

1. **Introduction:** God's moral requirement is that people be holy and righteous like Him. "Holy" refers character. "Righteous" refers to behavior. One who is holy behaves righteously. To be holy as God is holy is to have character compatible with God's character and behavior obedient to God's will.

- Paul argues no one meets God's requirement. Everyone falls short.
- Think of your life. No one has a perfect record. Based on life experience, no one can "stand in the right" before God.
- Paul completes this section of the letter relating these ideas to the purpose and significance of the moral Law of God which He gave through Israel.
- Jews and converts to Judaism obey the Law as a way to achieve righteousness, which requires perfect obedience, but no one can truly do that.
- Righteousness for Christians does not require perfect obedience to the Law. Believers become righteous based, not on their obedience, but on Jesus' obedience on their behalf. Righteous behavior, however, is required to live a life suitable to believer's calling "in Christ," which pleases God.

2. **Romans 3:19-20:** *¹⁹ Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. ²⁰ For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.*

- Everyone under the Law must obey it perfectly in its entirety. The only way out of the requirement of perfect obedience to the whole Law is through faith in Jesus and His salvation work.
- If righteousness is offered independent of the Law, what is the Law's value?
- The Law acts as a tutor to teach right from wrong, how to relate to others, and how to maintain a right relationship with God.
- The Law is like a mirror revealing the path of unrighteousness and showing the path of righteousness.
- God writes the moral Law on everyone's heart to provide some awareness of the moral Law.
- Verse 19 says that "*...whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped.*" Scripture shows biblical figures

under the Law such as Job, Isaiah, Habakkuk, and the Apostle John becoming literally speechless when they received a glimpse of God's glory.

- God's Law is true and righteous though impossible to perfectly obey. Can a person rightfully say anything in their defense when they violate God's law?
- No! In God's awesome presence, no one can argue their own worthiness. Being "in the right" before God" requires more than any person can give.

3. Introduction to Verses 3:21-26: These 7 verses are considered the heart of Romans. Everything to this point has been preparation for these verses. They present the Gospel clearly.

- In 1:16-17 Paul stated the letter's theme, "*For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."*
- What a wonderful statement – the omnipotent power of God guarantees salvation to everyone who believes.
- In 1:18 – 3:20 Paul established the truth that, without God's intervention, the whole human race is "in the wrong" before God and under God's wrath.
- Even in their fallen state everyone has knowledge about God from evidence embedded in creation and God's Law written on their hearts.
- That knowledge should be sufficient to recognize God's eternal power and divine nature, and cause one to glorify, thank, and worship Him.
- But, apart from God's intervention, it doesn't happen.
- Romans 3:11-12, "*no one understands; no one seeks for God. ¹² All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.*"
- For this reason, humanity is subject to God's wrath. The only shield is to accept the Gospel offer and become "in Christ."
- Because the full misery of God's wrath is not to be poured out until the end, many people in the present feel good about their status.
- Though they see moral and spiritual decline within themselves and in people around them, they don't recognize what they see is the result of God's just wrath toward sin.

- Humanity’s status before God is sad. The trend seems to be a continued downward spiral.
- But there is good news. People are not capable of fixing their own sin problem, but God has supplied a solution.

4. **Romans 3:21-26**: *“But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it – ²²the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. ²⁶It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.*

- Along with precious promises, the Jews were given God’s Law. Keeping the Law perfectly would earn righteousness. But no one was able to do that.
- For generations, Jews received prophecy that there would be a future great turning point in how God dealt with people.
- Again and again came indications that God, at the right time, would provide a savior who would change God’s relationship to people in a positive way. He would eliminate limited access to God, and provide a way to righteousness that didn’t involve the impossible perfect obedience of the Law.
- Paul’s dramatic **“BUT NOW”** signals Christ’s coming as the long desired turning point. Through His incarnate life and death, Jesus brought great change.
- That great change provided access to righteousness apart from the Law. Jesus lived a perfect life under the Law as believer’s representative, took sins upon Himself and paid the penalty for those sins by His death on the cross.
- His resurrection from the dead validated all He had done and made possible.
- Paul says, *“all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”* Neither Jews nor Gentiles are righteous before God. Everyone needs the righteousness apart from the Law made possible by Jesus and offered in the gospel.

- In OT, God gave the Law with its unyielding commandments, but at the same time provided for atonement through substitutionary animal sacrifice.
- It is as though God said, if you keep my commandments, all will be well. But since I know you will not be able to keep them, I will provide another way to be made manifest when the time is right.
- The promised other way is Christ. Christ's finished work of salvation opens a way to a righteousness independent of the Law.
- God offers that salvation to anyone who in faith accepts Christ to be who He says He is and to have done what He says He has done.
- The gospel offer to Gentiles as well as Jews is new but consistent with prophecy. The really big change is the basis for righteousness.
- Law righteousness required perfect **behavior**. Gospel righteousness requires **belief** in Jesus' atoning work and is independent of prior behavior.
- In grace and mercy, for those who believe in Christ and His salvation, God offers to substitute Jesus' righteous record for the sinners' record of failure.
- The righteousness, based on Jesus' atoning work, is given as a free gift, requiring nothing of the recipient but belief.
- Even the faith (trust in God) enabling belief is God's gift so no one can boast by saying that they believed when others didn't.
- The first step is regeneration which gives new spiritual life. In the Father's justification of believers, Jesus' perfect record is substituted for believer's sinful record.
- But someone might say, isn't such a substitution of records unjust? No!
- Substitution of records is based on the full penalty for sins being paid by Jesus by His death on the cross.
- Standing rightfully condemned before the Father, Jesus took our place and paid the penalty we owed.
- Paul's description in 1:18-3:20 of the destined eternity of judgment due unbelievers help us understand the enormity of change in status from condemnation to righteousness.

- **BUT NOW** expresses the amazement of being saved from an eternity of judgment and given an eternity of bliss in God’s presence.
5. **Three Key Words:** Redemption, propitiation, and justification. Jesus redeems believers and propitiates the Father. The Father justifies believers.
- **Redemption** is a term used when slaves are freed by payment of a ransom.
 - Sinners are slaves to sin, condemned by the Father for their sin, and subject to His wrath.
 - Jesus paid the ransom price to free sinners from slavery to sin through incarnation, perfect life under the Law, and death. He redeemed believers from God’s condemnation and wrath.
 - **Propitiation** means to appease or satisfy; to make amends for a wrong committed.
 - Propitiation of God’s condemnation and wrath toward sin requires that the just penalties for breaking God’s Holy Law be satisfied.
 - The Father’s condemnation and wrath was propitiated by Jesus when He bore the sins of all believers (past, present, and future), and His death on the cross paid their death penalty due sin.
 - **Justification** means being declared righteous. Justification is a legal action.
 - God the Father justifies believers based on the salvation work of Jesus.
 - Justification does not make a believer experientially righteous. It is a declaration of legal righteous freeing the recipient from God’s wrath and bringing them into union with Christ.
 - Justification *takes away* a believer's guilt and *imputes Christ’s righteousness to them*. Believers are not righteous on their own, only in Christ.
 - Becoming experientially righteous happens through sanctification accomplished through the continuing work of the indwelling Holy Spirit.
6. **“Now the righteousness of God has been manifested”:** Why does Paul say this?
- Since Adam and Eve’s sin, humanity’s great problem is inability to meet God’s requirement of being like Him in holiness and righteousness.

- God’s offer of salvation to all who believe is an enormous change from the necessity of becoming a Jew to have even limited access to God.
- The Jews were given the Law. Perfect obedience would earn righteousness. But no one was able to do that, not because the Law is defective in any way, but because of the sin nature of fallen people.
- The moral Law is important to all believers for restraining sin and awareness of sin. Because of human limitations the Law is not a route to righteousness.
- God has always saved people in the same way. Before Christ, salvation was in anticipation of the redeeming work of Christ.
- Since Christ came and finished His redemptive work, the gospel and its righteousness apart from the Law has openly manifested the power of God for salvation for all who believe.
- **Ephesians 2:4-5: “But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved.”**
- The power of Christ’s saving work covers all sin, from the first sin in the Garden of Eden to the last sin before Christ comes again.
- With all their spiritual advantages, the Jews (and converts) could not approach God directly. Only the High Priest could approach God, and that only once a year on the Day of Atonement, when he sprinkled blood on the mercy seat.
- Jesus opened the way for every believer (Gentile and Jew) to have direct access to the Father through Christ. No earthly priest necessary.
- Though spiritually dead, God made us spiritually alive with Christ.
- In spiritual death we were blind, unable to perceive either the blessings or necessity of God’s Gospel – **BUT NOW** God has made us alive spiritually, and opened the eyes of our heart to see our need for Christ.
- God sends His Holy Spirit to indwell believers with the purpose of transforming them into a likeness of Christ through the sanctification process.
- Sanctification proceeds at different rates as it gradually frees believers from the power of their sin nature.
- Sanctification is not completed until glorification.

- Scripture tells us at glorification, we will be like Christ in spiritual perfection. Until then we remain sinners, but sinners saved by grace and destined to be like Christ!
- **What did we do or who are we to deserve salvation?** We did nothing and could never be or do anything to deserve God’s love, grace, and mercy.
- Even the faith enabling belief is God’s gift. **Ephesians 2:8** *“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”*

7. **Romans 3:27-28**: *“Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. ²⁸ For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.”*

- Looking first at verse 3:28, Paul says we are justified BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH ALONE. Law works contribute nothing.
- Under grace, justification is through faith. Faith is necessary, but faith does not justify. Faith is the instrument God chooses to use to credit to us the righteousness of Christ.
- Faith does not save. Jesus saves through His perfect life under the Law, dying to pay the penalty for our sins, and bearing the Father’s wrath due our sin.
- Saving faith is God’s gift. No one is saved because of who they are or what they have done.
- Justification is God’s declaration of a believer’s legal righteousness.
- Being made experientially righteous is through the process of sanctification.
- In 3:27 Paul says boasting is excluded. Why? Salvation is all God’s doing, none of our own. Boasting expresses Pride.
- Pride is perhaps the greatest of all sins. Pride was the sin of Satan, the very first sin as recorded in Isaiah 14:13-14 (NASB): *“But you said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, And I will sit on the mount of assembly In the recesses of the north. ¹⁴ ‘I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’”* This is a dreadful but perfect example of Prideful boasting.

- Satan appealed to Eve’s pride. She fell into sin by the same temptation that succeeded with Satan. She wanted to be *“like God, knowing good and evil”* (Genesis 3:5).
- What actually happened to her is that rather than rising up to become more like God, she fell down and became like Satan. Satan also knew about good and evil. After the fall Eve had knowledge of good and evil, but it was perverted, fallen knowledge obtained through sinful actions.
- In the Middle Ages, Bible scholars considered “pride” to be the deadliest of the 7 deadly sins.
- C.S. Lewis (chapter 8, **Mere Christianity** points out that Christianity differs significantly from all other moral systems in recognizing danger in pride.
- Lewis says no one is entirely free of the sin of Pride. Everyone dislikes Pride’s actions in others, but people easily overlook Pride in themselves.
- Pride is competitive by its very nature. Pride takes no pleasure in having something, only in having more of it than others.
- We say people are proud of being rich, or clever, or good-looking, but that is not the case. They are only proud of being richer, or cleverer, or better-looking than others. It’s the comparison that produces Pride.
- We often use the phrase “I’m proud” in ways that are not sinful. Usually we simply mean we hold a warm-hearted admiration for what we are “proud of.”
- Such admiration is far from being sin. But admiration can become sinful if it causes a person to think so highly of themselves that they decide they are better than others. The worst form of admiration is pride of self.
- Spiritual health demands nothing be loved or admired more than we love and admire God.
- A unique risk for religious people believing they have a special relationship with God different from and better than that of other people.
- They are claiming not only human approval of their superiority, but also claiming God recognizes and approves their superiority.

- Paul implies a person might even imagine their salvation to be due to their own superiority. But that must not be. Boasting about our salvation is excluded because salvation is God's gift for which we can claim no merit.
- In Luke 18:11-12, Jesus' gives the example of a Pharisee filled with Pride at his Law keeping. He is compared to a tax collector who has great humility and knows he needs God's mercy.
- Quite likely the Pharisee was scrupulous in obeying the Law. By usual standards of law-keeping he would be deemed far superior to the tax collector.
- But to claim that unlike other men he had no sin was itself sin.
- Christ said the tax collector was justified by his humble admission of needing mercy. The Pharisee failed to see his need of God's grace and mercy. Pride blinded him to reality, convincing him he was not a sinner.
- Salvation through grace by faith eliminates boasting. We cannot boast we became righteous before God by superior morality, good works, pious feelings, faith, or superiority in business, or arts, or anything we can imagine.
- Jesus saves and He alone! Faith is necessary for salvation, but does not save.
- Faith is God's instrument which He provides. Let there be no notion of boasting.

8. What is Next: Romans 3:29-30.

- 9. Appendix: James Montgomery Boice used a clever technique called the salvation triangle to illustrate these terms. As seen in the diagram below, the three points of the triangle represent (1) God the Father, (2) Jesus Christ, and (3) the believer.**
- Each side of the triangle represents one of the three salvation words we are examining – Redemption, Propitiation, and Justification.
 - The arrow's direction indicates the flow Jesus to the Father, from Jesus to the believer, and from the Father to the believer.

