

Romans 03 - Four Jewish Objections; The Guilt of All Humanity; Why Does God Save Anyone?; Description of Justification; God's Greatest Problem

II. Sin (Rom 1:18—3:20)

(3) Condemnation of the Jew (2:17—3:8)

(D) Jewish arguments cannot save the Jew (3:1-8)

(a) First round (3:1-2)

Q: What advantage is there to being a Jew? (3:1)

A: The Jews have the oracles of God (3:2)

(b) Second round (3:3-4)

Q: Does Jewish unbelief nullify God's faithfulness? (3:3)

A: God is faithful when men are unfaithful (3:4)

(c) Third round (3:5-8)

Q: Should God judge the Jew? (3:5)

A: God will judge the world (3:6)

A: Paul should be praised for allegedly teaching license (3:7-8)

(4) Condemnation of the world (3:9-20)

(A) Charge (3:9)

(a) Guilt of the Jew (Cf. 2:17—3:8)

(b) Are only the Jews guilty?

(c) All are guilty

(d) Regardless of racial distinctions

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(ii) Count 2: none understand (3:11a)

(iii) Count 3: none seek God (3:11b)

(iv) Count 4: all have turned aside (3:12a)

(v) Count 5: all useless (3:12b)

(vi) Count 6: none do good (3:12c)

(b) Conversation (3:13-14)

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- (D) Jewish arguments cannot save the Jew (3:1-8)
 - (a) First round (3:1-2)
 - Q: What advantage is there to being a Jew? (3:1)
- 1 Then what advantage does the Jew have? Or what is the benefit of circumcision?
- 1 Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision?
- 1 What advantage, then, does the Jew have, or what value is there in circumcision?
- 1 What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision?

- Paul begins to anticipate the Jewish objections to what he just said (2:17-29), which is:
 - The Jews are not saved by keeping the Law (2:17-24)
 - The Jews are not saved by circumcision (2:25-27)
 - The Jews are not saved because of their birth into Abraham's lineage (2:28-29)
- If these things cannot save the Jews, and the Jews have pinned their hopes on these things, Paul is going to experience some pushback from the Jews. In v1-8, Paul anticipates three Jewish objections:
 1. What advantage is there to being a Jew if the Jews will be condemned right along with the Gentiles? (v1-2)
 2. Does Jewish unbelief nullify God's faithfulness? (v3-4)
 3. Should God judge the Jew? (v5)

A: The Jews have the oracles of God (3:2)

- 2 Great in every respect. First, that **they were entrusted with the actual words of God.**
- 2 Great in every respect. First of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God.
- 2 There are all kinds of advantages! First of all, the Jews have been entrusted with the utterances of God.
- 2 Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.
- First off, they were entrusted with the actual words of God.
- They have a special place of priority and privilege in the outworking of God's redemptive purposes because they were given the privilege of being the vehicle through which the world would be blessed.
- "...they were entrusted with the actual words of God" - had God not set Israel aside for a special purpose, the Word of God would've never come to the world. But the sad part is that this privilege is not going to save the Jews either.
- In 9:1-5 Paul will resume and expand the discussion of the privileges of the Jews: the adoption to sonship, the divine glory, the covenants, the law, the temple worship, the promises, the patriarchs and the human ancestry of the Messiah.

(b) Second round (3:3-4)

Q: Does Jewish unbelief nullify God's faithfulness? (3:3)

- 3 What then? If some did not believe, their unbelief will not nullify the faithfulness of God, will it?
- 3 What then? If some did not believe, their unbelief will not nullify the faithfulness of God, will it?

3 What if some of the Jews were unfaithful? Their unfaithfulness cannot cancel God's faithfulness, can it?

3 For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?

- Does Jewish unbelief, this lack of circumcision of the heart that Paul has been explaining, does this throw God's program off course? Has God somehow broken His promises? Does Jewish unbelief nullify God's faithfulness?

A: God is faithful when men are unfaithful (3:4)

4 **Far from it!** Rather, **God must prove to be true**, though **every person *be found* a liar**, as it is written: "SO THAT YOU ARE JUSTIFIED IN YOUR WORDS, AND PREVAIL WHEN YOU ARE JUDGED."

4 May it never be! Rather, let God be found true, though every man *be found* a liar, as it is written, "That You may be justified in Your words, And prevail when You are judged."

4 Of course not! God is true, even if everyone else is a liar. As it is written, "You are right when you speak, and win your case when you go into court."

4 God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.

- "Far from it!" - *Me genoita*, the strongest negation available in the Greek language. You can't say NO in the Greek language any stronger or more forceful than how Paul says it in this verse. Spanish translation: *No way Jose!*

— God will remain true to His word (reliable, trustworthy) to bless Israel as He had promised.

- "...God must prove to be true" - God will always be faithful to His promises, even when men are unfaithful. At the end of the day, God will fulfill His promises, even when men are resisting the will of God right to the bitter end.

— Even when men choose to rebel against God, they are in essence in many cases fulfilling the will of God.

— Today, God is using the Gentile pre-eminence in the current Church Age to provoke the Jews to jealousy (Rom 11). As He pours out His grace and favor on the Gentile dominated Church, it is fulfilling the design of God because Israel will again be envious and desirous of their place of spiritual pre-eminence again.

— Jewish unbelief did not surprise God or throw Him off course...He didn't get sweaty palms when Israel rejected their Messiah and have to go back to the drawing board to come up with Plan B.

— Even as the nation of Israel was rejecting their own Messiah, God was fulfilling His purposes to pay the sin debt for the entire world.

- "...every person *be found* a liar" - God would continue to be faithful even if *everyone* proved unfaithful, not just if *some* proved faithful.
- The OT quote here is from Ps 51:4b, testifying to the character of God. In this passage, Paul cited David's testimony to God's faithfulness after David's own unfaithfulness.
- If you don't believe the promises that God has given the Jew, you are calling God a liar! The concepts of unbelief, disobedience, and calling God a liar are equivalent. Unbelief is not accepting God's Word (Cf. 1 John 5:10).

(c) Third round (3:5-8)

Q: Should God judge the Jew? (3:5)

- 5 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 from a human viewpoint.)
- 5 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.)
- 5 But if our unrighteousness serves to confirm God's righteousness, what can we say? God is not unrighteous when he vents his wrath on us, is he? (I am talking in human terms.)
- 5 But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man)
- If Jewish sin enhances God's glory, because God's faithfulness is clearly seen against the backdrop of Jewish unfaithfulness, then why should God judge the Jew?
 - If Israel's unfaithfulness allowed God to fulfill His purposes, why should God be upset about Jewish unbelief and therefore judge the Jew?
 - If Jewish unbelief makes God look good, isn't God being unfair by judging the Jews?
 - Implied: "We did God a favor by being so rebellious! Is God going to judge us for glorifying Him?"
 - Apparently, Paul encountered this objection frequently because he addresses the topic again in 6:1-2,15-16.

A: God will judge the world (3:6)

- 6 **Far from it!** For *otherwise*, how will God judge the world?
- 6 May it never be! For otherwise, how will God judge the world?
- 6 Of course not! Otherwise, how could God judge the world?
- 6 God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?
- "Far from it!" - *Me genoita*, the strongest negation available in the Greek language. You can't say NO in the Greek language any stronger than how Paul says it in this verse.

Spanish translation: *No way Jose!*

- Paul says that this logic would prevent God from judging sin, which would in turn deny the very character of God because His character demands that sin be punished.
- This character trait of judging sin is so strong that one day it will be poured out on the unbelieving world (Rev 6:16) and the only ones who will be exempted are those who have the blood of the Lamb applied to their lives.
- The angels around the throne don't sing "Grace, Grace, Grace" day and night around the clock, they sing Holy, Holy, Holy (Rev 4:8; Cf. Is 6:3). God's dominate character trait is holiness, and holiness *must* judge sin.
- To articulate an objection like this is to not understand the character of God.

A: Paul should be praised for allegedly teaching license (3:7-8)

7 But if through my lie the truth of God abounded to His glory, why am I also still being judged as a sinner?

7 But if through my lie the truth of God abounded to His glory, why am I also still being judged as a sinner?

7 For if through my falsehood God's truthfulness glorifies him even more, why am I still being condemned as a sinner?

7 For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner?

- The fourth question clarifies the folly of the third question.

— If circumcision is of secondary importance to perfect obedience, is not sinning of secondary importance to glorifying God?

— If this were true, each individual could claim exemption from the judgment of God because his sin had advanced the glory of God.

8 And *why* not *say* (just as we are slanderously reported and as some claim that we say), "Let's do evil that good may come *of it*"? Their condemnation is deserved.

8 And why not *say* (as we are slanderously reported and as some claim that we say), "Let us do evil that good may come"? Their condemnation is just.

8 Or can we say—as some people slander us by claiming that we say—"Let's do evil that good may result"? They deserve to be condemned!

8 And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just.

- Paul preached grace over and over again, and this made him an enemy almost everywhere he went.

— When you have enemies, if they don't have a truthful accusation against you, they will make one up in order to slander and denigrate you.

- The accusation against Paul went something like this: Paul's gospel is so easy and his Christian life teaching so simple that people will go back into sin.
- This is what the legalists always say because they always try to put people under rules...if you take away the restraint of the Law, people will go back into sin. If people have no boundaries, they will do whatever they want.
- But Paul here skillfully turns the argument around...he says that if sin should not be judged because it enhances God's glory (Cf. v1, the original question he is answering), Paul says that he should be praised for teaching people to sin up a storm. He should be commended for teaching license if it makes God look better (of course he was not teaching license or anything close to it).
- If you take the argument of the legalists who were coming against Paul to its logical conclusion, if indeed Paul was teaching people to sin up a storm (which he was not), why should he be condemned (because sin enhances the glory of God)?

(4) Condemnation of the world (3:9-20)

After proving that all people, both Jews and Gentiles, are under God's wrath, Paul drove the final nail by citing Scriptural proof. Verses 9-18 is a picture of humanity in ruins. No one can do even one thing to satisfy God's standard of righteousness.

(A) Charge (3:9)

- (a) Guilt of the Jew (Cf. 2:17—3:8)
- (b) Are only the Jews guilty?
- (c) All are guilty
- (d) Regardless of racial distinctions

9 What then? Are **we** better *than they*? Not at all; for **we** have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin;

9 What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin;

9 What, then, does this mean? Are we Jews any better off? Not at all! For we have already accused everyone, both Jews and Greeks, of being under the power of sin.

9 What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all undersin;

- "...we" [2x] - Jews

- "...they" - Gentiles

- Paul just finished explaining that the Jewish nation is guilty before God (2:17—3:8), and before that (1:18-32) that the Gentiles are guilty before God.

— The summation of the entire matter is that the entire human race stands guilty and condemned before God. It makes zero difference what race or ethnicity they belong to,

Jew or Gentile, male or female, slave or free.

(B) Evidences (3:10-18)

Theologians have a concept that by which they label this passage: the depravity of man. The depravity of man is NOT an idea that says people are as bad as they can possibly be. It's also not that men indulge every possible sin that they can indulge in. Unbelievers are capable of, and often do, good things in the eyes of their fellow man (Matt 7:9-11). Cornelius, unsaved at the time, was a good man (Acts 10:1-2).

The *biblical* concept of total depravity means that man is incapable of doing anything that could *merit favor from God*. He can do good deeds in the eyes of his fellow man, but *he can't do anything to merit God's favor*. Total depravity also includes the notion that sin is so pervasive that it has touched every aspect of man's being (the "total" in total depravity)...the mind, emotions, and physical body. There is not a single aspect of the composition of man that has not be influenced by sin.

In this passage (v10-18), Paul will lay out 14 counts as to why the human race is guilty before God. Every one of these 14 counts that Paul lists are taken from the OT, most from Psalms.

(a) Character (3:10-12)

(i) Count 1: none righteous (3:10)

10 as it is written: "THERE IS NO RIGHTEOUS PERSON, NOT EVEN ONE;

10 as it is written,"There is none righteous, not even one;

10 As it is written, "Not even one person is righteous.

10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:

- Quoted from Ps 14:1,3...

- No one stands before God as a righteous person without the the shed blood of Jesus Christ and His righteousness applied (imputed) to their account (Cf. Phil 3:9).

— Paul knew righteousness as defined in the OT...he was a Pharisee, a keeper of the Law; his OT bonafides are listed in Phil 3:5-6. No one tried harder to be good before God, in the way he tried to do it, than Saul (Paul).

- We often treat sin lightly...few of us are so arrogant that we actually pretend to be perfect. We excuse ourselves by saying, "No one is perfect," but this is far different from agreeing we are spiritually depraved.

- The first thing we need to know about humanity in its lost condition is that it has "no righteousness." This doesn't mean that human beings are a bit less righteous than we need to be to please God. It means that from God's point of view, human beings have no righteousness of our own *at all*. We cannot possibly make ourselves righteous or acceptable to God by what we do.

(ii) Count 2: none understand (3:11a)

(iii) Count 3: none seek God (3:11b)

11 **THERE IS NO ONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NO ONE WHO SEEKS OUT GOD;**

11 There is none who understands, There is none who seeks for God;

11 No one understands. No one searches for God.

11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.

- "THERE IS NO ONE WHO UNDERSTANDS" - quoted from Ps 14:2...

— Why is it that people cannot understand the things of God? The answer is John 4:24. Since God is Spirit, we must have the Holy Spirit indwelling us in order to understand who God is (1 Cor 2:14).

— This is a lack of spiritual perception, not merely a lack of human knowledge. Human wisdom is bankrupt so far as coming to know God is concerned (1 Cor 1:18-21). We may admit our knowledge is incomplete, but not that we have no spiritual understanding.

- "...THERE IS NO ONE WHO SEEKS OUT GOD" - quoted from Ps 53:3...

— Human beings are so corrupted in our sinful human nature that God must make the first move toward us, because man will never seek out God on his own, without the Holy Spirit's intervention (Cf. Luke 19:10; John 6:44).

— In addition, part of the reason why no one seeks out God is because Satan blinds their minds to the gospel (2 Cor 4:4):

2 Cor 4:4: in whose case **the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievingso that they will not see the light of the gospel** of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

— So God has to make some sort of first move toward us, otherwise no one would be saved. God does this through the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit (John 16:7-11). The Holy Spirit does some sort of work in our lives of conviction (convincing) before a person can come to Christ.

- Any discussion you have with a Calvinist will always end up at this verse...so how do you harmonize this verse, which clearly says that no one seeks after God, with the many other verses (Cf. Rom 1) that indicate that men *can* seek God and are "without excuse" if they do not? Here's how you harmonize it:

- If man were left to his own devices, he would reject God 100% of the time. If you left man alone in his natural habitat, with no pressure applied to him at all, then not one single person would seek God because our sin nature is hostile toward God.

- This verse describes man's state without any of this "pressure" or "drawing" from God whatsoever. However, thankfully the reality is that God is constantly applying "grace pressure" to lost people every day of their lives, giving them the grace necessary to seek God. This verse describes man's condition without this "grace pressure" applied by God.
- How does God overcome the inherent sin nature of mankind that rejects God (Rom 3:11)? What exactly is this "grace pressure" that God is constantly applying to unsaved man?
 - God is drawing all men to Himself (John 6:44; 12:32)
 - The Holy Spirit convicts the world (unbelievers) of the sin of unbelief, righteousness (that their righteousness is not good enough), and judgment (the world is going to be judged) (John 16:7-11).
 - God sends His Word throughout the world (Is 55:10-11). The Word did a work in Timothy's life before he was saved (2 Tim 3:15).
 - The proclamation of the gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation (Rom 1:16)
 - Creation - general revelation (Rom 1:18-20; Cf. Ps 19:1-4)
 - Conscience (Rom 2:14-15)

- This verse does *not* say, as Calvinism's doctrine of Total Depravity states, that man is *unable* to seek God. Man does not lack the *ability* to seek God, and God does not hold back the essential grace for man to come to Christ (Cf. Eph 2:1, see notes there). The problem that this verse states is that man, in and of himself, lacks the *desire* to seek God. The difference is between *ability* to seek God, which man has, and the *desire* to seek God, which man does not have.

— Blinded by sin and obsessed with self, man seeks everything except God until the Holy Spirit convicts him of sin and he is convinced of his need for a Savior. Then he is drawn to Christ.

— God created human beings with a spiritual vacuum only He can fill. Sadly, in our sinful state, apart from God's grace, people can not and will not seek God on their own because God does not seem desirable. Instead, people everywhere try to fill their lives with everything but God.

— The extreme Calvinist view that human depravity and being dead in sin means that man cannot seek after and find God is repudiated by hundreds of verses (Cf. 1 Chr 16:11; 2 Chr 15:2; Ps 9:10; 22:26; 34:10; 40:16; 69:6; Prov 28:5; Jer 29:13; Hosea 10:12; Zeph 2:3; Heb 11:6, et al). If man does not and cannot seek God unless He causes them to do so by Irresistible Grace, what do all these passages (and dozens of others) mean?

— See [Calvinism: Total Depravity](#) for a complete refutation of Calvinism's view of Total Depravity.

- Calvinism points to this verse, in complete isolation from the rest of Scripture, in order to argue for their doctrine of Total Depravity. However, if you consider other passages, there is a strong counter-passage to the Calvinist interpretation of Rom 3:10-11.

Consider Acts 17:26-27:

26 and He made from one *man* every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined *their* appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation,

27 **that they would seek God**, if perhaps **they might feel around for Him and find Him**, though He is not far from each one of us;

- "...that they would seek God" - but according to Calvinism, man cannot seek God? In fact, Rom 3:11 says that "no one seeks out God." But this verse says that God created the nations and determined their appointed times and actual borders *so that man would seek God!*
- The de-centralization of power and the creation of nation-states around the world, with borders, was determined by God to prevent the global tyranny that Nimrod was trying to bring in at the Tower of Babel. This passage says that these de-centralized nation-states would give people time, space, and resources to seek God.

- So how do you reconcile Rom 3:11 with Acts 17:26-27?

— It is true that human beings have a natural proclivity to not seek eternal things, but God has programmed into His universe certain provisions that give man enough grace to seek the truth...if they want to. Unfortunately what most people do is to take the truth of God and suppress it in unrighteousness (Rom 1:18). This does not demonstrate inability, but rather *unwillingness*.

— Once you take the grace provisions that God gives to lost man and suppress them, God now says we have a problem. The problem is not your inability to hear and understand the gospel, the problem is you have suppressed that truth and now the problem is on you.

— Rom 3:11 is talking about man's natural proclivity without all of the "grace provisions" from God. Man in his default state, without God's involvement. But because God has built into creation all of these provisions for lost man to come to a knowledge of Him, lost people have the ability to do what Acts 17:26-27 says they have the ability to do, which is to seek God.

— So if a person is in unbelief, it isn't because they didn't have the ability to come to Christ, and it isn't because God didn't give them the "gift of faith" and regenerate them

so that they could believe. Rather, it is because they chose not to believe and suppressed these "grace provisions" in unrighteousness (Cf. John 3:19; Rom 1:18). That is *their* problem, not God's problem, because God clearly does everything possible to bring people to a knowledge and belief in Christ.

— The Bible consistently puts the responsibility to believe on man, not on God (Cf. 1:12-13; 3:16,36; 5:24; 6:47; Acts 16:31; Rom 3:21-22,25-26; 4:3-6; Eph 2:8. The Bible also consistently puts the responsibility for not believing on man (Cf. 3:18; 4:48; 5:40).

- Another verse that completely destroys Calvinism's view of this verse is Jer 26:3. There is no way to reconcile Jer 26:3 with the idea that people have no ability to respond to God:

Jer 26:3: **Perhaps they will listen and everyone will turn from his evil way, and I will relent of the disaster which I am planning to inflict on them because of the evil of their deeds.'**

— God genuinely calls them to repent. He speaks of the possibility that they will listen and return. Their response matters because it affects what follows: "I will relent of the disaster which I am planning."

— This verse doesn't describe a people acting out a predetermined script. It's a God who sincerely warns, sincerely invites repentance, and holds people responsible for how they respond.

- This passage teaches that no one, left to himself, can attain righteousness or seek God apart from God's grace. Yet God graciously calls every person to Himself and many freely respond to His grace while others freely reject it.

— Thus, Scripture can truthfully say both that "there is none who seeks God" in the sense of fallen humanity apart from God's grace, and that people like Josiah, David, and the prophets genuinely sought God because they cooperated with God's gracious initiative.

— This understanding fits naturally with the rest of Scripture:

2 Chr 15:15: All Judah rejoiced concerning the oath, for they had sworn with all their heart and **had sought Him earnestly**, and He let them find Him. So the LORD gave them rest on every side.

2 Chr 17:3-4: but [Jehoshaphat] **sought the God of his father [David]**, followed His commandments, and did not *act* as Israel did.

2 Chr 34:3a: For in the eighth year of his reign while he [Josiah] was still a youth, **he began to seek the God of his father David;**

Ps 27:8: *When You said, "Seek My face,"* my heart said to You, **"I shall seek Your face, LORD."**

Ps 63:1: God, You are my God; **I shall be watching for You; My soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You,** In a dry and exhausted land where there is no water.

Ps 69:32: The humble have seen *it and* are glad; **You who seek God**, let your heart revive.

Ps 105:3-4:

3 Boast in His holy name; May the heart of **those who seek the LORD** be joyful.

4 **Seek the LORD** and His strength; **Seek His face** continually.

Heb 11:6: And without faith it is impossible to please *Him*, **for the one who comes to God** must believe that He exists, and *that* He proves to be One who rewards those who seek Him.

— So this passage does not teach that no one can nor has ever sought God because that would completely contradict the passages listed above, plus many others. It teaches that no one seeks God *apart from God's gracious action*. God always initiates, calling every person to Himself. People are free to cooperate with His grace by seeking Him in faith, or to resist His gracious call.

*While I do agree that salvation comes through the workings of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, I disagree with the idea that God must first predispose some to believe and receive it, for the Word of God and the Holy Spirit are sufficient in and of themselves in bringing about the new birth. Instead of forcing individuals through the irresistible prompting of the Holy Spirit, God uses His Word and the convicting work of the Holy Spirit to confirm its truth in order to bring individuals to the point of decision. It is certainly God's grace that offers it, but at this point they are free to accept or reject salvation...Calvinism's definition of total depravity negates the sufficiency of the power of the Word of God and the Holy Spirit to give life...." [Dr. Robert R. Congdon, *Oops! I Thought I Was a Four-Point Calvinist* (Greer, SC: Congdon Ministries International, 2014), 48, 69-70.]*

(iv) Count 4: all have turned aside (3:12a)

(v) Count 5: all useless (3:12b)

(vi) Count 6: none do good (3:12c)

12 THEY HAVE ALL TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME **CORRUPT**; THERE IS NO **ONE WHO DOES GOOD**, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE."

12 All have turned aside, together they have become useless; There is none who does good, There is not even one."

12 All have turned away. They have become completely worthless. No one shows kindness, not even one person!

12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

- Quoted from Ps 14:3; 53:3...

- What Paul is saying is that the entire human race has missed the mark, wandered off the path. It pictures a hiker or cross-country runner who gets off the marked trail and can't find their way back.
- "...CORRUPT" - made useless. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus spoke of people's faith becoming useless (Cf. Matt 5:13).
- In general, the lives of unbelievers are useless before God. They may be useful before man (doctors, those who help others), but in terms of being able to produce anything with their life that is eternal, their lives are useless in that sense.
- The unbeliever cannot contribute anything to their own salvation (Is 64:6).
- "...ONE WHO DOES GOOD" - man can do nothing of eternal value if they are disconnected from Jesus Christ (Cf. John 15:5).
- Man can do good things in the eyes of man, but as far as bearing eternal fruit in your life, you can't do anything to that level of significance without being connected to Jesus Christ.

The collection of passages Paul chose to quote from the OT in v10-12 affirms the universality of sin; v13-18 shows its pervasive inroads into all areas of individual and corporate life. As if to confirm that people have always needed the gospel of grace, each sentence in this passage quotes from the OT.

(b) Conversation (3:13-14)

(i) Count 7: throat is open grave (3:13a)

(ii) Count 8: deceiving tongue (3:13b)

(iii) Count 9: poisonous lips (3:13c)

13 "THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN GRAVE, **WITH THEIR TONGUES THEY KEEP DECEIVING,**" "THE **VENOM** OF ASPS IS UNDER THEIR LIPS";

13 "Their throat is an open grave, With their tongues they keep deceiving," "The poison of asps is under their lips";

13 Their throats are open graves. With their tongues they deceive. The venom of poisonous snakes is under their lips.

13 Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips:

- Hang on, it gets better. Paul now gives four counts of evidence against how people speak...

- Verse 13ab is quoted from Ps 5:9...

- Because man's heart is wicked, what comes out of his mouth is wicked (Matt 12:34).

— Christians will often pray to get ahold of their tongue, to have better tongue control. And that's a worthy prayer, except that what comes out of our mouth is already in our

heart. People speak vile things with their mouths because vile things are in their heart.

- "...WITH THEIR TONGUES THEY KEEP DECEIVING" - referring to how people attempt to deceive other people; this will be especially true of the coming Antichrist (Dan 7:11,25; 11:36-38; 2 Thess 2:4; Rev 13:5).

- Verse 13c is quoted from Ps 140:3...

- "...VENOM" - poison; poison kills, destroys, makes people sick.

- This is how Paul describes what comes out of the mouth of an unbeliever, it's destructive.

- Prov 18:21 says that death and life are in the power of the tongue. With our speech, we have the ability to edify and build people up, stimulate people to greater things, and we also have the equal ability to annihilate someone emotionally and spiritually. Our tongue has the ability to put obstacles in people's paths that they will struggle with all of their life.

(iv) Count 10: mouths of cursing (3:14)

14 "THEIR MOUTH IS FULL OF CURSING AND **BITTERNESS**";

14 "Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness";

14 Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.

14 Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness:

- Quoted from Ps 10:7...

- The unsaved world stands guilty before God because their mouth says nothing but cursing and bitterness.

- "...BITTERNESS" - takes place in the heart; a result of unresolved anger at someone.

When there is bitterness in our heart, it will inevitably come out of our mouth through bitter speech (Matt 12:34).

(c) Conduct (3:15-17)

(i) Count 11: swift to shed blood (3:15)

15 "THEIR FEET ARE SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD,

15 "Their feet are swift to shed blood,

15 They run swiftly to shed blood.

15 Their feet are swift to shed blood:

- Quoted from Is 59:7...

- Prov 8:36 says all those who hate Me love death.

- The human race has a tremendous propensity for shedding innocent blood (murder); the 1st murder occurred in Gen 4.

- Those who promote and champion abortion and euthanasia always come from a humanistic, non-Judeo-Christian worldview. They are people who do not honor God

and have no place for the Bible in their lives.

— All who hate God love and celebrate death.

(ii) Count 12: paths of destruction (3:16)

16 DESTRUCTION AND MISERY ARE IN THEIR PATHS,

16 Destruction and misery are in their paths,

16 Ruin and misery characterize their lives.

16 Destruction and misery are in their ways:

- Quoted from Is 59:7...

- In the wake of the lives of unbelievers is destruction and misery...destroyed homes/families, destroyed bodies. Everywhere their path leads, it is marked by misery and destruction.

(iii) Count 13: do not know peace (3:17)

17 AND THEY HAVE NOT KNOWN THE WAY OF PEACE."

17 And the path of peace they have not known."

17 They have not learned the path to peace.

17 And the way of peace have they not known:

- Quoted from Is 59:8...

- How do we know the way of peace? It's only through the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ (Phil 4:7).

— Unbelievers do not have the peace of God. They do not have peace *with* God, they do not have peace *in* God, and they do not have internal peace in their hearts (Cf. Is 48:22; 57:21).

(d) Source of the problem (3:18)

(i) Count 14: no fear of God (3:18)

18 "THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES."

18 "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

18 They don't fear God.

18 There is no fear of God before their eyes.

- Quoted from Ps 36:1...

- Paul gives us the bottom line here...the reason unbelievers act the way they do is because they do not have the fear of God. Because they have no fear of God, they have no respect of God. And because they have no respect for God, they live their lives however they want to live it, no matter how depraved their lifestyle, their speech, and their conduct might be.

(C) Verdict (3:19-20)

(a) The whole world is guilty (3:19)

19 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;

19 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;

19 Now we know that whatever the Law says applies to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God.

19 Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

- The final verdict for mankind is: Guilty on all 14 counts!

— The whole world has suppressed the truth about God; all have failed to meet God's requirements or the expectations of our own consciences. All have sinned. All are guilty. All stand before the Judge, unable to offer any excuse. This is the final verdict from the highest court.

- "...every mouth may be closed" - no excuses, no arguments.

- "...all the world" - every single unbeliever will stand accountable before God at some point in history. Paul included this to ensure that there were no Jews who thought that what Paul just said only applied to the godless.

— If Jews, God's chosen people, cannot be excluded from the scope of sin's tyranny, then it surely follows that Gentiles, who have no claim on God's favor, are also guilty.

— This judgment is so sure, so inevitable, that in God's mind it's as if it has already taken place (Acts 17:51).

(b) The Law cannot save (3:20)

20 because by the **works of the Law** none of mankind will be justified in His sight; for through the Law *comes* knowledge of sin.

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.

20 Therefore, God will not justify any human being by means of the actions prescribed by the Law, for through the Law comes the full knowledge of sin.

20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

- "...works of the Law" - keeping the Big 10 (commandments) and all the other 603 commandments that flow from them, cannot justify anyone before God.

— And a Gentile cannot say, well I'm not a Jew therefore I never received the Law because God has taken His Law and written it onto the hearts of all men (conscience, Cf. 2:14-15).

— The only thing that the Law of God, or our consciences, can do is point out sin, make us aware of sin. They cannot perform the surgery necessary to correct the problem.

— The purpose of the Law was not to provide people with a series of steps that would lead them to heaven. It was to expose their inability to merit heaven (Gal 3:24).

— If someone breaks only one law, they are a lawbreaker. The Law is similar to a chain; if someone breaks even one link, the chain cannot save.

— No one carries out the Law completely (John 7:19).

— Imagine going to a doctor and having him tell you there's a problem, but never telling you how to fix the problem. Essentially that's what the Law of God (and our conscience) does for us...they differentiate between right and wrong, they identify the disease of sin, but neither do anything to fix the problem.

Summary: 1:18–3:20

Rom 1:18–3:20 has built an ironclad case against humanity. The evidence of our thoughts, words and deeds stands against us. We are all unrighteous and we cannot dispute that verdict:

1. All people are accountable to God for what we have done.
2. All people are guilty of countless wrongs we have done.
3. All people are without any works that would merit God's declaration of righteousness.

It proves that people have no hope of obtaining righteousness on their own. In this section (3:21–5:21), Paul explains how righteousness comes to us: as a gracious gift of God. We receive God's righteousness—that results in right standing with God—by faith.

III. Salvation (Rom 3:21–5:21)

(5) Gospel explained (3:21-31)

(A) Manifestation of righteousness (3:21-23)

(a) Apart from the Law (3:21a)

(b) Spoken of in the OT (3:21b)

21 But now apart from the Law *the* righteousness of God has been revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,

21 But now apart from the Law *the* righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,

21 But now, apart from the Law, God's righteousness is revealed and is attested by the Law and the Prophets—

21 But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;

- "But now" - marks the key conclusion: the Gospel is the (only) remedy. These words are the turning point in God's dealings with the human race, from judgment (v20) to justification (v21).

- God, in response to the sin of the human race, has manifested (unveiled, revealed) the cure. His manifestation of righteousness occurs in four ways:

1. Apart from the Law (v21a)
2. Spoken of in the OT (v21b)
3. By faith alone (v22a)
4. To all who believe (v22b-23)

- "...apart from the Law" - *choris nomou*, righteousness is obtained is apart (separate) from the Law (10 Commandments) (Matt 5:20). The Law still has value, but it saves no one. It is God's gift to restrain evil and points to and shows the need for Jesus Christ.

— "Apart from the Law" doesn't mean apart from the OT. Paul is saying that righteousness is revealed apart from the *principle* of Law. It is apart from a legal relationship to God based on the idea of earning or deserving merit before Him.

— God's righteousness is not offered to us as something to take up the slack between our ability to keep the Law. It is not given to supplement our own righteousness, it is given completely apart from our own attempted righteousness.

- "...the righteousness of God" - the theme of Romans. It is God's method of bringing people into right relationship with Himself; His method is "apart from the Law" (v20).

— Luther noted this was on the basis of *God's* righteousness...not man's! The only righteousness that counts is one that is given (imputed) (Ps 32:1-2, quoted in Rom 4).

— It's the cross that justifies. Religion doesn't work, it is simply a person's attempt to justify himself before God. From Gen 3:21 on, God covered them (Is 53:11).

- "...has been revealed" - *phaneroō*, perfect tense meaning something completed in the past that does not need to be repeated: "stands manifested."

- "...witnessed by the Law and the Prophets" - Paul is defending his teaching here about righteousness from the pages of the OT. This isn't something that Paul just made up...the Law and the Prophets said the same thing. The righteousness he is teaching here is rooted and grounded in the teachings and prophecies of the OT.

(c) By faith alone (3:22a)

(d) To all who believe (3:22b-23)

22 but *it is the* righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction,

22 even *the* righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction;

22 God's righteousness through the faithfulness of Jesus the Messiah—for all who believe. For there is no distinction among people,

22 Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference [distinction]:

- How do we obtain this righteousness of God? How can a human being stand sinless before a holy God?

— Verse 21 tells us how this righteousness *does not* come, which is through obedience to the Law (works). Then this verse tells us how this righteousness *does* come...through faith in Jesus Christ.

- "...righteousness of God" - refers to the imputed righteousness of Christ.

- "...through faith in Jesus Christ" - you can't get it through religion, you can't get it through good works, you can only get it through faith in Jesus Christ. God's righteousness becomes man's possession and begins to operate in his life after we put our faith in Christ.

— Paul isn't saying that people obtain salvation *because of* (by) their faith in Christ as this would encourage the idea that our faith makes a contribution to our salvation and has some merit. Rather, Paul clearly says that the imputed righteousness of Christ comes *through* our faith in Christ. We do not *earn* righteousness by our faith, we *receive* righteousness through faith in Christ. Faith simply takes what God gives; it adds nothing to the gift.

- What is the extent of this righteousness?

- "...for all those who believe" - the righteousness of God is available to every single member of the human race, without exception. No limited atonement here.

— The Bible consistently puts the responsibility to believe on man, not on God (Cf. 1:12-13; 3:16,36; 5:24; 6:47; Acts 16:31; Rom 3:21-22,25-26; 4:3-6; Eph 2:8. The Bible also consistently puts the responsibility for not believing on man (Cf. 3:18; 4:48; 5:40).

— The death of Christ was for the entire world...every single person ever conceived...this is *Unlimited* Atonement (John 3:16; Heb 2:9; 1 John 2:2).

23 for **all** have sinned and **fall short** of **the glory of God**,

23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

23 since all have sinned and continue to fall short of God's glory.

23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

- "...all" - if you have ever sinned in your life, Jesus died for you. Jews and Gentiles alike are equally in need of redemption, which comes only through faith in Jesus Christ.
- "...fall short" - the standard is not your neighbor, your coworker, your family or friends...the standard of righteousness is God.

— It's impossible to describe every way in which man falls short, but here are four primary ways man falls short of the glory of God:

1. We fail to give God the glory due Him, in our words, thoughts and actions.
2. We fail to qualify for, and thereby reject the glory and reward that God gives faithful servants.
3. We fail to properly reflect God's glory by refusing to be conformed into His image.
4. We fail to obtain the final glory God will bestow on His people at the end of history.

- Every area of man's life is touched by sin:

- Intellect
 - Prov 3:5-6 - we are not to "lean onto our own understanding" because our understanding, our intellect, has been tainted by original sin.
 - Prov 14:12 - the logic of man (unaided reason) leads to death; the reason why certain things seem right to man is because our minds have been impacted by original sin.
 - 2 Cor 4:4 - the "god of this world" has blinded the minds of unbelievers so that they will not see the light of the gospel.
 - Rom 3:11a - the reason why "no one understands" is because our minds are warped by original sin.
- Conscience
 - 1 Tim 4:2 - our conscience can become "seared...as with a branding iron" if we continually violate our conscience.
- Will
 - Rom 1:28 - people do not have a knowledge of God because they don't *want* to have a knowledge of God; it's by their own free will that they reject God or knowledge of Him.
 - Rom 3:11b - no one seeks God; our inherent state, because of original sin, is to not seek God.
- Deeds
 - No one does good, not even one (Rom 3:12).
- Speech

- Out of the abundance of our heart, our mouth speaks. What is down in the well comes up in the bucket (Matt 12:34).
 - Because man's heart is wicked, what comes out of his mouth is wicked (Rom 3:13-14).
 - Feet
 - All who hate God run to evil, are swift to shed blood (Rom 3:15).
 - All who hate God love and celebrate death.
 - Heart
 - The intent of man's heart is evil from his youth (Gen 8:21).
 - The human heart is more deceitful than everything else and is desperately sick (Jer 17:9).
 - The human heart is where evil thoughts and other wickedness originates (Mark 7:21).
 - Unbelievers are darkened in their understanding and excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart (Eph 4:18).
 - Body
 - We came from dust and will return to dust (Gen 3:19).
 - Our bodies are burdened with sin since the Fall; we groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the redemption of our body (Rom 8:23).
 - Our body (outer person) is decaying day by day, but our inner man is being renewed (2 Cor 4:16).
 - Total Being
 - Our total being, every area of our life, has been touched and tainted by sin. There is no part of our being or person that has not been affected by sin (Rom 1:18—3:20).
- "...the glory of God" - refers to the outward display of what God is. It includes the majesty of His powerful Person and the sublimity of His supremely elevated position.
- Sin separates us from fellowship with a holy God. We all lack both the character of God and the fellowship of God because of our sin.
- A man accused of a crime is considered innocent until proven guilty. The Word of God takes the opposite approach: God says that man is guilty until proven innocent. [J. Vernon McGee]

(B) Provisions of righteousness (3:24-26)

(a) Justification (3:24a)

(b) Redemption (3:24b)

24 **being justified as a gift** by His grace through the **redemption** which is in **Christ Jesus**,

24 being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;

24 By his grace they are justified freely through the redemption that is in the Messiah Jesus,

24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

- Paul now turns to the provisions of righteousness by giving us four theological terms. If you want to understand the gospel, you need to understand these terms and their implications:

1. Justification (v24a)

2. Redemption (v24b)

3. Propitiation (v25a)

4. Demonstration (v25b-26)

— It is all who believe (v22), not all who have not sinned (v23), who receive justification (v24). Justification is an act, not a process. It is something that God does, not man.

- "...being justified" - *dikaioō*, to render, declare, pronounce one to be just/righteous. It is a forensic, legal declaration of righteousness made by God Himself, that a person receives upon placing their faith in Christ.

— It's a legal term indicating a verdict of not guilty. An acquittal on all charges. On one hand it means to acquit (Ex 23:7; Deut 25:1; Acts 13:39); on the other hand it means to *declare* righteous (but it *does not* mean to make one righteous).

— What is it that makes us righteous? Justification does *NOT* make us righteous, it's simply the announcement that we are righteous. It is *imputation* that makes us righteous (Martin Luther called it the "Great Exchange") where my unrighteousness is exchanged for Christ's righteousness (Phil 3:9).

— Justification means that God treats sinful men as if they were of complete and unstained virtue, just like Christ. God declares believers to have a right standing before Him in terms of justice.

— The moment a person places their faith in Christ is the moment a verdict in heaven is read that states you are not guilty. Justification is not a change wrought by God in us, but a change of our relation to God.

— Justification describes a person's status in respect to God's law, not the condition of his or her character. The condition of one's character and conduct has to do with sanctification.

— The important thing to know about justification is that it happens at a moment in time, in a split-second...it is not a process. That may seem like an insignificant detail, but the entire Protestant Reformation was fought over this one detail.

— The Roman Catholic church believes that justification is a life-long process, obtained through obedience and performing good deeds. The reformers such as Luther, Calvin, Knox and the rest said No, justification happens in a moment in time, it is not a process.

- "...as a gift" - *dōrean*, freely, undeserved. Justification is a gift, which comports with what Paul says in Eph 2:8, but is contrary to Calvinism's belief in Irresistible Grace, which believes that faith is the gift (Cf. Eph 2:8; 4:23; 5:15,18; 6:23; Matt 19:26; John 4:10; 1 John 5:11; Rev 22:17).

— This gift of justification (salvation) comes from God's grace. Thus, the gift of salvation has its origin in God, its basis in grace, and it is received by means of faith.

- "...redemption" - *apolútrōsis*, the payment of a ransom to release someone from bondage (Cf. 1 John 5:19; John 12:31; Eph 2:2-3; Col 2:14; Heb 2:14-15; 1 Peter 1:18-19).

— God cannot give us His righteousness apart from Jesus Christ. There is no avenue for God to impute Christ's righteousness to our account outside of a person's faith in Christ.

— Redemption has the idea of not buying something but buying back something. Something you used to own, that became owned by someone else, and redemption buys that thing/person back. Salvation is free to me and free to you, but it was not free to the Son of God. He had to pay a ransom through His death on the cross to redeem/release us from bondage. God paid the cost of buying us back, which is why we are justified "as a gift" or "freely."

— The idea of redemption means that Jesus bought us, therefore we belong to Him. Paul expressed this in 1 Cor 6:20.

1 Cor 6:20: For you have been bought for a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

— The death of Christ, the perfect sacrifice on the cross, redeemed us from the horrific bondage of sin that Paul described in 1:18—3:20. Consequently, all who accept and receive by faith His sacrifice are redeemed.

- "...in Christ Jesus" - justification is possible only because God was willing to do the work for us. Paul's use of Christ Jesus rather than the normal Jesus Christ stresses the fact that God provided redemption by supplying the payment. The payment was the Messiah (Christ) promised in the OT, Jesus of Nazareth.

The gospel is that God sets to rights man's relationship with himself by an act of sheer generosity which depends on no payment man can make, which is without

reference to whether any individual in particular is inside the law/covenant or outside, and which applies to all human beings without exception. [Dunn]

Do not confuse justification and sanctification. Sanctification is the process whereby God makes the believer more and more like Christ. Sanctification may change from day to day. Justification never changes. When the sinner trusts Christ, God declares him righteous, and that declaration will never be repealed. God looks on us and deals with us as though we had never sinned at all. [Wiersbe]

(c) Propitiation (3:25a)

(d) Demonstration (3:25b-26)

(i) Past forbearance (3:25b)

25 whom God displayed publicly as a **propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness**, because in God's *merciful* restraint He let the **sins previously committed go unpunished**;

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;

25 whom God offered as a place where atonement by the Messiah's blood would occur through faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because he had waited patiently to deal with sins committed in the past.

25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;

- "...propitiation" - *hilastērion*, the satisfaction of divine wrath against sin. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ satisfied, tempered, put down God's wrath against the sin of mankind.

— The full idea of the first part of the verse is this: God has publicly displayed Jesus Christ in the gospel as a sacrifice of atonement that satisfied God's wrath and removed our sins. His sacrifice becomes effective for those who trust in Him.

- In 1 John 2:2, John clarifies the scope of this propitiation: the sins of the whole world:

1 John 2:2: and He Himself is the propitiation [*hilastērion*] for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for *the sins of the whole world*.

- The Greek word *hilastērion* is also used in Heb 9:5 to describe the Mercy Seat on the Ark of the Covenant. Once the blood of the sacrificed lamb was applied to the Mercy Seat, God's wrath against the sins of the nation of Israel was satisfied for one year.

— Inside the Ark of the Covenant, underneath the Mercy Seat, was the evidence of man's sin: the tablets of the Law, the manna received ungratefully, and the rod of Aaron that budded. All of these show man's rejection of God's leadership.

— Over the Mercy Seat were the symbols of the holy presence of the enthroned God in the beautiful gold cherubim. In between the two was the Mercy Seat, where the blood of the sacrificial blood was sprinkled by the high priest on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16).

— God's wrath was averted because a substitute had been slain on behalf of sinners coming by faith. Thus, Jesus really is our "Mercy Seat" standing between guilty sinners and the holiness of God.

— On *Yom Kippur* (the Day of Atonement) there was never a guarantee that God would accept the sacrifice and the applied blood, so that day was always a day of fear, remorse. But typically God would accept the sacrifice and His anger against their sin would be satisfied for one year.

— This annual ritual of the satisfaction of God's wrath against sin is what Paul is referring to here.

- The idea of propitiation presupposes that God is angry at us because of sin. As He looks at the sin of the entire human race, He is angry because of sin (Cf. John 3:36). Without propitiation, I am a candidate for God's wrath.

— But in propitiation, the wrath of God against sin has been satisfied (assuming I volitionally avail myself of it through faith in Christ), so that His anger is diverted from me because it was taken on by Christ on the Cross

— God had a problem: He is holy, so He hates sin, can't be in its presence. But at the same time, He is also love. He loves us too much to see us fall into His wrath. So God had to punish sin, but He loves us too much to see us punished, so what does He do?

— The answer is that God's two natures are reconciled in propitiation. When Jesus shed His blood on the cross, He was paying for our sins in His body. This satisfied God's holiness, and it also satisfied God's love because if we accept what He did for us, He doesn't have to pour out His wrath on us for our sin.

— Propitiation reconciles the two natures of God, and in propitiation, because of what Jesus did, the wrath of God has been pacified, appeased and placated.

- "...in His blood through faith" - the Greek text literally reads: "through faith in His blood."

— Paul is using a figure of speech called a metonymy, the name of one thing (blood) appears in the place of another (death) associated with it. Paul mentions Christ's blood here as representing His life poured out as a sacrifice that made amends for our sins

- So a summary of the first part of this verse would be: God has publicly displayed Jesus Christ in the gospel as a sacrifice of atonement that satisfied God's wrath and removed the guilt of our sins. His sacrifice becomes effective for those who trust in Him.

- "... *This*" - the antecedent is the redemption that God provided in Christ (v24).

- "...demonstrate" - the death of Christ has demonstrated (communicated, introduced, proposed, taught, revealed, manifested) two things:
- "...His righteousness" - the death of Christ justifies (vindicates) God's righteous character because God allowed millennia of sin to pass before dealing with them at the cross. God had shown forbearance, not out of weakness, but because He planned to provide a final sacrifice in the future.
- "...sins previously committed go unpunished" - during the OT God showed forbearance (patience), not out of weakness or sentimentality, but because He planned to provide a final sacrifice in the future (at the cross).
- In what sense can the death of Christ be said to demonstrate the righteousness of God? It demonstrates it by showing the impossibility of simply passing over sin. God's holiness/righteousness by necessity must judge sin.
- This forbearance is not the same as forgiveness. God did not *forgive* the sins of OT saints until Jesus died on the cross. The blood of the animal sacrifices only covered their sins (removed temporarily). God did not exact the full penalty for sin until Jesus died.
- It is as if the OT saints paid for their sins with a credit card...God accepted the sacrifices as a temporary payment, but the bill came due later and Jesus paid it off entirely.
- God exercised His mercy/forbearance in the past by forgiving all of these OT saints who were trusting in a coming Messiah. Why? Not because of any weakness or vacillation on His part in regard to His holiness, but because He knew of the coming death of His Son Jesus Christ, who would perfectly pay for all sin, past, present and future.
- The sin of OT saints were forgiven by God on credit (Gen 15:6) because God knew the future and the perfect sacrifice of His Son on the cross, that would satisfy His wrath against sin of all mankind, past, present and future. God knew payday was coming. [Acts 17:30]

Example of the sacrificial system in the OT: you have a loan, but you can't make the payment, so you go into the bank and tell them you're short on cash, please postpone payments for one year. The bank says ok, so you don't have to make a payment for the entire next year. The year comes and goes and the payment comes due, but again you can't pay it, so you go back into the bank and ask for another payment freeze. They say ok. This is what happened over and over again with Israel...every Yom Kippur they would offer God a sacrifice and apply the blood to the Mercy Seat in order to quell/satisfy God's wrath for sin for the next year. They did this year upon year upon year. Until finally, John 19:30 tells us, that God provided His own sacrifice in the body of

His Son Jesus Christ, put His blood on the Mercy Seat in heaven, to finally once and for all pay the sin debt of mankind and satisfy once and for all the wrath of God against sin.

(ii) Just and justifier (3:26)

26 for the demonstration, *that is*, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be **just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus**.

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.

26 He wanted to demonstrate at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies anyone who has the faithfulness of Jesus.

26 To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

- "...just and the justifier" - the second thing God demonstrated is that He can be both just (holy) and the justifier of those who have faith in His Son. At the cross, God demonstrated His righteousness by offering man justification (a legal verdict of "not guilty"), while remaining completely just because the righteous penalty for sin had been paid.

— The central, overarching question that the entire Bible seeks to answer is: How can a holy God forgive sin and still maintain His character of holiness? He can't ignore sin, He can't pretend that sin doesn't happen because if God were to do that, He would be denying His character, who He is.

— The answer is: He pours out His wrath on an innocent scapegoat (Gen 3:21). In this way, God's wrath against sin has been satisfied. In this, the mercy of God is also satisfied because God can now unconditionally forgive the sinner who has faith in His provision, because the sin debt of the world has been paid for.

— All throughout the OT, beginning in Gen 3:21, we see God's plan unfold through animal sacrifices and the Levitical system, showing how God forgives sin and yet still maintains His character of absolute holiness.

— When John the Baptist proclaimed Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29), we learn that it would be God Himself, in the form of a man, the second member of the Trinity, who would become the ultimate sacrifice for sin, ending the bloody sacrificial system once and for all, and forgiving the past, present and future sins of every person who has ever lived.

— Some 2000 years ago, God the Father poured out His wrath on God the Son so Christ could utter the word *Tetelestai* ("it is finished"), meaning "paid in full" so that God would no longer need to punish us for sin.

— God Himself is the Author of the entire work of salvation.

- "...the one who has faith in Jesus" - the Bible consistently puts the responsibility to believe on man, not on God (Cf. 1:12-13; 3:16,36; 5:24; 6:47; Acts 16:31; Rom 3:21-22,25-26; 4:3-6; Eph 2:8. The Bible also consistently puts the responsibility for not believing on man (Cf. 3:18; 4:48; 5:40).

Paul is teaching that this gospel he is preaching, which isn't anything new, accomplished two things: it demonstrated the past forbearance of God and it demonstrated how God could be both just and Justifier. It answers the main question in the Bible: how a holy God can forgive sin, yet not compromise His character. Warren Wiersbe summarizes this passage with the characteristics of justification, which are that it is:

- Apart from the Law (v21)
- Through faith in Christ (v22a)
- For (available to) all people (v22b-23)
- By grace (v24)
- At great cost to God (v24b-25)
- In perfect justice (v26)

(C) Results of righteousness (3:27-31)

(a) Excludes boasting (3:27-28)

27 Where then is boasting? It has been excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by **a law of faith**.

27 Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith.

27 What, then, is there to boast about? That has been eliminated. On what principle? On that of actions? No, but on the principle of faith.

27 Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.

- Paul now gives us three spiritual results of righteousness:

1. Righteousness excludes boasting (v27-28)
2. Righteousness eliminates cultural/racial distinctions (v29-30)
3. Righteousness upholds the Law (v31)

- God has designed salvation in such a way that when a person receives it, they have nothing to brag about because they simply received it as a gift. How can someone brag/boast about something they received as a gift and did absolutely nothing to earn? Fact is, we *couldn't* do anything to earn it.

- There is no place for human boasting in this plan of salvation because God's provision of salvation by faith comes from a different kind of law (the law of faith) than salvation by works. When we get to heaven, no one will be bragging.
- You would think that a sinner would love to be forgiven at no cost. Unfortunately that is not the case. Sinners have their pride...they desperately want to claim some role in their own redemption. This is why some form of salvation by works is popular, even as those same people believe and state that salvation is by faith alone in Christ alone.
- This is why Paul in his epistle to the Galatians, calls the gospel a stumbling block. He says that God designed salvation in a way that it is offensive (a stumbling block or an "offense" to sinful man, Cf. Gal 5:11). Man wants a checklist, something to do, to obtain something from God, especially something as great as salvation. But God says, No, you don't have to do anything, and in fact you *can't* do anything, to even come close to warranting salvation.
- The gospel is offensive because it says that man cannot save himself; man can do *nothing* to earn favor from God. It's not that man doesn't *have* to do anything, it's that he *can't* do anything to merit or assist in his own salvation. And once you're a Christian, the gospel continues to be offensive by the fact that we cannot even grow toward maturity under our own power.
- We contributed nothing to our salvation except our need. God has setup salvation in such a way that none of the glory goes to man, it all goes to Him.
- Faith is a synonym for trust, and according to John 1:12-13, all we need to do is "receive" (believe) it (the gift).
- When we rightly understand God's divine grace, and understand that God bestows it only upon those who humbled themselves and believe, we see that the gospel destroys our ability to boast.
- "...a law of faith" - the Jews were inclined to boast because of their privileges (Cf. 2:17,23). The reason is that God's provision of salvation by faith comes from a different kind of law—the law of faith, taught in the OT—than salvation by works comes from.
- Some people have great difficulty understanding that faith is not a work because exercising faith is something we do. While faith does involve trusting, the Bible never regards trusting God as a work.
- It regards faith as the act of believing a statement and relying on the truthfulness of the One who made it. Faith involves accepting the promises of God (i.e. John 3:16) as true.
- Faith is best described as receiving a gift from another. You did not think to purchase the gift, you didn't work for the money to buy the gift, you didn't order or go get the gift, you didn't wrap the gift, and you didn't deliver the gift. You simply held out your hands to accept the gift that the other person is giving you, after they did all the work involved

in giving you that gift. If you receive the gift, then go around bragging to everyone how great the gift is, you don't deserve any credit for it because all you did is accept the gift. — But if, when the person was delivering the gift, you slammed the door in the face and told them to leave, that you didn't want to accept the gift, then it would be your fault that you never received the gift. The other person did everything possible to get the gift into your hands, but you slammed the door in their face, thus it's your fault that you never received the gift.

28 For we maintain that a person is **justified by faith** apart from works of the Law.

28 For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.

28 For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the actions prescribed by the Law.

28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

- This is the main problem the world has with the gospel...the fact that they play no part in it. They can't do anything to save themselves.

— The main way people suppose they can save themselves is by morality or doing good. The problem is they put themselves in the place of God by defining morality and goodness.

— This is why Paul calls the gospel a "stumbling block" or "offense," something that angers the natural man (Gal 5:11). Our sick, sinful, depraved condition always wants to do something to earn something from God.

- "...justified by faith" - the Bible describes justification in several different ways:

- "justified by faith" - emphasizes the *instrument* that brings about justification (Rom 1:17; 3:28,30; 5:1).
- "justified by grace" - God's *motivation* behind justification (Rom 3:24; 5:16; Titus 3:7)
- "justified by blood" - the *grounds* of justification (Rom 3:25; 5:9)
- "justified by God" - the *source* of justification (Rom 3:25; 5:9)
- "justified by Christ" - the *provider* of justification (Rom 4:5,25; 5:18; 1 Cor 6:11)
- "justified by the Spirit" - the *applier* of justification (1 Cor 6:11)
- "justified by works" - the *evidence* of justification (James 2:21;24-25)

- "...apart" - *chōris*, separate or besides; a key word to understand. We aren't justified by faith *plus* whatever deeds of the law we can do. We are justified by faith *alone*, apart/separate from/completely detached from deeds of the law.

- People who believe they can save themselves by their own actions believe God approves them because they are better than other people.

— For people such as the Pharisee, religion or ethics is the ultimate arena for their achievement. They draw up their own systems of morality, strictly follow their own sets of rules and expect God or the world to praise them.

— Justification by grace through faith undercuts all these pretensions. Not even the best works can win God's approval. Our best works are worse than "not good enough." They are actually evil because they feed the pride that lies at the heart of evil in us all.

— Notice that there is no mention of needing to wait until the end of your life to see if the data collected on you gets you over the hump and proves you're truly saved (i.e. the Calvinist belief in "final salvation"). Nor is there any mention of needing to persevere in good works (i.e. the Calvinist belief in the Perseverance of the Saints); no mention of needing to "confess my sins" or "repent of my sins" in order to receive justification.

— Paul's gospel is simple: belief on Jesus Christ is the only thing that a lost sinner must (can) do to initiate a relationship with the God who made them. John's Gospel, the most evangelistic book in the Bible, states unequivocally 99x that belief/faith is the sole condition for salvation. In the entire NT, it is stated over 160x.

- This verse is what many point to that creates a tension with what James says in James 2:14-20. But if you understand who James is writing to (Jewish believers) and what he is teaching them in James 2 (to apply the faith in Christ that saved them to their growth in Christ [sanctification]), and you understand who Paul is writing to (believers) and what he is teaching them in Rom 3 (laying down the foundation of justification), the tension goes away.

— Paul says here that mankind is justified by faith apart/separate from works. But James asks in James 2:21 if Abraham was justified by works when he offered up Isaac, with the implied answer being Yes. So how can Paul state that justification is by faith alone without works, and James say that Abraham was justified by works? Isn't that a blatant contradiction?

— No! Paul is laying the doctrinal foundation for justification, first tense salvation. How mankind can be justified before a holy God. James is talking about justification not before God, but before man. James' readers were already justified before God (they were already saved); he is urging them onto good works not to get them justified before God (because that would be impossible based on Rom 3:28), but to be justified before men. Justification before men means that the same faith that we exercised to be justified before God, we begin exercising in second tense salvation in order to prove our faith is useful. If we don't exercise our faith daily in serving the Lord, then we demonstrate that our faith is useless because God can't use us as He wishes for His glory.

Some people have difficulty understanding that faith is not a work. While faith does involve doing something—trusting God—the Bible never regards trusting God as a meritorious work (Cf. 4:4-5). It regards faith instead as the act of believing a statement and relying on the truthfulness of the One who made it. Faith can be compared to accepting a gift offered to you by someone. To accept the gift, you must extend your arms to receive the gift, but that act does not constitute doing something that earns the gift.

(b) Eliminates Jew/Gentile distinction (3:29-30)

29 Or is God *the God* of Jews only? Is He not *the God* of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also,

29 Or is God *the God* of Jews only? Is He not *the God* of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also,

29 Is God the God of the Jews only? Is he not the God of the gentiles, too? Yes, of the gentiles, too,

29 Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also:

- This verse demonstrates that the righteousness offered, the free gift, is for both Jews and Gentiles. The offer is universal.

- The Jew/Gentile distinction, which was so prevalent in the first century and before, has been completely eradicated in the Church today.

- In fact, all distinctions have been eradicated in the Church...Jew/Gentile, slave/free, male/female, socio-economic distinctions, national origin/ethnicity/racial distinctions.

30 since indeed God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith is one.

30 since indeed God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith is one.

30 since there is only one God who will justify the circumcised on the basis of faith and the uncircumcised by that same faith.

30 Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.

- Not only is this righteousness offered to both Jew and Gentile (v29), it is also received in the same way by both Jew and Gentile. Every single person, no matter who they are, is saved the same way by the same sacrifice from the same God. We're all saved in the exact same way because there is only One way to salvation.

— Therefore, Paul has taken any arbitrary, man-made distinctions, which human beings like to erect, in the church, and destroyed/nullified them.

— Of course there are still distinctions between male and female, but those distinctions are based on role, not ontology (value). As far as ontology (value) is concerned, we are all saved the same way, so any distinction based on value has been destroyed.

(c) Upholds the Law (3:31)

31 Do we then nullify the Law through faith? Far from it! On the contrary, we establish the Law.

31 Do we then nullify the Law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Law.

31 Do we, then, abolish the Law by this faith? Of course not! Instead, we uphold the Law.

31 Do we then make void [nullify] the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.

- Paul now expects an objection to what he has been teaching: If the Law doesn't make us righteous, what good is it? Sounds like you have just voided the Law altogether.

- "Do we then nullify the Law through faith?" - does the gospel nullify (contradict) the Law?

— No, because the Law didn't save them. They were already saved when they applied the blood to the doorposts and lintel of their homes and the angel of death passed over them. And as they were leaving Egypt, having seen the great power of the LORD, they "believed" (Ex 14:31).

— God gave them the Law at Mount Sinai to show a saved/redeemed people how to live, how to relate with God and relate with others. The Law was not given to redeem them, it was given to a redeemed people. They were put under the Law for their practical sanctification.

— The result of the gospel is that the Law is upheld, if it is understood properly.

- "...Far from it!" - *Me genoita*, the strongest negation in the Greek language.

— Knowing he could be accused of antinomianism (being against the Law) for arguing that man can be justified apart from the Law, Paul lays out a defense of the Law (later developed in Rom 6-7) that salvation by grace through faith does not denigrate the Law, but underscores its true importance by:

1. Providing a payment for the penalty of death, which the Law required for failing to keep it.
2. Fulfilling the Law's original purpose, which is to show man his complete impossibility of obeying God's righteous demands, therefore driving people toward Christ (Gal 3:24).

3. Giving believers the capacity to obey the Law (Rom 8:3-4).

- "...we establish the Law" - Paul was not saying that the Law is valueless. Even though Paul believed in salvation by faith, he saw the Law as having an important function, which is to convict people of their inability to gain acceptance with God by their own works, and instead pointing them to Christ as the only source of a righteous standing before God.

— The gospel of grace does not void God's Law. In fact, the gospel does the opposite: the gospel upholds the Law. In fact, the gospel is the only thing that does or could uphold the Law.

— This verse does not say our faith upholds the Law in the sense that believers live moral lives when we live by faith. True as that is, as explained later in Romans (Cf. 6:1-2, 17-18; 8:4-5), that's not what this verse says. It is faith—justification by grace through faith—that upholds the Law.

— The point is not that Christians, by the power of the new life of God within them, uphold the Law. Instead, this verse points to the Lord Jesus Christ. He upheld the Law in the process of providing salvation for us by His death on the cross. God's way of salvation meets the demands of the Law in three crucial areas: holiness, demand for justice, and demand for true righteousness.

1. Holiness - The Law is so holy that sinners could never have fulfilled it. For God to save us on the basis of what we could do, God would have to declare the Law unimportant as a standard. Justification by grace through faith shows that God continues to take the Law seriously. The Law remains God's standard. The Law would have condemned everyone if Jesus had not fulfilled its requirements for all who trust in Him.
2. Demand for Justice - Justification by grace through faith upholds the Law by meeting the Law's demand for justice. The Law requires sinners be punished by death. With Jesus' death on the Cross, God showed us that He took the Law with full seriousness. Jesus suffered the Law's penalty in our place.
3. Demand for True Righteousness - Justification by grace through faith upholds the Law by showing that God justifies believers based on real righteousness. This true righteousness fulfills the Law at every point. Jesus fulfilled the Law perfectly for us; thus God credits the actual, unchanging, perfect righteousness of Jesus to every believer's account.