

**Introduction** (Rom 3:19-31)

The PGA Tour is down to the final week, the Fedex Championship. The winner will take home ten million dollars in prize money. The Fedex Championship is limited to the top thirty on the Fedex Points list, and the players have all worked hard to try to make it into that small field competing for the top prize. Even the person who finishes thirtieth in the championship will take home more than three hundred thousand dollars. Patrick Cantlay was in first position going into the final week, and is an enviable position. He and John Rahm are battling it out for the grand prize. These players are not being given a gift; they have earned whatever they win.

Many years ago, Karen and I were living on a very tight budget. We wanted to pay off our home mortgage so we lived very frugally and paid extra money every month. We also were praying for God's provision to pay off the note. I had been praying that we could pay it off in seven years, but the Lord spoke to me to pray for it to be paid off in three years. Three years later Karen received a call from her grandfather. He asked how much we owed on our house, and then he sent a check to pay it off. Karen and I did not earn that money. It was not owed to us for anything that we did. That money was a gift, a very appreciated gift.

In our text today, Paul answers the question of how we are justified. He says that we are justified as a gift by God's grace. We are not justified by anything that we earn or have labored for; it is a gift of grace. Our great regular season play has not earned this justification; it is just a gift. Third, Paul said that we are justified by faith, apart from works of the Law. This morning, we will look at how we are justified. Let's read our text.

(Rom 3:19-31) "Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; {20} because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin. {21} But now apart from the Law *the* righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, {22} even *the* righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; {23} for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, {24} being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; {25} whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. *This was* to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; {26} for the demonstration, *I say*, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. {27} Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith. {28} For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law. {29} Or is God *the God* of Jews only? Is He not *the God* of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, {30} since indeed God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith is one. {31} Do we then nullify the Law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Law."

**How Is A Man Justified?**

1. He is not justified by the works of the Law (Rom 3:19-28)
2. He is justified as a gift by God's grace (Rom 3:21-25)
3. He is justified by faith apart from works (Rom 3:26-31)

## 1. **He is not justified by the works of the Law.** (Rom 3:19-28)

Paul begins this discussion on how we can be justified by telling us how we are not justified. The Jews had placed their trust in their heritage, their circumcision, and the Law. Paul said that through the Law every mouth may be closed and all the world would be accountable to God. The Law brings knowledge that we have sinned and need a Savior. Then, Paul makes it very clear, saying, “because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.” That is all. The law gives knowledge of sin; it does not justify us. “By the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight.”

(Romans 3:19-20) “Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; {20} because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin.”

The works of the law cannot justify us because we have a problem: all of us have sinned. In Isaiah 59:2, God tells us that our iniquities have made a separation between us and Him. This separation is what Billy Graham refers to as a chasm that separates us from God, and he uses this as the basis for the bridge illustration. The works of the Law do not do anything to bridge the gap between God and us that is caused by our sins.

(Is 59:2) “But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden *His* face from you so that He does not hear.”

Some people illustrate this separation with the use of a telephone line. When the telephone line gets cut, all the good works in the world will not mend that broken line. The two lines have to be joined together and Jesus is the only One who can reconnect that line that was broken by our sins. Doing good works is great but it does not atone for the breach caused by our sins. In Titus 3:5, Paul wrote that God saves us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy. The works of the law or righteous deeds, no matter how many we do, cannot save us.

(Tit 3:5) “He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit,”

Paul tells them that the righteousness of God is manifested apart from the Law. The Greek word that is translated as manifested is *phaneroo*, (Strong’s G5319) and it means to make clear or visible. God wants it clear that we are not justified by the works of the Law. This has been made clear by the Law and by the Prophets. The Law gave God’s standards so that we knew right from wrong. The Law made it clear that all of us have sinned, and it showed us that we had a need for a Savior.

(Rom 3:21) “But now apart from the Law *the* righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,”

It would be helpful to define a couple of other words in the passage. The word justify is used six times in Romans 3 (Rom 3:4, 3:20, 3:24, 3:26, 3:28, 3:30). The Greek word is *Dikaioo* (Strong’s G1344), and it means to show to be innocent or righteous, to declare righteous. When someone is justified, they are declared innocent or righteous. The Law declares that we are sinners; it does not declare that we are righteous. We have knowledge of our sins, not justification. Knowledge

of our sins does not justify us, and doing the works of the Law does not justify us. Doing some good works of the Law does not deal with the violations of the Law.

If I were to rob a bank, a clear violation of the Law, I would be found guilty of breaking the law, which the Bible refers to as sin. If I take some of that money and give it to those in need, those would be good works, but those good works do not make me innocent of my crime of robbing the bank. When I am caught, I will be charged with bank robbery. If I tell the judge that I did some good things with some of the money, the judge will still render a guilty verdict. Good works do not justify; for by the works of the law no flesh will be justified.

Another key word in the passage is righteous. Righteous or unrighteous is used eight times in Romans 3 (Rom 3:5, 3:10, 3:21, 3:22, 3:25, 3:26). When you consider that the word justify means to declare righteous and it is used six times, the passage speaks about righteous, unrighteous and/or being declared righteous fourteen times. That is a big clue to what the passage is about. God is righteous and all men have sinned and are unrighteous. Works of the Law do not declare the unrighteous as righteous; they only show men that they are unrighteous.

Paul makes a very strong statement about justification in verse twenty-two. He said “the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe, for there is no distinction.” When God justifies or declares the unrighteous sinner as righteous, there is no distinction between our righteousness and God’s righteousness.

(Rom 3:22) “even *the* righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction;”

Many years ago, Karen and I visited a church and during the Lord’s Supper each congregant had to tell the pastor, “I am a sinner” before being allowed to partake of the elements. I told the pastor that I could not do that. I told him that I was a sinner but God had declared me righteous, and He now refers to me as a saint, not a sinner. Much of the church has not grasped this concept that there is no distinction between our righteousness and God’s righteousness. When God justifies us, He declares us righteous.

In 2 Corinthians 5:21, God says that “He made Him (Christ) who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” We are the righteousness of God in Christ. It is not our own sinless life, but it is on the merit of Christ’s sinless life that He justifies us. But, it is not by the works of the law that we are declared righteous.

(2 Cor 5:21) “He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

In Romans 3:23, we have a classic verse in our gospel presentations, “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” This follows the statement about our righteousness being on the same par as God’s righteousness. There is a huge contrast here between those who have placed their faith in Christ and their condition prior to placing their faith in Christ. We have all sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

(Rom 3:23-31) “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, {27} Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith. {28} For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.”

Paul continues by asking about boasting, and responds, “It is excluded.” He then asks, “By what kind of law? Of works?” The answer is, “No, but by a law of faith.” There is no boasting because our righteousness does not come by works of the Law. In verse twenty-eight, he concludes that “a man is justified apart from the works of the Law.”

## 2. He is justified as a gift by God’s grace (Rom 3:24-25)

Paul has told us that we are justified apart from the Law and that by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in God’s sight. So, how is one to be justified. In verse twenty-four Paul says that we are justified as a gift by God’s grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. Our justification is not something that we earn; it is a gift of God’s grace. This grace that is given to us is through the redemption in Christ Jesus through the sacrifice that He made on our behalf. Some people define grace as God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense, and this is exactly what Paul is saying.

(Rom 3:24) “being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;”

In Ephesians 2:8-9, Paul wrote that we have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. We are justified as a gift by God’s grace, and Paul makes it clear that it is not as a result of works. There is no room for boasting by anyone because it is not by our works that we have been declared righteous.

(Eph 2:8-9) “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; {9} not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

Our justification is a gift of God’s grace that was made possible by the blood of Christ. Another word worth mentioning is propitiation, and it simply means to appease or satisfy. The result of our sins was death. The only way to have forgiveness of those sins was the blood of a sinless sacrifice. God tells us in Hebrews 9:22, “all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.” It was the blood of Jesus that provides forgiveness. His blood was the propitiation for our sins.

(Rom 3:25) “whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. *This was* to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed;”

(Heb 9:22) “And according to the Law, *one may almost say*, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.”

God’s gift of grace was yet another demonstration of His righteousness. His judgment upon the unrighteous was a demonstration of His righteousness, and His forgiveness is yet another demonstration of His righteousness.

(Rom 3:5-6) “But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? The God who inflicts wrath is not unrighteous, is He? (I am speaking in human terms.) {6} May it never be! For otherwise, how will God judge the world?”

There is one last word that I want to focus on for one minute, and that is forbearance. The Greek word is *anochē* (Strong’s G463), and it means a delaying or forbearance. There has not been an

immediate judgment by God; there has been a delaying of this wrath to come. Why a delay or forbearance? I believe the answer is found in 2 Peter 3:9, where Peter tells us that God is not slow about His promise, but is patient towards us, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. God's forbearance is so that more people will come to repentance. He has been willing to patiently pass over sins previously committed in order to give more people time to come to repentance. This is just another demonstration of His righteousness and love.

(2 Pet 3:9) "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance."

### 3. He is justified by faith apart from works (Rom 3:25-31)

This gift of grace that justifies us comes through faith, which we will look at next. In verse twenty-five, the propitiation of Christ's blood was through faith. Jesus made the payment for all sins, but not everyone has received that forgiveness which comes through faith. Our justification comes by faith.

(Rom 3:25) "whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. *This was* to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed;"

Notice what Paul says in verse twenty-six. "He is just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus." Faith is another key word in Romans 3, and it is used eight times (Rom 3:22, 3:25, 3:26, 3:27, 3:28, 3:30, 3:31). The Greek word is *pistis*, (Strong's G4102) which comes from *peitho* (Strong's G3982) which means to be convinced of, to be persuaded, or have confidence in. In Hebrews 11:1, God gives us a great definition of faith. "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." Justification is based on our conviction or faith that God is who He says He is, and that Jesus is the Messiah who came and died for our sins so that we could have forgiveness.

(Rom 3:26) "for the demonstration, *I say*, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."

(Heb 11:1) "Now faith is the assurance of *things* hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."

In verse twenty-eight, Paul concludes that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the law. Our justification is not in works of the Law, but is by placing our faith in Christ.

(Rom 3:28) "For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law."

A few years ago, I was at a trade show and they were raffling off a Harley Davidson Sportster motorcycle. In order to participate you had to get a card with about thirty images that needed to be stamped. Thirty exhibitors in the trade show had paid \$500.00 each to be put on this card, and each attendee at the show received a free card at registration. Those that wanted to be in the raffle for the Harley had to go to each participating booth and have their card stamped. For the participating exhibitors, it was a great incentive to get most of the attendees to visit your booth. Once someone had all the images on the card stamped, they could put it in a big raffle wheel. At the end of the tradeshow, someone draw a card out of the raffle wheel and they announced the name on the card. In order to win the motorcycle, you had to be there to claim the motorcycle.

The name they drew in the raffle had already left the tradeshow. Even though the motorcycle was his to claim, he did not receive the gift. Therefore, another name was drawn and this time the person drawn was there and he was given the Harley Sportster. The gift of salvation is very similar. The gift has been paid for, and it has been offered to you, but you must receive this gift by faith in order to obtain it.

In Reformed Theology, one of the five tenets is Limited Atonement, which says that Jesus only died for the elect. This is incorrect. In John 3:16, God so loved the world that He sent His only begotten Son. In 1 John 2:2, Jesus is the propitiation for our sins (believers), but not just ours, but also for those of the whole world.” Jesus’ blood was the propitiation or satisfaction for the sins of the whole world, not just the elect. But, it is only those who receive the payment for their sins by faith that are forgiven of their sins.

(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.”

(1 John 2:2) “and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for *those of* the whole world.”

Paul compares receiving this justification by faith with works. There is no boasting in our justification because there are no works involved. In verse twenty-eight, he makes it very clear that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.

(Rom 3:27-28) “Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith. {28} For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.”

Paul finishes this section by asking if God is the God of Jews only, or if He is the God of Gentiles also. He answers his question, saying, “Yes, of Gentiles also.” He said that God will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised by faith. This is actually a lead-in to Romans 4, where Paul will go into depth about Abraham’s faith, and how he believed God while yet uncircumcised and his faith was credited to him as righteousness.

(Rom 3:29-30) “Or is God *the God* of Jews only? Is He not *the God* of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, {30} since indeed God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith is one.”

Paul ends this section by asking if our faith nullifies the Law. He answered, “May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Law.” The Law was to establish the righteousness of God and that all of us have sinned and need forgiveness of sins. It was never intended to justify us. Our faith in Christ’s payment for our sins was the remedy for our sins. We are made righteous or justified by the gift of grace through faith, apart from the works of the Law.

(Rom 3:31) “Do we then nullify the Law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Law.”

## Conclusion and Applications

How are we justified? We are not justified by works, but we are justified as a gift of God through faith. In Ephesians 2:8-9, Paul wrote that we have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

(Eph 2:8-9) “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; {9} not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

There may be someone here today that has done a lot of great works. You may have helped a lot of people. You may have given money to the needy. You may have done lots of good things, but you have never placed your faith in Christ for your salvation. We are justified and made righteous by placing our faith in Christ. If you believe that Jesus came and died for our sins, and became sin on our behalf, and was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and you would like to confess Jesus as the Lord of your life, I invite you to pray with me.

*Jesus, I do believe that You came and died for the sins of the world. I believe that You were raised on the third day. I want to place my faith in You today. I want to receive You as my Lord and Savior. I ask You to come into my life and to take away my sins. I receive Your forgiveness, and I thank You for declaring me righteous today. Thank You. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.*

There may be some today that have struggled with a poor self-image, with condemnation, or with guilt. If you have asked Jesus to come into your life, then I declare to you that you are righteous. Sometimes our words and actions do not line up with God's righteousness, but God has justified or declared that you are righteous. You are now a saint. If you struggle with that, I encourage you to meditate on this passage today. I encourage you to memorize Romans 8:1-2 and 2 Corinthians 5:21. Both of these verses can help renew your mind in this area. Third, I want to pray for you this morning.

(Rom 8:1-2) “Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. {2} For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.”

(2 Cor 5:21) “He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

*“Jesus, I come to You on behalf of those that are feeling condemned, guilty, and unworthy. Based on Your word, I declare them to be righteous. They are the righteousness of God in You. I ask You to impress that upon their heart and mind. I ask You to remove the guilt, shame, condemnation and unworthiness from them. I plea the blood of Jesus over them. I ask You to show them their real identity, that they are saints, holy and righteous sons and daughters. I pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Q & A

**Introduction** (Rom 3:19-31)

1. **He is not justified by the works of the Law.** (Rom 3:19-28, Is 59:2, Tit 3:5-7, 2 Cor 5:21)
2. **He is justified as a gift by God's grace** (Rom 3:24-25, Eph 2:8-9, Heb 9:22, 3:5-6, 2 Pet 3:9)
3. **He is justified by faith apart from works** (Rom 3:25-31, Heb 11:1, John 3:16, 1 John 2:2)

**Conclusion and Applications** (Eph 2:8-9, Rom 8:1-2, 2 Cor 5:21)