

JUSTIFIED BY FAITH AN EXEGESIS OF ROMANS 3:21-31

Introduction

In Romans 1:1-3:19, Paul graphically describes the universal need of man for salvation. The unrighteous man, certainly, needs salvation (Romans 1:18-32). The moralist, hoping to escape God's judgment by his judging of others, is equally in need (Romans 2:1-16). Even the Jew, one of God's chosen people and having such advantages as circumcision and the law, is in the same situation (Romans 2:17-3:8). Yes, *all* have turned away from God, and *all* require some means of justification, of obtaining a right standing before God, other than their own works or merit. Having now established that need beyond any doubt, Paul proceeds in Romans 3:21-31 to explain the one and only means of justification for all mankind, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Translation

21 But now a righteousness from God, apart from the law, has been revealed, being testified by the law and the prophets; **22** now this righteousness from God comes by means of faith in Jesus Christ unto all those who believe--for there is no difference, **23** because all have sinned and come short of the glory of God-- **24** being justified without cost by His grace, through deliverance by Christ Jesus. **25** God publicly displayed Him as the propitiation--through faith--by His blood, to prove His righteousness, because of the passing over of sins formerly committed **26** in the forbearance of God, to prove His righteousness in the present time, in order that He might be just and also justify by faith in Jesus.

27 Therefore, where is boasting? It is excluded. Through what kind of law? Of works? No, but through the law of faith. **28** For we reckon a man to be justified by faith apart from works of the law. **29** Is God (the God) of the Jews only? Or (is He) not also (the God) of the Gentiles? Indeed, (He is) also (the God) of the Gentiles, **30** since it is one God who shall justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through (the same) faith. **31** Is the law therefore abolished through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we confirm the law.

Exegetical Outline

Justification is the imputation of God's righteousness.
Romans 3:21-31 is the explanation of this righteousness.

- I. God has **revealed** His righteousness, apart from works of the law (21-23).
 1. The prophets and law testify to this righteousness (21).
 2. This righteousness comes by means of faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe (22).
 3. There is no distinction among believers, and the need for justification is universal, because all have sinned and all come short of the glory of God (23).

- II. God has **provided** righteousness through Jesus Christ (24-26).
 1. God provides justification free of charge, as an act of His grace (24).
 2. God provided justification by faith when He **publicly displayed** Christ as the **propitiation** for sins (25-26).
 - a. Propitiation comes through the blood of Christ (25).
 - b. God's public demonstration proves His righteousness (25b-26).
 - A. It proves His righteousness and justice in the passing over of sins formerly committed (25b).
 - B. It proves His righteousness and justice in providing justification to sinners by faith in Jesus Christ (26).

- III. God's gracious provision of justification by faith has certain crucial **implications** for believers (27-31).
 1. Because justification is by faith and not by man's keeping of the law, all boasting is excluded (27-28).
 2. God is God of *all* believers, Jews and Gentiles alike. All are justified by the same faith in Jesus Christ (29-30).

3. Justification by faith does not abolish the law, which has previously testified to God's provision of righteousness (21), but on the contrary, confirms and establishes it (31).

Commentary

21. But now a righteousness from God, apart from the law, has been revealed, being testified by the law and the prophets.

"But now" is a phrase that could potentially be either a logical inference, or simply temporal. The latter is undoubtedly to be preferred.¹ The conclusion in verse 20, that no flesh is justified by works, does not lead automatically to a logical inference a man is justified by faith. Such justification by faith is a gracious act of God--a mystery for centuries, but clearly revealed now that Christ has come to earth, died, and been raised from the dead.

"A righteousness from God"...this phrase is best taken as a genitive of source and understood as God's method for justifying sinners by faith in Jesus Christ, rather than simply righteousness as an attribute of God.² This understanding best fits the overall context and message of this passage concerning justification by faith.

"Apart from the law"...it could hardly be otherwise, in view of the statement in verse 20 that no one is justified by works of the law. We cannot agree here with Sanday and Headlam that "under the old system the only way laid down for man to attain to righteousness was by the strict performance of the Mosaic Law."³ Although the Jews were given God's commands, that was not the way of *salvation*. Even in Old Testament times, no one was ever justified by works of the law; right standing with God was only possible through His sheer grace. The law brings about the knowledge of sin only, not the solution to it (3:20).

"Has been revealed" comes to us in the perfect passive. God's public display of Christ as the propitiation for our sins

¹ Hodge, p. 136. Sanday and Headlam, p. 82, Cranfield, p. 201.

² Hodge, p. 136.

³ Sanday and Headlam, p. 83.

and the one way of salvation for all men, is an action completed in the past with *continuing results* (in eternity) for believers. It is much more than a simple past action, but a revelation that impacts and determines eternal destinies. $\phi\alpha\nu\epsilon\rho\omega$ is a word that means to reveal, to make know, to show, to make visible. Paul uses this word in Romans 1:19 to describe God's general revelation to man, so that man is without excuse for his unbelief. Now, since Christ has come and fulfilled His purpose, God has unveiled what was once a mystery, making it clearly visible in a public display for all to see.

"Being testified to by the law and the prophets" shows us how God has in the past foretold His eternal plan of salvation, even though not fully unveiled at that time. The coming of Christ is an event that was fully anticipated and which fulfilled the Old Testament Scriptures. It is interesting to note the various uses of the one word, "law," within this passage. There is law in terms of God's commands given in the Mosaic Law. No man is able to keep this law perfectly so that he is righteous before God (verses 21 and 28). There is also law in terms of *principle* in verse 27. Here, as well as in verse 31, "law," particularly in combination with "prophets," is surely equivalent to the Old Testament Scriptures, held in high regard by Paul (and by Christ). These Scriptures prophesy extensively about God's plan to justify believers.

22. Now this righteousness from God comes by means of faith in Jesus Christ unto all those who believe--for there is no difference.

"Now" ($\delta\epsilon$ in Greek) introduces a more detailed explanation, repeating once again the basic subject matter, "this righteousness from God," God's plan of justification.

"By means of faith in Jesus Christ"...gives specifics as to how a man may be justified before God. The genitive, "faith," is one of agency, while the genitive, "Jesus Christ," is an objective genitive. It is through, or by means of, placing one's faith in Jesus Christ--not "because of" or "on account of"--that a man is justified. It is specifically faith in *Jesus Christ*, not a generalized faith that God exists, or faith as an impersonal "force," or any other substitute.

"Unto all those who believe" clarifies that salvation is not universal, but is granted only to those who believe. A textual variant is found here, in that some manuscripts say only "unto

all," others only "upon all," and still others "unto and upon all." While the longer reading could perhaps be a combination of two alternatives,⁴ Hodge notes that it is most likely correct on both external and internal grounds, explaining that justification both *extends to* ("unto all") and *covers* ("upon all") believers.⁵

"For there is no difference" is significant in two ways. As explained in verse 23, and expounded in such details in 1:18-3:20, there is no difference in the need of all men for salvation. Secondly, there is no distinction among believers. The method of justification is the same for all, Jews and Gentiles alike (3:30).

23. Because all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

"Because all have sinned" is a phrase that could be taken in a couple of different senses. The aorist here could well be a historical summary, and thus a fitting summary of all that Paul has described earlier concerning the unrighteousness man, the moralist, and the Jew. Indeed, all men have sinned. But also, the very same aorist is used later in Romans 5:12, here concerning the imputation of Adam's sin as the federal representative of the human race--in other words, what we call "original sin." Either way, all men are sinners and thus incapable of achieving right standing before God aside from His mercy.

"And come short of the glory of God"...this use of the present tense no doubt denotes a general characteristic of all human beings. Hodge describes this condition well as the "present and abiding consequence of sin."⁶ The details of this coming short of God's glory are worth exploring, as more than one possible interpretation exists. Cranfield notes man's share in God's glory prior to the fall.⁷ Certainly, in this respect man falls short. In Romans 1:23, Paul has already described man's exchange of God's glory for various idols. This explanation makes good sense, but man also falls short in failing to live in a way that glorifies God, to render to God the glory that is due Him.

⁴ Sanday and Headlam, p. 84.

⁵ Hodge, p. 139.

⁶ Hodge, p. 140.

⁷ Cranfield, p. 204.

24. Being justified without cost by His grace, through deliverance by Christ Jesus.

"Being justified" brings us to a major concern as to precisely *who* is being justified. Does this present participle refer back to the "all" of verse 23? One must proceed with caution here, in order to avoid the error of universalism. All have sinned, all come short of the glory of God, but are *all* justified? No. It is worth commenting here that the free gift of God's grace contrasts with the sinfulness of all mankind expressed in verse 23. As this entire passage stresses, no man is justified by works or merit of his own, but purely by God's grace. However, it seems best to understand those being justified as relating back to verse 22a, "those who believe," and to take 22b-23 as a parenthesis that reminds us again of the universal need for salvation.

The Greek verb rendered "justify" ($\delta\iota\kappa\alpha\iota\omega$) is a significant word in the epistle to the Romans, being used by Paul fifteen times in this book, four of these in 3:21-31. (See Appendix 1.) While this word has a range of meanings, it is best understood in this context as God's action in acquitting believers, pronouncing and treating them as righteous in His sight because of the work of Christ--imputing the righteousness of Christ to them and not administering the death sentence that sin deserves.

"Without cost (freely) by His grace" describes the merciful nature of God's action with an adverbial accusative ($\delta\omega\phi\epsilon\alpha\nu$) plus a dative of means, *by means of* His grace, the grace that He exercises in justifying sinners. The genitive, "His," is no doubt understood as one of origin; justification originates with God in His sovereign decision to demonstrate mercy. $\Delta\omega\phi\epsilon\alpha\nu$ is a wonderful word that Bauer defines "as a gift, without payment, gratis," in this context, though as "undeservedly, without reason, or in vain, to no purpose" in other texts. Justification is not without purpose or reason, as indeed this passage reveals, but it is surely a *free, undeserved gift*--without payment on our part, but at great cost to God in the death of His Son.

"Through deliverance" is a phrase that has generated some controversy in regard to the specific implications of $\alpha\pi\omicron\lambda\upsilon\tau\rho\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$. The idea of "redemption" or "deliverance" or "acquittal" is clearly in mind here, but the question generated is whether or not this word embraces the payment of a ransom. Bauer notes the usage of this word as "buying back as a slave or captive, making him free by payment of a ransom," and Cranfield agrees that this

concept would be familiar to Paul's readers, even though he leaves the question open.⁸ Hodge adds clarity by noting the suffering of Christ as the ground of our deliverance, and other Scriptures that confirm the payment of a ransom (1 Timothy 2:6, Matthew 20:28, 1 Peter 1:18), plus the fact that it is God's wrath from which we are redeemed.⁹ Although the other Scriptures noted do not use this specific Greek word, the word here can rightly have this connotation, and certainly the payment of a ransom is central to the overall concept of redemption. Thus, I concur with Hodge.

"By Christ Jesus" is a construction that both Cranfield and Sanday and Headlam note as normally having reference to the glorified Lord rather than the historical Jesus.¹⁰ Certainly this places emphasis on the importance of the resurrection and ascension. In any event, this phrase points out that it is through the work of Christ on the cross that our redemption has been accomplished.

25. God publicly displayed Him as the propitiation--through faith--by His blood, to prove His righteousness, because of the passing over of sins formerly committed.

"God publicly displayed Him" begins the emphasis on the public demonstration that God has made of His righteousness. The verb here, *προτιθημι*, may also mean to plan, propose, or intend something, as Bauer notes in Romans 1:13 and Ephesians 1:9, and as Cranfield notes in Romans 8:28 and 9:11.¹¹ Some commentators prefer this latter definition in the present context.¹² Hoehner, in his taped lectures, also states this preference on the basis that the double accusative to follow demands a verb of action. Yet others note that "when we turn to the immediate context we find it so full of terms denoting publicity."¹³ It is a somewhat difficult choice because both meanings are theologically correct and can be found elsewhere in Paul's writing. God's purpose in

⁸ Cranfield, p. 207.

⁹ Hodge, p. 141-2.

¹⁰ Cranfield, p. 208, Sanday and Headlam, p. 86-87.

¹¹ Cranfield, p. 209.

¹² Cranfield, p. 208-9, Hodge, p. 142.

¹³ Sanday and Headlam, p. 87.

election is a prominent feature in passages such as Ephesians 1, for example. Yet here, there is indeed a concentration on the *public* nature of God's display of His righteousness, and the *public* nature of the crucifixion of Christ. Thus I translate "publicly displayed," but with full recognition of the God's purposes as taught elsewhere.

"As the propitiation" takes us to another word, *ἱλαστήριον*, that is crucial to our theological understanding. (See Appendix 1.) The word can be used to refer to the *place* of propitiation, or the mercy-seat, yet here it points to the Person of Jesus Christ; the *place* of propitiation is the rather the cross.¹⁴ Controversy arises in the question of whether the word implies an appeasing of God's wrath. While God's anger cannot be compared with the capricious anger of the pagan gods who had to be constantly appeased (or so it was believed), it is certainly true that those who trust in Christ are delivered from the righteous anger of God against sin; recall the discourse in Romans 1:18-32. As Cranfield notes:

"God's wrath, unlike all human wrath, is perfectly righteous, and therefore free from every trace of irrationality, caprice, and vindictiveness, and secondly that in the process of averting this righteous wrath from man it is God Himself who takes the initiative."¹⁵

The concept of sacrifice, as evidenced in the reference to His blood, is another key implication in this word.

"Through faith" is the means of justification that highlights the teaching of this passage. The phrase is somewhat parenthetical here in that our faith is in *Christ Himself*, rather than *in His blood*, although the shedding of His blood is a vital element in redemption. Some manuscripts add the definite article to "faith" here. Its inclusion or omission does not radically alter the basic doctrine, Sanday and Headlam prefer to include it as an article of previous reference which points back to verse 22.¹⁶

¹⁴ Sanday and Headlam, p. 87.

¹⁵ Cranfield, p. 216.

¹⁶ Sanday and Headlam, p. 89.

"By His blood," having taken "through faith" as parenthetical, is surely a dative of means referencing the sacrificial character of the propitiation; blood, regarded as the seat of life, had to be shed for the forgiveness of sins.¹⁷

"To prove His righteousness" is a clear purpose of God's public demonstration. Here (and in verse 26 to follow) righteousness is used as an attribute of God, rather than as right standing before God as earlier in verses 21 and 22. The Greek *ενδειξις* is a rare New Testament word (used only four times, twice here in two verses) that Bauer defines as "sign, omen, proof." It is prominent in verses 25 and 26, as God *proves* His righteousness and His justice.

"Because of the passing over of sins formerly committed"...explains why it was so necessary for God to give public proof of His righteousness. *Παρεσις* is the *passing over* of sins, the temporary suspension of judgment, in contrast to *αφεσις*, the *putting away* of sins (forgiveness), as noted by Sanday and Headlam.¹⁸ Having in the past suspended the full exercise of His wrath, God now makes a public demonstration on the Cross, unveiling the mystery of His eternal plan of redemption. Hodge notes how the Roman Catholics misuse this passage to claim that forgiveness of sins was not possible prior to the time of Christ, that souls were held in a semi-conscious state of suspense, and yet the Scriptures speak of Abraham as being in heaven (see also Romans 4).¹⁹

It is important to note here that normally it is evil to justify the ungodly. As noted by Hodge, "a judge is unjust when he allows a criminal to be pronounced righteous, and treated accordingly," and yet here, "there is no such disregard to the claims of justice in the justification of the sinner who believes in Christ."²⁰ If God merely overlooked sin, merely winked at it or excused it, He would be unjust. But that is not what He has done. Rather He has exactly the full penalty for sin, but in His mercy delivered His Son to suffer and die on behalf of the elect.

¹⁷ Hodge, p. 146; Sanday and Headlam, p. 89.

¹⁸ Sanday and Headlam, p. 90.

¹⁹ Hodge, p. 150.

²⁰ Hodge, p. 152.

26. In the forbearance of God, to prove His righteousness in the present time, in order that He might be just and also justify by faith in Jesus.

"In the forbearance of God" is noted by Sanday and Headlam to be either (1) temporal, *during* (the time) of the forbearance of God, or (2) God's *motive* for postponement of judgment--which they prefer.²¹ Either view might be substantiated well. The "sins formerly committed" quite probably does refer to sins committed during the time period before Christ came to earth. However, the second view emphasizes God's love and mercy in justifying the sinner. Perhaps *του Θεου* can be conceived as a subjective genitive; God exercises forbearance, or patience, in the passing over of sins.

"To prove His righteousness" is repeated, plus "in the present time." There are two parts to the demonstration of God's righteousness, first in the suspension of His judgment, second in the justification of believers. Regarding the second aspect, Cranfield notes here:

"Paul's concern with something even more important than men's being made aware of God's righteousness, namely God's **being** righteous."²²

Not only must God make His righteousness *known* to men, He must also *be righteous* in His justification of sinners. The "*εις το*" plus infinitive, *ειναι* ("to be") is a construction which in Greek normally identifies purpose. The Cross satisfies God's purposes on both counts, in view of the *public* nature of the crucifixion, and the fact that Christ, being God incarnate and being sinless, is a sacrifice that fully satisfies the demands of God's justice. "The present time," a dative of time when, can be related to the "but now" that begins verse 21, the actual historical time when Christ came, died, and arose from the dead.

"In order that He might be just and also justify by faith in Jesus" brings to a climax the demonstration of God's righteousness (as an attribute) in providing righteousness (justification) to believers. It concludes the expression of God's purposes for the sacrificial death of Christ in a public display. The present

²¹ Sanday and Headlam, p. 90.

²² Cranfield, p. 209 (emphasis added).

participle used for "justify" indicates that God is perfectly just and righteous while at the same time justifying those who believe in Christ. Sanday and Headlam explain this in a helpful manner:

"It is not that 'God is righteous *and yet* declares righteous the believer in Jesus,' but that 'He is righteous *and also*, we might almost say *and therefore*, declares righteous the believer.'"²³

"By faith in Jesus" points again to the point of this passage, justification by faith alone. The objective genitive is used here (Jesus Christ must be the object of faith for the believer) with a genitive of agency (it is by means of faith that justification is obtained). This is fully consistent with "those who believe" (verse 22), "through faith" (verses 25 and 30), and "by faith" (verses 28 and 30).

27. Therefore, where is boasting? It is excluded. Through what kind of law? Of works? No, but through the law of faith.

"Therefore, where is boasting?" begins a new section which outlines some major inferences to be drawn from the doctrine of justification by faith. The first of these concerns boasting on the part of man. "It is excluded." It is shut out. Cranfield and Sanday and Headlam agree that the aorist here has the force of an exclusion accomplished once and for all, a simple past action.²⁴ Since no merit or work of man has any part in accomplishing his redemption, the glory goes to God and man has no basis whatsoever for boasting or pride in himself.

"Through what law? Of works? No, but through the law of faith." *How* and *why* is man's boasting excluded? The Greek νόμος, law, is used in various ways within this passage. Here it is best taken (Bauer's second definition) as "a rule governing one's actions, principle, norm." It might also be taken as a reference to the Holy Scriptures in general, since those sacred writings testify to God's plan of redemption through faith (verse 21). Either way, this verse confirms the message of verse 23, that all are equal before the Cross, as well as the fundamental point of this passage, justification by faith alone:

²³ Sanday and Headlam, p. 91.

²⁴ Cranfield, p. 219; Sanday and Headlam, p. 95.

"A plan of salvation which strips every man of merit, and places all sinners on the same level before God, of course cuts off all assumption of superiority of one class over another." Furthermore, "nothing done by or for him should in any measure diminish his sense of personal ill-desert on account of his transgressions."²⁵

28. For we reckon a man to be justified by faith apart from works of the law.

"For we reckon"...the *γαρ* here begins the explanation of the reason for the conclusion stated in verse 27. Some manuscripts substitute *οὐν*, but this particle would indicate a conclusion from the preceding argument, rather than an explanation, as Hodge notes.²⁶ *Λογιζομεθα* means that we reckon, consider, look up, evaluate, or estimate (Bauer), with the plural perhaps being either an author's plural (as Paul sometimes uses) or "conviction common to all believers."²⁷

"A man to be justified by faith apart from works of the law" summarizes and drives home the main message of this section. We have here the dative of means, "by faith," and an objective genitive in "works of the law," the performance of such deeds. Hodge notes that it is not only "works performed in obedience to the law, and with a legal spirit, but those which flow from faith and a renewed heart."²⁸ Believers, as they are sanctified, may (indeed ought) to grow in obedience to God's commands, but even these actions are not the basis of justification; *it is faith--and only faith--in the completed work of Christ.*

29. Is God (the God) of the Jews only? Or (is He) not also (the God of the Gentiles? Indeed, (He is) also (the God) of the Gentiles.

One can almost hear the ancient exhortation, "Hear O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one" (Deuteronomy 6:4). A second inference is introduced, based on the fact that there is *one way*

²⁵ Hodge, p. 155.

²⁶ Hodge, p. 155.

²⁷ Cranfield, p. 221.

²⁸ Hodge, p. 146.

of salvation for all men, who are equally in need of justification. If God were the God of only the Jews, perhaps there would be another method of justification for the Gentiles. But there is not. Faith in Christ is the basis for a man to be reckoned righteous before God, and no alternative exists. Thus those words from Deuteronomy naturally follow: The Lord our God is one and He is Lord over all.

30. Since it is one God who shall justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through (the same) faith.

Clearly stated here is the grounds for the conclusion just stated that one God reigns over all men, because the basis for justification is the same for both the circumcised (the Jew) and the uncircumcised (the Gentile). Sanday and Headlam, though most of their commentary is quite sound, seem to wander astray in their statement that although both Jew and Gentile are justified by faith, that faith operates through the *channel* of circumcision for the Jew but no special channel or condition for the Gentile.²⁹ This distinction seems out of place in view of the labors Paul has taken to establish the lack of any distinction between either sinners or Christian believers.

The participle *εἴπερ* combines *εἰ* ("if") and *περὶ* ("concerning") to mean "if indeed" or "if it is true that" or "since," as translated here. It leads directly into the grounds for the conclusion that has been stated.

Note that *ἐκ πίστεως* and *διὰ τῆς πίστεως* are used almost interchangeably here to describe justification by faith, with the article of previous reference the second time, best translated as "the same faith." As Hodge notes along with Cranfield, Paul uses both terms at various times with no apparent distinction.³⁰

The future tense, "will justify," requires some comment in view of the completed work of Christ in securing our redemption. Hodge assesses this usage as indicative of God's "permanent purpose" rather than a reference to the final judgment.³¹

²⁹ Sanday and Headlam, p. 96.

³⁰ Hodge, p. 157; Cranfield, p. 222.

³¹ Hodge, p. 157.

31. Is the law therefore abolished through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we confirm the law.

At various times in Romans, Paul states a false inference in the form of a question and immediately answers with the emphatic optative, "μη γένοιτο!" Or in common English, "No way!"

Two key present tense verbs are set in contrast here. First, *καταγω* means to render ineffective/powerless/idle, to nullify, to abolish or set aside or wipe out (Bauer). It may also mean to release someone from something (Bauer). Is there no more law? Is the believer released from any obligation to obey God's moral law? Since justification is purely and wholly by means of faith, such a logical inference might be drawn, and such is the attitude of antinomianism. But it is not so.

Note secondly the contrasting verb *ιστημι*, to "establish, confirm, make or consider something valid" (Bauer). Here it is important to consider Paul's repetition of the word "law," used so often yet in different senses. Yet more than one of those senses makes good sense in this context. The Christian is not released from the moral law, even though that does not secure salvation in any way, yet is given the power of the Holy Spirit to increasingly obey that law. Paul considers this later in the chapters on sanctification (6 through 8). The *fruit* of regeneration is a changed heart, a desire to live one's life so as to please and glorify God. Failure to bear such fruit does not cause a loss of salvation (believers do grow at different rates), but might generate some question as to whether regeneration has actually taken place. Another understanding of "law" is the Old Testament Scriptures. As noted in verse 21, those very writings testify to God's plan of redemption to be revealed. Certainly, those writings are confirmed in the coming of Christ and unveiling of the mystery hidden through the ages. The promises given in those Scriptures are fulfilled, not abolished or negated! Thus we have the third and final (in this context) inference from the doctrine of justification by faith.

Conclusion

Romans 3:21-31 is a key passage explaining one of the core doctrines of Christianity, justification by faith. God's glorious grace is underlined in the fact that this explanation follows the overwhelming evidence of man's universal need for salvation. Without exception, all have turned away from God, sinned, and come

short of His glory. It is God who must take the initiative to effect redemption. That plan is explained in three major parts:

1. God's eternal plan, prophesied in the Holy Scriptures, is **unveiled** at the time of Christ.

2. God has **provided** justification by faith in publicly displaying Christ as the propitiation for our sins, and in doing so, He proves His righteousness and He *is* righteous.

3. God's gracious gift of righteousness **implies** that man's boasting is excluded, that *one* God reigns over all, and that the law is confirmed.

Application

This crucial teaching has important applications in Christian counseling. The counselor must exhort the believer to walk in obedience to God's commands. That is *sanctification*. But sanctification cannot precede salvation. To attempt it as such invites frustration and failure. The believer must first be reckoned or declared right before God because he is empowered to live according to God's righteous commands. (Even then, he is not sinless.) He is to obey God out of gratitude and love, not in an attempt to earn his salvation through performance of works--which, if it were possible, would give him a basis for boasting. A proper understanding of justification by faith alone provides a solid foundation for righteous living *in gratitude to God for what He has already done, for His gracious gift of salvation*. The Christian counselee who truly understands the basis for his justification is in a solid position to proceed with sanctification with a heart that responds in love to God's grace.

Appendix 1: Word Studies

1. *δικαιοω* (used 39 times in the New Testament)

Bauer

1. Show justice, do justice to someone.
2. Justify, vindicate, treat as just.
3. Paul uses the word almost exclusively for God's justice.
 - a. Of men...be acquitted, be pronounced and treated as righteous and thereby become *dikaïos*, receive the divine gift of righteousness; be justified.
 - b. Of God's activity.
 - c. Make free or pure, be set free or made pure (passive).
 - d. God is proved to be right (Romans 3:4).

Liddell and Scott

1. Set right.
2. Hold or deem right, claim or demand as a right.
3. Do a man right or justice.
 - A. Punish, chastise.
 - B. Have right done one.
 - C. Pronounce or treat as righteous, vindicate, justify.

Louw and Nida

1. To cause someone to be in a right relationship with another.
2. To show or prove to be right; demonstrate that something is morally right.
3. To acquit, remove guilt, set free, clear.
4. To cause to be released from the control of some state or situation.
5. To conform to righteous, just commands.

Other Uses by Paul: Of the 39 occurrences of this word in the New Testament, the overwhelming major (27) are in Paul's epistles. Of these 27, over half (15) are in the book of Romans. Almost all refer to God's justification by faith in Christ, at least to obtaining a right standing with God (Romans 2:13, 3:20, 3:24, 3:26, 3:28, 3:30, 4:2, 4:5, 5:1, 5:9, 8:30 [twice], and 8:33). Two other uses occur, however. In Romans 3:4, God is *proved right*, and in Romans 6:7, the believer is *set free* from sin. Paul also uses *dikaioo* twice in 1 Corinthians (4:4 and 6:11). The latter occurrence references again justification by faith, the former Paul says that his clear conscience does not make him *innocent* (NIV). In Galatians, all 8 occurrences of *dikaioo* are clearly the same doctrine of justification by faith (verses 2:16 [three times], 2:17, 3:8, 3:11, 3:24, and 5:4). Much of the language here is similar to that of Romans 3:21-31. In 1 Timothy

3:16, the word refers to Christ being vindicated, and in Titus 3:7, Paul's final use of the word again means justification by faith. Thus, most occurrences of *dikaioo* in the Pauline epistles clearly point to the doctrine of justification of faith.

Conclusions: Certainly a range of meanings exists in all of these resources. However, in this context, the meaning that makes the best sense is that of God's activity in reckoning a man to be righteous, based on Christ being publicly displayed as the propitiation for sin (see Bauer's #3a and b above, also #2; Liddell and Scott 3c; Louw and Nida #3). Also, in view of the reconciliation between man and God, the peace with God that we have on the basis of justification (Romans 5:1), Louw and Nida's first definition above is also applicable and enriches our understanding of what God has done for us.

2. *ἱλαστήριον* (used 2 times in the New Testament)

Bauer

That which expiates or propitiates; means of expiation, gift to procure expiation.

Liddell and Scott

1. Mercy seat (LXX, Exodus 25:16).
2. Propitiatory gift or offering (Romans 3:25).

Louw and Nida

1. Place or location where sins are forgiven.
2. Propitiation is "a process by which one does a favor to a person in order to make him or her favorably disposed."
However, they go on to say that "in the New Testament, God is never the object of propitiation since He is already on the side of the people."

Conclusions: *Expiation* involves the removal of sins. *Propitiation* involves the appeasing of God's wrath. Both are accomplished in Christ's suffering and death; Bauer's definition thus is preferable to the other two lexicons. The *place* where sins are forgiven, or "mercy seat," would be better designated as the Cross. In the one other New Testament occurrence of this word, Hebrews 9:5, reference is made to the location as it was in Old Testament times. In this context, it is the Person of Christ who God publicly displays as *ἱλαστήριον*. *Propitiation* is no doubt the best rendering of the word; Paul provides additional explanation of the sacrificial nature of that propitiation in his reference to the blood of Christ.

Appendix 2 Textual Variant

	Byzantine	Western	Caesarean	Alexandrian
Romans 3:28				
γαρ		D G it vg syr	arm	Aleph A □ 81 326 1739 1881 cop

Church fathers: Origen, Ambrosiaster, Augustine John-Damascus.

ουυ	K	D		B
	451	88		C
	629	181		33
	Byz			104
	syr			1241

Church fathers: Ephraem, Chrysostom, Euthalius, Theodoret, Ps-Oecumenius, Theophylact. Omit Lectionaries.

Conclusions

The first alternative, γαρ, seems to be the best. Based on external evidence, it has strong support in the Alexandrian witness, a family that maintains some difficulties and orthodox readings, and which Westcott and Hort identify as neutral and use as a basis for choice of variants. The Western witness, while not normally conclusive alone, is early and independent, and can be cited along with another family as it is here. Note that several of the translations retain this variant, while only one retains ουυ. Moreover, ουυ has much support in the Byzantine tradition, but this family tends to standardize and attempt to eliminate problems; the added *number* of manuscripts here does not add much additional support.

Internal criteria support the same choice. The γαρ gives explanation to what has just been stated: the exclusion of boasting. The use of ουυ here would point to a conclusion from what precedes rather than an explanation of it.

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