a slave or prisoner.

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(vs.25a) **“God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of His blood—to be received by faith...”**

Q1. Based on Paul’s words above, what was the price that was paid for our forgiveness and justification? Use your own words to restate what Paul is saying.

Q2. Based on Paul’s words above, how do we receive what Christ has purchased?

You may not have realized it, but this statement (in verse 25) is one of the most succinct proclamations of the gospel ever written! Let’s look at it in four parts and consider each part in the light of other parallel passages.

Part 1 - “God presented Christ”

God the Father gave up His own dearly loved Son for us.

(John 3:16-17) **“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him.”** (NIV)

(Romans 8:31-32) **“...If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all—how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things?”** (NIV)

(1 John 4:9) **“This is how God showed His love among us: He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him.”** (NIV)

Part 2 - “a sacrifice of atonement”

God provided His Son as an offering and payment for our sins.

This phrase would have certainly caught the attention of Paul’s Jewish readers (of which there were many in Rome). In the Old Testament, the Day of Atonement was one of the most important days of the year in Israel. Annually, on this sacred and holy date, the high priest of Israel offered an animal sacrifice for the sins of the people (see Hebrews 9:6-7). The animal (which of course was innocent) was put to death on the altar, to *atone* for the sins of the people. It is what is known as a *substitutionary* offering. Although the people deserved to be punished and put to death because of their awful rebellion against God, the animal was put to death instead as the *substitute*. This vivid and temporary ritual did not take away sin, but only served to *illustrate* the future sacrifice of Jesus who bore *our sins* on Himself as *our substitute*. In fact, John the Baptist first introduced Jesus by saying, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). In another passage, the Apostle Paul described Jesus as “Christ our Passover lamb”, who has been sacrificed for us (1 Corinthians 5:7).

(Hebrews 10:1-14) **“The law [of Moses] is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship...But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins. It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Therefore, when Christ came into the world, He said: “Sacrifice**

NLT = New Living Translation, NIV = New International Version, ESV = English Standard Version

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and offering you did not desire, but a body [a human body] you prepared for me; with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased...[But] we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when this priest [Jesus] had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, He sat down at the right hand of God...For by one sacrifice He has made perfect forever those who are being made holy [i.e., by His one sacrifice for sins He has made perfect forever those who are being *set apart* for God's purpose]." (NIV)

(1 John 2:2) **"He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world."** (NIV)

(1 John 4:10) **"This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins."** (NIV)

Part 3 - "through the shedding of His blood"

The cost of our justification before God is nothing less than the shed blood of Jesus.

The Bible teaches that "without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness" (Hebrews 9:22) and Jesus said, "This is my blood...It is poured out as a sacrifice to forgive the sins of many" (Matthew 26:28). The blood of Christ shed for us is the only payment for sin that is acceptable to, and endorsed by, God the Father.

(Ephesians 1:6-8) **"...To the praise of His glorious grace, which He has freely given us in the One He loves. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that He lavished on us..."** (NIV)

(1 Peter 1:18) **"For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. Through Him you believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and glorified Him, and so your faith and hope are in God."** (NIV)

(Acts 20:28) **"...Be shepherds of the church of God, which He bought with His own blood."** (NIV)

Part 4 - "to be received by faith"

The gift that Jesus purchased with His blood is received by simple childlike faith.

As Paul pointed out previously in Romans 3:22, "This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe". (See also Study #1, page 3 note.)

"For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood." Rom 3:25a (NLT)

"For me His precious blood He shed. It is enough that Jesus died and that He died for me." - Liddie Edmonds

"For nothing good have I whereby Thy grace to claim...Jesus paid it all, all to Him I owe; sin had left a crimson stain, He washed it white as snow." - Elvina Hall

Optional: For further study, see Rom. 5:6-9, Eph. 2:13, Col. 1:20, Heb. 9:24-28.