

God's Forbearance – Romans 3:21-26

Bible Study ~ 5/18/16
Grace Church of Lockeford

The beginning of Ch. 3 carefully sets the stage for what we are going to examine this morning. Paul lays out an argument concerning the justice and righteousness of God. Paul is going to demonstrate that it is just and right for God to judge those who have not believed, yet also just and right to pardon the believer. How? Because all are guilty and therefore all deserve to be judged. Yet God has graciously provided a way of escape for those who believe. The Law exposes our guilt and leaves us in the bondage of sin. That is when Christ steps in! **In the first few verses here we learn about...**

1. The Righteousness Of God vv. 21-23

Once the Law came, righteousness apart from the Law was impossible. The Law reveals sin and leaves us doomed. That is what 3:9-20 are all about. Especially 19-20. So if the Law can't make us righteous, where does righteousness come from? Paul first tells us that the righteousness of God apart from the Law is witnessed by the Law and prophets. *John 5:39* – The Law and Prophets testify of Christ! *Matthew 5:17* – He came to fulfill the Law and Prophets! The OT is all about Christ. And when we properly understand them they point, not to the Law, but to Christ's coming! They witness to God's righteousness in how He will deal with mankind. But they also proclaim, as we saw in *Galatians 3*, that the law cannot bring righteousness. So what does the law do? It is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. **“Under the Old Testament Law, righteousness came by man *behaving*; but under the Gospel, righteousness comes by *believing*.”**¹ This is such blessing! Not by works, but by His mercy!

This righteousness is not through the Law. It is through faith in Jesus Christ. God's righteousness is applied to all who believe. There is no distinction (difference). Just as all have sinned and come short of His glory, so all who believe are saved. God is righteous in saving those who believe because the penalty for their sin has been paid! We fall short of God's glory. In the Greek there is a continual action here. We continually fall short of God's glory. We can never meet the standard. But when we place faith in Christ we are given His righteousness. Keeping the law cannot bring righteousness, only faith in Christ can. **“It is not simply all who have faith, but all who have faith in Christ.”**² This is an important point. Some teach that as long as you have sincere faith in something, you will be saved. That is not what Scripture reveals. The object of our faith is what saves us not the faith itself! So, God is righteous in declaring righteous all who trust in Christ. How? How can God be righteous in cleansing sinners who do nothing to atone for their sin? **That takes us into the next part of Paul's argument...**

2. The Justice Of God vv. 24-26

We are justified freely by His grace. Freely = *without cost*. What an incredible blessing! We are justified, declared righteous, freely by God's grace! The unmerited, unearned favor of God is extended to us for the purpose of justification. But this justification is very specific. It is through the redemption in Christ. Redemption = *the payment of a price, a ransom*. We are not justified simply on a whim. We are justified because Christ paid the penalty! Christ paid the penalty by being the propitiation for our sin. Propitiation = *mercy seat, place of propitiation. The means of appeasing wrath and gaining the good will of an offended person; especially with respect to sacrifices for appeasing angered deities*. Christ satisfied God's just wrath through His death, burial, and resurrection. The shedding of Christ's blood appeased God's wrath. *Hebrews 9:22, 28* – blood has to be offered. Christ was offered once! God was righteous in restraining his punishment of sin in the past because now Christ has borne that penalty! We are blessed by the forbearance of God! Forbearance = *delay of enforcement*. God didn't punish sinful man when we deserved it. Instead He waited until Christ and unleashed it on Him! Punishment, judgment must be meted out. And so it was, on Christ. **“Jesus' death is the final sacrifice which**

¹ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 523.

² John D. Barry, Michael S. Heiser, et al., *Faithlife Study Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2012), Ro 3:22.

completely satisfied God's demands against sinful people, thus averting His wrath from those who believe."³

God is both just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Christ. This is all tied in with His righteousness. Christ satisfied God's wrath for sin thereby enabling Him to declare righteous all who place their faith in that vicarious sacrifice. "God declared all men guilty so that He might offer to all men His free gift of salvation."⁴ The death of Christ demonstrates that God is just, sin must be punished. Yet the death of Christ enables God to declare righteous, or justify, all who place their faith in Christ! In this way He is able to be just as He declares the guilty to be innocent. In most cases this would be a huge miscarriage of justice. But here the penalty has been paid by one other than the guilty party. "Paul argued that sin is universal and God's condemnation is therefore just (vv. 9–18). The apostle now explains that Christ's death—the demonstration of righteousness in the present time—showed that God was not indifferent to sin."⁵ What a blessing! That God can be just while declaring righteous a sinner such as I! This is what the Sacrifice of Christ does! God forbears. He holds off on punishment of sin that we might believe in Christ. Those who believe in Christ are declared righteous based on His vicarious suffering for sin. Those who do not believe remain under condemnation.

CHALLENGE: Because we have been declared righteous by God, live righteous!

³ John A. Witmer, "Romans," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 451.

⁴ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 523.

⁵ John D. Barry, Michael S. Heiser, et al., *Faithlife Study Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2012), Ro 3:26.